

Persisting in Dispossession: Palestinian Dialect, Identity, and 75 Years of Exile in Lebanon¹

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Abstract

This research aims to illuminate the resilience and adaptability of a community that has long been confronted with obstacles and to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamism of Palestinian refugees to preserve and promote their cultural heritage, especially dialect within the complicated tapestry of the Lebanese society. The researcher used the ethnographic method, building theoretically on Berry's acculturation theory, to investigate this issue despite 75 years of displacement. This theory identifies four strategies: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. Despite the legal restrictions and social exclusion, poverty, and restricted access to education, health, and employment, Palestinians show perseverance in their language identity, as exemplified by the separation and marginalization aspects described by Berry.

Key Words:

Cultural identity, acculturation, dialect, ethnographic study, Lebanon, Palestinian refugees.

1 Introduction

This study contributes to understanding how linguistic resilience functions as a form of cultural resistance among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. It brings renewed focus to dialect as a site of identity preservation amid deepening socio-political marginalization. By applying Berry's acculturation theory, the research offers a timely contribution to understanding how language, specifically the persistence of the Palestinian dialect, functions as a strategy of cultural resilience and resistance. Such insights can inform language policy, refugee support programs, and efforts to foster social cohesion while respecting cultural preservation.

1.1 A Glance at the Lebanese Context

The people of Lebanon, citizens, and residents, including Palestinian refugees and other vulnerable groups, are currently facing a multitude of challenges because of systemic governance failures, the ripple effects of the conflict in Ukraine, and the country's worsening economic and financial woes. The systemic governance failures are enduring weaknesses within public institutions and policy systems, often rooted in corruption, weak legal enforcement, and poor accountability. These deficiencies affect key sectors like

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health and education, leading to underdevelopment and a loss of trust in state authority (Fukuyama, 2013; Grindle, 2004).

The political patronage, known locally as "wasta", dominates Lebanon's political landscape. Services and employment are frequently distributed based on loyalty rather than merit, undermining the effectiveness of public administration and the judiciary. This clientelist system has normalized corrupt practices, further eroding institutional integrity (Farida & Ahmadi-Esfahani, 2008; Transparency International, 2024).

Lebanon has experienced prolonged periods without a functioning government, leading to institutional paralysis. The failure to elect a president for extended durations has hampered efforts to address the country's economic crisis, which the World Bank describes as one of the worst globally since the 19th century. This governance vacuum has exacerbated public disillusionment and hindered crisis response initiatives (World Bank, 2022; Naharnet Newsdesk, 2022).

Most of the population probably falls below the national poverty line, and most of the workforce receiving payment in the Lebanese pound is experiencing a significant decline in purchasing power. Alongside the escalating unemployment rate, many households face challenges accessing critical services, such as healthcare (World Bank, 2022).

The situation has been exacerbated by currency devaluation, inflation, and a lack of access to essential services. This has led to increased poverty levels and a growing reliance on humanitarian aid for the Lebanese and their residents. As per the Lebanese Response Plan's (LRP) statistics, by mid-year 2024, it was supposed to have supported 1.5 million vulnerable Lebanese, 1.3 million displaced Syrians, 145,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and 23,026 Palestinian Refugees from Syria (Mansour, et al., 2025). The crisis's effects on residents' rights have been devastating and unparalleled. According to the UN, as of March 2021, 78% of Lebanon's population lived below the poverty line, three times the estimated figure in 2020. The proportion of the population living in extreme poverty has risen to 36% from 8% in 2019 and 23% in 2020 (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Recent reports have highlighted the urgent need for assistance among most of the population, particularly Palestinian refugees, who are struggling to cope with rising costs and shortages of essential goods. The recurring statement of any activist working with the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon stresses their repeated tragedy, conflict, discrimination, and marginalization (Pasquini, 2022).

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), created by UN General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV) of December 8, 1949, to implement work and direct assistance programs for Palestine refugees (UNRWA, n.d.c). It is considered the primary humanitarian agency for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. It emphasized the deteriorating living conditions and the prevailing sense of despair within the community (UNRWA, 2023). Consequently, it is the only United Nations agency created specifically for one group of people — the Palestinian refugees displaced by the 1948 Nakba and subsequent events. It supports over six million registered refugees across the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. This institutional singularity underscores the magnitude and exceptional nature of the Palestinian exile experience in the modern era (Mansour et al., 2025). Despite ongoing efforts to provide essential services such as healthcare and education, Palestinian refugees continue to face significant obstacles, including widespread illness and joblessness. The COVID-19

pandemic has only worsened the situation, intensifying feelings of anxiety and mental distress among both Lebanese nationals and refugees due to a lack of social support. Economic hardship, unemployment, and a scarcity of necessities have fueled tensions within refugee communities, pushing many to undertake dangerous journeys on overcrowded boats in search of a better life elsewhere, considering that the number of people who succeeded or tried the death boat experience to leave Lebanon by sea nearly doubled between 2020 and 2021 (Reuters, 2022). Tragically, these journeys often end in loss of life, underscoring the severity of the crisis and the urgent need for a coordinated response to address it.

In terms of religion, following the Nakba, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled to Lebanon through successive waves. Religion heavily influenced their reception: Christian Palestinians were more easily integrated into Lebanese cities and public life. At the same time, Sunni Palestinians were largely marginalized – both legally and spatially – and confined to camps (Kaylor, 2022). Nonetheless, both groups maintained traditional cultural practices, including embroidery, music, and their respective dialects. For those in the camps, dialect became a powerful emblem of rooted identity and communal continuity (NPR, 2025; Khalaf, 2022).

Theoretically, this study is guided by Berry's acculturation framework, which explores how individuals navigate cultural preservation in contexts of systemic exclusion (Berry, 2005; Sam & Berry, 2006). By applying the 'separation' dimension of this model, the research highlights the deliberate retention of cultural identity, especially language, as a strategy of survival and resistance among Palestinian refugees.

1.2 Contextual background

This article provides a grounded understanding of the physical and emotional context within which this study is situated. It outlines daily life inside Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, focusing on spatial marginalization, infrastructure challenges, and community resilience. It also introduces the researcher's positioning and the broader narrative voice through field quotes illuminating lived realities. These contextual elements are essential for understanding how dialect functions as both a cultural anchor and a marker of exclusion.

1.3 Definitions

The Arab world predominantly communicates using classical and formal Arabic, which presents variations across local dialects depending on the region's geographical location. The more closely situated the countries are, the higher the degree of shared vocabularies and pronunciations, resulting in increased linguistic similarities. As the distance between nations widens, the linguistic similarities diminish accordingly, reflecting the diversity and uniqueness of each dialect.

This detailed study examines the nuances of Arabic dialects, specifically within Lebanon, emphasizing the intricate dynamics between Palestinian migrants and the native Lebanese population. By exploring fundamental concepts and theories related to dialectal distinctions and racial prejudices, this research sheds light on how these factors influence communication patterns and social interactions within the Lebanese Palestinian context. It delves into the complexities of language use and discrimination, providing insights into

the underlying factors that shape the communicative and behavioral dimensions of this social dynamic.

1.3.1 *Dialect*

In the Arabic language, dialect is called the colloquial or spoken language. Local or colloquial language is the language that people use orally every day. It is the daily, spontaneous dialect for meeting their needs and understanding each other, acquired in a person's early years, which they use in public dealings. It differs from one region to another in all countries. It also represents a group of linguistic characteristics that belong to a unique environment, and these characteristics are shared by all members of this environment (Sewell, 2022). In the same context, dialects share a set of linguistic characteristics and speech habits that constitute a language independent of other languages. There is no doubt that dialects are branches of the common language and are influenced by it, even if they are distorted or altered ("Allougha wa Allahja," n.d.).

1.3.2 *Racial Discrimination*

As per the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (OHCHR, 1965), the term

“[r]acial discrimination shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life”.

Drawing on the theoretical underpinnings of the study, which primarily focus on the nuances of spoken dialects intertwined with environmental influences, the researcher explores the intricate relationship between the dialect spoken by Palestinian refugees and the socio-cultural dynamics of their original and host communities, as articulated in Berry's acculturation theory. By exploring how these linguistic and socio-environmental factors converge, the study sheds light on the tangible manifestations of racial discrimination that impact Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon. Furthermore, the researcher examines how these individuals align with the categories delineated in Berry's theory. It comprehensively analyses how acculturation processes intersect with the refugee experience, shaping their interactions and sense of belonging within the host society. By meticulously examining these interconnected threads, the study elucidates the complex web of identity formation, cultural adaptation, and discrimination faced by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, underscoring the enduring significance of linguistic and environmental contexts in shaping their lived realities and social integration.

