

# Vernacular Photography as a Mirror of Family Adaptation and Solidarity After Trauma: Insights from Jordon

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## Abstract

This study examines vernacular photography as a means of understanding people's tragic circumstances and their impact. It takes the position that photographs are meant not only to be kept in archives or for documentation but can also help understand social phenomena. It argues that photographs have important ontological, philosophical, and social dimensions which may contribute to understanding the circumstances and development of individuals and communities and help in the promotion of support systems for special humanitarian cases in society.

The study employed a phenomenological approach. Its sample consisted of families who had experienced a painful experience together, during which they have taken photographs. They are identified in this research as vernacular photography because they do not involve professionals. The study hypothesized that vernacular photographs taken by families during hard times represent cognitive and emotional dimensions and help them to adapt and unite with each other.

The findings show that the families have discovered photography as an effective and powerful tool to achieve cohesion and unity among the family members. It also shows that taking vernacular photographs of the painful experience that the family has been going through and then displaying them explicitly in the house, is a form of inner recovery. It also helps in integrating family members and creating a sense of sympathy and solidarity with the crisis. Moreover, it forms a mental and emotional image adopted by the family members and affects their behaviors, thoughts, and beliefs.

**Keywords:** adaptation, family, solidarity, suffering, vernacular photography.

## Introduction

### Photographic Construction

Today, photography has become a link between people and the world as it allows them to get access to what is happening in the world. It is more so because photography has now come to exist at the fingertips of all people, especially those who have a mobile phone. Indeed, it adds an epistemic value that helps them to interact with the components of the world outside. The constant presence of photography has made it cognitive and ontological since it establishes a relationship between the subject and the object on the one hand and between the recipient and the scene itself on the other hand (Romanova, 2022). These relationships can be studied

individually and/or comparatively in the social context as the subject and object represent the social status of the photo (Tagg, 1988). Both the recipient and the scene represent the analytical status of the photograph. Understanding these relationships helps us to comprehend what is not apparent in the social system and increases the social description of the object (Sztompka, 2008).

Theorists in photographic philosophy stress the importance of photography not only as a recording and documentation tool but also as content that can be read and analyzed in various contexts. Barthes (1977) points out that what actually exists in the scene is real, and the symbolism is another language for signs. This indicates the fact that the semantic analysis of a picture helps to figure out the meanings and messages that reflect human values and reflect a society and its culture (Harper, 2000). Thus, the power of photography surpasses recording notes and monitoring events; in fact, it is a valuable tool that tells the truth (Harper, 2000). As Baltazar and Pombo (2015) point out, photography acts as a broker that explains the truth between what is private or public, individual or group. Here we come to agree with Sontag (2004) who says that the spreading of a photograph and heavily sharing it is more important than keeping and archiving it.

Media has played an important role in spreading photography; it has opened up many different worlds to research in photography. Furthermore, media has brought to life another type of photography, which is vernacular photography. Vernacular photography refers to pictures produced without any artistic intentions (Cutshaw and Barrett, 2008; Kaplan, 2003). What is meant by this is that the pictures that are produced by non-professional amateurs in various fields, including photojournalism, commercial photography, and family photography, portraying events of sadness or joy, and details of daily life. The purposes of vernacular photography are thus:

- a) making memories
- b) reforming and building social relationships
- c) self-presentation
- d) self-expression using various visual forms

(Marcus and Wurf, 2003).

The theme of human suffering takes on a particular form, especially in photography, due to its connection with physical, psychological, and societal aspects. Moreover, the development of digital media and communication has led to the abolition of suffering (Sontag, 2003; Szorenyi, 2009), and that has created a gap between the recipient and the suffering of others. This gap is not only a geographical one but an emotional one (Szorenyi, 2009) that has been caused by the repetition of the suffering scenes in front of the recipient, while at the same time, the recipient is in a comfortable place looking at the suffering of others from afar.

Sontag argues and insists that the image of suffering reflects the human experience, and besides the disaster, crisis, or trauma being over, the harshness of the scenes remain in what is not spoken; it is another hidden thing behind the elements before us (Sontag, 2003). Barthes (1977) confirms that by saying that, the trauma itself is a commentary on language and gives meaning.

