Research Paper Social Sciences

Social Adjustments & Future Aspirations: A Case Study of Militancy Affected Children in Jammu Province

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ABSTRACT

The state of J&K has been among the worst sufferers of militancy for the last quarter of a century. In has not only affected the geo-polity of the state but has destroyed the centuries old woven social, cultural and economic threads of the society. The current exercise will study the impact of conflict on the life of militancy affected children and an attempt has been made to understand the harm that the conflict has done to the young minds and its impact on various aspects of the life of a child which are considered immensely important for their overall development. It has been done by analyzing and interpretation of the data obtained regarding the profile of the children, the various problems encountered by them before and after their institutionalization, and their future hopes.

KEYWORDS PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorders), Conflict, Orphanage, Vulnerability, Psychological Fallout.

Introduction:

Recent times have witnessed a significant increase in the number of confrontations internationally raging from outright warfare and mass violence to sporadic civil unrest and long term unstable post conflict situations. New weapons and patterns of struggle have resulted in grave human rights violation, elimination or incapacitation of civilians through killings, torture and disappearances, psychological terror, forced migration, starvation and the destruction of social institutions (Boyden, 2002). The state of J&K had been witnessing bloodshed since the past twenty five years in which thousands have lost their lives, many rendered homeless and displaced. Thousands fled their original places of residence, because of fear of militants or death of the family members, to places out of state and to other somewhat peaceful parts of the state. Jammu region has been providing rehabilitation in the form of migrant camps and orphanages, to such victims of conflicts. Singh(2007) has observed that during the conflict situation, it is the innocent people who become the targets, and no victims are more innocent than children. Sadly, children are all too frequently the victims of armed conflicts, both of long-running campaigns and also of more isolated major events. Conflict leaves these victims in poverty; loss of shelter, education and other basic services; disability, stigma and political repression etc. But having seen their parents getting killed in front of their eyes is one act that leaves a deep impact on the psychology of the children.

Methodology:

The present study was empirical one and the data was collected from both primary as well as secondary sources. The primary data was obtained through the use of interview schedule, observation method and focussed group discussions. The schedule included both open ended and close ended questions. After data collection, a code design was prepared in the tables. In all 250 respondents were surveyed from the 07 homes of Jammu province. It has been done by analyzing and interpretation of the data obtained regarding the profile of the children, the various problems encountered by them before and after their institutionalization, and their future hopes.

Objectives:

1. To study the issues concerning the adjustment of militancy affected children in the homes.
2. The problems encountered by the victims.

Socio-economic profile of the children:

Out of the total sample size of 250 respondents, 169 were males, constituting about 68 percent; where as female respondents were 81 forming 32 percent of the total sample. The fewer share of the female participants is due to the fact that in our traditional society, parents generally do not want to send their daughters away from themselves keeping in view their social security. And another reason for less female participation is the few number of homes granting admissions to the female victims of militancy. As there was only one home solely devoted to female victims. s

It has been observed that exposure of small children to armed conflict adversely affects their overall development and has serious consequences for their psychological well-being. the respondents taken, 35 (14 percent) children were in their early childhood (2-6 years), 90 (36 percent) children falls in the middle childhood category (6-10 years), and another 125 (50 percent) children were in the early adolescent (10-14 years). The children subjected to violence in their early childhood were exposed to multitude of problems in terms of their physical, emotional and mental personality and drastically impacted future perceptions about life and attitude. It was observed that the small children were carrying a sense of fear regarding the strangers, have lost trust in others, and were scared and perplexed in comparison to their senior counterparts at Homes.

The majority of the respondents were the students of primary level classes though the age distribution among them carries huge range. The important reason behind this was that the children when brought to the orphanages, in most of the cases, are put to lower classes because of the differences in level of education, medium of instruction and syllabi in schools in which they studied earlier to those in which they were enrolled at present. The result is that one finds large difference between the actual age of children victims, their class of study than their age-mates. The stay of the respondents in the orphanage homes range between 2 to 10.5 years.

The families of most of the respondents were in extreme poverty because either the head of the family was killed by the militants or were left without any source of income because of the damage done to the resources and infrastructure of their respective regions in the conflict. Thus, in majority of the cases there is no source of income and as a result such families were living under extreme poverty. As they have not received much help from the governmental agencies, they are left with no other option than sending their children to the orphanages. In all the orphanages children are allowed to follow their religion. It was observed that only in SOS village, Balgram a separate house is for the Muslim children so that they feel comfortable in offering prayers, besides this no other segregation is found in the name of religion.

It is seen that most orphans faced negative effects as a result of parents' death, thus becoming vulnerable and inclined to physical and psychological fall outs. According to Sengendo

and Nambi (1997) such children are capable of distinguishing between their quality of life when their parents are alive and well, and when they eventually die. Most of them lose hope and feel sad and helpless. Loss of parents at an early stage of childhood devoid such children of parental love, putting them under great stress and creating an atmosphere that is most unsuitable for the normal processes of socialization and child development.