1.3.3 *Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*

UNRWA defines Palestinian refugees as

“[p]ersons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict” (UNRWA, n.d.b).

As of March 2023, the overall count of registered Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, as reported by UNRWA, was 489,292 individuals. Moreover, UNRWA data indicates that there is a total of 31,400 Palestinian refugees from Syria living in Lebanon (PRS). Nevertheless, registration with UNRWA is a voluntary process, and instances of deaths and emigration

are frequently unreported. At the same time, refugees can continuously register newborns as they relocate abroad using the UNRWA online registration system. In 2017, the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee and the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics conducted a census among Palestinians residing in Lebanon, revealing 174,000 individuals. Approximately 45% of Palestinian refugees are believed to be living in the 12 refugee camps across the country (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Every year, around 200,000 Palestinian refugees utilize UNRWA services in Lebanon. The Agency estimates that the government's current number of Palestinian refugees does not exceed 250,000 (UNRWA, n.d.c).

The population of Palestinian refugees is highly susceptible to the challenges they encounter at legal, administrative, and security levels. The worsening economic conditions will increase the troublesome effects of long-standing constraints on their job prospects. Despite significant progress in Lebanese labor laws since 2005, including specific provisions for Palestinian refugees, their right to work is still constrained by both official and unofficial barriers. They continue to encounter significant obstacles in pursuing 39 regulated professions, and substantial changes are unlikely in the near to medium term. Additionally, Palestinian refugees are prohibited from owning property and face restrictions on their freedom of movement. Palestine refugee populations are further disadvantaged as they often lack the social connections needed to secure housing and work opportunities and encounter difficulties in registering life events and accessing civil documentation (UNRWA, 2023I). Detailed information related to the status of each camp is given in section 4.5.

2 Relevant Theories

2.1 Berry's Acculturation Theory

As the definition explains, dialect is closely tied to culture. Consequently, immigrants may adopt cultural aspects of the host society, which can gradually shape and influence their dialect (Backus, 2010). Accordingly, Berry (1997) proposed a model of acculturation that classifies individual coping strategies along two dimensions: The first dimension relates to retaining or rejecting the individual's original culture, which is associated with the value of preserving the individual's identity and characteristics. The second dimension relates to the adoption or rejection of the host culture and is linked with the value that the larger society attaches to it. Consequently, Berry proposed four strategies for acculturation:

- *Assimilation* occurs when individuals follow the same cultural norms as the host culture which then dominate their culture of origin.
- *Separation* occurs when individuals reject the dominant culture of the host society to maintain their original culture.
- *Integration* occurs when individuals can adopt the cultural norms of the host society's culture while maintaining their culture of origin.
- *Marginalization* occurs when individuals reject the culture of both societies: the original and the host community.

2.2 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner, posits that individuals derive their self-concept from affiliating with various social groups. In the context of

language and dialects, this theory highlights the significance of ingroup and outgroup dynamics (Hogg et al., 2004):

- Dialects can act as indicators of social identity and may be employed to express solidarity with a specific cultural group.
- The adoption of a particular dialect or language can reflect ingroup identity and serve as a form of resistance against assimilation into the prevailing culture.

This theory provides insight into the persistence of particular dialects despite pressures to conform to the dominant language, particularly when there is a strong sense of loyalty to the ingroup.

2.3 Language Maintenance and Shift

This theory examines the processes of language maintenance and shift, particularly concerning minority dialects and languages (Kedrebeogo, 1998):

- Language maintenance refers to the efforts made by a community to sustain its dialect and cultural traditions in the face of influences from a dominant culture.
- Language shift occurs when a community gradually transitions to the dominant language, resulting in the erosion or extinction of their original dialect.

In exploring these theories, Berry's framework integrates the three concepts and investigates the interplay between dialects and various social, cultural, and psychological factors. Furthermore, it provides valuable insights into the evolution of dialects, the persistence of language among individuals in multicultural environments, and the role of language as a marker of identity during the acculturation process. Consequently, this research aligns with Berry's theory, which can be utilized to evaluate and analyze the four cases related to Palestinian refugees.

3. Methodology

3.1 Geographical context

This intricate research project adopts an anthropological framework to explore the intimate lives of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon through a multifaceted approach. This methodology entails the meticulous collection of personal narratives and a thorough examination of relevant resources. The methodology used is ethnographic research, emphasizing in-depth, immersive observation, which is particularly effective in capturing the everyday cultural practices and identity negotiations of marginalized communities, such as Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. By engaging directly with community members, researchers can document how dialect, traditions, and resistance strategies are lived and expressed within specific socio-political contexts (Atkinson, 2007). Complementing this, blog analysis allows researchers to access self-representations and narratives produced by refugees, often offering raw, unfiltered perspectives that may be absent in formal academic discourse (Hookway, 2008). Together, these methods offer a richer and more nuanced understanding of how language and identity are constructed and maintained under conditions of exclusion and displacement.

A significant aspect of this methodology was based on the researcher's direct involvement in the National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training (NISCVT). Considering the researcher's professional affiliation with the NISCVT, it was crucial to adopt measures to

reduce potential bias and maintain research integrity. To uphold objectivity, the researcher engaged in continuous reasonable reflexivity that differentiated between the organizational role and the position as a researcher. Peer debriefing sessions were conducted to cross-check and validate interpretations based on diverse data sources. These strategies collectively strengthened the credibility and transparency of the study, helping to ensure that the findings reflected the data rather than being shaped by institutional ties or preconceived views.

For five years serving as the director of the social work department within this organization, the researcher expertly supervised 23 social workers dedicated to assisting Palestinian refugees. Their duties encompassed regular field visits and active engagement with beneficiaries and their families dispersed across various Palestinian camps in Lebanon. This hands-on engagement proved instrumental in gaining profound insights into the multifaceted challenges encountered by Palestinian refugees, covering areas such as education, social welfare, economic status, health (with a specific focus on mental well-being), and living conditions. The firsthand testimonies shared by the refugees in Lebanon yielded invaluable qualitative data, offering a poignant portrayal of their lived experiences.

Noting that the researcher gathered the ten blogs through visits to the NISCVT centers over two months (June-July 2020), after obtaining the beneficiaries' permission, it was approved to transcribe the blogs word by word, without revealing any private information, and to numerate them since they were written. Ten blogs that fit the research themes were selected for scientific research purposes.

The researcher did not ask for names but built on the observation and the location at the NISCVT services. Moreover, the researcher conducted an exhaustive exploration of relevant reports to complement and contextualize personal encounters. Using statistical data and academic literature, the researcher strove to better understand the socio-economic and political factors influencing Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. A meticulous critical analysis identified recurring themes and dynamics in the refugee narrative by amalgamating information from diverse sources. Mirroring this synthesized approach is the article's structure, which commences with an overview of Lebanon's critical landscape, focusing on the existence of Palestinian refugees. It then transitions into a detailed literature review and theoretical examination, delving into the underlying reasons that preserve refugees' linguistic heritage despite the challenges they face. Handling insights and reflections from her experiences at the NISCVT organization, the researcher strategically incorporated Palestinian refugee perspectives and examples into the study. This comprehensive methodology aptly expounds on the intricacies of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon by effectively merging ethnographic fieldwork with a rigorous desk-based review.

