



Beyond borders: Investigating the impact of the 2023 Conflict in Gaza on generalized anxiety disorders and associated somatic symptoms and well-being among the Kuwait population: A global call for public intervention programs

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Introduction

- Conflicts between countries inevitably result in widespread human suffering, impacting families, health, the economy, and the environment.
- The effects of conflicts on health can include both physical and psychological harm to civilian populations within the conflict zone (1, 2).
- However, the impact of conflicts on health-related issues in populations outside the conflict zone remains to be investigated.

Introduction



Purpose of the Study

- Generalized anxiety disorder, associated somatic symptoms, and well-being were examined among the Kuwait population during the Gaza Conflict in 2023, in addition to exploring the provoking factors.



Methods

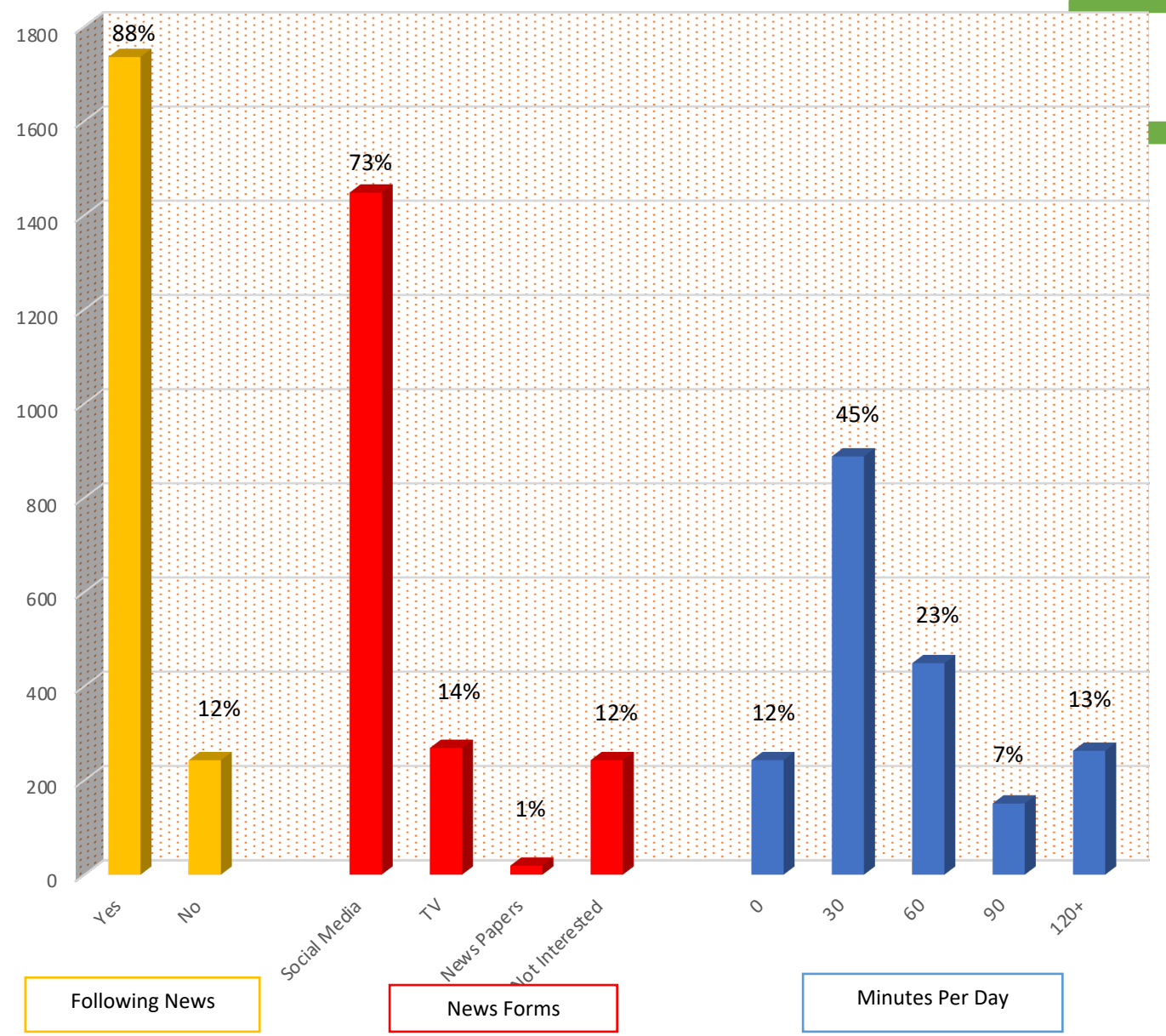
- A descriptive, correlational cross-sectional design was used in this study.
- An online survey was conducted to collect information from people living in Kuwait during the Gaza Conflict.
- Data were collected between November 20 and November 27, 2023.
- The generalized anxiety disorder scale (GAD-7), a modified patient health questionnaire (mPHQ-15), and the World Health Organization - Five (WHO-5) were used to examine self-reported anxiety, somatic symptoms, and well-being among the study participants.

