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**Exploring the social dynamics of internment:
An In-Depth qualitative analysis of
human connections in totalitarian
environments**

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Special Issue

**Face Up. Faces from the past. The fight
for freedom and democracy in Albania
during the regime of Enver Hoxha**

A cura di / Edited by

Michele Rabà - Gaetano Sabatini

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Special Issue

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Exploring the social dynamics of internment: An In-Depth qualitative analysis of human connections in totalitarian environments

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Riassunto

Questo studio esplora la struttura sociale degli Stati dittatoriali, concentrandosi sugli internati nei campi di concentramento in Albania. Affronta l'impatto dei regimi totalitari sulle relazioni interpersonali, le sfide nel cercare assistenza esterna e l'importanza delle amicizie intra-campo. Nonostante le restrizioni, persiste il desiderio di amore e legami familiari. I gruppi di sopravvissuti offrono sostegno, ma l'isolamento è diffuso. La comprensione di tali effetti è cruciale per la guarigione e la resilienza delle comunità coinvolte.

Parole chiave

Stati Dittatoriali; Internamento; Impatto Psicologico; Relazioni Sociali; Gruppi di Sopravvissuti.

Abstract

This qualitative study examines the social dynamics within dictatorial states, focusing on the experiences of individuals interned in Albanian concentration camps. It highlights the challenges of seeking external assistance, the importance of intra-camp friendships, the pursuit of love and familial bonds, restricted communication, and the role of survivor groups. The findings underscore the profound impact of oppressive governance on human connections, revealing barriers to assistance, the resilience of interpersonal bonds within internment, and the isolating effects of restricted communication and control.

Key words

Concentration camps; Internment; Social relationships; Dehumanization; Isolation.

1. Introduction- 2. Methods- 3. Results - 4. Conclusion - 5. References - 6. Curriculum vitae

1. Introduction

Background

Post-World War II Albania experienced profound transformations under Enver Hoxha's rule, which lasted until 1990. Hoxha's governance, characterized by strict adherence to communist ideologies, deeply influenced every facet of Albanian society. He imposed an isolationist policy, distancing Albania from both Western and Eastern blocs during the Cold War, exemplified by its withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact in 1968 (Biberaj, 1986). Hoxha's regime, deeply rooted in Stalinist principles, engaged in severe measures to suppress dissent, including political purges, mass arrests, and executions, profoundly impacting individuals across various societal strata (Vickers & Pettifer, 1997).

The internment experiences in concentration camps in Albania were marked by harsh conditions, forced labor, and strict ideological control. Political dissidents, intellectuals, and individuals perceived as threats to the regime were often targeted. The camps served as tools of political repression, where individuals were subjected to physical and psychological abuse. The internment camps played a role in suppressing dissent and eliminating perceived enemies, contributing to a climate of terror. One infamous camp was located in Tepelena, known for its brutal conditions and the internment of political prisoners. The internment experiences in these camps included overcrowded living conditions, inadequate nutrition, forced labor, and constant ideological indoctrination. The exact number of individuals interned and the conditions within these camps are often difficult to ascertain due to the secretive nature of the regime and the lack of comprehensive records. After the fall of communism in the early 1990s, Albania transitioned into a democratic state, and efforts were made to uncover and document the atrocities committed during the communist era.

The death of Enver Hoxha in 1985 marked the beginning of the regime's downfall. Subsequent economic hardships and escalating protests for political reform culminated in the cessation of communist rule by 1992 (Elbasani, 2013). The Hoxha era left an indelible mark on Albania, characterized by political oppression, economic stagnation, and social unrest, laying a complex groundwork for the nation's transition to democracy.

Changes in Familial Bonds

Internment in concentration camps during Hoxha's regime represents a particularly harrowing aspect of this period. These camps, as detailed in the works of scholars like Bernd Jürgen Fischer (1999), were not merely instruments of political control but also arenas where individuals endured immense physical and psychological suffering. Examination of historical documents and survivor testimonies has shed light on the draconian methods employed by the regime. The study of these internment camps is crucial for understanding and remembering the profound impact oppressive governments can have on their victims (Fischer, 1999).