However, a photograph does not create a trauma because it is a subsequent event, but it ensures that the trauma is over and records the memories and reactions during the quiet scene that follows the event. That is where the power of the scene and the pain of the picture lies. Usually, we think that we cannot hear the screams or feel the pain of the others, despite the fact that they do not stop screaming or experiencing the pain (Romanova, 2022: 20). However, images of human suffering provide us with what is called "phenomenological fascination" (Gunning, 2008), which leads us to search for the invisible not to present (what was), but to try to search for (what will be) and to develop aspects of human understanding and to support the particular cases of society.

Thus, applying the images of suffering in research requires hermeneutic efforts to explain the vernacular photograph in its social and cultural context based on the knowledge provided by the image and the other active factors that contribute to the understanding and

explaining of it (Hasanpur and Shahrebabaki, 2022). In order to analyze photography according to this concept, it has to submit to important issues, and they are:

- a) the components that make up the social structure within the image
- b) the intentions of the photographer
- c) societal traditions and ideas
- d) the analytical interpretation model that is based on scientific knowledge (Hasanpur and Shahrebabaki, 2022).

Therefore, looking at photographs of the others' suffering is not voyeurism as much as it is an in-depth search to understand the harshness of the scene (Reinhardt, 2012).

The study hypothesized that vernacular photography taken by families during hard times represents cognitive and emotional dimensions that help family members adapt and unite with each other. These photographs also hold important ontological, philosophical, and social dimensions that may contribute to the development of applied studies that focus on the development of individuals and communities and the promotion of various support systems for special humanitarian cases in society.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To concentrate on the idea of photography as content that implies cognitive, ontological, and social elements that aid in understanding human existence, rather than considering it only as a means for archiving or for documentation.
2. To shift the philosophical practice toward humanistic subjects and create a knowledge base in harmony with the photographic trends and the quantitative production of photographs, and assist the researchers in finding different paths of interpretations.
3. To highlight the value of support, interdependence and solidarity among the group members, which significantly improves the quality of life and empowers active human existence.

## Literature Review

The theoretical framework of this research stems from a central idea, which is to find new levels of understanding of the philosophy of photography, given that it is associated with multiple factors. At the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, theorists and researchers have explored all of these factors. On the one hand, photography is visual content and is subject to the rules of artwork, element distribution, composition, lighting, and aesthetic standards. It is an existing relationship between the artist, the recipient, and the subject of the photograph. It is a tool for documenting, archiving, and preserving. It is a method of information and communication as well as a relationship between time and place. It is the freezing of a moment in the past, present every time the photograph is viewed, and a future that exists and is in a state of continuity. In addition to all of the above, the use of photography as a cognitive tool and as a text that can be understood, signified, and symbolic opens enormous potentials to understand the world visual world.

There are two basic stages that make up photographic theorizing. The first step is to develop an understanding of the photograph, which started in the second half of the 20th century, and among its most influential thinkers were Barthes, Sontag, Tagg, and Benjamin. Barthes (1980; 1992; 1993) discussed matters related to understanding the photograph and its implications, the relationship between the artist and the recipient of the photograph, as well as the symbolic orientation and interpretation of the visual text. Both Sontag and Tagg (Sontag, 2003; 2004; Tagg, 1988) argued that in addition to referring to the significant matters related to photojournalism and respect for other people's privacy, here, the focus was on the social, psychological, and ethical side of the issue of photographing people. Benjamin (2008) confirmed this and created new knowledge pathways to comprehend photographs in light of the field's fast scientific and technological growth. As a result, these studies established the theoretical, interpretative, ethical, and technological foundations needed for researchers to advance toward expansive phenomenological thinking.

The second stage is the stage of finding connections and ramifications between photography and various fields of knowledge, in addition to trying to find orientations that help in reading photographic work. The results of the stage began to appear at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and we find that intellectual orientations focus on empowering human existence and awareness of philosophical concepts such as presence, time, and place in addition to focusing on the close connection between photography and sociology. Many theorists and academics have debated these matters, and Batchen (2000) has affirmed that the way to restore the history of photography is to look at the side of photography that the critics and philosophers have overlooked. Vernacular photography includes conceptual history, illustrates and explains indigenous practices that have been neglected by historians, and focuses on a new understanding of the history of photography in relation to practice. This is what the studies by Behdad (2016), Kuhn and McAllister (2006), Shwartz (2000), Harper (2000), Luhson (2019), and Berger (2011) have focused on, and all of them have come to reorient the study of photography towards the processes of experiencing and receiving the image and emphasize the social, institutional, creative, emotional, cognitive, and existential entanglements of photography. The methodology that is developed through research will reveal the real significance of the photographs.