Results

- 1979 participated in the study.
- Participants' descriptive statistics on GAD-7, PHQ-15, and WHO-5.

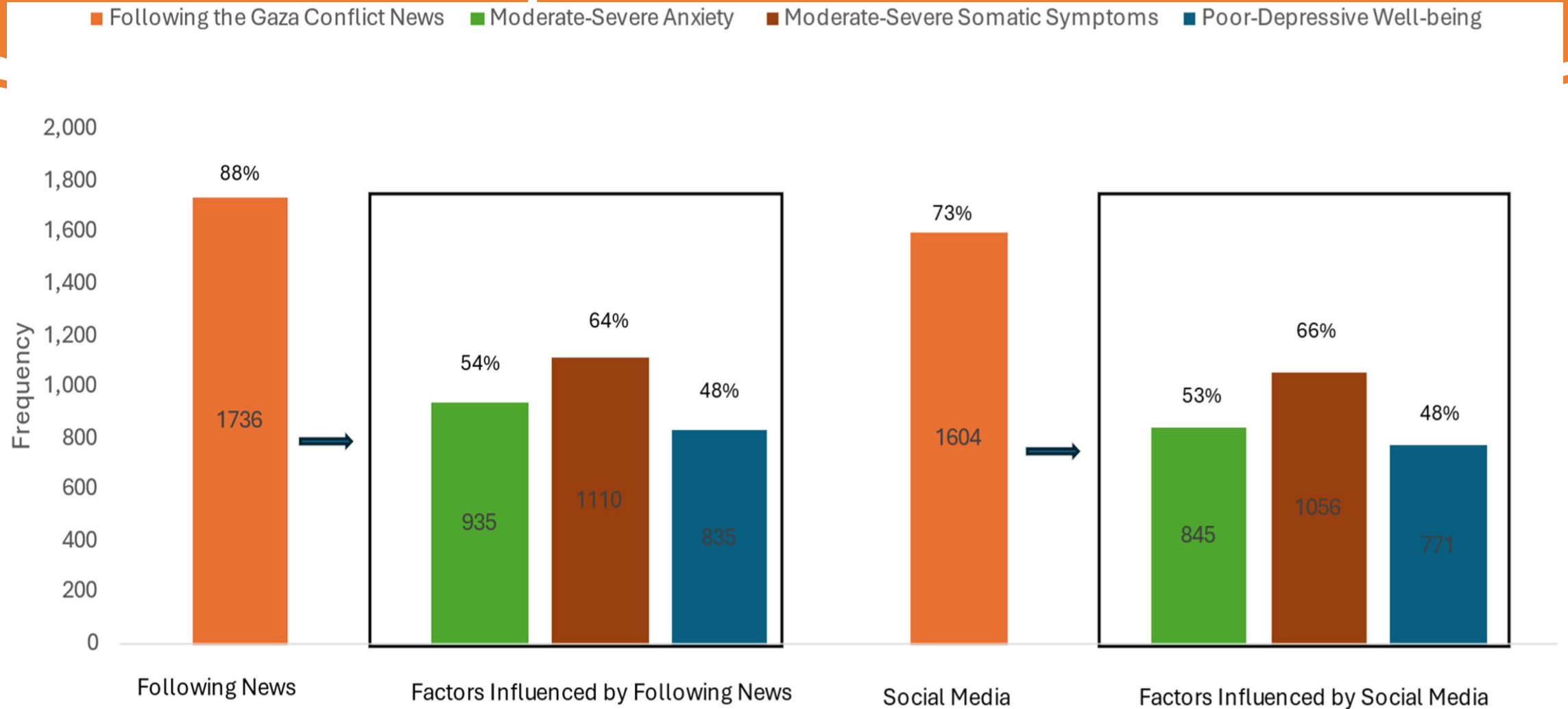
| | Freq. | % | $\mu \pm$ | |
|---|--------------|----------|-----------------------------|----------|
| GAD-7 | | | 10.20±4.48 | Moderate |
| Minimal (0-4) | 220 | 11 | | |
| Mild (5-9) | 740 | 37 | | |
| Moderate (10-14) | 649 | 33 | | |
| Severe (15-21) | 370 | 19 | | |
| mPHQ-15 | | | 11.12±6.39 | Moderate |
| Minimal (0-3) | 312 | 16 | | |
| Mild (4-8) | 409 | 20 | | |
| Moderate (9-13) | 492 | 25 | | |
| Severe (14-28) | 766 | 39 | | |
| WHO-5 | | | 53.35±21.82 | Fair |
| Depressed (≤ 28) | 289 | 15 | | |
| Poor (29-50) | 628 | 32 | | |
| Fair (51-70) | 554 | 28 | | |
| Good (71-85) | 401 | 20 | | |
| Excellent (86-100) | 107 | 5 | | |