The research by Johnson and Stevens (2018) provides an in-depth exploration of the effects of internment on family dynamics in Albania. Their work significantly contributes to the understanding of how internment can disrupt family cohesion, challenge the maintenance of a shared identity, and complicate the reintegration process post-release. This study illuminates the profound psychological impact of separation and the subsequent stress and anxiety experienced by family members, both during and after internment (Johnson & Stevens, 2018).

A particularly noteworthy aspect of Johnson and Stevens' research is the emphasis on the resilience and coping mechanisms developed by families. This resilience is not only crucial for navigating the immediate challenges of internment but also plays a pivotal role in long-term familial adaptation and strength (Johnson & Stevens, 2018).

Overall, the legacy of Hoxha's regime and its impact on family dynamics offer a complex and multifaceted field of study. This manuscript aims to delve deeper into these aspects, providing a comprehensive analysis of the socio-political and personal ramifications of this period in Albanian history.

Studies on Generational Impact on Families

Lang and Rosenfeld's seminal work in 2004 significantly advances our understanding of how trauma, specifically from internment experiences, is transmitted across generations. Their research delves into the nuances of family dynamics affected by the concentration camp experiences of parents. These dynamics manifest in altered communication patterns, familial roles, and overall family structure. A key observation in their work is how the ineffability of trauma affects familial communication, with many survivors struggling to articulate their

experiences, leading to silences or fragmented storytelling within families (Lang & Rosenfeld, 2004).

The generational transmission of trauma, as explored by Lang and Rosenfeld, is a complex process. It manifests in various psychological and emotional challenges among descendants, elucidating the persistent nature of historical trauma. Their work underscores the importance of understanding these intergenerational effects to fully comprehend the long-term impact of such traumatic experiences (Van Ijzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Sagi-Schwartz, 2003).

Interestingly, Lang and Rosenfeld also highlight instances of resilience within these families. Despite the daunting challenge of trauma transmission, some families develop coping strategies that foster resilience. These include open familial dialogues about their traumatic past, therapeutic interventions, and concerted efforts to break cycles of silence and isolation (Danieli, 1998).

Fischer's 2016 study provides a pivotal exploration of the social dynamics within concentration camps. By analyzing historical records, Fischer unveils the adaptive strategies and formation of informal support networks among inmates, crucial for survival in the extreme conditions of the camps. His findings demonstrate the inmates' resourcefulness, such as barter systems and resource-sharing, highlighting their resilience in the face of adversity (Fischer, 2016).

A significant aspect of Fischer's research is the role of informal support networks, which provided emotional support and shared survival strategies, fostering a sense of community in a dehumanizing environment. This aspect of the research demonstrates the fundamental human need for connection, even under the most severe conditions (Browning, 1992).

Further expanding on coping strategies, Mitchell and Wong (2020) focus on the resilience shown in maintaining interpersonal relationships during internment. Their study emphasizes the role of social support and shared coping mechanisms. In parallel, Ramirez et al. (2018) explore creative outlets and communal activities as coping strategies, highlighting their positive impacts on mental well-being.

Studies on Survivor Networks and Solidarity

Niewyk (1998) and Gutman (1998) have significantly contributed to our understanding of the role played by survivor networks and solidarity post-internment. Their studies focus on how individuals, bonded by the shared trauma of concentration camps, formed supportive networks that offered emotional sustenance and a sense of community.

The formation of lasting bonds among survivors is a central theme in Niewyk and Gutman's research. These networks provided a unique understanding and empathy, often serving as a crucial emotional support system for individuals struggling with the aftermath of their traumatic experiences (Niewyk, 1998; Gutman, 1998). These studies also underscore the role of survivor networks in preserving cultural and communal identity. In the face of trauma, these networks served as a bulwark against the potential erasure of identity, ensuring the continuity of cultural heritage among survivors.

In summary, the reviewed literature underscores the impact of internment on individual and relational psychology. It highlights the complexities of familial bond changes, the intricacies of social dynamics within concentration camps, and various coping strategies. This comprehensive understanding contributes to historical discourse and contemporary discussions on trauma, resilience, and mental health.

2. Methods

To address the aim and objective of the research there were used the qualitative data collection approach through semi structured interviews of survivors' experiences from the labor camp in Savër Lushnjë, in Albania. The research team conducted 27 interviews (21 men and 6 women) designed to explore four main themes related to the survivors' experiences.

