

The effect of sanctions on social norms regarding violence and atrocities

Sanctions, such as the checkpoint easement in the West Bank, has harmful effect on t social norms regarding violence and atrocities.

Geographic region: Middle East and North Africa

Effect size: Harmful effect ($g=-0.053$)

Confidence in study findings: Low (1 study with 5 effect sizes)

Short summary

Sanctions, such as the checkpoint easement in the West Bank, implemented under the Jenin First Initiative, aimed to alleviate nonviolent repression and its social effects. By reducing movement restrictions, the intervention shifted social norms regarding violence and atrocities. The findings suggest that addressing perceived humiliation and repression reduces support for violence, promotes less militant attitudes, and fosters norms of peace.

Long summary

The intervention

Sanctions, such as the checkpoint easement in the West Bank, targeted movement restrictions, aiming to improve mobility and reduce the daily hardships experienced by Palestinians. Implemented in 2009 as a pilot program, this initiative focused on areas near Za'atara, with neighboring checkpoints like Wadi Nar serving as control sites with no changes.

How the intervention is expected to affect this outcome

Sanctions, such as the checkpoint easement in the West Bank, aim to influence social norms regarding violence and atrocities by addressing perceived humiliation and repression. By easing travel restrictions, the intervention aimed to reduce frustration, restore dignity, and shift attitudes away from violence and militancy. The assumption was that alleviating nonviolent repression would foster a greater acceptance of peaceful political engagement and reduce social acceptance of violent norms.

The evidence base

The cell contains 1 impact evaluation study set in the West Bank.

Evidence findings

The intervention led to a significant reduction in support for violence and militant groups in areas affected by checkpoint easement. Social norms shifted as perceptions of humiliation decreased, fostering fewer militant attitudes and increased support for peaceful political solutions. In contrast, control areas with no changes in movement restrictions saw rising militancy and continued acceptance of violence.

Included studies

Longo (2014) examine the implications of checkpoints and the relaxation of travel restrictions in West Bank. This intervention was called the Jenin First Initiative, spearheaded by a Tony Blair-led Quartet, composed by the United States, the United Nations, the European Union, and Russia, and was implemented in 2009. The plan was to open economic corridors for Palestinian traffic and trade. The study used a natural experiment to analyze the effects of the 2009 Israel decision to ease travel restrictions in the West Bank on Palestinians, with a difference-in-difference estimation model to see the difference before and after the intervention, particularly in Za'atara (treatment) and Wadi Nar (control). The study revealed that the easing of travel restrictions resulted to a significant decrease of support for violence against Israel and produced a more positive perception regarding extremism, which is an indicator of diminished radicalism. Moreover, Palestinians in the treatment group had lesser negative attitudes toward Israel but still showed ambiguous reactions for a two-state solution. The intervention also resulted to the increased support over secular-nonviolent parties (Fatah) over religious-violent ones (Hamas). This study is rated medium confidence as it is a non-experimental study.

Confidence assessment

Overall low: This cell is rated low as it only contains one study.

Other outcomes in the study:

Social cohesion / feelings of trust & acceptance of diversity

Social cohesion / willingness to participate or help