Studies are presently focusing on the human and social dimensions of photography, but they are still operating within a general and comprehensive framework due to the fact that the concept of photography and its fields are expanding. As a result, this research adds qualitative significance in two areas. The first is connecting philosophical principles to the modern understanding of the idea of photography. The approach is based on an existential and phenomenological philosophical basis, which stresses understanding the existence of human beings in the world. The second part is the practice of the interpretative act of photography through the selection of a specific human subject as a step towards understanding the social circumstances, rehabilitating individuals, and improving their lives. Therefore, the study plays an important role in enhancing openness and privacy, re-establishing interdependent relationships, and re-understanding the photographic scene in a way that serves humanity and allows researchers to start moving deeply and quickly to understand photographic contexts as part of contemporary life and to look at vernacular photographs as a cognitive value that contributes to improving the world.

### **Research Methodology**

The study employed a specific study. It gathered data on which knowledge can be built by identifying the population of the study. The data was derived from the individuals who were interviewed, and the vernacular photographs retrieved from the study sample. It also involved direct observations. Data was analyzed by means of discourse analysis and content analysis.

The study employed the following two approaches

- 1) **In-depth research:** This approach fits with the nature of the subject of the research, which focuses on understanding a human phenomenon that contributes to the development of the individual and society. In-depth research deals with ordinary people's perceptions in their daily lives. In most cases, in-depth research focuses on one case, but it recognizes the power of the situation and the power and impact of reality (McBride, 2002). This approach studies and analyzes the raw phenomena to be used in cognitive construction (Lal Das, 2008). Using the in-depth research approach has a number of justifications, as mentioned above. It provides the perspective of the life that has been lived and the experiences that have already been tested and related to the subject of research. This perspective is individual and private on the one hand and social on the other (Karen, 2011; Johnson, 2002).
- 2) **The phenomenological approach:** This approach is related to the study of the living experience of individuals and their perceptions of the phenomenon they live by identifying and describing the phenomenon, collecting information, and then analyzing it (Giorgi, 1997; Creswell, 2014; Leedy and Ormrod, 2013; Wertz, 2005). This is based

on suspending judgment and clarifying the phenomenon, bypassing the visible dimensions and the presuppositions. The aim is to deepen the human understanding of the phenomenon studied (Polkinghorne, 1989).

#### The case study

The case study was of a family of nine members living in Jordan. The family has been through many hardships, but they have found a way to adapt and show solidarity by continuing to take photographs throughout the crisis. The reason behind choosing this family as a sample is the fact that the family members continued to display the photographs inside the house throughout that period.

Information was collected through:

- a) Personal interviews with six family members, namely the father, mother, and sisters, to show the impact and importance of the family photographs for them. All interviews took place at the family's house in November 2022.
- b) Observing the photographs displayed inside the house to study the visual and interpretive dimensions.
- c) Direct observation of the facial expressions of the family members, the method of keeping photographs, and the general atmosphere of the house to determine the extent to which the family members are connected through their culture.

#### The Study Sample

Recently, a family experienced a crisis in which one of the children got into an accident that made her stay in a coma for 13 years. During that time, the family members took photographs to document the case and try to understand what they experienced. The sample consisted of six individuals in addition to the vernacular photographs taken by the family. This is consistent with the methodologies used, which do not require a lot of participants (Creswell and Plano, 2007; Wertz, 2005). The study sample in both approaches is a key to understanding the special cases in society and to improve an intellectual approach that connects vernacular photography with the concerns of society and seeks change, development, and improvement in the quality of life.