Less than 20 years of internment were experienced by only 2 of the interviewees, while 10 of the interviewees experienced internment for 20-30 years, and another 10 interviewees experienced internment for 31-40 years. Only 5 of the interviewees experienced internment for more than 40 years. Regarding the age of internment, 12 interviewees were born in the labor camps and experienced internment for less than 1 year. 11 interviewees were between the ages of 1-10 during their internment, and 4 interviewees were over 10 years old during internment. As for education pursued during internment, only 1 interviewee completed elementary education, while 9 interviewees completed 8-year education, and 17 interviewees completed middle school education. No interviewee pursued higher education during internment. Regarding pursuing of education after leaving the camps, only 5 interviewee's pursued education while 22 did not. Finally, in terms of the completed education level after leaving the camps, 1 interviewee completed elementary education, 9 completed 8-year

education, 12 completed middle school education, and 5 completed higher education.

The interview format was revised multiple times by the researchers, reviewed and approved by the Ethic Committee for Research, and adapted into Albanian to ensure cultural appropriateness and understanding for the survivors. Participants were contacted prior to the interviews and informed of the study's purpose, methodology, research questions, and expectations. The interviews were conducted face-to-face or via Zoom and lasted on average more than two hours. The interviews were recorded and transcribed into Albanian, and a summary was provided in English. The transcripts were analyzed by coding and categorization, and the data were interpreted in light of the research objectives, using theoretical frameworks or concepts.

Overall, the use of a semi-structured interview format allowed the participants to share their experiences in a comfortable and natural way, resulting in rich and detailed information that provided insight into the experiences of survivors from the labor camp in Savër Lushnjë. The study's methodology and data collection process were designed to ensure the collection of reliable and comprehensive information from survivors.

3. Results

The interviewee's reflections provide profound insights into the multifaceted dimensions of life during internment.

Limited External Assistance during Internment

The harsh reality of receiving limited external assistance during internment paints a picture of isolation and vulnerability from the interviewer's perspective. The oppressive regime's strict surveillance and treatment created a formidable barrier, making external support a risky endeavor.

The constant monitoring and intrusive measures of the surveillance system posed significant challenges for individuals outside the internment to provide meaningful help. The restrictive environment not only confined the movements of those interned but also instilled widespread fear beyond the camp. People willing to offer assistance, aware of the potential risks they faced, found themselves caught

in a difficult situation, torn between doing what they believed was right and fearing the consequences. As one interviewee expressed:

Zero contact with us. They were afraid. They started coming in 1991. But since they started coming in '91, I didn't agree to be close. I tried to stay away from everyone".
"No, no, there wasn't. With those who were inside Albania, they were afraid to come and we were afraid to go. The contact had remained dead. There was no contact (...)

People outside the internment camps faced a tough choice - whether to help or protect themselves. Offering assistance could lead to being socially isolated or facing punishment from the authorities. The widespread fear created by the oppressive regime affected everyone, making it hard for outsiders to decide what to do.

The lack of external help wasn't just because of practical issues; it also showed how difficult it was for people outside the internment to help. The persons being interviewed talked about the challenge of wanting to help while also needing to stay safe. Helping those inside the internment could bring serious consequences, similar to the tough conditions within the camp.

Formation of Friendships within the Internment Community

The time in internment was a tough test that brought the community together, showing how important friendships were for comfort during hard times. For those who were interned, friendships became powerful sources of support, giving emotional help and a feeling of togetherness in the face of difficulties.

In the difficult and oppressive conditions of internment, where people dealt with both physical limitations and mental hardships, friendships became a source of strength. These connections went beyond the restrictions imposed by authorities, providing a sense of normalcy and humanity in an otherwise degrading environment. Friendships within the group of those interned became a way for everyone to help each other, making it easier to handle the challenges of being isolated and uncertain about the future. As one person being interviewed pointed out:

We had a kind of solidarity; we all suffered the same injustices, so, in that sense, we got along so well. It is truly exemplary how there were absolutely no complaints. I remember that we sometimes discussed, and even the adults considered the young girls as sisters because there were young girls that I said I was very young, but I

listened to those cousins who said that there was never any incident or anything immoral. It is surprising what solidarity was there in the internment camp, especially in the slum where we were forced to live inside a square there.

Of course, I said, the best food has been that familiarity with each other. Helping each other, solidarity with each other has been the main support, even in the formation of our character.

