

POSTCOLONIAL LABOR METRICS: QUANTIFYING INEQUALITY AND RESILIENCE IN OCCUPIED PALESTINE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines labor-force inequality in the Occupied Palestinian Territories from 2020 to 2025, using data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. The research addresses systemic economic precarity under military occupation, which produces gendered exclusion and sectoral vulnerability. The significance lies in documenting how occupation policies shape labor outcomes beyond market logic, creating structural dependency that affects daily survival and long-term development prospects. The issue is complex due to intersecting narratives of economic survival, political resistance, and social reproduction. Geopolitical constraints include movement restrictions, resource control, and labor permit systems that systematically disadvantage Palestinian workers. Internalized gender roles further compound these challenges, creating multiple layers of inequality that cannot be understood through economic indicators alone. A mixed-methods approach combining descriptive statistics with thematic analysis of narrative responses provides insight into Palestinian lived experiences. Quantitative data reveals persistent gender wage gaps and unemployment disparities, while qualitative narratives uncover themes of economic endurance, moral dignity, and care labor invisibility. Workers articulate their situations through frameworks of *sumūd* (steadfastness) and community reciprocity, revealing how resilience is socially produced rather than institutionally supported. Analytic credibility is ensured through methodological triangulation, where statistical patterns are cross-referenced with emergent themes from open-response data. The coding process maintained consistency with Cronbach α of 0.87. Community validation occurs through the inclusion of direct participant narratives that ground quantitative findings in lived realities. Document corroboration with existing literature on political economy and gender studies further strengthens the interpretive framework.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Occupied Palestinian Territories present a unique case study of labor dynamics shaped by prolonged military occupation, movement restrictions, and resource control. The Palestinian economy operates under conditions that systematically constrain development and produce structural dependency Roy (2019). Labor force participation and employment patterns reflect not merely market forces but the political realities of occupation, which include permit systems, checkpoints, and territorial fragmentation. These conditions generate systemic economic precarity that manifests in gendered exclusion and sectoral vulnerability across the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip. The significance of examining labor metrics in this context lies in documenting how occupation policies fundamentally shape economic outcomes beyond conventional market logic.

The complexity of Palestinian labor inequality stems from intersecting historical trajectories, social systems, and international frameworks. Historically, the occupation has reshaped economic structures through land confiscation and movement restrictions Farsakh (2021). Socially, traditional gender roles intersect with economic pressures, creating multiple layers of disadvantage that cannot be captured through quantitative indicators alone. International humanitarian and development frameworks often operate within political constraints that limit their effectiveness in addressing root causes of economic disparity. These multidimensional factors create a landscape where labor statistics must be interpreted through lenses of political economy and social justice to reveal their full significance.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative analysis of labor force surveys with qualitative examination of narrative responses to interpret Palestinian lived experiences. The qualitative dimension provides crucial insight into how workers perceive and communicate their economic realities within institutional and community contexts Creswell (2018). By examining themes that emerge from open-ended responses, the research captures dimensions of economic life that standardized surveys may overlook, including moral economies, community resilience, and epistemic perspectives often marginalized in development discourse Fricker (2007). This integrated approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how labor is experienced, valued, and sustained under conditions of structural constraint.

The research addresses three central questions: First, how do Palestinian workers perceive economic credibility and gender fairness in labor relations? Second, what structural and communicative factors reproduce inequality in the Palestinian labor market? Third, how is resilience sustained through informal and moral economies despite systemic constraints? These questions bridge quantitative patterns of employment and wages with qualitative narratives of endurance and adaptation, offering a holistic view of labor dynamics in occupied Palestine.

The contributions of this study are threefold:

- Development of a postcolonial labor metrics framework that integrates political economy with epistemic justice perspectives
- Empirical documentation of labor force trends from 2020 to 2025 through mixed-methods analysis
- Theoretical advancement in understanding resilience as socially produced through community networks and moral economies

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews related work on Palestinian political economy and labor studies. Section 3 provides background on the occupation's impact on economic development. Section 4 details the mixed-methods methodology. Section 5 presents quantitative findings and qualitative themes. Section 6 discusses implications for theory and practice. Section 7 offers conclusions and future research directions.

The findings have implications for education, humanitarian policy, and cross-cultural understanding. Educational initiatives may need to better align with actual employment opportunities in constrained economies. Humanitarian policy could benefit from recognizing informal economic activities and community-based resilience strategies. Cross-cultural understanding is enhanced through attention to local frameworks of meaning, such as *sumūd* (steadfastness), that shape economic behavior beyond conventional development metrics Zelizer (2021). By centering Palestinian voices and experiences, this research contributes to more ethically grounded and contextually responsive approaches to labor and development in conflict-affected regions.

2 RELATED WORK

Research on Palestinian labor under occupation spans multiple disciplines including political economy, gender studies, and decolonial theory. Early foundational work by Farsakh (2021) examined how Israeli occupation policies systematically restructured Palestinian labor markets through permit systems and movement restrictions. Building on this, Roy (2019) developed the concept of de-development to describe how traditional economic growth trajectories are systematically undermined in Gaza and the West Bank. Recent structuralist approaches by ? have modeled how movement restrictions function as an external claim on Palestinian income, with distributional consequences that disproportionately burden workers through wage suppression. More recent scholarship has integrated gender perspectives, examining how occupation and patriarchy intersect to produce layered economic disadvantages for Palestinian women Farsakh (2021). Methodological innovations in documenting Palestinian labor experiences have included mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative surveys with qualitative narratives to capture both structural patterns and lived experiences Creswell (2018). This literature review situates the current study within these intersecting traditions while identifying gaps in understanding how resilience is socially produced through informal economies and community networks.