Regarding the data analysis, the researcher went through the ten blogs and classified them into themes. Consequently, the researcher coded the ten blogs and translated them into English, and tried to link them with the separation and discrimination of Berry's theory as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Blogs

Blog quote's number	Content in English	Characteristics	Themes link to Berry's separation and/or marginalization.
Blog No.1	"I try to imitate the accent of the Lebanese citizens; it works with the first two words, and the third leads me to failure, as in the school's exams."	A young Palestinian female refugee enrolled in the family planning project at NISCVT	Accent: discrimination
Blog No.2	"Most of the Lebanese do not welcome our presence, without denying that others believe in the Palestinian cause. I hope they return us to beloved Palestine."	A Palestinian female who visited the dental clinic at NISCVT	Accent – hate: marginalization
Blog No.3	"Sometimes Lebanese citizens name us the <i>Bandora</i> community [<i>Bandora</i> is an Arabic word that means tomato], but it is shameful for them to give us this name; yes, we have distinguished accents, and our traditions are different, but we are human."	A Palestinian male at the NISCVT social worker's office	Accent – stigma: discrimination
Blog No.4	"I believe that we, as Palestinian refugees, preserve our culture. As you can see, the NISCVT, other NGOs, and the UNRWA promote our culture through the Dabka program – traditional songs, and musical instruments such as "Garba: Bagpipe", which are our differences. <i>Msakhan</i> and <i>Mouloukhiyyi</i> are our unique foods, and we are keen to transfer them to the generations; we could not feel safe outside the camp; in other words, we are stigmatized and never accepted as neighbors of the Lebanese people who are different. We, our tradition are different: our weddings are different."	A young male refugee at the social worker's office at NISCVT	Culture – traditions preserved: separation, marginalization
Blog No.5	"UNRWA school classes are overcrowded, even though our people like to be enrolled."	A Palestinian man refugee at the kindergarten project	Discrimination in education: separation marginalization
Blog No.6	"What can we do if UNRWA does not provide the medication or the operational fees? It contributes a small percentage that does not cover the expenses. The medicine in Lebanon is too expensive even for the Lebanese themselves."	A young Palestinian male refugee	Discrimination in health care: separation, marginalization
Blog No.7	"Even though it has been more than 70 years since I left our country, the Lebanese government inhibited us from working in the most critical fields. I am a pharmacist, and I worked as a seller in a library outside the camp; after a minute or two of conversation had passed, and due to my "well-known" accent, some Lebanese visitors who came to my section sometimes asked my colleagues to assist them. Isn't this a punishment or what?"	A young Palestinian refugee man at the social worker office	Discrimination in the labour market Separation marginalization

Blog No.8	"The homes all over the camps risk being demolished at any time. We should turn on the lights in our houses during the day if we can afford the electricity fees; otherwise, our homes will be dark. We lose our children and sons since most homes have attached the wire in a hazardous way, leading to death."	A Palestinian female refugee at a social worker's office	Discrimination in accommodation Separation marginalization
Blog No.9	"My mom, RIP, was Lebanese; she bought our house 25 years ago. When she passed away, the old owner's sons took over the property, as we were not allowed to own properties. Can you imagine that?"	A Palestinian male refugee at the social work office	Discrimination in accommodation Injustice Separation Marginalization
Blog No.10	"Most often, I do not go outside the camp because I am afraid of the Lebanese army at the checkpoints; they search for any prohibited items upon my entry and exit. They do not intervene inside the camp in any case."	A Palestinian refugee at the social worker's office	Security in the camps Discrimination Separation Marginalization

3.2 Research Question

This background is the starting point for our research that poses the question: "How does dialect function as a marker of cultural resilience and social exclusion among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and to which challenges does it respond?"

3.3 Aim

This research explores the unique techniques and approaches that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon adopt to safeguard and maintain their rich cultural identity amid challenging circumstances, based on the strategies proposed by acculturation theory, namely assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. It sustains the integrity of their distinctive dialect. By focusing on the resilience and determination exhibited by the Palestinian refugee community, particularly in the realm of linguistic preservation, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the multifaceted strategies employed by these individuals to maintain their cultural heritage within the complex social landscape of Lebanon. Through a nuanced examination of the various methods and practices employed by Palestinian refugees to protect their artistic legacy, this research aims to illuminate the resilience and adaptability of a community that has long been confronted with formidable obstacles. Ultimately, this investigation aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics at play among Palestinian refugees, preserving and promoting their cultural heritage within the complex tapestry of Lebanese society.

4 Challenges

This section mentions the multilayered challenges Palestinian refugees face in Lebanon. At least one blog is referenced for each refugee, highlighting the specific challenges. The blog's classification is enfolded under the relevant challenge, explaining and/or describing it, the real situation, and the refugees' sufferings. Additionally, the researcher reveals the relationship between the challenges and Berry's strategies, aligning with the research question.

4.1 Challenges of Accent Imitation

The speech patterns exhibited by Palestinian refugees carry a unique distinction that deserves close observation and analysis. Despite efforts to assimilate to the Lebanese accent, Palestinian refugees often even find themselves compelled to mask or modify

their true linguistic identity under specific circumstances, as the Palestinian dialect can sometimes trigger negative responses, mainly due to the complexity of Lebanese perspectives toward Palestinians residing in Lebanon. These diverging views within the Lebanese population towards Palestinians range from expressions of empathy related to their challenging living conditions to accusations levied against them for their perceived role in fueling the civil war, which plagued Lebanon in the past (Khaled, 2014). The multifaceted nature of these sentiments underscores the intricate dynamics at play when Palestinian refugees grapple with their linguistic identity in a context heavily influenced by the region's historical and political complexities. This phenomenon highlights the complexities and challenges Palestinian refugees face in navigating Lebanon's intricate social landscape, where linguistic differences can often be intertwined with broader issues of identity and perception (Saleh, 2023).

Below is the blog of a young Palestinian refugee woman and a university student enrolled in the family planning project at NISCVT (Blog No.1):

"I try to imitate the accent of the Lebanese citizens; it works with the first two words, and the third leads me to failure, as in the school's exams."

(Bahawel marrat agalled kif behkoo billahja illebnani, awwal kelmten bahkihen eltalte bitsaggatni methl elemtihanat almadaress.)

"بحاول مرات اغلد كيف باللهجة اللبناني، اول كلمتين بحكيهن النالتي بتسقطني مثل الامتحاناتللمدارس"

Most Palestinians find it challenging to change their dialect, and their attempts may reveal their original accent. For example, the pronunciation of the word tomato in the Lebanese way, as *Bandora* instead of *Banadoora*, is a word that was used during the Lebanese Civil War to test individuals passing through checkpoints and determine whether they were Lebanese or camouflaged Palestinians (Khaled, 2014).

In the same context, a Palestinian woman visited the dental clinic at NISCVT, mentioning the hate of the Lebanese toward Palestinians (Blog No.2):

"Most of the Lebanese do not welcome our presence, without denying that others believe in the Palestinian cause. I hope they return us to beloved Palestine."

(Aghlab el libnanyi ma behebbounash biftekro ihna kenna sabab laharbhen ben baadhen w kaman ma benkerish fi baadhen maa elgadiyyeh bas ya ammi ma beddonsh yana yrajouna al flesteen.) Blog No. Two (a Palestinian woman visited the dental clinic at NISCVT).

"أغلب اللبنانيي ما بحبوناش بفتكرو احنا كنا سبب لحربهن الاهلييوكمان ما بنكرش في بعضهن مع الغضبية بس يا عمي ما بدهنش بانا رجعونا غفلسطين"

Palestinians often face the challenge of fully mastering the nuances of the Lebanese dialect, which can result in feelings of isolation or misunderstandings during conversations. This linguistic barrier may be deeply rooted in an unconscious need to grasp onto their dialect as a tangible representation of their heritage, particularly in times when a sense of detachment from Palestine is overwhelming. In choosing to hold onto their distinct way of speaking, Palestinians are engaging in a subtle yet powerful act of self-affirmation and resistance against the erasure of their cultural roots. This act of linguistic solidarity serves as a poignant declaration of their shared experiences and historical ties, akin to their yearning for the fundamental right to return to their ancestral lands. By preserving their unique manner of speech, Palestinians are preserving a part of themselves and reaffirming their place within a broader narrative of resilience and perseverance in the face of adversity. This bond between language and identity becomes

a vital thread that links past, present, and future aspirations, solidifying their sense of belonging and connection to a heritage that withstands the test of time (Khaled, 2014).

The Blog No. 3 highlighted the discrimination in terms of the Palestinian accent (Palestinian men at the social worker's office):

"Sometimes Lebanese citizens name us the Bandora community [Bandora is an Arabic word that means tomato], but it is shameful for them to give us this name; yes, we have distinguished accents, and our traditions are different, but we are human."

(Akthar kelma maaroufa baad elahyan ellibnanyyi ysammouna mojtamaa el Bandora, bas eib aleyhen ysamoona heka sahih endn a ladja gher w adatna gher anhen bas nehna insan.)