Table No.1, reveals that where one parent had died, majority 155 (62%) of the child respondents at first stayed with the surviving parent. Whereas, 95 children (38%) had to move to other places along with their mothers or alone, after the death of the father. This invariably had direct impact upon their schooling, nutrition and health. It also disturbed the coherence of familiar networks of community, friends and family, which provide a basis of consistency and security for the young. When children are forced to move from their familiar socio-cultural-geographical surroundings to an unfamiliar world the familial relations are altered, emotional ties are broken and uncertainty haunts them and the psycho-socio impact on them can be shattering.

As per fig.1, 35 (14%) of the respondent have stated that they were witness to the killing of their parents by the militants. This incident has put them under extreme stress as they kept on recalling the horrific memories, were unable to concentrate on their studies, had a feeling of insecurity and higher anxiety levels. Lake (2004) has corroborated that such children are at great risk for emotional and behaviour problems including low self-esteem, withdrawal, nightmares, self-blame and aggression, thereby, leaving a deep impact on their psycho-socio well-being.

Aylon (1998) has commented that separation from siblings is another source of trauma for the children, not only small but even the older children are distressed by separation. The study showed that the siblings of many of the children 90 (36 %) were accompanying them. This is because in many cases both parents are dead and in others impoverishment forced the parent(s) to send all their children to the orphanages. The siblings of 160 children (64%), however, were staying back at their respective villages and inmates wants them to join homes, so that they can share their minds with them.

As far as support from relatives was concerned the relatives of only 15 children (6%) pay them monthly visits, 85 respondents (34%) receive their relatives after five to six months. 35 children (14%) stated that their relatives come very rarely and 70 (28%) of them said that their relatives do not come at all, while 45 children (18%) commented that relatives come once in a year on birthdays or festivals. Puri (2002) in his study reveals that over the time visits of the relatives decrease either because they do not want to be bothered with fresh demands of the family of the deceased; or in some cases in which the deceased who was killed by the militants for his suspected role as informer of the security forces or his political affiliations; the neighbours and friends avoid contacts with the family on account of fears or bias.

As Sagar (2001) has pointed out that the worst damage of militancy to "innocent minds" (Parentally deprived) lies in life-long hatred in their minds against those who made them to leave their homes or killed their parents. This holds true in fig. 2, as majority i.e. 120 children (48%), on being asked about the career fields they would like to pursue; said that they want to join the Army/Police when they grow up. The reason behind it was that they want to take the revenge from the militants as they killed their parents and made them orphans. This shows the deep impact that the incident had left on the minds of the children.

Conclusion:

The current study throws light on the socio-economic profile of the militancy affected children, their education, parent survivorship, impact of armed conflict on the children, trauma suffered, health issues, future aspirations of the child respondents. The trauma of violence and the social change that conflict has brought to the region has impacted the children tremendously - orphans being the worst hit. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder was a main concern among the child victims. The fear psychosis is predominant to visit their native places. Aggressive behaviour with fellow inmates in small conflicts. Revengeful attitude is observed among the victims, as they want to join army to fight with militants.

Figure no. 1: Information regarding Parental Survivorship

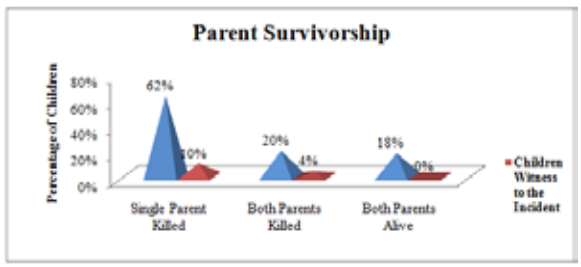
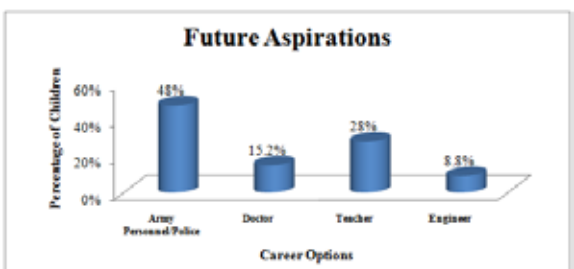


Figure No. 2: Future Aspirations of militancy affected children



Stay after the Incident/ Situation	Militancy affected Children	Percentage
Parents (if alive)	145	58.0
Siblings	5	2.0
Grandparents (Maternal)	30	12.0
Grandparents (Paternal)	20	8.0
Maternal Uncle	15	6.0
Paternal Uncle	20	8.0
Orphanage	5	2.0
Army Camp	10	4.0
Total	**250**	**100**

Table No. 1 Place of Residence after incidence

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