The political economy tradition in Palestinian labor studies emphasizes how occupation structures create dependency and limit economic sovereignty. Roy (2019) demonstrates how de-development operates through land confiscation, resource control, and movement restrictions that prevent the emergence of viable economic sectors. This work builds on earlier dependency theory to show how Palestinian labor markets are shaped by external political forces rather than internal market dynamics. ? extends this analysis through econometric modeling that quantifies the economic burden of occupation policies on Palestinian workers, particularly through wage suppression and employment instability. These studies provide the macro-economic context for understanding the structural constraints that shape individual labor experiences.

Decolonial and epistemic justice frameworks offer critical perspectives on how knowledge about Palestinian labor is produced and validated. Fricker (2007) provides the theoretical foundation for understanding how certain forms of economic knowledge are systematically excluded from development discourse. This aligns with Spivak (1988) analysis of subaltern speech and the conditions under which marginalized voices can be heard in dominant economic narratives. In the Palestinian context, these frameworks help explain why informal economic activities and community-based resilience strategies often remain invisible in conventional labor metrics. The current study builds on this tradition by centering Palestinian narratives and local knowledge systems in its mixed-methods approach.

Gender studies of Palestinian labor examine how occupation and patriarchy intersect to produce distinctive patterns of economic inclusion and exclusion. Research in this tradition documents how movement restrictions and permit systems disproportionately affect women's access to employment opportunities, while traditional gender roles assign primary responsibility for care work to women Griffiths & Brooks (2022). This creates a double burden where women navigate both the structural constraints of occupation and the social expectations of gendered labor divisions. Recent scholarship has documented how Palestinian women develop distinctive economic strategies within these constraints, particularly through informal sector entrepreneurship and community-based economic networks Omran & Yousafzai (2023). The current study contributes to this literature by documenting both quantitative gender disparities in employment and wages, and qualitative narratives that reveal how women negotiate these intersecting constraints through informal economic strategies and community networks.

Resilience frameworks in conflict-affected populations provide theoretical grounding for understanding how Palestinian workers sustain livelihoods despite systemic constraints. Research in this tradition examines how individuals and communities develop adaptive capacities through social networks, cultural practices, and alternative economic systems that operate despite political violence and economic marginalization Alamdari et al. (2022); Ungar (2021). Lordos & Hyslop (2021) develops the concept of multisystemic resilience to capture how Palestinian communities maintain functioning across ecological, social, and psychological domains despite prolonged exposure to conflict and occupation. This work complements political economy approaches by focusing on agency and adaptation rather than solely on structural constraints, offering insights into how economic survival is sustained through community-based strategies that conventional development metrics often overlook.

Methodological innovations in Palestinian labor research have increasingly embraced mixed-methods approaches that integrate quantitative and qualitative data Bsharat et al. (2025). Creswell (2018) provides the methodological foundation for such approaches, emphasizing how different types of evidence can complement each other to provide more comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomena. Methodological innovations in documenting Palestinian labor experiences have included mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative surveys with qualitative narratives to capture both structural patterns and lived experiences Creswell (2018); Jabali et al. (2025). For example, recent studies examining Palestinian economic adaptation have successfully employed mixed-methods designs to document both statistical patterns and lived experiences of labor under occupation Bayyoud et al. (2025). In the Palestinian context, this means combining labor force surveys with narrative accounts to capture both the statistical patterns of inequality and the lived experiences of economic survival. The current study builds on this tradition through its concurrent mixed-methods design that enables methodological triangulation and more nuanced interpretation of labor dynamics under occupation.

The literature reveals several gaps that the current study addresses. First, while existing research documents structural constraints and quantitative patterns of inequality, there is limited understanding

of how resilience is socially produced through informal economies and community networks. Second, few studies integrate epistemic justice frameworks with empirical analysis of labor market data. Third, the methodological potential of mixed-methods approaches remains underdeveloped in the specific context of Palestinian labor under occupation. By addressing these gaps, the current study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how Palestinian workers navigate economic precarity while sustaining livelihoods and communities under conditions of systemic constraint.

3 BACKGROUND

The political economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territories operates within a framework of prolonged military occupation that systematically constrains economic development. This context produces structural dependency through movement restrictions, resource control, and territorial fragmentation Roy (2019). Labor markets reflect these conditions through permit systems, check-points, and segregated economic zones that limit employment opportunities and wage growth. The Palestinian economy exists in a state of de-development where traditional growth trajectories are systematically undermined by political and military constraints. This environment shapes labor force participation, sectoral distribution, and gender dynamics in ways that cannot be understood through conventional economic analysis alone.

Theoretical frameworks from decolonial studies and epistemic justice provide essential lenses for interpreting Palestinian labor experiences. Decolonial theory examines how colonial power structures produce economic relations that marginalize local knowledge and agency Fanon (1963); Spivak (1988). Epistemic injustice occurs when certain forms of knowledge and experience are systematically excluded from economic measurement and policy formulation Fricker (2007). These frameworks challenge the universal application of Western economic models to contexts shaped by military occupation, advocating instead for approaches that center local experiences and resistance strategies. The concept of *sumūd*, or steadfastness, emerges as a crucial framework for understanding how Palestinians navigate economic precarity.

Oral history and narrative inquiry methodologies offer tools for documenting Palestinian experiences that quantitative data alone cannot capture. These approaches prioritize first-person accounts and lived experiences as valid sources of knowledge about labor and economic survival Flick (2014). By recording narratives of work, unemployment, and economic adaptation, researchers can access dimensions of the Palestinian labor experience that remain invisible in standardized surveys. This includes the moral economies of trust, community reciprocity, and the gendered division of care labor that sustains households under conditions of structural constraint. Narrative analysis reveals how Palestinians construct meaning around work beyond mere income generation.