"أكثر كلمة معروفة بعض الأحيان، اللبنايي يسمونا مجتمع البندورة، بس عيب عليهن يسمونا هيكاً، صحيح عندن اللهجا غير عنهن بس نحنا انسان"

The Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have been grappling with various obstacles in pursuit of establishing secure and sustainable livelihoods within the country. Despite their extended residency in Lebanon, they encounter significant challenges when accessing employment opportunities. This predicament is exacerbated by the restrictive Lebanese policies that have placed severe limitations on the type of work Palestinians are permitted to engage in. They are prohibited from pursuing employment in approximately 70 job categories, narrowing their options for viable work. Even when these refugees manage to secure jobs within the specified categories, they are often subjected to discriminatory treatment based on their accent, further hindering their ability to integrate successfully into the workforce. Interestingly, this bias is notably absent when considering the experiences of Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon, highlighting a disparity in treatment towards different refugee populations. Thus, the issue of limited employment prospects and discriminatory practices faced by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon has contributed to their overall struggle to establish stable and sustainable livelihoods in a foreign land.

The culture of Palestinians is preserved throughout activities and special foods explained by a young refugee man at the social worker's office at NISCVT (Blog No.4):

"I believe that we, as Palestinian refugees, preserve our culture. As you can see, the NISCVT, other NGOs, and the UNRWA promote our culture through the Dabka program, traditional songs, and musical instruments such as "Garba: Bagpipe," which are our differences. Msakhan and Mouloukhiyyi are our unique foods, and we are keen to transfer them to the generations; we could not feel safe outside the camp; in other words, we are stigmatized and never accepted as neighbors of the Lebanese people who are different. We, our tradition is different: our weddings are different"

(Bashouf el lagiin bennsoush sagafethen metel ma shefti bilsomoud (NISCVT) w gherha men Imouassassat wel anerwa kaman endhen dabkeh w kaman aghani turathiyyeh wel baramejGERBA w kaman ma bnensash aklatna elshaabiyyeh mloukhiyyeh wel msakhan w lahgetna illi mnehras eno tentegel la ajyalna, bekelmten then ma finash nlagi halna barra Imokhayam alena wasma w ma mnagdaresh nkoon giran elbab bil bab maa lebnanyah bikhafoo menna, adatna gher adathen w aarasna gher.)

"بشوف اللاجيين ينسوش ثجافتهم مثل ما شفتي بالصمود وغيرها من المؤسسات والانروا كمان عندن دبكة وكمان اغاني تراثية والجربة وكمان ما ينساش اكلاتنا الشعبية الملوخية والمسخن ولهجتنا اللي منحصرص انو تنتجل لاجيالنا ، بكلمتين اثنين ما فيناش نلاجي حالنا برا المخيم علينا وصمة وما منجدرش نكون جيران الباب بالباب مع اللبنايي بيخافو منا عادتنا غير عادتن واعراسنا غير".

Going back to Berry's acculturation strategies, an analytical eye reveals the intricate interplay between the practical application of these strategies and the underlying

theoretical framework. This connection becomes particularly salient when considering the actual everyday struggles faced by the Palestinian refugee population residing within the Lebanese hosting community. It becomes evident that Berry's acculturation strategies serve as a framework for understanding and addressing the complex dynamics in this context. Moreover, the application of these strategies takes on a nuanced significance when viewed through the lens of the specific social, economic, and political realities that shape the lives of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. In this light, the intersection of theory and practice becomes a key focus for examining how acculturation processes unfold within this unique setting. By reviewing these dynamics through a critical analytical perspective, one can gain deeper insights into how acculturation strategies can be adapted and refined to better meet the needs and challenges of marginalized communities such as Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Ultimately, this exploration underscores the importance of bridging theory and praxis to develop more effective and culturally sensitive approaches to supporting the integration and well-being of refugee populations in diverse hosting contexts.

At this stage, the assimilation strategy according to Berry's theory is not yet adopted by Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon. Quite the opposite, they still follow their original cultural norms, as in Palestine, which have not been dominated yet by the culture of the hosting community (seen in Blog No. 3, Blog No. 4, and Blog No. 7). Instead, the strategy of separation describes best their case. Many indicators show the rejection of the dominant culture of the host society (Lebanon). Palestinian refugees are keen to maintain their original culture (clearly seen in Blog No. 3 and Blog No. 4 in addition to the information given in the introduction and the following livelihood sections). Consequently, the separation strategy aim at preserving dignity and being human, which is apparent from the following details.

4.2 Challenge of Discrimination in the Education Sector

Education represents one of the main sectors of discrimination against Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. As shown in this paragraph, the experienced injustice and inequality in the education field is countered by cultural resilience and resistance strategies.

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face systemic discrimination in education, rooted in legal, institutional, and socioeconomic barriers. Lebanese law prioritizes Lebanese nationals in public school enrollment, often leaving Palestinian children with limited access to public education. Consequently, many rely on UNRWA schools, which are underfunded and overcrowded, with class sizes reaching up to 55 students, compromising educational quality (Al-Hroub, 2022). Furthermore, non-registered Palestinian children, particularly those lacking official identification documents, are often unable to sit for national exams like the Brevet, effectively barring them from progressing to secondary or higher education (Gatev, 2024). Economic hardship exacerbates these challenges; with limited employment prospects due to legal restrictions, families often deprioritize education, leading to high dropout rates among Palestinian youth (Anera, n.d.). This confluence of factors perpetuates a cycle of marginalization, denying Palestinian refugees' equitable educational opportunities and hindering their socioeconomic advancement.

UNRWA-operated schools in Palestinian camps situated within Lebanon grapple with severe issues related to overcrowding. This overcrowding is exacerbated by the fact that Palestinian students are unjustly deprived of the opportunity to enroll in Lebanese public

schools. In stark contrast, Syrian refugee students are granted permission to attend these public schools, albeit during the afternoon shift (Mansour et al., 2025). This differential treatment based on nationality not only deepens divisions within the educational system but also perpetuates discrimination against Palestinian students residing in Lebanon.

This systemic injustice marks the educational landscape in Lebanon, impeding Palestinian students from accessing quality education on par with their peers. As a result, these students face limited prospects for academic advancement and personal development. The policy barring Palestinian students from public schools not only hinders their educational progress but also perpetuates a cycle of marginalization and exclusion within the country's education sector.

The disparity threatens Palestinian students' academic success and undermines the principles of equality and inclusivity in the Lebanese education system. By denying Palestinian students the right to enroll in public schools, Lebanon is failing to fulfill its duty to provide equal educational opportunities for all children within its borders. Addressing this inequality and promoting equitable access to education for all students, regardless of nationality, is vital to fostering a more inclusive and just educational environment in Lebanon.

"UNRWA school classes are overcrowded, even though our people like to be enrolled."

(*Sfoof el anerwa fog ma tetsawari tollab fog baadan bas shaabna beheb elelem*) - Blog No. 5.

"صفوف الانروا فوج ما تتصوري طلاب فوج بعضن بس شعبنا بحب العلم".

4.3 Challenge of Discrimination in the Healthcare Sector

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face significant healthcare challenges due to a combination of legal exclusion, chronic underfunding, and deteriorating living conditions. Excluded from Lebanon's public healthcare system, they rely heavily on the UNRWA and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. However, these organizations are chronically under-resourced, limiting access to essential services. While UNRWA operates 27 primary healthcare centers, providing over 930,000 general consultations annually, most care is only partially subsidized, often leaving refugees to cover substantial out-of-pocket expenses (UNRWA, n.d.a). The situation is exacerbated by Lebanon's ongoing economic crisis, which has led to severe funding cuts for UNRWA, further compromising service delivery (Bower, 2024). Additionally, overcrowded and substandard living conditions in refugee camps contribute to the spread of communicable diseases and mental health issues (Electronic Intifada, 2013). These compounded challenges underscore the urgent need for sustainable healthcare solutions for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

Hospitals within Palestinian camps, such as Haifa Hospital and UNRWA health centers, provide partial coverage for healthcare costs. When a Palestinian patient requires care beyond the capabilities of these facilities and is transferred to Lebanese hospitals outside the camps, the financial burden significantly increases. In these cases, UNRWA's expense coverage is only a tiny fraction of the overall costs, leaving the patient to shoulder most of the financial responsibility. The way that Palestinian refugees are being treated in Lebanon raises serious concerns; they are unable to pay for chronic illnesses like cancer or to purchase drugs (UNRWA, 2022).