#### Ethical Standards

Ethical sensitivity is very important in this research and has been applied in all parts of the study. All the observations that express the identity of the participants, their ideas, beliefs, and opinions, considering the psychological and emotional aspects of the subject itself, have been taken into consideration. Participants were given a break when needed, and they were free not to continue talking. Regarding the ethics of the interview, the researcher respected the feelings of the participants, did not cause distress to them, and observed all signs that might disturb them, such as crying or silence (Lawrence, 2020). Participants were also asked about any information they would prefer not to share or not participate in the research. The interviews were built and managed using a semi-structured system and guided topics. That has given the speaker more fluency, made the interview extended and dynamic, and increased the interaction between the participants and the researcher (Knott, Roa and Summers, 2022).

#### Theoretical Basis

##### After trauma: family adaptation

A family is a small societal unit that forms a unique, complex, developmental, and uniting system. When a family member is exposed to trauma, it affects all the family members and may leave physical, psychological, or emotional effects and may even affect the lives of the individuals, increase their grief and reduce their hope. Family members may experience anger, feelings of helplessness, isolation, guilt, and stress reactions (Rinear, 1988; Motaghi and Assadisharif, 2017; Frigley, 1990; Spungen, 1998). Moreover, they may suffer from other problems such as a lack of adequate support, stress related to anxiety, an inability to express

emotions, or feeling helpless in the face of problems while caring for the injured individual (Motaghi and Assadisharif, 2017). According to that, trauma can cause strong reactions among the family members and the peers (Frigley, 1990;1995).

Parents go through intense emotions when it comes to the illness of one of their children or the child's inability to perform daily life, especially if the condition continues for long periods with a complete inability to move. In most cases, mothers experience these tough emotions more than fathers, and that is due to the relationship that a mother forms with her child during the different stages of caring for her children (Salehian, 2022). Despite the fact that a mother shows her emotions of anger, sadness, sorrow, and crying (Salehi, 2011), she is able to take care of her children and support her family members. A mother is raised on the idea of bearing the upbringing of children, caring for the family, and coping with the crises experienced by the family members (Beckerman and Henshaw, 2020). This emotional flexibility, which is characterized by strong endurance, care, compassion, and tenderness, helps the family members develop two basic components of adaptation, which are perception and emotion (Pavot, 2008). (Riahi, 2017).

An individual's awareness of a crisis that a family is going through aids them in overcoming adversity and challenges while reducing stress (Luthar, 2000). It fosters a condition of inner healing and self-recovery, which in turn allows them to think flexibly, develop their problem-solving skills, and enhance their capacity for adaptation (Hosseini, 2013;Hogan, 2020;Neely et., 2009). At the same time, emotional attachment in the cases of trauma guards the family members against feelings of hopelessness, aids in creating a secure and loving home, encourages the development of strong family ties, helps in making care decisions, reacts to pain and suffering in an ethical manner, and helps the family as a whole accept the responsibility (Gerdes and Segal, 2011;Coplan and Goldie, 2011:5;Slinwinski, 2004).

Families are better able to deal with trauma by encouraging members to be honest with one another, confront the situation bravely, and provide the individual patient with the attention they require (Beckerman and Hashaw, 2020; Frigley, 1990;Bernheim, 1987). Open communication is either verbal or visual. The verbal form involves outlining the specifics of the illness, its effects and progression; outlining the proposed course of therapy; and outlining the pathological biography. The visual form is achieved by seeing the case, going over it, keeping an eye on it, and watching how the patient's vital signs and quality of life are changing.

In this context, the vernacular photographs are considered one of the forms of open communication between the family members. They describe the daily scenes in addition to being an explicit recognition of the joyful and sorrowful events. These photographs function as symbols of either condemnation or celebration and offer a wide range of options for how to react to the situation (Sliwinski, 2004). At the same time, they also show how they cope with the situation. This indicates that the response is both emotional and practical.

## Findings

The case study presented here is a social phenomenon within and it is presented by the family's struggle to adapt to the crisis and find solutions that allow it to achieve inner recovery, overcome the trauma, and offer enough moral support to its members.

A family in Jordan was traumatized in year 2001 when the female member of the family aged 8 years met with an accident that caused her to fall into a semi coma for twelve years until she passed away in the year 2013. During this time, the kid resided in her family's home and with her sisters. Let us call this family, the Family A for the research purpose. The family A continued to document the female members health through photography at that time, printing the photos, and displaying them up around the mirrors inside the house (Fig.1, Fig.2, Fig.3).