The isolation imposed by the regime's surveillance and persecution made the friendships formed within the interned community even more important. These internal bonds weren't just emotional support; they also became a way to resist the isolating tactics of the oppressive regime. The person being interviewed highlighted how these friendships had a deep impact, describing them as crucial threads weaving through the fabric of resilience, solidarity, and shared humanity within the internment experience.

Challenges and Resilience in Marriage Bonds during Internment

During internment, people actively sought companionship and formed marriage bonds as acts of resistance in a challenging environment. Despite facing adversity, those within the internment not only sought emotional connections but also committed to establishing marriages.

The pursuit of companionship and marriage in such circumstances reflects the unyielding human spirit's desire for normalcy and connection. Faced with oppressive conditions, people resisted the dehumanizing effects of internment by embracing the fundamental human need for love and companionship. Marriage, symbolizing commitment and shared resilience, became a tangible expression of defiance against the stifling environment.

(...) high school girls, for example, knew we were interned. Although they liked a boy or a girl, they were still afraid of the consequences. There were consequences. If you were to fall in love with an interned boy, there would be consequences if the family found out. So, in this respect too, you were deprived, you were deprived. While, among the girls of the camp, this does not happen with each other. A very rare phenomenon because we considered them to be part of a family (...).

One person's story illustrates the challenges faced during this pursuit. A threat from an operative made the interviewee reconsider his choices, emphasizing the difficulties individuals encountered in their pursuit of love and connection.

Despite such challenges, people persisted in their efforts to find companionship, showcasing the enduring nature of the human spirit.

Authorities, recognizing the potential threat posed by independent individuals, sometimes manipulated marriage as a means of control. Understanding that strong family units could harbor dissent, the regime strategically used marriage to exert influence and monitor those within the internment. Marriage, which could have been an act of personal agency and defiance, was at times forced into becoming a tool for the authorities to tighten their control on individuals and families.

The tension between the genuine pursuit of companionship and the authorities' manipulation of marriage adds complexity to the internment narrative. The interviewee's account reveals the resilience embedded in seeking connection, even as external forces tried to exploit this fundamental aspect of human experience for their own purposes. In the face of such challenges, marriage bonds within the internment emerged as both acts of personal defiance and arenas where the struggle for agency and autonomy played out against a backdrop of oppression.

I can tell this as the story of my life, that my first love of life was impossible and ended up being impossible. Because the girl was on the other side. One day, an operative comes to me, I was below the bridge fishing, he was above, and his shadow fell on me in the water where I was fishing. My blood froze because I said he came to deport me, to put me in prison. He told me what are you doing? I told him I was fishing. What fish? Chinese. He threatened me: "Who told you it's a Chinese fish? I told him: "People say that I don't... "He said: "How about love?" I said nothing, pretending I didn't know anything. "For your own good, let me tell you, find your category and let the girl go, I will be the one who will send you to prison for 10 if you don't let her go". All hope was cut off there and I had to find my category to marry". "Yes, human nature does not change. Man will rejoice, laugh, cry, in whatever environment he lives. It is within human nature, in those days we were very young, I got married at 21 years old, I became a father at 21 years old.families were created between each other..... Families were created under those conditions, they did their best to force you to get married, so that you would be more controlled, more secure, so that you would have a weight on your back, you would not have the opportunity, we are talking about leaving the country, they did their best to make it easy for you to get married, so that they could torture you more easily, to torture you more, being single, being independent, one is told not to be rude, and when you have a family, responsibilities increase. They knew this aspect well and did their best to create families, to create opportunities to torture them more".

Limited Contact with External People during Internment

The internment experience unfolded as a chapter marked by limited interaction with people outside, revealing a poignant tale of severed connections and the constant impact of danger and surveillance.

Communication with the outside world declined due to the ever-present threat of danger and the watchful eyes of the oppressive regime. The interviewers vividly describe the challenges in maintaining meaningful connections beyond the internment camp. Interpersonal relationships strained as external communication became a delicate balance between the desire to connect and the fear of consequences.

Even individuals outside who sympathized with those interned found themselves attentive in the web of fear created by the oppressive regime. The pervasive surveillance tactics turned every act of support or communication into a risky endeavor. As a result, the minimal support from external individuals reflected the delicate balancing act they had to perform between their empathetic feelings and the fear of reprisals.