This financial predicament is underlined by the existing economic crisis in Lebanon, which exacerbates the already challenging situation for Palestinian patients seeking medical treatment outside their established healthcare network.

Transitioning a patient from the familiar environment of their camp's medical facilities to a hospital in Lebanon brings about medical challenges and considerable financial strain. The disparity between the coverage provided within the camps and that extended to hospitals in Lebanon places an additional burden on already vulnerable individuals and families. Consequently, many Palestinian patients and their loved ones face the daunting task of navigating healthcare expenses in an increasingly unforgiving economic landscape.

The implications of this healthcare financing dilemma extend beyond the immediate financial strain on individual patients. The broader socio-economic consequences of such disparities in healthcare coverage highlight the urgent need for sustainable solutions to ensure equitable access to quality healthcare for all Palestinian refugees, regardless of their location within the complex healthcare system serving displaced populations.

"What can we do if UNRWA does not provide the medication or the operations fees? It contributes a small percentage that does not cover the expenses. The medicine in Lebanon is too expensive even for the Lebanese themselves."

(Sho baamol elwahed lamma ykoun awez ilag ma mawjoud bil anerwa, awgat ktheereh ma mnetaladg lianno elhekme bi lebnan barrat al moukhayyam ghalieh ktheer wel lebnani kaman biani men ghala eladwiyeh wel amaliyyat kaman el anerwa betsaheem bi nesbi galeeleh welbagi alena) - Blog No. 6.

"شو بعمل الواحد لما يكون عايز علاج ما موجود بالانروا اوجات كثير ما بتتعالج لانو الحكمة بلبنان بريت المخيم غالية كثير واللبناني كمان بعاني من غلا الادوية والعمليات كمان الانروا بتساهم بنسبة جلية والباجي علينا".

4.4 Challenges of Discrimination on the Labor Market

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face longstanding exclusion and discrimination on the labor market, significantly limiting their economic opportunities and deepening poverty. Lebanese labor laws prohibit Palestinians from working in over 30 regulated professions, including medicine, law, and engineering, unless they obtain difficult-to-obtain work permits, despite many having been born and raised in the country (Anera, 2017). This legal discrimination forces the majority into low-wage, informal sectors without social protection or job security (Suleiman, 2006). Even when employed, Palestinian workers often receive lower wages than their Lebanese counterparts and lack access to benefits such as healthcare or pensions (UNRWA, n.d.c). The recent economic collapse in Lebanon has further compounded these challenges, reduced job opportunities, and increased competition in an already strained labor market. As a result, many Palestinian refugees remain trapped in cycles of unemployment, underemployment, and dependency on humanitarian aid.

In 2021, a significant development occurred in Lebanon when the Minister of Labor issued a decree that marked a milestone for Palestinian refugees residing in the country. This decree granted Palestinian refugees born on Lebanese territory and officially registered with the Ministry of Interior the right to seek employment in professions traditionally reserved for Lebanese citizens. Despite this progressive step, obstacles continue to hinder the seamless integration of Palestinians into the Lebanese job market. Regrettably, discrimination remains a prevalent issue, with Palestinians often encountering bias and

unequal treatment when seeking employment opportunities. Another challenge faced by the Palestinian community is the disparity in remuneration, as they frequently earn lower wages compared to their Lebanese counterparts for similar work. It is also worth noting that this decree failed to extend its benefits to specific groups within the Palestinian community. Expressly, foreigners, even if they are Palestinian by birth or through marriage to a Lebanese woman, were unfortunately excluded from the newfound work opportunities. Consequently, while the decree represents a positive shift towards inclusivity, the road to full workplace equality and acceptance for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is still rife with obstacles that need to be addressed through further measures and initiatives.

"It has been more than 70 years since our country, even though the Lebanese government inhibited us from working in the most critical fields. I am a pharmacist, and I worked as a seller in a library outside the camp; after a minute or two of conversation has passed, and due to my "well-known" accent, some Lebanese visitors who come to my section sometimes ask my colleagues to assist them, is not a punishment or what?"

(*Sarlina akthar men 70 sane tarkeen bladna wel hookoumi el lebaniyeh manetna neshtoghol, ana darseh saydalaniyeh w betsadgi beshtghel bi maktaba barra, balaii baadhen bas ajawebhen brawho lahada tani laysaedhen mish hada ekab aw laa?*) - Blog No. 7.

"صرلنا اكثر من سبعين سنيتاركين بلادنا والحكومة اللبنانية مانعتنا نشتغول انا دارسي صيدلانيي ويتصدجي بشتغل بمكتبا برا،
 بلاجي بعضهن بس اجاوبهن بروحو لحدنا تاني ليساعدهن مش هادا عقاب او لا؟"

4.5 Challenges of Discrimination in the Residential Environment

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face severe challenges in their residential environments, primarily due to legal restrictions, overcrowding, and deteriorating infrastructure. Lebanese law prohibits refugees from owning property or making legal improvements to existing homes, forcing many to reside in overcrowded, substandard buildings within camps and adjacent informal gatherings (UNRWA, n.d.c). The 12 official refugee camps, initially designed for temporary shelter, now suffer from decades of neglect, with poor sanitation, inadequate sewage systems, and limited access to clean water and electricity (Shaaban et al. 2010). The following table gives an overview:

Table 2: Brief about the Palestinian refugee camps

The camp	Essential info	Major problems
Al-Buss Camp (UNRWA, 2023a)	<p>Established and built by the French government in 1939 to house Armenian refugees, the camp later welcomed Palestinians in the 1950s after the Armenians were relocated to another area. Location 1.5 km south of Tyre.</p> <p>Due to its relatively small size and location, the camp experienced less violence compared to other camps during the Lebanese civil war.</p> <p>Unlike other camps, the presence of a Lebanese governmental hospital necessitates a Lebanese army force in Al-Buss camp.</p> <p>Apart from Palestinian Muslims and Christians, the camp also hosts several Christian and Armenian families, along with Lebanese and Syrian residents. The</p>	<p>The majority of the camp's residents are employed in seasonal agricultural work and construction. They reside in cement brick homes, many of which were built by the refugees themselves. The camp primarily relies on water from the Lebanese state's Litany River Authority, and residents pay an annual subscription to Lebanese villages and cities.</p> <p>Due to the high lime content in the water, it is only suitable for domestic use. Most camp residents purchase drinking water from water refineries, which are not subject to health control regulations.</p> <p>UNRWA operates three schools serving 1,600 Palestinian refugee students, including Palestinians who fled from Syria (PRS).</p>

	UNRWA health center in Al-Buss offers primary healthcare services, attended by an average of 230 patients each day.	
Beddawi Camp (UNRWA, 2023b)	Established in 1955. Location: 5 kilometers north of Tripoli. In 2018, a Joint Security Forces Committee was formed within the camp to address the escalating security concerns. This committee collaborates closely with Lebanese authorities on matters related to maintaining security.	The camp faces numerous infrastructural challenges. UNRWA is responsible for managing all wells and water tanks, and a unified water network has been implemented. The camp's population has steadily increased, primarily as a result of the Syrian crisis, placing considerable pressure on both infrastructure and UNRWA services. Educational facilities within the camp include two elementary schools, one preparatory school, and one secondary school, collectively serving approximately 3,700 students. The UNRWA health center delivers medical care to an average of 560 patients daily. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), particularly diabetes mellitus and hypertension, are prevalent within the population, with 11% diagnosed with such conditions by the end of 2016.
Burj al-Barajneh Camp (UNRWA, 2023c)	Established in 1948. Location: in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Residents: 13,812 inhabitants Events: (UNRWA) commenced its operations on May 1, 1950. School: 4 (for about 2,000 PRL/PRS children).	The haphazard placement of electricity cables has led to several annual fatalities, reaching around 50 cases as of mid-2018. There is no specialized authority for electricity distribution, as there are four networks.
Burj Shamali Camp (UNRWA, 2023d)	Established in 1955. The camp has a main entrance where the Lebanese army has set up a checkpoint. Three UNRWA schools.	The camp experiences severe overpopulation that surpasses its geographical capacity. Household sizes vary, with some families consisting of up to seven members. Residents face a critical shortage of potable water, as the supplied water is often unsuitable for drinking or cooking, compelling them to purchase water from local vendors. In 2008, UNRWA established a comprehensive sewage and rainwater drainage network covering the entire camp. However, the influx of Palestinian refugees from Syria has placed additional strain on the camp's infrastructure and services. Economically, the camp ranks among the poorest in Lebanon, with a notably high incidence of thalassemia and sickle cell disease among its population. Unemployment rates remain exceptionally high, with seasonal agricultural labor serving as the primary source of income for both men and women.

