

Children of Conflict with Special Reference to Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the impact of violence on the wellbeing of children. Children are considered as the weakest survivors of conflict. They are also stranded or isolated from their families and are sometimes forced to take family responsibilities that render them helpless against forced labour, sexual abuse or recruitment in the armed forces. The worst effect of conflict is on the education and health of children in general and mental health in particular. Conflict disturbs the mental peace of children and leaves them to leave a depressed and traumatic life.

Key words: *Conflict, Mental health, Kashmiri Children.*

1. Introduction

As non combatants, children are the most harshly affected folk in war torn nations as wars keep on inflicting grave harm on children and world has always failed to make parties responsible accountable. Children living in conflict zones around the planet have kept on enduring outrageous degree of violence over the recent many years, since the world has kept on bombing them. For a really long time parties to conflict have been perpetrating barbarities with absolute impunity, and it's only seen surge.

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Children living in nations at war have gone under direct assault, have been used as human shields, slaughtered, or made to fight as combatants in wars. Forced child marriages and abducting children have become common strategies in conflicts everywhere ranging from Syria to Yemen, and from the democratic republic of Congo to Nigera, South Sudan to Myanmar.

KASHMIR CONFLICT

The Kashmir conflict started as a movement for independence from India in the late 80's. In December 1983, when daughter of the then Indian Home minister of Kashmir affairs, Rubaiya Sayeed was abducted by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front [1]. India government was afraid of the repercussions of the sudden surge in the local armed groups. India then decided to send more troops to the Valley in early 1990. This depicted the open start of the revolt. Inside a brief time frame, India posted two or three hundred thousand security forces all through the valley with an emphasis on some big cities. Violence committed against local citizens by security forces and militant groups were the norm in the early 90's. Besides 160000-170000 Hindus migrated from the valley of Kashmir, to the camps in Jammu and New Delhi, leaving behind a Kashmir with the vast majority of muslims [2].

IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON THE CHILDREN OF KASHMIR

- **EDUCATION**

The growing violence against school going children has prompted student uprisings and protests as Kashmiri students see their future put in risk and being militarized with the growing number of cases related to militancy. Use of tear gas and pellet guns by security forces on protesting students caused with many enduring pellet wounds to their eyes [3]. A study by Chinar International (Kashmir based NGO) in 2016 found a profound feeling of negativity in education regarding quality and outcome. The continued vicious cycle of violence in the valley has made numerous schools go neglected. This has left in Kashmir some school buildings without sanitization, water and boundary walls [4]. Most of the schools close to the border areas have even been shut due to the fear of shelling across the border. The accessibility of sanitization and toilets for students of middle and higher education has also declined and students prefer moving to schools less exposed to the violence, which only some can afford.

- **DEPLOYMENT OF MILITARY CAMPS NEAR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

On the two sides of the contested boundary, school structures and playing grounds close to the Line of Control are also been heavily occupied by armed forces. The militarisation of these zones can prompt a negative mental effect on kids which can cause higher dropout rates and has increased given the situation in Kashmir valley where

numerous kids feel terrified of the school's vicinity to military camps.

A study directed by the Working Group on Peace, Conflict and Education at Colombia University in 2013, found that 79% of the military camps were at a distance of less than 1km from schools [5]. A portion of these schools even imparted common roads to the camps. Kids in these schools are made to feel undermined and terrified while within the sight of the military. And because of the closeness of these military structures, kids are always exposed to the explosive weapons.

• **IMPACT ON GIRL STUDENTS**

The unstable viciousness in the locale has gravely affected young girls, which has negatively affected the endeavours of the country to improve access to education for female students. In 2004, India started a program called Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV); it intended to build up residential schools for female students in all districts with low female education rate. The government additionally chose to allow monetary incentives and scholarships for the female students destined to families living below poverty line [6].

Notwithstanding these new activities by India to empower education in girl students, the distress in Kashmir has additionally exacerbated the separation in schooling levels among boys and girls. Parents in Kashmir also feel higher degree of risk in sending their daughters out given the probability of encounters and shelling.

The closeness of military camps additionally places female students at high risk. With the presence of armed forces meaning girls are more in danger of sexual violence, and harassment. This prompts a further ascent in the dropout rates in schools.

- **Impact on the health of children**

The ill effects of violence on the health of children is well known, it causes deaths, injuries, psychological trauma and breakdowns. Conflict directly or indirectly affects each and every aspect of human health whether it is physical, emotional or mental. It is estimated that one among ten children is globally affected by conflict. Wars affect children psychologically more than physically. Psychological trauma, depression has been a subject of debate for mental health professionals from past many years. Many researches revealed that traumatic experiences are more common among youths and the most common reason for that is violence or war. Kashmir which is regarded as heaven on earth is presently the most vulnerable place to live because of the insurgency which existed here since 1989. No doubt mental disorder is a universal problem but the people who are living in conflict zones are experiencing these problems more than other people who are living in peaceful areas. It was estimated that due to this conflict the younger generation of Kashmir are suffering from depression, neuroticism etc. Most of the children in Kashmir are also suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder. Many children also complaint of insomnia and scary dreams. Professionals are worried that early childhood traumatic experience has immense impact on the well being of an individual. Numbers of mental trauma

cases are rising in Kashmir day by day due to frequent raids by security forces and the major portion are the adolescents. These all things lead to depression and finally the children indulge in drug abuse and other unlawful activities.

CONCLUSION

The Kashmir strife has moulded the oblivious psychology of the whole of Kashmiri populace. It forces a significant inquiry of how the current political circumstance in the valley has and is mentally influencing the young, causing numerous mental health issues. In like manner, it's the Kashmiri youth that is most impacted entity since there is no hope of peace in the near future. This ongoing cycle of violence has left youth with no option but respond with repressed emotion, aggression and frustration. Yet, since the tranquil choices are impeded, the Kashmir conflict creates misery, despair, and various mental health issues among youth in young age that feels unheard and disregarded in this entire conflict.

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