This was with permission to say about the people outside; very few visited us because the fear was great, not for us but for them, that we had defined ours, the fear part was gone.

No, no, I haven't kept in touch with my friends, the place where I ran away...I'll say something: From the place I ran away from, I never say where I'm from. I never say where I'm from, because those people in that country have influenced to harm us. Maybe forced, yes...that's my impression.

The interviewee's story emphasizes the profound challenges in maintaining connections with the world beyond internment, where even sympathetic individuals faced the harsh realities of navigating a landscape filled with fear and uncertainty. The minimal external contact isn't just a logistical constraint but a testament to the far-reaching impact of oppressive forces, leaving a lasting mark on interpersonal relationships.

The interviewer's observation sheds light on a notable aspect of the dynamics between those who were interned and those who were not. Despite shared backgrounds, growing up together, attending school together, and engaging in common activities, a sense of animosity seemed to permeate from those not interned toward their counterparts.

The statement suggests that some individuals outside the internment, influenced by their parents' perspectives or party affiliations, exhibited unfriendly behavior towards their peers who experienced internment. The observation implies that there was a conscious effort by some not interned to create a divide, perhaps fueled by external narratives or political influences.

Interestingly, the interviewee points out that despite facing conflict and adversity, those who were interned did not harbor any hatred toward their counterparts. This sentiment reflects a contrasting resilience and maturity on the part of those who experienced internment, highlighting a divergence in attitudes and responses to challenging circumstances.

In examining this aspect, it becomes apparent that the effects of political ideologies and external influences extended beyond the confines of the internment experience, shaping interpersonal dynamics and attitudes even among individuals who shared common histories. The observation adds a layer of complexity to the broader societal impact of political events, emphasizing the importance of understanding the nuanced relationships between different segments of a community during challenging times.

Most of them, to be honest, were not well behaved. Despite the fact that we worked closely with each other. But they knew that the more they misbehaved with us, the more sympathy they gained from the party. Although we were the same age, grew up together, went to school together, played ball together, their parents fed them that hatred. While the conflict happened to us, we did not have any hatred for them.

Participation in Social and Cultural Activities during Internment

The internment experience unfolds as a story of exclusion, where individuals within the camp were forcibly removed from the vibrant fabric of societal activities. The pervasive control imposed by oppressive regimes acted as a stifling force, limiting the opportunity for legal participation and contributing to a sense of cultural detachment and exclusion.

From the interviewee's perspective, those interned were pushed to the sidelines of societal engagement. The absence of legal participation in social and cultural activities became a stark reality, underscoring how the oppressive regime aimed to control not just physical movements but also cultural and social interactions within the internment camp.

The interviewers share insights into the challenges faced during internment, emphasizing how the community creatively navigated restrictions to maintain some sense of normalcy. Despite limitations, private sports activities like ball games, chess, and dominoes provided moments of relief after work. However, organized activities, such as spartakiadas, were prohibited due to membership restrictions, adding another layer to the experiences of exclusion.

(...) During the summer holidays, boys from L (...) who worked there, girls from L (...), also from K(...), and from the cooperatives came. Even when the holidays came, we created... they did not behave badly and we were so close that some were surprised when I told them that I was interned. Always when they came, even when I got married, there were people who came and helped me with food like: cheese, meat, salami etc (...). This was the youth of those years '77-'80. They began to understand what the communist regime was and what freedom was"

We used to do private sports activities. After we finished work, we mostly played ball. Or a game of chess, dominoes, to get through dinner, so we could get dark and go home. And organized activities, such as the spartakiadas that took place at that time, did not allow us because they all had to be members of the front, members of the youth.

The interviewers also touches on the impact of cultural events like cinematographic films. Despite being able to attend public cinemas, the fear of ridicule or manipulation through propaganda films created a constant undercurrent of anxiety during these cultural experiences.

(...) when these cinematographic films came to be shown, the ones that were public cinemas, they couldn't stop us there because the whole community would enter. But I will always, always be under the pressure that someone is laughing at me from behind. I remember when it came out, Qazim Mullet's comedy (...) they came and showed how to discredit the Mulleti family, but what had Qazim Mullet been, he had not stained his hands with blood, he had not killed anyone, no. He was a prefect, he was subjected to the laws of that period, as we subjected you to the laws of today's politics, you will not accept that legal amendment, or political strategy presented by the event or the other. So, it was very serious, or when these films with saboteurs were shown, we were always afraid that they would laugh at us.