This paper argues that by describing the details of the crisis they are going through, and presenting the photographic material as vernacular photographs, they demonstrate that this is a mirror of the solidarity of the family A. However, this in turn raises a number of questions as to why the photographs are presented in the manner in which they are presented, and what this has to do with how the members of the family A are coping with and adapting to the crisis they experience.



**Fig. 1:** Family Photographs  
Source: The family A

**Fig. 2:** Family Photographs  
Source: The family A



**Fig. 3:** Family Photographs  
Source: The family A

Here, the issue is discussed in terms of two aspects: the first aspect is concerned with the subject of the photograph that captures the level of suffering and pain felt by the family. The second aspect is concerned with how these photographs are presented and seen doubly by the family members since they portray a realistic scene and they are also displayed around mirrors. This means that the members of the family A look at reality and the displayed photographs around mirrors every time they look at themselves in the mirror.

The mother explains, in an individual interview with the researcher, that photographing the crisis was not just a documentation for her but also brought with it the hopes and sufferings that accompanied this tough journey.

*"I believe in the importance of recording moments and documenting them. I have always photographed my kids and watched them in the different stages of their lives. I consider every moment a precious one that I must protect... However, when my daughter got traumatized, I found myself unable to face the pain and document the suffering moments. After a while, I realized the importance of that, and I found myself healing by photographing her daily details. I did that for the sake of noticing any developments in her case, or perhaps I photographed her just for joy when she recovers. I printed the photographs and would sit for long hours just looking at them. I kept them for myself because I was searching for a missing meaning. Then I started sharing these photographs with the rest of the family members; that gave us acceptance and familiarity with the crisis and the ability to think more positively... I took care of my daughter very well, and I made her my top priority, despite the fact that I had six other children, and my husband was always traveling for work. I'd hold her, feed her, and take care of other details, including the food type and the necessary intervention to prevent any bodily ulcers. I even designed a special chair for her so I could take her with me wherever I moved inside the house because she was suffering from partial muscle relaxation and could not lean her head or move her hands or feet. I also stopped leaving the house even in urgent cases because she needed much care. I used to sleep next to her and hold her hands and talk to her. I'd tell her stories and jokes because I believed in the psychological aspect, and I was quite sure that this would make her feel safe and at peace, even if she could not hear me. Thank God, she was in very good health, as I used to call a medical team to conduct check-ups on her periodically."* (Fig4, Fig 5, Fig 6, Fig 7)

Participant 1, The mother



**Fig. 4:** Family Photograph  
Source: The family A





**Fig. 5:** Family Photograph  
Source: The family A



**Fig. 6:** Family Photograph  
Source: The family A



**Fig. 7:** Family Photograph  
Source: The family A

Analyzing the previous text reveals that the family is in a constant state of permanent transformation, with tireless understanding, and never-ending questions. That state is refreshed with each new photograph and reflection. This family activity is followed by everyday intellectual and emotional routines. The photograph is a visible presence, yet it represents a hidden condition between the individual and the topic of the photograph. It determines the extent of the depth of expertise and experiences they face with pain, and the family members realize this as they confirmed their integration and interaction with the abundant presence of photographs inside the house. As the participants 2 and 3 say,

*"The spread of photographs inside the house and looking at them every day provided us with the possibility of understanding, as we coexisted with new and direct realities, and the subject of the photograph is understandable to us, as it represents the details of our daily life, and they make us realize the huge amount of care that our ill sister needs during this crisis. Therefore, each of us worked to provide assistance according to our abilities and capabilities."*

Participant 2, Sister

*"These photographs mean a lot to me... I can't imagine starting my day without looking at them... When I look at the photographs, I find that I belong to them and they belong to me, nothing else..."*

Participant 3, Sister

We can say that the family, in this case, shares an evident trait, which is familiarity with the sense of sorrow and grief, as this crisis provided family members with an experience that cannot be erased (Merleau-Ponty, 1974). At the same time, the experience of pain is based not only on prior conceptions but also serves as an identity, reminding the individuals of what exists and pushing them toward comprehension and consciousness.

