

War on Terror (WOT) and its Impact on Children: Evidence from Pakistan

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This paper is dedicated to the misery-stricken children of FATA.

Abstract:

Past decade has seen phenomenal rise in extremist militancy in Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA). The rise in militancy has created a situation of lawlessness in FATA resultantly creating a volatile situation of economic opportunities for the natives. It has damaged the social structure and the basic infrastructure adding more vulnerability to the people of FATA. This rising phenomenon has not only destroyed the socio-economic set up of the area but also has left great psychological impacts on the minds of the children. Children are the worse victims of this growing phenomenon as it has badly impacted their mental health. This paper aims at finding out the worse impact of War on Terror on the overall development of the children of FATA. The study comprises of scientific methodology; a questionnaire, which was designed on the basis of Child Development Indicators, developed by United States Department of Health and Human Services. Policy implications have been suggested at the end of the paper for the betterment of the aforementioned area with particular focus on child development.

Key words: Child Development, War, FATA-Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

The Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) are situated in northwest of Pakistan. The region's border is linked to

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan to the east and south respectively, and to Afghanistan from its west and north. FATA is directly governed by the federal government and it includes seven agencies namely Khyber, Kurram, North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Mohamand, Bajur and Orakzai. Agencies are further divided in sub agencies. People of the FATA are Pashtuns and Muslims by faith. Under the Article 1 of the Constitution, the territory of FATA is included in Pakistan and is directly governed by the President of Pakistan. The laws passed by the National assembly cannot be executed in FATA until the President endorses it. All administrative decisions about crimes and other issues are taken by *Jirga*¹ system under the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) 1901². The constitutional and administrative set up of FATA is quite different from the rest of the country. FATA is an egalitarian society, which is very well known for its bravery, hospitality, and traditions. The natives are blamed to be fundamentalists for being the strict followers of conservative religious approach but reality is on the contrary. They have strong societal norms and settle their disputes through their system of Jirga.

The tragic incident of 9/11 brought the burning flames of this phenomenon into this particular area otherwise it was a peaceful area. Though it was underdeveloped but peace was prevailing everywhere. Today FATA is considered to be the epicenter of terrorism that is creating instability in the entire area. Militancy in FATA is not a local issue but a sans frontier issue in which many actors are involved and are playing their active role. The American war on terror along with its allies (Pakistan as a major ally) particularly in this area has added up to a great extent to the miseries of the already misery stricken people.

¹ A Jirga is a traditional assembly of leaders that make decisions by consensus and according to the teachings of Islam. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jirga>)

² A special set of laws that are applicable to FATA.

In 2001, the Pakistan Army entered into the FATA to fight against militancy. To date, thirteen years have passed but the war between military and militants still continues. The war aims to create peace in FATA but due to brutal attacks by militants, peace is still a daydream. War has cast adverse impact on education, health, employment, living standards, and especially on the development of children and youth.

CHILDREN IN FATA

While reviewing the literature it was found there was no substantial literature available regarding children of FATA. The available amount of literature was not showing the genuine issues of the children of the FATA. The women in FATA are marginalized and constitute very vulnerable segment of the society. They are living in an unprotected environment that doesn't guarantee their rights. Unless and until a mother is not given her right, the child can never be motivated. A mother's lap is said to be child's first learning place but depressed and socially backward, she cannot serve this duty with full spirit. The rise of militancy has also created a sense of fear and insecurity in women. Despite an impressive contribution of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for FATA's social uplift, the issue of physical and psychological growth of children remains unaddressed.

The children are considered to be the future of every nation but the children of this area are very marginalized and element of militancy has made them more vulnerable. They are watching the show of violence everyday. Firings, bomb blasts, drone attacks, and rocket attacks etc. are some of the activities that keep on going everyday since long and leaving worse impact on the innocent minds of children. They have become mental patients because they are unable to socialize with their peers, go to the schools for education and play. The deaths of their near and dear ones', migration from their native areas

and the injuries they receive during these violent acts are also some of the worse factors which are impacting the lives of the children of FATA very badly. This study aims to find out the contributing factors (Militant Acts) that prove very bad for the children's overall development and natural growth for a productive and complete personality.