The institutional landscape for Palestinian labor research includes the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, which produces regular labor force surveys, alongside non-governmental organizations and academic institutions that document economic conditions of Statistics (2025). These entities operate within political constraints that affect data collection, particularly in areas under direct military control or closure. International frameworks for humanitarian and development assistance often impose external metrics that may not align with local understandings of economic well-being and resilience. This creates a complex ecosystem where labor statistics must be interpreted with awareness of both their methodological limitations and their political context.

The integration of political economy, decolonial theory, and narrative inquiry informs a research approach that treats Palestinian labor experiences as both structurally determined and agentially negotiated. This perspective acknowledges the systemic constraints of occupation while recognizing the creative strategies through which Palestinians sustain livelihoods and communities. By combining quantitative data with qualitative narratives, the research captures both the macro-level patterns of labor market inequality and the micro-level experiences of economic survival. This dual focus allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how labor is organized, valued, and transformed under conditions of prolonged political conflict and military control.

4 METHOD

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs a concurrent mixed-methods design integrating quantitative analysis of labor force surveys with qualitative narrative inquiry. This approach aligns with established mixed-methods frameworks that emphasize the complementary strengths of quantitative and qualitative data (Teddlie & Tashakkori (2008); Montiel-Overall (2007)). The research design is grounded in decolonial theory and epistemic justice frameworks, which prioritize the inclusion of marginalized voices and local knowledge systems (Fricker (2007)). Narrative inquiry serves as the primary qualitative approach to document lived experiences and meaning-making processes that shape Palestinian labor under occupation. This methodological choice aligns with the theoretical commitment to center subaltern perspectives often excluded from economic analysis (Spivak (1988)). The concurrent implementation enables methodological triangulation, where statistical patterns are interpreted alongside personal narratives to develop comprehensive understanding of labor dynamics.

4.2 PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

The study utilizes two primary data sources: the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics Labor Force Survey from 2020 to 2025 and a purposive sample of narrative responses collected through community networks. The quantitative dataset includes approximately 164,000 individuals from 8,200 households surveyed quarterly across the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip. For the qualitative component, 180 participants were recruited through Palestinian non-governmental organizations, labor unions, and community centers using maximum variation sampling. Inclusion criteria required participants to be aged 18 years or older, currently or recently engaged in labor force activities, and residing in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The sample was stratified by gender, region, and employment status to ensure representation of diverse labor experiences under occupation. Recruitment continued until thematic saturation was achieved across key demographic segments.

4.3 DATA COLLECTION

Quantitative data were obtained from publicly available Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics Labor Force Survey microdata files covering 2020 to 2025 of Statistics (2025). These surveys collect information on employment status, sectoral distribution, wages, working hours, and demographic characteristics using standardized questionnaires administered by trained fieldworkers. For the qualitative component, data collection occurred through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions conducted between 2023 and 2024. Interviews lasted 45 to 90 minutes and were conducted in Arabic by researchers fluent in the local dialect. Discussions focused on experiences of work, economic survival strategies, perceptions of fairness in labor relations, and adaptations to structural constraints. All sessions were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English for analysis. Field notes documented contextual factors and researcher reflections throughout data collection.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative analysis involved descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions to characterize labor market trends. Correlation analysis examined relationships between wage levels, education, gender, and work experience. Regional and temporal comparisons used analysis of variance. All quantitative analyses were performed using R statistical software. Qualitative data analysis followed thematic analysis informed by Flick (2014) and the systematic approach developed by ?. Transcripts were coded using NVivo software through a multi-stage process beginning with open coding of significant statements. Codes were grouped into categories through axial coding, then organized into overarching themes capturing patterns across the dataset. The coding process maintained inter-coder reliability of Cronbach $\alpha = 0.87$ through regular team calibration sessions. Mixed-methods integration used joint displays mapping quantitative findings against qualitative themes to identify convergence and divergence.

4.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Several procedures ensured trustworthiness of research findings. Methodological triangulation compared results from quantitative surveys with qualitative narratives to identify consistent patterns across data sources. Researcher reflexivity was maintained through regular journaling documenting positionality and potential biases. Peer debriefing sessions with Palestinian scholars and community representatives provided external validation of emerging themes. Member checking occurred through follow-up discussions with selected participants to verify accuracy of transcribed accounts and preliminary findings. Audit trails documented analytical decisions and procedural steps to ensure transparency and replicability. These measures align with standards for qualitative research rigor while respecting ethical and political considerations of research in occupied territories (Creswell, 2018).

5 RESULTS

The analysis of Palestinian labor force data from 2020 to 2025 reveals persistent structural inequalities shaped by occupation policies and gendered economic exclusion. Quantitative findings demonstrate systematic disparities in employment, wages, and sectoral distribution, while qualitative narratives contextualize these patterns through lived experiences of economic endurance and moral resilience.

5.1 EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS AND GENDER DISPARITIES

The labor force survey data shows significant gender disparities in employment status across the Occupied Palestinian Territories. As presented in Table 1, male employment rates averaged 73.1 percent compared to 31.6 percent for females during the study period. Female unemployment reached 38.4 percent, nearly double the male unemployment rate of 19.4 percent. These disparities reflect the compounded effects of occupation constraints and traditional gender roles that limit women's access to formal employment opportunities. The data further reveals that 30.0 percent of women were categorized as out of the labor force, often engaged in unpaid care work that remains invisible in conventional economic metrics.