Following The Gaza Conflict News

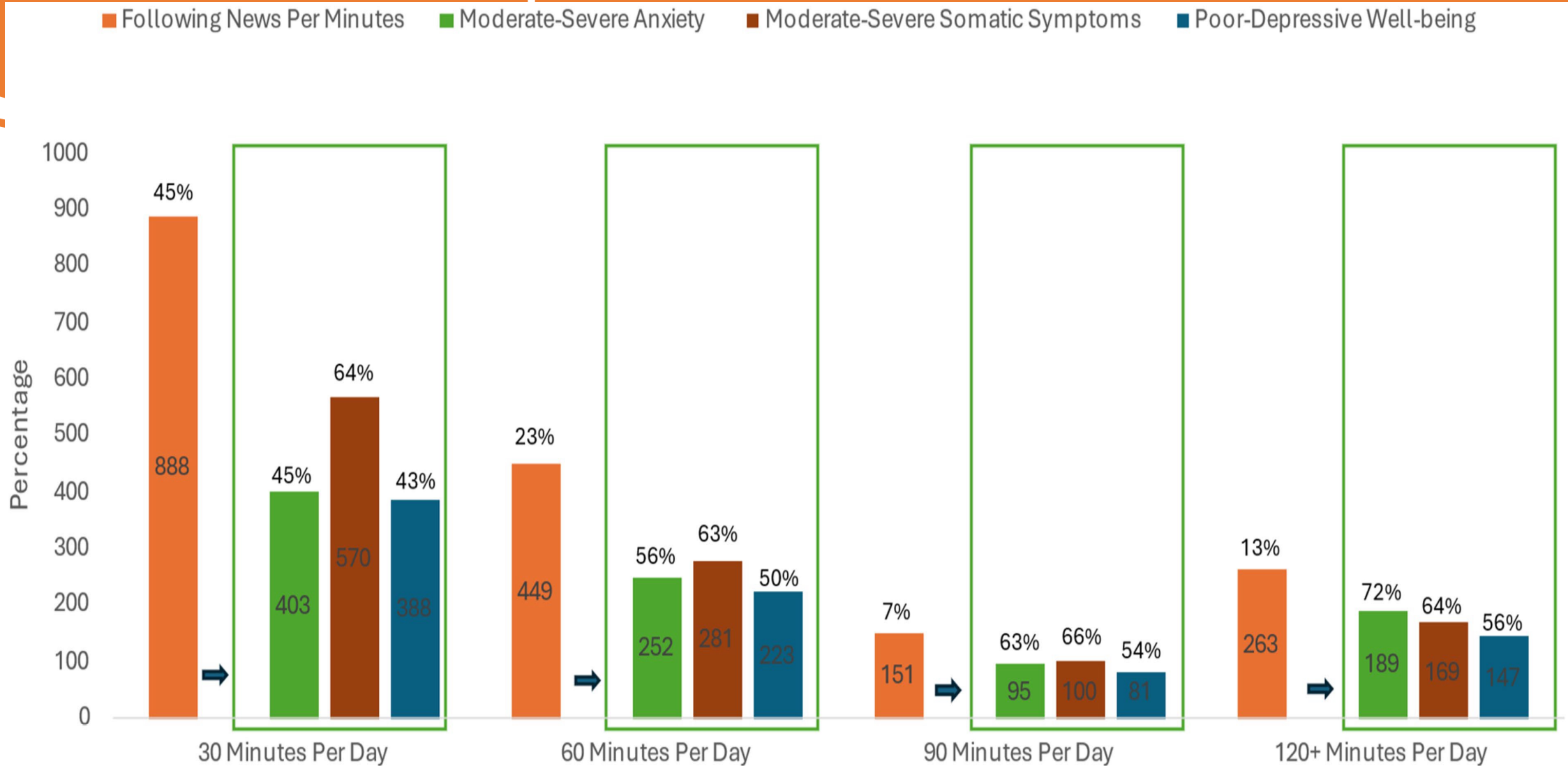


Results