OBJECTIVES

The main and major objective of this paper is to find out the impact of war on terror on the development of the children of FATA. Second objective is to suggest some policy implications regarding the said issue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ahsan (2013) states that education is everyone's fundamental right and children of FATA are being deprived of this right. Children have limited mental growth and are in state of depression. He emphasizes that if serious steps are not taken then the future of these children will be dreadful.

Shiekh (2013) states that 831 schools were destroyed by militants between 2009-2012 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA. This shows the miserable status of education in FATA. The situation has detrimental psychological impact on children. Poor security has created a fear in their minds and they are distancing themselves from education.

Javaid (2012) concludes that FATA is already an underdeveloped area and the War on Terror has made it more marginalized and deprived. The socioeconomic status of the people has declined drastically due to militants' attacks. There is a strong need to develop consensus to curb extremism from FATA. Otherwise the population living in those areas will suffer more in future with regard to education and economic circumstances.

UNESCO Report (2011)³ states that outbreak of armed conflict in any area is a constant threat for the native dwellers. It creates a sense of insecurity among the people. Wars badly affect the education of the children. It destroys the basic infrastructure including the schools. This phenomenon deprives the children of that area from getting education that is their fundamental right.

Khan (2009) posits that Pakistan military operation in FATA does not only have the explicit cost but some implicit one as well, in terms of public-state relationship. He says that operations have negative impact on the mentality of the people and children. Tribal leaders think that military operations are destroying their authority and tribal values. Therefore there is a need to develop strategies and capacity building programs for the tribal.

HYPOTHESIS

H₀: Militancy has no impact on the development of the children in FATA.

H₁: Militancy has negative impact on the development of the children in FATA.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data was collected through primary resources i.e. a survey as well as structured interviews. Questions were designed according to the indicators. As the respondents were children, easy language was used. Questions were translated in regional language during interviews to ensure correct understanding and response of these children.

Sample

The target population was comprised of children with varied family backgrounds and within the age bracket of 12 to 18

³ UNESCO Report (2011). The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education

years. The sample of eighty children was taken. The parents' consent and convenience for the interview was also sought.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics was used for data interpretation. The development of children was gauged against the indicators developed by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS), which are as follows: **Indicators of Children Development (Developed by USDHHS)**

Following are the indicators which are developed by the USDHHS.

- Life satisfaction
- Hope
- Gratitude
- Money management/frugality
- Generosity
- Spirituality and purpose
- Parent-youth relationships
- Peer relationships

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Life Satisfaction (Scale developed by Scale Huebner, E.S., Suldo, S.M., & Valois, R. F. University of South Carolina)

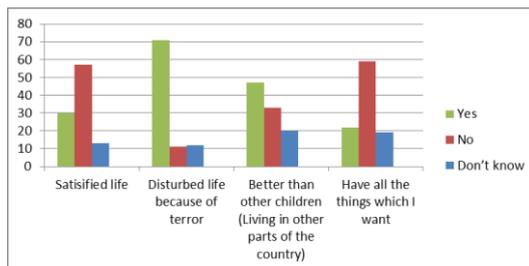


Figure No.1

Source: (Researcher's own calculations by using field data)

Note: (Results are shown in percentage)

The above results show that children are less satisfied and terror has disturbed their lives. They are deprived of basic necessities and want to share same status with the children living in privileged areas of the country.