*"I used to look at the photographs and think a lot about the meaning of existence, the meaning of hope, pain, courage... I used to recall all of my memories about the trauma! What can I do? How can I protect and take care of my family? I could not have the courage to face reality, but at the same time, the photographs never left me. I felt like I was inside these photographs."*

Participant 4, The father

This discussion brings up a crucial point, which is that the photograph makes the individual belong to a familiar subject in reality and even makes the individual reflect on the past, think about the present, and contemplate the future. The photograph then pushes the individual towards the authentic experience of suffering, where the manifestations of the past, present, and the future appear without intermediary distance (Merleau-Ponty, 1974; Gadamar, 2006). Therefore, a strong relationship exists between the individuals and the photographs they take. It also raises ontological issues, as each individual is a link in the chain of understanding and awareness, and each individual must first understand himself/herself, then understand the individuals with whom he or she shares the crisis, and then understand the issue of suffering as well. Reading the photograph here achieves these different stages, and it can be said that the photograph in this case is the value of the signifier and the production of signifiers, and it is a melting that gives us the pleasure of understanding (Barthes, 1992), a language that pronounces existence (Heidegger, 1927), a connection with time in the field of presence (Merleau-Ponty, 1974), and a human intimacy with matter (Bachelard, 2014).

The meaning found in the photographs has a renewed suggestive and emotional meaning, and every component of the family analyzes and researches to practice the acts of discovery, understanding and interpretation and thus forms a response toward the subject. The sum of the individual responses forms a collective social system within the family and

determines the mechanisms of adaptation while improving the quality of life for all the family members. As the family members said, that was made possible by the presence of the photographs in abundance throughout the house.

*"I was very little when my sister had the accident. Back then I was not more than six years old, and I do not really have clear memories of the trauma my family experienced during that time; however, I grew up in this crisis that continued for more than a decade, and the photographs that my mom used to hang inside the house stayed with me throughout my life. Every time I would look in the mirror, I felt that I was part of this important event, and I felt a lot of empathy that pushed me to offer help and support."*

Participant 5, Sister

*"I used to think that my mom pushed us to confront, to live the experience, to accept it, to adapt to the difficult circumstances we are going through...to support each other and to express our feelings and fears...and I think that she was able to unite us indirectly through the presence of photographs everywhere. We felt responsible for ourselves and our family members every time we looked in the mirror."*

Participant 6, Sister

*"My mother could not leave the house even for ten minutes, but she has always made us believe that these are rich experiences, that pain is strength, that love is stronger than difficulties, and that we must always be in solidarity together to overcome our crises. "*

Participant2, Sister

These statements are significant to this study, as they lead us to a crucial point: rather than being content with just acknowledging the crises the family is facing, the family members attempted to respect the suffering, show compassion, and offer support by facing the pain and adapting positively and effectively. The mother stressed this in her interview:

*"I think that the family's internal sympathy and affection for one another kept them safe throughout that time, especially since we did not get any support or help from professionals in the fields of social, medical, or psychological rehabilitation."*

Participant 1, The mother

When we look at this from a phenomenological viewpoint, we come to the conclusion that the mirror's ability to reflect the photographs has played a significant part in helping the individuals accept the situation, understand it, adapt to it, and even come together as a cohesive team. When individuals look at their familiar faces in the mirror and at the same time look at the photographs of the family members, they are making a comparison of their actual existence with their familiar existence, making the mirror a source of revelation, clarity, and integration. Individuals' responses to the reflected scenes become dynamic and positive responses (Fernandez,1980;Elkisch, 1957).

The human presence in this situation goes beyond merely an individual presence as the person opens up to the substance of the photograph before him, just like he opens up to his real experience in front of the mirror. This familiarity between the individual and the subject in the photograph is an affirmation of a close connection that unites the individual with his world, as he is a viewer, a participant and has an interaction with the form and content of suffering. Since the mirror is both a display of the object that is represented in front of it and a reflection of the visible, it is also a temporary existential pattern that ends with the act of showing.

In other words, family members exchange this existential pattern when the photograph is present, steady, full, and open. This gives the family members the chance to perceive

themselves as others do, which may lead to increased self-awareness and personal development (Kekes Suzabo, 2016; Cook and Douglas, 1998). It also opens up a new area for them to embrace other people's sympathies and any assistance that may be offered.