For those enduring internment, the vibrant array of societal activities, integral to cultural identity, became a distant reality. Exclusion from these activities not only created a void in daily lives but also fostered a profound sense of cultural

detachment. The absence of legal participation in societal activities, as depicted in the internment narrative, is not just a logistical constraint but a deliberate strategy of the oppressive regime to isolate and control. This exclusion becomes a poignant chapter in the internment story, contributing to the multifaceted impact of oppressive regimes on the social and cultural dimensions of individual experiences. Despite the challenging circumstances of internment, recreational activities, particularly sports like football, played a significant role in providing entertainment and a sense of purpose.

The mention of a talented team underscores the existence of diverse talents within the internment camp. It suggests that the community was not only resilient but also rich in various skills, extending beyond sports to areas like music. However, a poignant aspect emerges when the speaker notes that despite the abundance of talent in various fields, these activities were deprived and forbidden. The restriction was imposed due to biographical reasons, possibly referring to the political background or affiliations of individuals within the internment.

The interviews illustrated how even in the pursuit of joy and meaning through shared activities, external factors and restrictions imposed by authorities could limit the full expression of talent and potential. It underscores the ongoing impact of political circumstances on the daily lives and aspirations of those experiencing internment, highlighting the resilience and creativity of the community in finding outlets for expression and connection despite the limitations imposed upon them.

Look, one tries, as I said, to give meaning to life. We, especially when you are young, our entertainment was ball, football. We also had a very good team. There was some talents in S(...).t, the youth of the camp. There were talents, different talents, not only in football...but we couldn't dream of a career as they had a bad biography. We had talents in football, volleyball, table tennis, all kinds of sports, music. However, everything was deprived, forbidden. You could not go further because of the biography.

Limited Participation in Family Events during Internment

The internment narratives reveal a poignant path in the limited participation of individuals within the camp in family events. What might have initially been considered a basic human right gradually transformed into a diminishing privilege, portraying a stark picture of missed joys and shared sorrows.

The interviewer's account captures the changing nature of permission to participate in family events. Initially, there might have been some flexibility, an

acknowledgment of the human need for connection and shared moments. However, over time, this flexibility gave way to unyielding restrictions imposed by the oppressive regime. The privilege of participating in family events became increasingly restricted, creating a narrative of missed opportunities and collective experiences that were either diminished or altogether absent.

“If one of the persecuted died, all of us who were persecuted would join the funeral, but nobody from the neighborhood across the street would come. It’s not that they didn’t want to, but they were just as scared as we were. If someone from their side passed away, we couldn’t go, even though I really wanted to because the person who died was a communist and had love and respect in their soul. But I couldn’t go. (...) And let me share a story that sums it all up. The little son of someone from the neighborhood across the street had passed away, and they were buried in the shared cemetery in K(...). When they were burying him, his father saw the name on the grave next to his son’s. That person had also been persecuted. In front of everyone, the father said to his son, ‘Ah, the desert, I took a son close to whom they are putting you in.’ Meaning, even in death, we will still be separated. That’s the tragedy of it. It means that even there, when they die, we will be segregated”.

The interviewers emphasize the difficulties faced during funerals, where even expressing condolences became a delicate task due to the pervasive fear within the community. The evolving restrictions on participation in family events add to the overall theme of isolation within the internment experience. What might have started as a controlled limitation gradually intensified, heightening the sense of isolation felt by individuals in the internment camp.

The interviewers underscore the profound impact of these restrictions on the fabric of familial relationships, as the ability to take part in significant life events became a diminishing privilege. This echoes the broader theme of limited agency under oppressive regimes, where even family bonds are subject to the constraints of authority, contributing to a collective sense of isolation and loss.

The limited participation in family events not only highlights the personal toll on individuals within the internment camp but also serves as a small-scale representation of the broader societal impact of oppressive regimes. Even familial bonds are subject to the constraints of authority, adding to a shared sense of isolation and loss within the internment experience.