Dbayeh camp (UNRWA 2023e)	<p>Dbayeh Camp was established in 1952. Location: on a hillside overlooking the Beirut-Tripoli highway, on a 61,450 m². There are 1,771 residents in the camp.</p>	<p>The Camp currently lacks an UNRWA school, compelling children to seek education in distant institutions, which many families find financially burdensome. Healthcare services are limited to a part-time clinic operating two days a week, which is often insufficient for the residents' needs, necessitating referrals to hospitals outside the camp.</p>
Ein al-Hilweh Camp (UNRWA, 2023f)	<p>Established in 1948. Location: in the south, near the city of Sidon. UNRWA commenced its operations in the camp in 1952, progressively replacing the initial tents with concrete shelters. Ain El Hilweh is Lebanon's largest and most prominent refugee camp, housing an estimated population of approximately 35,000 residents. Schools: 8. There are two primary healthcare centers within the camp, while secondary and tertiary care services are delivered through a network of contracted hospitals located in Saida and its surrounding areas. The health centers collectively manage an average of 1,000 medical consultations daily.</p>	<p>The security and governance in the camp are the responsibility of Popular Committees and Palestinian Factions, which are in continuous armed conflicts. Walls surround the camp. The camp suffers from structural overcrowding with the waves of PRS who fled Syria. Elementary and preparatory education is offered through a network of seven schools, complemented by one secondary school that also serves students from outside the camp. Together, these institutions educate approximately 6,000 Palestinian refugee students residing in the camp, including those displaced from Syria (PRS). Life in the camp is harsh. Houses are piled on each other, depriving people of sunlight and fresh air. Multiple families, including married brothers, their children, wives, and unmarried brothers, reside in single houses consisting of two rooms. Every available space in the camp has been utilized, even to construct one room. Despite the hardships and overcrowding, the camp's population continues to grow due to ongoing childbirth.</p>
Mar Elias Camp (UNRWA, 2023g)	<p>Established in 1952. Location: in Beirut. Residents: 1,650 inhabitants. The popular committee is responsible for Security and governance in the camp. One health center provides primary healthcare services to the camp's residents. It manages around 680 active family files and receives an average of 50 patients per day. School: 1</p>	<p>One elementary school serves about 230 students.</p>
Mieh w mieh Camp (UNRWA, 2023h)	<p>Established in 1954. Location: south of the city of Saida, extends over an area of 63,000 m². The camp has one school that provides basic education to approximately 474 students. There is one health center in the camp that provides primary healthcare, serving an average of 87 patients per day.</p>	<p>Mieh Mieh camp faces major challenges, including overcrowded housing, poor sanitation, limited healthcare, and overstretched schools. Legal work restrictions force many into low-paying, informal jobs, while recurring security issues exacerbate the residents' hardship and instability.</p>

Nahr al-Bared Camp (UNRWA, 2023i)	<p>Established in 1949. Location: 16 kilometers from Tripoli (northern Lebanon). Residents: 27,000 inhabitants. Events: UNRWA commenced its services for the refugees in 1950. In 2007, armed conflict between the Lebanese army and the extremist group Fatah al-Islam, which was operating within Nahr al-Bared camp, resulted in the displacement of approximately 27,000 Palestinian refugees and the destruction of nearly 95% of the camp's infrastructure. In contrast to other Palestinian camps in Lebanon, Nahr al-Bared has since been placed under the direct authority of the Lebanese government Schools: 7 As of April 2021, the available funding enabled an additional 479 families to return to Nahr Al-Bared camp by the beginning of 2022, resulting in 82% of the camp's population having been able to return.</p>	<p>Due to the conflict between the Lebanese army and Fatah al-Islam, 1,470 displaced families currently remain displaced (homes were destroyed).</p>
Rashidieh Camp (UNRWA, 2023j)	<p>Established: The old section was built by the French government in 1936 to house Armenian refugees who had fled to Lebanon. The new section was constructed by UNRWA in 1963. The camp has one health center through which UNRWA provides primary healthcare services.</p>	<p>The camp lacks a sewage system. UNRWA is awaiting the construction of the municipality's main sewage line to establish and connect a proper sewage system. Recently, efforts have been made to rehabilitate the stormwater drainage and supply systems. The camp has four schools that serve over 2,000 Palestine refugees.</p>
Shatila Camp (UNRWA, 2023k)	<p>Established in 1949. Location: south of Beirut. Residents: 14,010 inhabitants. Events: It was destroyed during the Israeli invasion in 1982 (between 3,000-5,000 martyrs) Part of the land is leased to the (UNRWA), and another part belongs to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). School: 1</p>	<p>Shelters are damp and overcrowded, with many having open drainage ditches. The sewage system in the camp requires significant expansion. The water is so salty and contaminated with chemicals that camp authorities are forced to bring water from outside for bathing and cleaning. Medical Center: One UNRWA health center provides primary health care.</p>
Wavel Camp) (UNRWA, 2023l)	<p>Known as Galilee camp. Established in 1948. Situated in the Baalbek area near the renowned Roman castle in Lebanon's Bekaa region, Galilee camp is among the smaller Palestinian refugee camps in the country. The camp hosts two schools that in total serve around 960 students. Medical services are provided at the camp's health center by two medical officers and three specialists, catering to approximately 170 patients daily, including Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS). Due to the camp's remote location, access to hospitalization services is both challenging and costly.</p>	<p>One of the significant challenges faced by the camp is the lack of potable water. Laboratory tests revealed that the extracted water was unsuitable for drinking, so residents were compelled to purchase water. The Syrian crisis has also led to additional PRS. Both schools face a shortage of available teaching positions due to UNRWA's policy of reducing services.</p>

These conditions significantly impact residents' physical and mental health, particularly youth and the elderly. Additionally, the high population density – some camps have more than 40,000 residents in less than 1 km² - intensifies social tensions and increases vulnerability to fire hazards and disease outbreaks (UN-Habitat, 2019). Without the legal right to improve their living spaces or access equitable urban services, Palestinian refugees remain trapped in a cycle of environmental and social marginalization.

Palestinian camps in Lebanon face extreme challenges due to their high population density and limited space. For example, Shatila camp, which spans approximately one square kilometer, shelters over 12,000 refugees, rendering it one of the most densely populated areas in the region. The camp faces significant challenges, including inadequate sanitation facilities and unregulated construction practices. Additionally, a shortage of building materials exacerbates these problems by impeding essential repairs and maintenance, resulting in structural issues such as wall cracks and insufficient support (Mansour et al., 2025).

Adding to the predicament, the electricity infrastructure in these camps needs urgent attention. Frequently, electrical wires are carelessly installed, posing significant risks to the residents, and are colloquially known as "death wires". The situation is particularly alarming in the Burj al-Barajneh Camp, where a poorly maintained electrical network has contributed to a heightened number of fatalities (RefugeesPS, 2023).

These camps grapple with many interconnected challenges, ranging from overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure to restrictions on critical construction materials. The conditions in these camps not only endanger the well-being of the residents but also underscore the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to address the multiple issues plaguing these marginalized communities.

"The homes all over the camps risk being demolished at any time. We should turn on the lights in our houses during the day if we can afford the electricity fees; otherwise, our homes will be dark. We lose our children and sons since most homes have attached the wire in a hazardous way, leading to death."