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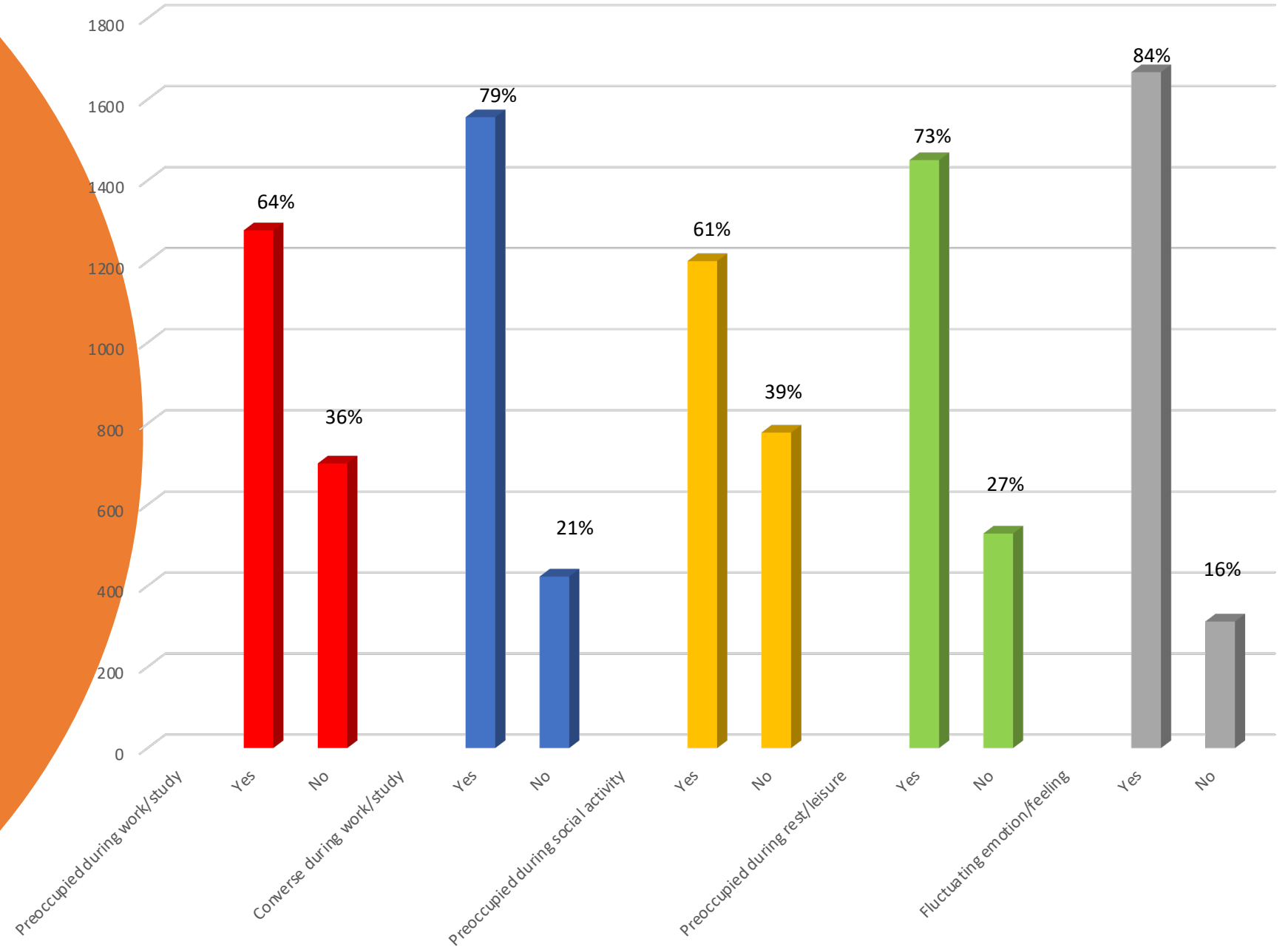