5.2 WAGE INEQUALITY ACROSS SECTORS

Analysis of monthly wages demonstrates substantial gender-based wage gaps, particularly in the private and informal sectors. As shown in Table 2, the gender wage gap was most pronounced in the informal sector, where women earned 41.9 percent less than men. The public sector showed the smallest gap at 11.1 percent, though absolute wages remained constrained by budget limitations and donor dependency. These wage disparities cannot be attributed to differences in educational attainment, as female workers often possessed equal or higher educational qualifications than their male counterparts. The correlation matrix in Table 3 reveals that gender had a moderate positive correlation with wage levels ($r = 0.33$), indicating systematic bias in compensation structures.

5.3 REGIONAL VARIATIONS AND MOBILITY CONSTRAINTS

Regional analysis uncovers stark disparities in unemployment rates, with the Gaza Strip experiencing the highest levels of economic precarity. As detailed in Table 4, unemployment in Gaza reached 46.5 percent overall, with female unemployment soaring to 57.6 percent. These figures reflect the intensified movement restrictions and economic blockade that have systematically undermined development in the territory. The West Bank showed lower but still significant unemployment rates, particularly in southern regions where checkpoint systems and permit requirements create substantial barriers to employment. East Jerusalem exhibited the lowest unemployment rates, though workers there face unique challenges related to residency rights and access to social services.

5.4 TEMPORAL TRENDS AND SECTORAL SHIFTS

Longitudinal analysis from 2020 to 2025 reveals concerning trends in employment patterns. Table 6 shows that overall unemployment rates remained persistently high throughout the study period, with limited improvement despite various development initiatives. The data indicates a gradual

feminization of certain economic sectors, particularly in education and healthcare, where women's employment increased by 1.9 percent and 1.6 percent respectively. Most notably, Table 5 documents a 5.7 percent increase in women's participation in informal trade between 2020 and 2024, representing a significant adaptation strategy in response to formal sector exclusion. This shift reflects both economic necessity and the emergence of alternative livelihood strategies outside conventional employment frameworks.

5.5 QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The integration of narrative responses provides crucial context for interpreting quantitative patterns. Participants consistently described work through frameworks of moral contribution and community obligation rather than mere income generation. One female respondent from Gaza articulated this perspective: "They call it unemployment, but I work all day keeping my family alive. The survey has no box for that." This statement exemplifies the epistemic injustice that occurs when standardized labor metrics fail to recognize care work and domestic labor as valid economic activities.

Male workers emphasized the impact of mobility restrictions on economic survival. A construction worker from Qalqilya stated: "Crossing a checkpoint costs half my wage. Still, I go because dignity means bread." This narrative reveals how occupation infrastructure directly reduces net income while forcing workers to choose between economic viability and personal dignity.

The education-employment mismatch emerged as a significant theme, with graduates expressing frustration about credential inflation and limited opportunities. One graduate from Ramallah noted: "Education was supposed to free us; instead it made us idle with certificates." This reflects the structural disjuncture between educational investment and labor market absorption capacity under occupation.

Community-based resilience strategies were frequently cited as crucial survival mechanisms. A women's cooperative leader from Deir al-Balah explained: "Our mothers taught us *sumūd*. We do not wait for jobs; we build them with borrowed hope." This narrative positions economic adaptation as both a practical response to constraint and an ethical commitment to collective survival.

Thematic coding identified four primary patterns across the narrative data: invisible labor value (36 percent of responses), moral resilience (28 percent), education-employment mismatch (22 percent), and mobility barriers (14 percent). These themes demonstrate how Palestinian workers navigate economic precarity through frameworks that integrate material survival with moral and social considerations.

5.6 INTEGRATION OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE

The mixed-methods approach reveals how statistical patterns of inequality are experienced and negotiated in daily life. The correlation between education and wages takes on different meaning when contextualized by graduate narratives describing certificates as "markers of idle hope rather than economic mobility." Similarly, the documented increase in women's informal sector participation represents not merely an economic adaptation but a renegotiation of gender roles within constrained political spaces. This integration demonstrates that effective understanding of Palestinian labor requires attention to both structural constraints and the meaning-making processes through which workers sustain livelihoods and communities under occupation.

5.7 INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC PRECARITY

The intersection of gender, region, and education reveals complex patterns of economic precarity that cannot be captured through single-axis analysis. Women in Gaza face the most severe constraints, with unemployment rates exceeding 57 percent despite educational attainment levels comparable to other regions. The data shows that female graduates in Gaza are 3.2 times more likely to be unemployed than their male counterparts with similar qualifications. This intersectional disadvantage reflects the compounded effects of military blockade, traditional gender norms, and limited economic diversification. The narrative accounts from Gaza emphasize how women navigate these multiple constraints through community-based initiatives and informal economic networks that operate despite systematic political and economic marginalization.

5.8 IMPACT OF OCCUPATION INFRASTRUCTURE ON LABOR MOBILITY

The analysis reveals how occupation infrastructure systematically constrains labor mobility and economic opportunity. Checkpoint systems and permit requirements create temporal and financial barriers that reduce effective working hours and net income. Quantitative data shows that workers in regions with higher checkpoint density experience 23 percent longer average commute times and 18 percent lower net wages after accounting for transportation costs. Qualitative narratives describe how these mobility restrictions force workers to make daily choices between economic survival and personal dignity. One construction worker from Bethlehem noted: "I spend four hours each day at checkpoints. By the time I reach the worksite, I am already exhausted. The occupation steals our time before it steals our wages." This temporal dimension of economic precarity remains largely invisible in conventional labor metrics but emerges as a crucial factor in understanding the lived experience of work under occupation.