2. Hope (Scale developed by Snyder, C.R. University of Kansas)

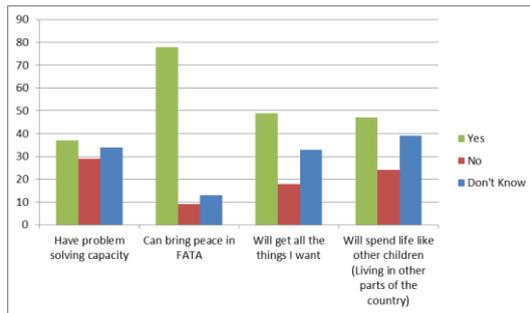


Figure No.2

Source: (Researcher’s own calculations by using field data)

Note: (Results are shown in percentage)

The above analysis on presence of hope reveals mix evidence. However, the children are determined to bring peace in their region and optimistically hope for a better life.

3. Gratitude (Scale developed by McCullough, M.E., Emmons, R.A., Tsang, J)

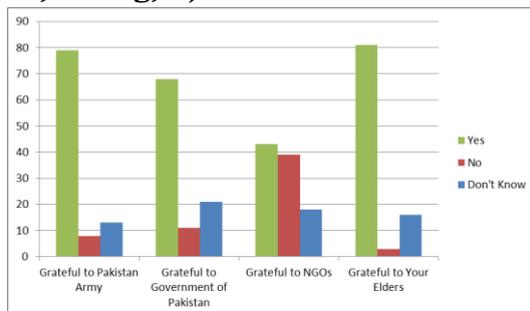


Figure No.3

Source: (Researcher’s own calculations by using field data)

Note: (Results are shown in percentage)

The results show that the children have great sense of gratitude for the Government of Pakistan and the Army, but there are mixed results about the NGOs. The reason is that most of the NGOs are working for peace and social development and a negligible number is working for the development of children.

4. Money Management/Frugality (Scale developed by Kasser, T. Knox College)

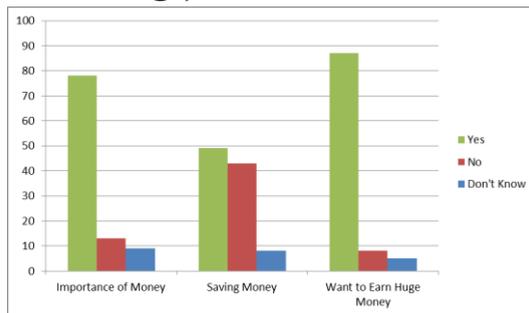


Figure No.4

Source: (Researcher's own calculations by using field data)

Note : (Results are shown in percentage)

The above figure shows that children know the importance of money and want to have a strong earning hand. However, mixed results on saving indicate their fear of losing their property to militants, which bars them from saving.

5. Generosity (Scale developed by Kasser, T. Knox College)

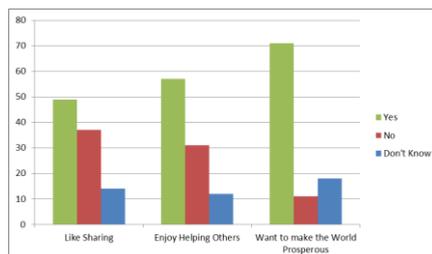


Figure No.5

Source: (Researcher's own calculations by using field data)

Note : (Results are shown in percentage)

The results of generosity scale show that children are traditionally generous like their forefathers and they have a passion to make the world more prosperous.

6. Spirituality and Purpose (Scale developed by National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR))

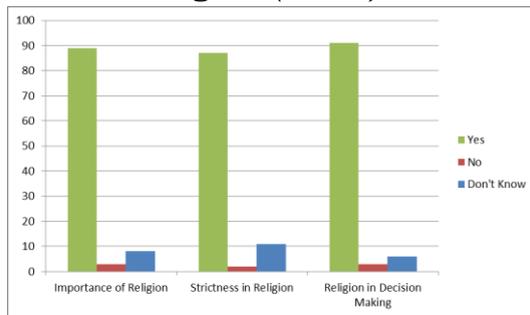


Figure No.6

Source: (Researcher’s own calculations by using field data)

Note: (Results are shown in percentage)

The results of spirituality scale show that children have great affection for religion and they are strongly affiliated to their norms and values. Religion matters a lot for them and they seek its guidance for making decisions.