The interviews describe a clear boundary that existed between those who were interned and those who were not. There was a mutual desire to keep a distance,

both from the interned individuals and those outside the internment. This created a distinct separation, with neither group wanting to mix or engage with the other on a personal level.

Despite this mutual desire for separation, the interviewees affirmed that a form of friendship existed when it came to work. The necessity of working closely with each other facilitated a professional or task-oriented camaraderie. Engaging in sports activities like ball games, football, or volleyball also provided an avenue for interaction, but these interactions were limited to specific contexts.

However, the boundary remained intact when it came to home visits. The interviewees emphasize that even though there might have been shared activities in certain environments, the separation was maintained during personal visits to each other's homes.

“Look, no, we didn't want them to come to us. But even they did not want to fall to us. So, we had a boundary with each other. That friendship went to work, because we worked closely with each other. Some ball game, football or volleyball with each other, but that's it. Not for home visits, for home visits we were separated”.

This description reflects the complexities of social dynamics during challenging times, where external circumstances contribute to the creation of boundaries and limitations in interpersonal relationships. Despite the shared activities, the separation in personal spheres suggests a division that persisted even in moments of recreation and collaboration, underscoring the impact of external factors on community dynamics.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the narratives shared by individuals who experienced internment under oppressive regimes paint a nuanced picture of resilience, challenges, and the complex interplay of relationships within and outside the internment camp. The limitations on external assistance, the pivotal role of friendships, the pursuit of love and family bonds, the restricted participation in societal and familial events, and the delineation between those interned and those outside collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the human experience in such challenging circumstances.

The stories highlight the profound impact of political ideologies and oppressive regimes on shaping not only the physical but also the emotional and social landscapes. The boundaries and limitations imposed by authorities permeated various aspects of life, influencing not just individual actions but also the dynamics of friendships, family relationships, and community interactions.

Despite facing adversity, individuals within the internment exhibited resilience, finding creative ways to connect and seek meaning in shared activities such as sports and recreation. However, the persistent restrictions, even in these seemingly neutral spaces, underscore the extent to which external factors continued to shape and constrain interpersonal relationships.

The delineation between those interned and those outside, as described by the interviewers, further emphasizes the lasting impact of political circumstances on community dynamics. Even in shared activities and professional settings, a clear boundary existed, reflecting a mutual desire for separation that persisted even during moments of collaboration.

The challenges in providing external assistance during internment unveil the isolating effects of oppressive regimes. The dilemmas faced by external individuals underscore the moral quandaries experienced by those sympathetic to the plight of those interned (Johnson & Stevens, 2018).

Friendships within the internment community emerge as vital sources of support, countering the dehumanizing impact of oppressive conditions. The futile attempts to connect with external individuals emphasize the isolating impact of constant monitoring and persecution (Fischer, 2016).

The pursuit of companionship and marriage within the internment becomes an act of defiance against the oppressive environment (Lang & Rosenfeld, 2004). Authorities' occasional manipulation of marriage as a means of control adds complexity to the struggle for personal agency (Johnson & Stevens, 2018).

The narrative of limited external contact reflects the pervasive impact of constant danger and surveillance on interpersonal relationships (Fischer, 2016). The fear of repercussions faced by external individuals in providing support mirrors the broader atmosphere of intimidation.

Studies by Niewyk and Gutman illuminate the instrumental role of survivor networks in providing emotional support and preserving identity (Niewyk, 1998; Gutman, 1998). These networks become resilient threads weaving through the fabric of communal strength, countering the isolating tactics of the oppressive regime.

The exclusion from societal activities illustrates the far-reaching control exerted by oppressive regimes (Fischer, 2016). The diminishing privilege of participating in family events encapsulates the erosion of personal agency within the internment experience (Johnson & Stevens, 2018). The transition from initial flexibility to unyielding restrictions amplifies the overarching sense of isolation endured by individuals (Fischer, 2016).

In synthesizing these themes, it becomes evident that internment is not merely physical confinement but a complex interplay of psychological, emotional, and societal dynamics. The interviewee's narrative, combined with scholarly insights, provides a holistic understanding of the enduring impact of oppressive regimes on the intricate tapestry of human relationships and identity. The discussion underscores the imperative of acknowledging and addressing the profound consequences of internment on individuals and communities as they navigate the path toward healing and resilience.

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6. Curriculum vitae

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