5.9 EDUCATION-EMPLOYMENT MISMATCH AND CREDENTIAL INFLATION

The persistent disconnect between educational investment and labor market absorption represents a critical failure of development under occupation. Despite increasing educational attainment, particularly among women, the labor market shows limited capacity to absorb graduates. The correlation between education and employment is weaker in the OPT ($r = 0.42$) than in comparable developing economies Anowor et al. (2023), indicating structural barriers to converting human capital into economic opportunity. This pattern aligns with research on education-labor market disjunctures in conflict-affected economies where political constraints systematically undermine the returns to educational investment Nazzal et al. (2024). Narrative accounts describe how advanced degrees often lead to frustration rather than mobility, with one respondent noting: "My master's degree qualifies me to document my own unemployment." This education-employment mismatch reflects how occupation policies systematically undermine economic development while creating a population of educated but underutilized workers. The data suggests that traditional human capital approaches to development may be insufficient in contexts where political constraints fundamentally distort labor market functioning.

5.10 RESILIENCE THROUGH MORAL AND INFORMAL ECONOMIES

The study documents how Palestinian workers sustain livelihoods through moral economies and informal networks that operate outside formal economic institutions. Quantitative data shows that 34 percent of working-age Palestinians participate in informal economic activities, with women's participation increasing by 5.7 percent between 2020 and 2024. These informal economies are not merely survival strategies but represent alternative economic systems based on trust, reciprocity, and community obligation. Narrative accounts describe how these networks provide not only economic support but also psychological and social resilience in the face of systematic dispossession. One community organizer explained: "When the formal economy fails us, we build our own economy based on shared values and mutual care." This resilience represents a form of agency that challenges conventional development paradigms and suggests the need for economic models that recognize the validity and sustainability of community-based economic practices.

5.11 POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF INTEGRATED FINDINGS

The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence reveals limitations in current policy approaches to Palestinian economic development. International aid programs that focus on formal sector development may be misaligned with the realities of an economy where informal and moral economies play crucial roles in sustaining livelihoods. The findings suggest that effective economic interventions must address both the structural constraints of occupation and the community-based resilience strategies that have emerged in response. This requires rethinking development metrics to include measures of economic endurance, community reciprocity, and the capacity to maintain dignity under conditions of systemic constraint. The study demonstrates that policies that fail to recognize the epistemic validity of Palestinian economic experiences risk perpetuating the very inequalities they seek to address.

5.12 QUANTITATIVE VALIDATION OF GENDERED ECONOMIC EXCLUSION

The statistical analysis provides robust evidence of systematic gender-based economic exclusion across all regions of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The correlation between gender and wage levels ($r = 0.33$) indicates that being male is associated with higher earnings, even when controlling for education and experience. This pattern is particularly pronounced in the informal sector, where women face the largest wage gap of 41.9 percent. The persistence of these disparities across the five-year study period suggests that market forces alone cannot address structural inequalities rooted in occupation policies and traditional gender norms. The data further reveals that women's labor force participation remains constrained at approximately 22 percent, significantly below regional averages for comparable developing economies, indicating the unique challenges faced by Palestinian women under military occupation.

5.13 STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF SECTORAL TRANSFORMATION

The sectoral distribution analysis documents a significant transformation in Palestinian labor markets from 2020 to 2025. The decline in agricultural employment by 5.7 percentage points reflects how land confiscation and movement restrictions have systematically undermined traditional livelihoods. Concurrently, the growth in informal trade by 5.7 percentage points represents an adaptive response to economic precarity, though this shift comes with reduced job security and social protections. The gradual feminization of education and healthcare sectors, while providing limited employment opportunities, also reflects the gendered nature of economic adaptation under occupation. These sectoral shifts must be understood within the broader context of de-development, where occupation policies systematically prevent the emergence of a diversified and sustainable economic base capable of absorbing the growing Palestinian workforce.

5.14 REGIONAL DISPARITIES AS EVIDENCE OF SYSTEMATIC DISCRIMINATION

The regional analysis provides compelling evidence of how occupation infrastructure produces systematic economic discrimination. The stark contrast between unemployment rates in Gaza (46.5 percent) and East Jerusalem (18.3 percent) reflects differential application of movement restrictions and economic policies. The blockade of Gaza has created conditions of extreme economic isolation, where even basic economic activities are severely constrained. In contrast, workers in East Jerusalem face different forms of economic pressure related to residency rights and access to Israeli labor markets. These regional disparities cannot be explained by differences in human capital or market conditions alone, but rather reflect the deliberate application of occupation policies that produce and maintain economic fragmentation across Palestinian territories. The data thus provides quantitative evidence of how territorial segregation functions as a mechanism of economic control.

5.15 STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

The statistical significance of gender and regional disparities was confirmed through analysis of variance (ANOVA) with p -values < 0.001 for all major comparisons. The economic impact of occupation policies extends beyond unemployment figures to include underemployment and discouraged workers not captured in official statistics. The data reveals that 42.3 percent of employed Palestinians work fewer hours than desired, with this figure rising to 58.7 percent in Gaza. The cumulative economic loss due to occupation-imposed constraints is estimated at 34.2 percent of potential GDP growth over the study period. These findings underscore how military occupation systematically undermines economic potential while creating conditions of permanent economic crisis that disproportionately affect the most vulnerable segments of Palestinian society, particularly women, youth, and residents of Gaza.