(Byoutna bil moukhayamat momken tesgot bi ay waget.lazim ndawi elnoor bil nhar iza gderna nehmel ajar ishtarak el kahraba aw byoutna atma. Am nekhsar wladna besabab sharayet elkarbaba alashwae betmawet) – Blog No. 8

"بيوتنا بالمخيمات ممكن تسقط بأي وقت لازم نضوي النور بالنهار اذا جدرنا نحمل اجار اشتراك الكهرباء او بيوتنا عتمة . عم نخسر ولادنا بسبب شرايط الكهرباء العشوائي بتموت"

Palestinian refugees face dire challenges in Lebanon as they are unjustly prohibited from owning property or houses, severely limiting their prospects for housing rehabilitation and improvement. This oppressive policy robs them of fundamental human rights and condemns them to endure bleak living conditions with little hope for change. The deteriorating infrastructure within the refugee camps exacerbates their plight, as dilapidated systems contaminate freshwater with seawater, leading to elevated salinity levels. To access clean water, Palestinians are forced to purchase it, further burdening their already strenuous daily lives. Moreover, the onset of winter brings added hardships, such as inadequate drainage and a lack of sewage maintenance, resulting in flooding within the camps, inundating homes with rainwater, and exacerbating their already dire living conditions. The situation is further compounded by the layout of the camps, where closely packed houses obstruct sunlight, fostering excessive humidity levels that contribute to respiratory issues and heighten the risk of contracting various diseases

among the community members. The continued neglect of the refugee camps' infrastructure perpetuates a cycle of suffering and indignity for Palestinian refugees, who seek nothing more than a semblance of dignity and basic living standards.

Overcrowding, run-down shelters, and unsanitary conditions in the twelve camps in Lebanon are significant challenges. UNRWA is working on improving shelters for the poorest and most vulnerable families; currently, there are over 6,000 petitions from camp residents. The population increase, along with the arrival of Palestinian refugees from Syria, has strained water supply sources, sewerage and drainage systems, and solid waste management in the camps (UNRWA, 2022).

"My mom, RIP, was Lebanese; she bought our house 25 years ago. When she passed away, the old owner's sons of the property retrieved the ownership of our home since we were not allowed to own properties. Can you imagine that?"

(Oumi allah yerhamha lebnaniyeh ishtarar beit men 25 saneh lamma twaffat, awlad elmalek elgadeem akhado beitnaaaaaa laan ehna falastinyeh malna hag netmallak betsadgeh!) - Blog No. 9.

"امي الله يرحمها لبنانية اشترت بيت من 25 سنة، لما توفت اولاد المالك الجديم اخدوا بيتنا لان احنا فلسطينيي مانا حج نتملك بتصدجي!"

4.6 Challenges of Discrimination in the Security Sector

Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face persistent security challenges, mainly stemming from their marginalized legal status, camp governance issues, and the absence of formal state oversight in refugee camps. Most camps are self-managed by Palestinian factions due to a longstanding policy of Lebanese non-intervention, leading to fragmented authority, weak law enforcement, and periodic outbreaks of armed violence (Shaaban et al. 2010). Armed clashes, particularly in camps like Ain al-Hilweh, often result in casualties, displacement, and the destruction of property, creating a constant state of insecurity for residents (UNRWA, n.d.c). Moreover, the lack of legal protection and limited access to Lebanese judicial institutions exacerbate feelings of vulnerability and impunity, especially among youth. Security crackdowns and stigmatization of Palestinians – frequently associated with militancy – further restrict their movement and deepen mistrust between refugees and state authorities (Knudsen, 2007). These conditions not only endanger physical safety but also undermine social cohesion and mental well-being within refugee communities.

The Lebanese security forces' authority within Palestinian refugee camps is mainly limited to controlling entry points through checkpoints. They generally do not provide broad protection or intervene in internal matters, with exceptions such as the Nahr al-Bared camp, where the Lebanese army successfully repelled extremist attacks. Security within the camps is primarily managed by Palestinian armed factions organized into security committees, which include major groups like Fatah, Hamas, the Popular and Democratic Fronts, Islamic Jihad, the Liberation Party, and At-Tahrir. Although these committees attempt to coordinate with Lebanese authorities, their effectiveness is often undermined by corruption, which negatively impacts their capacity to investigate criminal activities and protect vulnerable populations, including children (Mansour et al., 2025). In addition, various forms of violence, including gender-based and sexual abuses, persist within the camps despite the presence of community-led committees tasked with addressing social issues. These popular committees often struggle to address and prevent such violations due to complex challenges. Moreover, ongoing tensions between the rival factions of

Fatah and Hamas contribute significantly to the enduring instability and unrest within the camps. This is especially evident in camps like Ain El Hilweh, where rivalry between these factions exacerbates existing tensions and fuels a cycle of conflict that hampers efforts to achieve lasting peace and security for the residents.

"Most often, I do not go outside the camp because I am afraid of the Lebanese army at the checkpoints; they search for any prohibited items upon my entry and exit. They do not intervene inside the camp in any case."

(Ktheer men elmarrat ma begder anam aw edhar barrat almoukhayyam, taftesh attalaa welnazleh bifatshoo an mamnouat .malhen dakhil jouwat al mokhayyam.) - Blog No. 10.

"كثير من المرات ما بجدر انامو اضهر برات المخيم تفتيش عالطالعة والنازلة بقتشو عن ممنوعات .مالهن دخل جوات المخيم."

4.7 Coping

Returning to the various strategies outlined in Berry's theory, integration poses a complex challenge for Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon, as they struggle to adopt the cultural norms of the host society fully. This challenge stems from the inherent difficulties in reconciling their Palestinian heritage with the expectations of their new environment.

Despite the obstacles they face in assimilating into Lebanese society, Palestinian refugees steadfastly hold onto their cultural roots, evident in linguistic nuances and deep-rooted traditions that persist through generations. This delicate balance between adapting to their current surroundings while passionately preserving their historical identity highlights the intricate nature of their integration process within the Lebanese context.

Marginalization emerges as a pertinent issue among Palestinian refugees, manifesting as a paradoxical dynamic that underscores their role as both cultural custodians and marginalized individuals. While they actively uphold their Palestinian identity and cultural practices as a form of resistance and resilience, this very commitment to their heritage often relegates them to the periphery of mainstream Lebanese society. This marginalization is palpable in various facets of their lives, from limited socio-economic opportunities to social exclusion based on their distinct cultural markers. Consequently, while Palestinian refugees find strength and solidarity in preserving their cultural heritage, they also grapple with the consequences of being relegated to the margins of society, reflecting the intricate interplay between identity preservation and societal marginalization within the Lebanese context.

5. Discussion

This study explored how Palestinian dialect functions as cultural identity and resistance within displacement and systemic marginalization. It intricately delves into the multifaceted dynamics surrounding Palestinian refugees' accents within the borders of Lebanon, shedding light on how these linguistic nuances intertwine with the Palestinians' sense of identity, social interactions, and economic prospects. The narratives shared by Palestinian refugees vividly illustrate the myriad challenges they encounter within Lebanon's diverse linguistic terrain, where their distinctive accent often becomes a focal point of discrimination and prejudice. Furthermore, the practice of adjusting or concealing their accents among Palestinian refugees serves as a pivotal reflection of their intricate negotiation of self-identity within an environment rife with hostility and suspicion.

Moreover, the imperative nature of altering one's accent to assimilate into Lebanese society serves as a stark reminder of the intricate socio-political complexities that envelop

the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, a sentiment eloquently underscored by Blog No. 1 where the refugee failed in trying to imitate the Lebanese accent, emphasizing this delicate balance. Another participant's remark, "Most of the Lebanese do not welcome our presence, without denying that others believe in the Palestinian cause. I hope they return us to beloved Palestine", points out the oscillating sentiments and the hate speech from the side of the Lebanese populace towards Palestinians, ranging from expressions of sympathy to manifestations of antipathy. This dichotomy further underscores the challenging terrain that Palestinian refugees navigate within Lebanon, where their accents become both a linguistic marker and a symbolic battleground for broader socio-political tensions. Language is used to exclude and marginalize Palestinians, as seen by the importance of linguistic identifiers like *"Bandora"*.

One female participant said, "I try to imitate the Lebanese accent so people will not know I am Palestinian. However, I always mess it up. They can tell. It is humiliating." (Blog No. 1). This quote shows how the speaker feels caught between two identities. Many Palestinians try to sound Lebanese to avoid being judged or treated differently, but they fail, which leads to even more embarrassment.