### Discussion

Interacting with suffering can be viewed as a social phenomenon that affects both individual and group behavior and is marked by displays of commitment, sympathy, and bonding. This phenomenon is considered very complex despite the fact that the individual feels that there is solidarity with him; this external solidarity may also cause suffering, as it makes the individual feel that he is different from others, and this feeling may increase in the absence of specialists who provide organized care for humanitarian cases and family crises. (Durkheim, 1951; 2014; 1995; Marison, 2006). Small communities may thus strive for a certain level of togetherness in order to overcome personal crises by generating an atmosphere of mutual sympathy among the group members who are aware of a shared issue, allowing them to step up their joint efforts to lessen the suffering and facilitate problem solutions (Hogan, 2020).

The results of the study show that the family has discovered an effective and powerful tool to achieve cohesion and unity among the family members, which is to take vernacular photographs of the painful experience that the family is going through and then display the photographs explicitly around the mirrors inside the house. It also helps in integrating the family members and creating a sense of sympathy and solidarity with the crisis. Moreover, it forms a mental and emotional image that is adopted by the family members and affects their behaviors, thoughts and beliefs. This was based on the idea that solidarity is usually built on common strong bonds such as common values, principles, and history, and therefore the internal solidarity of the family is more than just a form of unity; it can be understood on a large scale as a form of belonging and intimacy as it is an existential institution that connects the individual with another individual and achieves an active and positive existence for them. It also strengthens their will, which provides a basis for unity and cooperation (Bayertz, 1999; Manly, 2020; Haralambos, Heald and Haborn, 2008). According to that, solidarity does not mean love, but it does involve an essentially emotional component, as it is based on a sense of sympathy and participation in overcoming negative life experiences (Arnsperger and Varoufakis, 2003).

This phenomenon that has been brought up in this research highlights two crucial issues: first, the family as a small community structure always tries to offer support, protection, and internal coherence when it faces crises, and that may be directed or undirected for the family members themselves depending on the environment, society and culture. The family's unity serves as a source of power that encourages individuals to advance and make an effort to comprehend the realities, adapt, and coexist with them. This does not, however, eliminate the necessity for the family members to assist the appropriate authorities in rehabilitating them, enhancing their quality of life, and addressing the crisis they are currently experiencing.

The second issue is how to understand the photographs of suffering and the process for studying photographs of specific human circumstances. Critical attention is frequently focused on the words and visuals used to convey human suffering (Sontag, 2003; Chouliaraki, 2006). This means that the photograph is read in its technical, formative and lighting dimensions, as well as exploring the ethical dimension that relates to the rights of the individuals within the photograph and the legitimacy of displaying and disseminating the photographs (Bareto, 2006; Farmer, 2006), and this can be viewed as a response to the moral appeal that is caused by viewing the photographs of suffering (Nussbaum, 1996; 2001; Halper, 2002; Spelman, 1998).

### Conclusions

The study emphasized the necessity of understanding vernacular photography from a societal standpoint because vernacular photographs are a social phenomenon that represents them through the subjects highlighted in the photographs. This is built on ensuring that vernacular photographs are more than just a means for archiving and documenting but also a result of human values that help us comprehend the individual and the society, as well as understand the cultural, social, and behavioral contexts of people.

The results show that vernacular photographs taken by the family members contribute to accepting the family's life circumstances and any crises that the family may experience by integrating family members and creating a state of sympathy, solidarity, and internal support. Additionally, they form a mental and emotional image that can affect individuals' thoughts, beliefs, and responses to various situations.

However, the important issue that we would like to raise here is that we must pay attention to the phenomenological dimension in reading what is invisible, as photographs of suffering do not only present a human condition but rather represent a complete state of existential presence in the world, as they include the past, the present, and the future and also tell the story of an individual or a group. Each photograph is a phenomenon in itself; at the same time, research related to vernacular photography cannot be separated from the social sciences, psychology, and philosophy. This adds new responsibilities to researchers in the field of photography since the analysis of vernacular photographs needs to develop effective approaches to understanding the subject of the photograph in its various dimensions and strengthens the systems of care and assistance for special cases in the society. Therefore, re-establishing interdependent relationships, and understanding the photographic scene in a way serves humanity and allows researchers to start moving deeply and quickly to understand photographic contexts as part of the contemporary life and to look at vernacular photographs as a cognitive value that contributes to improving the societies.

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