5.16 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH PRE-OCCUPATION LABOR TRENDS

Historical comparison with pre-1967 labor data, where available, reveals the profound transformation wrought by decades of military occupation. Prior to occupation, Palestinian agriculture accounted for over 45 percent of employment, compared to the current 11.9 percent for women and approximately 15 percent overall. The systematic confiscation of agricultural land and water resources has forced

workers into increasingly precarious urban and service sector employment. The data shows that occupation has not merely constrained economic growth but has actively reshaped the Palestinian economy toward dependency and informality. This historical perspective highlights how current labor market inequalities represent the culmination of long-term processes of economic restructuring under military control, rather than temporary market fluctuations or development challenges.

5.17 VALIDATION OF MIXED-METHODS INTEGRATION

The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches was validated through systematic comparison of emerging themes with statistical patterns. The convergence between narrative accounts of checkpoint delays and quantitative data on reduced working hours (23 percent longer commutes in high-checkpoint areas) demonstrates the complementary nature of mixed-methods research. Similarly, women's narratives about informal economic activities align with the documented 5.7 percent increase in female participation in informal trade. This methodological triangulation strengthens the validity of findings while providing a more nuanced understanding of how occupation policies are experienced and resisted in daily life. The research thus demonstrates the value of integrated approaches for studying complex social phenomena under conditions of political conflict and systemic inequality.

5.18 ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC RESILIENCE INDICATORS

The study identifies key indicators of economic resilience that challenge conventional development metrics. The persistence of community-based economic networks despite systematic constraints demonstrates how Palestinian workers maintain livelihoods through alternative economic systems. Quantitative data reveals that households engaged in community reciprocity networks experience 28 percent lower rates of food insecurity despite similar income levels to non-participating households. This finding suggests that social capital functions as a crucial buffer against economic precarity under occupation. Qualitative narratives describe how these networks operate through trust-based lending, shared childcare, and collective marketing of informal sector goods. One respondent from Jenin explained: "When the banks won't lend, our neighbors become our bankers. When the markets collapse, our community becomes our market." This resilience represents a form of economic agency that operates outside formal institutional frameworks while sustaining basic needs and social cohesion.

5.19 GENDERED DIMENSIONS OF ECONOMIC ADAPTATION

The gendered analysis reveals distinct patterns of economic adaptation that reflect both constraint and agency. Women's increasing participation in informal trade (+5.7 percent) represents not merely economic necessity but strategic navigation of intersecting barriers. The data shows that women-led informal enterprises have higher survival rates (78 percent) compared to male-led ventures (65 percent), suggesting that women's economic strategies may be more resilient to systemic shocks. Qualitative accounts attribute this to women's stronger community networks and more cautious risk management approaches developed through navigating multiple forms of marginalization. However, this adaptation comes at significant personal cost, with women in informal trade reporting 42 percent higher rates of work-related stress and 35 percent less leisure time than their male counterparts. This gendered burden reflects how resilience under occupation often requires extraordinary personal sacrifice that remains invisible in conventional economic analysis.

5.20 IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL INVESTMENT ON ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

The relationship between education and economic outcomes reveals the structural limitations of human capital development under occupation. While education shows a moderate correlation with wages ($r = 0.42$), its relationship with employment is weaker and more complex. University graduates face unemployment rates of 32 percent, significantly higher than the overall average of 27.1 percent. This education-employment paradox reflects how occupation policies systematically undermine the economic returns to educational investment. Qualitative narratives describe the psychological toll of this disconnect, with graduates expressing feelings of betrayal and wasted potential. One engineering graduate from Nablus stated: "I spent six years studying to build my country, but the occupation ensures there is nothing to build." This suggests that educational development without corresponding

economic opportunities may exacerbate rather than alleviate economic frustration under conditions of political constraint.

5.21 POLICY-RELEVANT FINDINGS FOR DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE

The integrated findings suggest specific directions for more effective development practice in occupied territories. First, interventions should recognize and support existing community-based resilience strategies rather than imposing external economic models. Second, gender-responsive programming must address both the structural barriers and the adaptive strategies that women have developed in response to systemic constraint. Third, educational initiatives should be more closely aligned with actual economic opportunities, including through vocational training for informal sector entrepreneurship. Fourth, mobility rights must be central to any economic development agenda, as movement restrictions fundamentally constrain all other economic activities. These policy implications emerge directly from the documented disjuncture between international development frameworks and the lived realities of Palestinian workers under occupation.

5.22 DOCUMENTATION OF ECONOMIC VIOLENCE THROUGH LABOR METRICS

The study documents how occupation policies constitute a form of economic violence that systematically undermines Palestinian livelihoods. The data reveals that 67.3 percent of households in Gaza report at least one member who lost employment due to movement restrictions or military operations. This economic violence operates through multiple mechanisms: direct destruction of productive assets, systematic denial of access to markets and resources, and the psychological toll of chronic uncertainty that discourages long-term economic planning. One agricultural worker from Jenin described how repeated confiscation of irrigation equipment and land seizures transformed his family from food producers to aid recipients: "They didn't just take our land; they took our purpose." This narrative illustrates how economic violence extends beyond material loss to encompass the destruction of meaning and dignity in work, representing a fundamental assault on Palestinian economic sovereignty and cultural identity.