7. Parent -Youth Relationships (Scale developed by Moore, K., Gunnoe, M.)

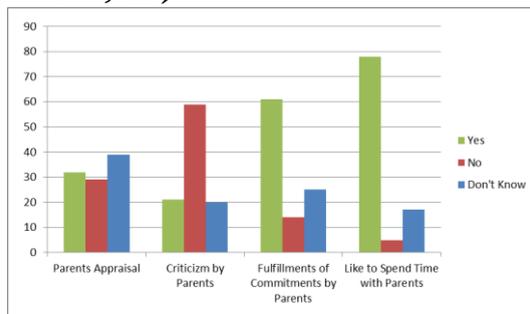


Figure No.7

Source: (Researcher’s own calculations by using field data)

Note: (Results are shown in percentage)

The results show mixed evidence. The reason is that parents are illiterate and they might not know the importance of emotional factors. They love their children but might be unaware of the fact that their appraisal is necessary for the development of children. They do not know the psychological importance of appraisal and encouragement. However, the children gladly endorsed that their parents always kept their words and fulfilled commitments.

8. Peer Relationship (Scale developed by Moore, K., Gunnoe, M.)

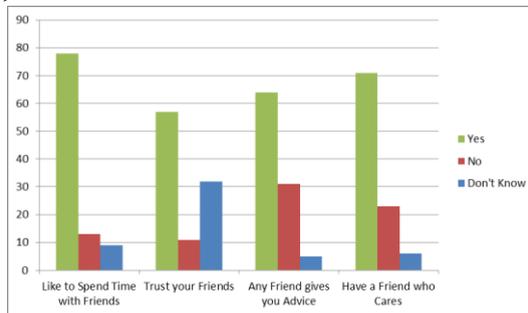


Figure No.8

Source: (Researcher's own calculations by using field data)

Note : (Results are shown in percentage)

The results show that children love to spend time with their friends, thus follow their traditional values of hospitality and sincerity.

CONCLUSION

The objective of this research was to indicate the worse impact of militancy on the psychological growth of the children. The results illustrate that children are discontented, disturbed and are scared because of this phenomenon of war on terror. At the end of the survey children were asked to make a wish; most of them wished for peace, security and education. Despite harboring fear of militants, they were optimistic about the

future of the their area where once peace was prevailing. The negative effect of militancy on FATA mirrored through their fearful, gloomy eyes, weak and pale physique and depressed demeanor. Their daily diet pattern-as revealed through the interview with parents- lacks basic nutrition. Parents' ignorance on this issue also contributes to depravity. In this respect, it will be appropriate to comment that the fundamental right of each child is to enjoy health and education and it must be catered by the government and this alarming situation in FATA calls for a quick and upfront solution. All stakeholders in the development activities in FATA i.e.; NGOs, parents and government need to focus on the physical and psychological health and education of children for a promising and secure future of the country. Also, all proposed programs must address to rebuild the religious and traditional values, as they are firm roots of people of FATA and knit them closely with each other.

SUGGESTIONS

- Government should provide psychosocial support to the children in collaboration with the NGO's working in the same sphere and in aforementioned area.
- Government may start some rehabilitation programs in the area i.e.; life skills based education for healthy mental growth of children.
- Awareness raising campaigns regarding the development of the children may also be raised through community awareness programs.
- A joint venture of government and NGO's may be initiated to provide nutrition to the malnourished children.
- Primary caregivers (Parents) especially mothers must be given training to understand and deal with psychological

requirements of children in precarious circumstances such as wars and in situations of terror.

- Government must focus on providing better health and education facilities in the area.
- Sports opportunities and healthy activities should be provided to the children, it would help these children grow up normally and shed the sense of deprivation and dissatisfaction.

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