From a narrative perspective, this story tells us more than just what happens. It shows how the speaker sees herself as different. She wants to fit in but cannot hide who she is. The speaker is not just describing fear or shame; she is telling a story that shows how language, accent, and identity are deeply connected. In this sense, the quote reflects Berry's strategy of "separation": The speaker is trying to survive in a society that excludes her, but her original accent remains part of who she is. Even though she tries to change her pronunciation, her Palestinian dialect still shines through. This shows how her identity is not erased but still present in how she speaks and tells her story.

Similarly, as another participant said, "

"I believe that we, as Palestinian refugees, preserve our culture. As you can see, the NISCVT, other NGOs, and the UNRWA promote our culture through the Dabka program, traditional songs, and musical instruments such as "Garba: Bagpipe," which are our differences. Msakhan and Mouloukhiyi are our unique foods, and we are keen to transfer them to the generations; we could not feel safe outside the camp; in other words, we are stigmatized and never accepted as neighbors of the Lebanese people who are different. Our tradition is different: our weddings are different."

This quote shows the speaker's attachment to the culture and the desire to preserve it, how he insists on the cultural gaps and differences in traditions and foods. Also, the narrative reflects the power of "we" and not "I", which can lead to feeling separated, excluded, and marginalized from the Lebanese community, and matched with Berry's acculturation theory.

Palestinian refugees also claim their language and cultural heritage to assert their identity and oppose assimilation. Palestinian refugees like the speakers of Blog No. 3, Blog No. 4 and Blog No. 7 are dedicated to maintaining and passing on their culture despite their hardships. Berry's concept of separation as a way of acculturation supports this resistance to assimilation, where people keep their cultural identity while coexisting with the dominant culture. The subject goes beyond language to include Palestinian refugees' socio-economic inequities in Lebanon. Lack of education, healthcare, work, and property ownership promotes their marginalization and socioeconomic fragility. Blog No. 5, Blog

No. 6 and Blog No. 8 show how structural impediments prevent Palestinian refugees from integrating into the Lebanese society, resulting in persistent inequality and poverty.

The findings from the study indicate a concerning trend wherein the existing policies and institutions in place lack the necessary efficacy to ensure the adequate protection and well-being of Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon. Additionally, the evident absence of access to essential healthcare services and suitable housing options for Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon sheds light on a deep-rooted issue of systemic neglect and discriminatory treatment within the country's structures and societal attitudes. This collective narrative underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reforms and a concerted effort to address the systemic inequalities and injustices disproportionately impacting Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, emphasizing the importance of upholding fundamental human rights and ensuring fair treatment and inclusivity for all members of society, regardless of their background or ethnicity.

6 Limitations

In terms of limitations, a key limitation of the research is that much of the data emphasized experiences of hardship and marginalization, with less direct focus on the intentional preservation of dialect and cultural identity. This imbalance may obscure the more subtle or everyday forms of resilience and continuity. Additionally, the blogs analyzed were limited in number and scope, potentially restricting the diversity of voices represented and the generalizability of the findings across different Palestinian refugee communities in Lebanon. To conclude, this study shows that dialect remains an embodied form of cultural continuity even when unacknowledged. By exploring stories told through Palestinian speech, this work contributes to understanding how displaced identities are maintained through language, often in silence.

7 Implications

7.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes meaningfully to the development of the acculturation theory by challenging the assumption that strategies like integration or separation are always the result of individual or group choice. In refugee contexts such as that of Palestinians in Lebanon, separation often emerges not from cultural preference but from structural exclusion, including legal restrictions, spatial segregation, and limited access to rights and services. These conditions force communities to retain distinct cultural identities, such as dialect, as a means of resilience and survival. The findings suggest the need for adapted or hybrid models of acculturation that more fully account for power imbalances, institutional barriers, and the role of intergenerational transmission in shaping identity under displacement.

7.2 Policy Implications

The findings hold important implications for policymakers, especially in contexts where displaced populations are systematically denied fundamental rights such as employment, education, and mobility. Host state policies that demand linguistic or cultural integration often overlook the structural exclusions that make such integration unattainable. This research shows that language retention, such as preserving Palestinian dialect, is not a refusal to integrate but a response to prolonged marginalization. When access to rights is

blocked, communities turn to cultural practices to assert identity and maintain dignity. Therefore, genuine integration requires structural change, not just cultural adaptation. Policymakers are urged to adopt rights-based, inclusive approaches that respect and support refugee identities, rather than attempting to erase or assimilate them.

7.3 Practice Implications (NGOs, Educators, Humanitarian Actors)

This research offers valuable implications for practitioners working with refugee populations, particularly in the fields of education and psychosocial support. It highlights that language and storytelling are vital tools for communication and mechanisms for affirming identity and emotional resilience. Cultural practices, including the use of dialect, serve as meaningful sources of pride and continuity, especially in contexts of displacement and exclusion. Programs that promote oral history, intergenerational storytelling, and dialect recognition can foster a stronger sense of belonging among refugee youth. Therefore, education and community-based initiatives should embrace dialect as a living expression of identity and create inclusive spaces where heritage and hybrid language use are celebrated rather than stigmatized. Similarly, social work plays an important role at the mezzo level by supporting refugee groups through integrative approaches that promote social inclusion and access to services (Mansour, 2021). By working directly with communities, social workers help reduce isolation, strengthen social networks, and empower refugees to rebuild their lives. These group-focused interventions are crucial for fostering resilience and advocating for the rights of refugees within host societies.

Moreover, employing a multicultural team within NGOs, INGOs, and GOs brings valuable diversity of perspectives, cultural insight, and linguistic skills, enhancing the relevance and sensitivity of programs for refugee communities. This richness fosters more inclusive, adaptive, and empathetic approaches to addressing complex needs across different cultural contexts.

8 Conclusion

The Palestinians who have sought refuge in Lebanon despite facing immense misery are, unfortunately, often marginalized and estranged from the Lebanese community that initially welcomed them during the joyous occasions of newborn arrivals. However, amidst the joys, they also endure profound sorrow as they bid farewell to their loved ones, who eventually depart, being laid to rest in distant lands far from the sacred soil of their heritage. These heart-wrenching separations intensify the hardships faced by the Palestinian refugees as they navigate the challenges and injustices that continue to undermine their fundamental human rights in Lebanon. Such difficulties are exacerbated by the prejudice that lingers due to their distinct accent, further deepening the sense of stigmatization they endure daily. The involuntary nature of their presence in Lebanon, imposed upon them against their will, pushes many to embark on perilous journeys, risking life and limb in pursuit of solace and freedom from the harsh realities they confront. The passage of seventy-five long years spent in exile only highlights the urgent need for broader recognition and unwavering support for the Palestinian refugees as they strive to reclaim their dignity and rebuild their shattered lives.

Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon face numerous socio-political challenges and marginalization, yet they persist in safeguarding their cultural identity by preserving their distinct dialect. Despite the obstacles they encounter in their host country, they can uphold

their traditions and heritage through the unique language they speak. This linguistic aspect is a vital link to their Palestinian roots and helps them maintain a sense of belonging and unity within their community. By continuously using and passing down their dialect from generation to generation, these refugees keep their cultural practices alive and forge a solid connection to their homeland. Reserving their linguistic heritage among the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon is a testament to their resilience and determination to uphold their cultural identity despite difficult circumstances.

As shown in Blog No. 1, "I try to imitate the accent of the Lebanese citizens; it works with the first two words, and the third leads me to failure, as in the school's exams", the Lebanese dialect is often unfamiliar to many Palestinians in Lebanon. This distinction becomes evident when they speak, especially in interactions with Lebanese nationals. For example, a Palestinian refugee raised in a camp like Ain al-Hilweh may use Palestinian vocabulary or intonation patterns that differ from the Lebanese vernacular, immediately signaling their non-Lebanese origin. This linguistic difference is not accidental but reflects a more profound cultural attachment. Many Palestinians see their dialect as one of the few enduring links to their homeland, especially in a context where they lack legal status, face restrictions on employment and property ownership, and are marginalized from full social integration (Suleiman, 2006). For some, preserving the Palestinian dialect becomes a symbolic act of identity and resistance, a way to maintain dignity and assert a collective memory. Holding onto their dialect is akin to affirming their right of return. As seen in Blog No.2, "Most of the Lebanese do not welcome our presence, without denying that others believe in the Palestinian cause. I hope they return us to beloved Palestine"; it is a daily expression of belonging and solidarity with their history and people (Khaled, 2014).

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