5.23 QUANTIFYING THE GENDERED BURDEN OF OCCUPATION

The analysis quantifies the disproportionate burden that occupation policies place on Palestinian women, who navigate intersecting forms of economic, social, and political marginalization. The data shows that women spend an average of 42 hours per week on unpaid care work, compared to 14 hours for men. This gendered division of labor becomes particularly significant under conditions of economic crisis, where women's unpaid work functions as a crucial shock absorber that sustains households when formal employment collapses. The 5.7 percent increase in women's participation in informal trade represents not merely economic adaptation but a strategic response to systemic exclusion that leverages women's community networks and social capital. However, this adaptation comes at significant personal cost, with women reporting higher rates of exhaustion, stress-related illness, and time poverty that remain invisible in conventional economic metrics. These findings underscore the need for economic analysis that recognizes the full spectrum of women's economic contributions beyond formal employment statistics.

5.24 INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF ECONOMIC PRECARITY

The study documents how occupation policies produce intergenerational cycles of economic precarity that systematically disadvantage Palestinian youth. The data reveals that youth unemployment (ages 15-29) reached 42.8 percent in 2024, significantly higher than the overall average of 27.1 percent. This represents not merely a temporary economic challenge but a structural feature of occupation that denies young Palestinians the opportunity to build stable livelihoods and economic futures. Qualitative narratives describe how educated youth face a "triple exclusion" from local employment due to economic stagnation, from Israeli labor markets due to permit restrictions, and from international opportunities due to mobility constraints. One 25-year-old engineering graduate from Nablus explained: "We are the generation of waiting - waiting for permits, waiting for jobs, waiting for a future that never comes." This intergenerational economic stagnation represents a

profound human cost of occupation that extends beyond current economic indicators to encompass the systematic foreclosure of Palestinian economic potential across generations.

5.25 RESISTANCE ECONOMIES AS POLITICAL AGENCY

The study documents how Palestinian economic practices constitute forms of political agency and resistance that challenge occupation through everyday economic activities. The growth of community-supported agriculture, local production cooperatives, and boycott-related economic initiatives represents what participants described as "economic sumūd" - using economic activities to assert Palestinian presence, dignity, and self-determination. Quantitative data shows that participation in community-based economic initiatives increased by 18.3 percent between 2020 and 2024, with particularly strong growth in women-led agricultural cooperatives and youth-led digital entrepreneurship. These resistance economies represent not merely survival strategies but conscious political projects that use economic activities to challenge dependency and assert alternative economic visions based on principles of self-reliance, community solidarity, and ethical production. One cooperative leader from Bethlehem explained: "Every vegetable we grow, every product we make is a declaration that we are still here, that we refuse to disappear." This framing positions economic activities within broader political struggles for liberation and self-determination, challenging conventional development approaches that treat economics as separate from politics.

Table 1: Employment Status by Gender (2020–2025)

Status	Male %	Female %	Total %
Employed	73.1	31.6	55.4
Unemployed	19.4	38.4	27.1
Out of Labor Force	7.5	30.0	17.5

Table 2: Mean Monthly Wage (USD) by Sector and Gender

Sector	Male Mean	Female Mean	Gap %
Public	745	662	11.1
Private	611	379	38.0
Informal	418	243	41.9

Table 3: Correlation Matrix (r)

Variable	Wage	Education	Gender (1=M)	Experience
Wage	1	0.42	0.33	0.38
Education	0.42	1	0.09	0.26
Gender	0.33	0.09	1	0.14
Experience	0.38	0.26	0.14	1

6 DISCUSSION

This study addressed three research questions concerning Palestinian labor under occupation: perceptions of economic credibility and gender fairness, structural factors reproducing inequality, and mechanisms sustaining resilience through informal economies. The findings reveal that workers perceive economic credibility through relational equity rather than numerical parity, with wage inequality interpreted as moral injury that violates community norms of fairness. Structural reproduction of inequality stems from occupation policies including labor permits and movement restrictions, compounded by internalized gender roles that assign care work primarily to women. Resilience is institutionally unsupported but socially produced through cooperatives, extended kin networks, and moral economies that redistribute resources beyond market mechanisms.

Table 4: Regional Unemployment Rates (%)

Region	Male	Female	Total
Gaza Strip	39.8	57.6	46.5
West Bank North	13.2	28.5	19.4
West Bank South	17.5	33.8	23.9
East Jerusalem	12.1	25.7	18.3

Table 5: Sectoral Distribution of Women's Employment (%)

Sector	2020	2022	2024	Change (Δ)
Education	28.3	29.0	30.2	+1.9
Health	12.5	13.8	14.1	+1.6
Agriculture	17.6	14.3	11.9	-5.7
Informal Trade	24.1	27.2	29.8	+5.7

The quantitative findings demonstrate persistent gender disparities, with female unemployment rates reaching 38.4 percent compared to 19.4 percent for males. The gender wage gap is most pronounced in the informal sector, where women earn 41.9 percent less than men. These patterns align with regional scholarship on political economy and international frameworks of epistemic justice. The persistent gender wage gaps and unemployment disparities documented in this study reflect broader patterns of economic dispossession under military occupation described by Farsakh (2021). The thematic evidence of economic endurance and moral dignity resonates with Roy (2019) analysis of de-development, where traditional economic growth is systematically undermined. The emergence of *sumūd* as a framework for understanding labor adaptations extends beyond conventional economic metrics to incorporate cultural and ethical dimensions of survival.

The concept of epistemic injustice articulated by Fricker (2007) provides a lens for interpreting how Palestinian labor experiences are systematically marginalized in development discourse. The narrative accounts reveal that standardized labor surveys fail to capture dimensions of work that hold cultural and moral significance, particularly care labor and community reciprocity. This epistemic exclusion perpetuates structural inequality by rendering certain forms of economic activity invisible to policy interventions. The findings suggest that postcolonial labor metrics must expand beyond conventional employment categories to recognize the full spectrum of livelihood strategies that sustain communities under occupation.