Results

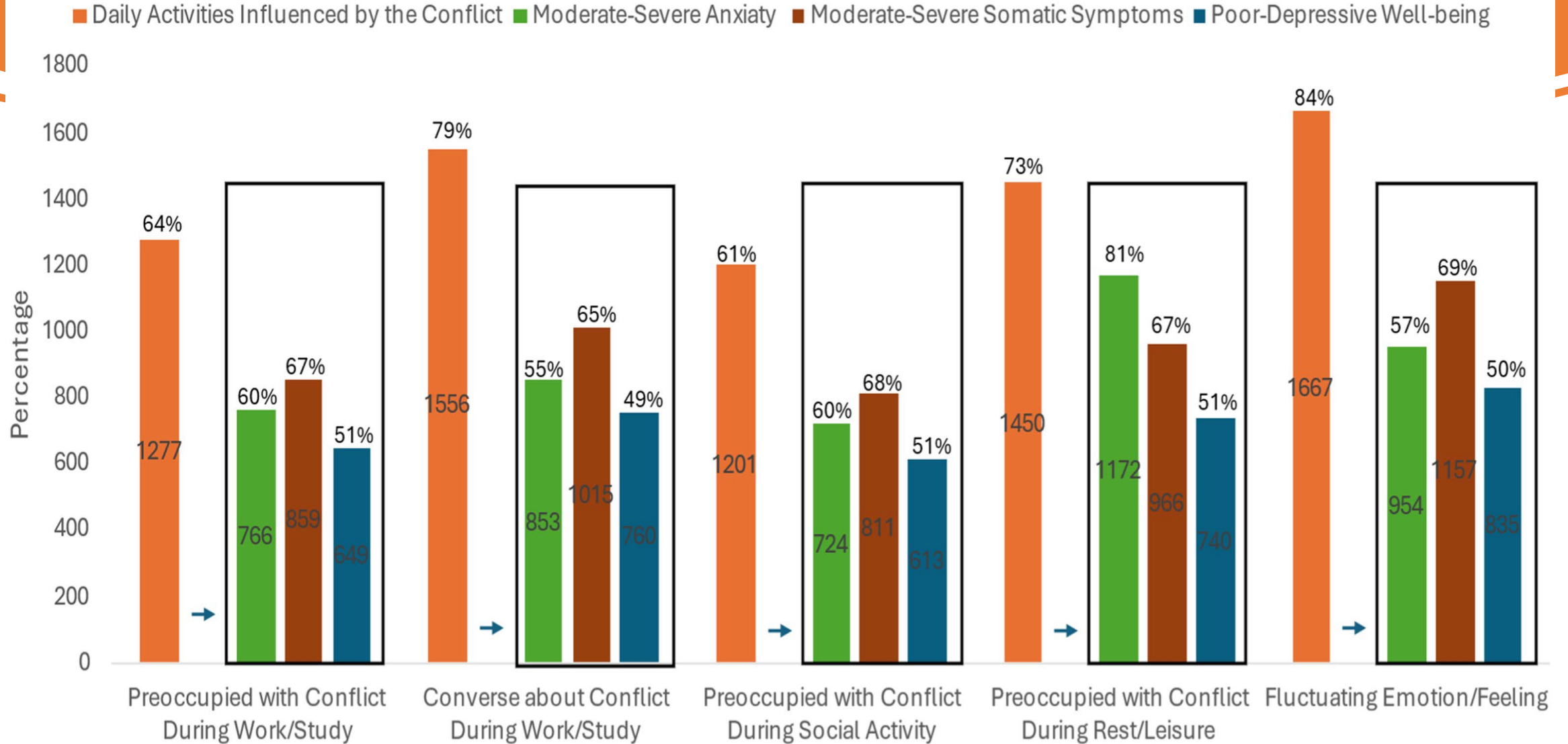


Results

Being Preoccupied with the Gaza Conflict

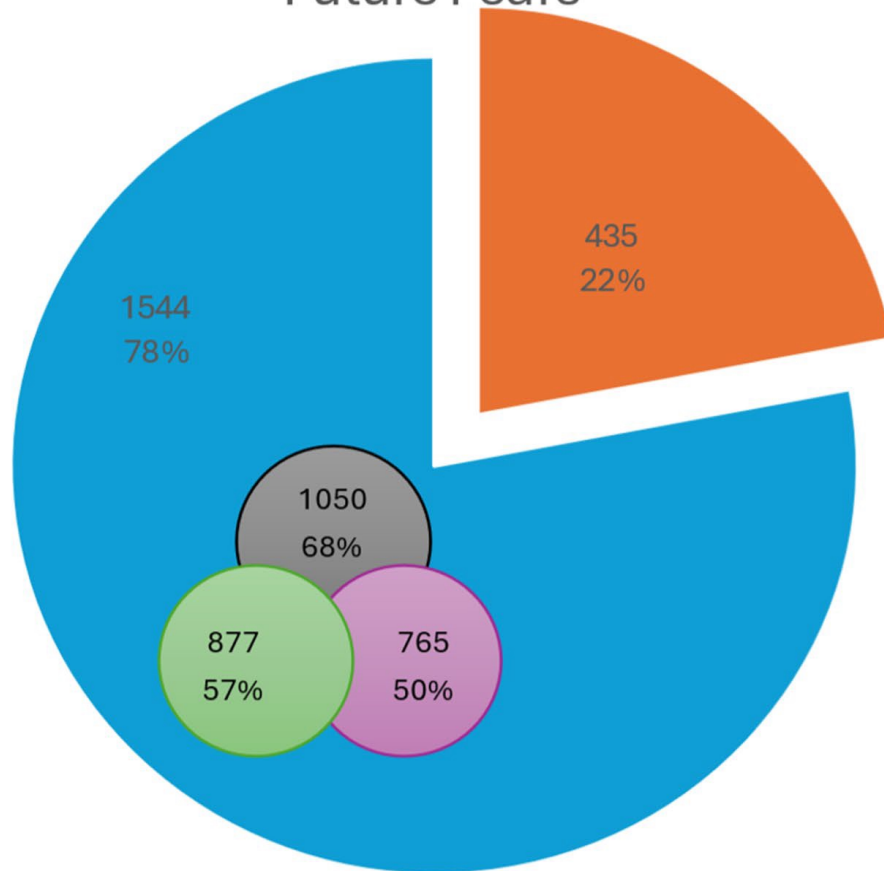


Results

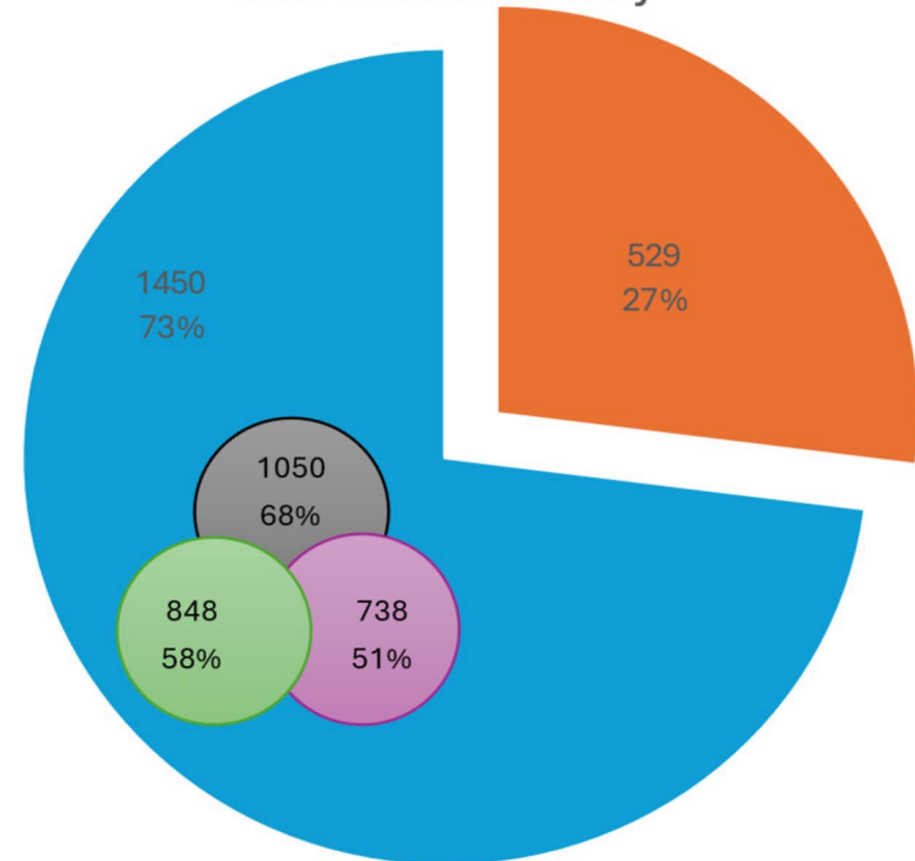


Results

Future Fears



Current Insecurity



■ Yes ■ No ■ Moderate- Severe Anxiety ■ Moderate- Severe Somatic Symptoms ■ Poor- Depressive Well being

Discussion

- Based on the DSM-5 (6) definition of moderate-to-severe anxiety, these participants may experience social and occupational challenges, with recommendations for professional medical interventions for participants with severe anxiety.
- The National Institute of Mental Health (7) highlights that GAD interferes with activities of daily living, such as work/school performance, productivity, and relationships.





Discussion

- The spread of fake news, misinformation, and propaganda on news and social media platforms can exacerbate feelings of fear, anger, worry, and frustration.
- Continuing the risk of daily following the news, preoccupation with the region's insecurity, and fear of future expansion of the conflict might negatively affect work–study performance, productivity, and relationships.

Discussion

- The relationship between anxiety and the somatic symptoms, as well as well-being, supports the biopsychosocial model of health, which posits that psychological factors can significantly impact physical health.
- Even though the participants live far away, it is possible that shared Middle Eastern geo-cultural characteristics, such as language, religion, race, ethnicity, culture, and region, played a crucial role in relating and sympathizing with people in the conflict zone, which might have given rise to GAD and its association with the emergence of somatic symptoms and decline in well-being.

Implications for OT

- Design structured daily routines, stress management activities, and relaxation techniques to help clients regain functional participation.
- Facilitate community programs that foster social connectedness, especially for populations heavily impacted by indirect conflict exposure.
- Introduce meaningful leisure and social participation activities to enhance positive affect and resilience.
- Collaborate with public health systems to create community workshops, online OT-guided programs interventions that teach coping strategies, stress management, and occupational engagement

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