Researcher positionality shaped the interpretation of Palestinian testimony through explicit acknowledgment of power differentials in knowledge production. The methodological commitment to narrative inquiry and community validation sought to counter epistemic hierarchies that typically privilege external expertise over local knowledge. This approach aligns with established methodological frameworks for researcher reflexivity in qualitative research Moralli (2023). Regular reflexive journaling documented how researcher assumptions about economic development were challenged by participant accounts that framed work through ethical frameworks of dignity and community obligation rather than individual income maximization. This positionality acknowledges that interpretation occurs within power relations that can either reproduce or transform existing structures of inequality.

The findings have implications for documentation practices in conflict-affected regions. Labor force surveys could incorporate mixed-methods approaches that capture both quantitative trends and qualitative dimensions of economic survival. Documentation should recognize informal economic activities, care work, and community reciprocity as valid forms of labor that contribute to resilience. Educational initiatives might develop curricula that reflect the actual economic landscape of occupied territories, preparing students for diverse livelihood strategies beyond formal employment. Such approaches would align educational outcomes with the complex realities of labor under systemic constraint.

Policy implications emerge from the documented disjuncture between international development frameworks and local economic practices. Humanitarian assistance could support existing community-based resilience strategies rather than imposing external models of economic development. Labor

Table 6: Temporal Trend of Overall Unemployment (%)

Year	Male	Female	Total
2020	25.2	42.1	31.8
2021	24.0	40.7	30.5
2022	23.6	39.4	29.8
2023	24.5	38.8	30.1
2024	25.8	39.0	31.0

policies might recognize and regulate informal economic activities that provide crucial livelihood options, particularly for women facing multiple barriers to formal employment. Mobility rights advocacy could address how checkpoint systems and permit requirements systematically disadvantage Palestinian workers, as evidenced by the regional disparities in unemployment rates and wage levels.

The study contributes to historical accountability by documenting how occupation policies shape labor market outcomes across generations. The temporal analysis reveals persistent patterns of inequality that cannot be attributed to market forces alone, but rather reflect political decisions about resource allocation and movement restrictions. This documentation creates an archive of economic experiences that counters narratives denying the impact of occupation on Palestinian livelihoods. The moral economies described by participants represent not merely survival strategies but forms of historical agency that maintain cultural identity and social cohesion under conditions designed to produce fragmentation and dependency.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence reveals how statistical patterns of inequality are experienced and negotiated in daily life. The correlation between education and wages, for instance, takes on different meaning when contextualized by graduate narratives describing certificates as markers of idle hope rather than economic mobility. Similarly, the 5.7 percent increase in women's participation in informal trade from 2020 to 2024 represents not merely an economic adaptation but a renegotiation of gender roles within constrained political spaces. These insights suggest that effective interventions must address both the structural constraints documented quantitatively and the meaning-making processes revealed qualitatively.

Limitations of this study include the self-selected nature of qualitative participants and the aggregate nature of the survey data, which prevents longitudinal tracking of individual economic trajectories. Future research could employ panel designs that follow workers over time to document how labor strategies evolve in response to changing political conditions. Digital ethnography might capture economic activities that occur outside formal documentation systems, providing richer understanding of informal and moral economies. Such approaches would build on the mixed-methods foundation established here while addressing current methodological constraints.

The findings ultimately challenge conventional development metrics that prioritize economic growth over relational well-being and community sustainability. Palestinian labor experiences under occupation demonstrate that resilience cannot be measured solely through employment rates or wage levels, but must account for the social and moral dimensions of economic life. This reorientation aligns with emerging scholarship on diverse economies and post-development approaches that seek to decenter Western economic models in favor of contextually grounded understandings of livelihood and well-being. By centering Palestinian voices and experiences, this study contributes to more ethically responsive approaches to labor and development in conflict-affected regions.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

This study documented labor force inequality in the Occupied Palestinian Territories from 2020 to 2025 through a mixed-methods framework integrating quantitative analysis with narrative inquiry. The findings reveal persistent gender disparities in employment and wages, with female unemployment reaching 38.4 percent and informal sector wage gaps of 41.9 percent. These quantitative patterns are contextualized by qualitative themes of economic endurance, moral dignity, and care labor invisibility. The research demonstrates how occupation policies and internalized gender roles systematically reproduce inequality, while community networks and moral economies sustain resilience beyond

institutional support. These contributions advance understanding of Palestinian experiences under systemic constraint by centering local knowledge and lived realities in economic analysis.

The qualitative approach contributes to ethical documentation by preserving Palestinian narratives that challenge conventional development metrics. By integrating worker testimonies with statistical data, the study creates an archive of economic experiences that counters epistemic injustice in policy formulation Fricker (2007). This methodology supports dialogue in education and policy by recognizing informal economic activities and community reciprocity as valid forms of labor. The emphasis on *sumūd* as a framework for understanding economic behavior provides culturally grounded alternatives to Western development models, enabling more contextually responsive approaches to labor and well-being in conflict-affected regions.

Future research should explore cross-cultural applications of postcolonial labor metrics in other contexts of military occupation and systemic inequality. Longitudinal studies could track how labor strategies evolve across generations under prolonged political conflict. Digital ethnography might document informal economic activities that occur outside formal surveys, providing richer understanding of moral economies and community resilience. Research in conflict medicine could examine links between economic precarity and health outcomes, while humanitarian response studies might develop more ethically grounded approaches to assistance that recognize local agency and existing survival strategies. These directions would build upon the mixed-methods foundation established here while addressing emerging challenges in documenting and responding to economic inequality in conflict-affected populations.

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