

Armed Conflict in Kashmir and Stress among People: An Overview

Poornima Sharma

Head,
Deptt. of Political Science,
St. Norbert's College,
Jabalpur (M.P.) India.



Jawaid Ahmad Mir

(Corresponding Author)
Research Scholar,
Deptt. of Political Science,
Rani Durgavati University,
Jabalpur (M.P.) India.

Abstract

Kashmir, which is known as "Paradise on Earth" for its natural beauty, has today become a land of armed conflict. The thirty year old armed conflict in the State of Jammu and Kashmir has disturbed various dimensions of human life. Growing up in the context of armed conflict brings one face to face with many personal, social, psychological and political problems/challenges (Rajni Dhingra and Vaishali Arora, 2005). Armed conflict also creates psychological kind of warfare among people. Before the emergence of armed conflict, the situation in Kashmir valley was peaceful. The present paper reveals that people are suffering from stress due to encounters, killings, protests, strikes, shutdowns, curfew, disturbance, chaos, confusion, displacement, uncertainty and disappearance. The effect is more serious on the youth. The main purpose of the study is to analyze the impact of stress among people due to ongoing armed conflict in Kashmir valley. The present research paper is based on literature of previous studies.

Keywords: Armed Conflict, Stress, People, and Kashmir Valley.

Introduction

The armed conflict in Kashmir valley which emerged in 1989 led to killings, disappearances, displacements, destruction of infrastructure and destabilization of lifeline systems. The general consequences of armed conflict in Kashmir valley are use of force by military, loss of security, deaths, human rights violation (Farooq A. Rather, 2013), displacements, disrupted schooling (Waheeda Khan, 2015) and the like. Kashmir conflict has badly affected every section of society and life. The impact has put into challenge the major consequences for survival, development, health and overall psychological well being. Therefore, the prevailing situation in the Kashmir valley has affected the psychological health of people seriously, resulting in the mental stress of people. The torture in form of physical injuries is quite evident but the psychological trauma is being put to question time and again (Dr Irm Jalali Bodha, Ifra Showkat, 2017).

Objective of the Study

1. To identify the effects of armed conflict on mental health and general health of the people of Kashmir valley.
2. To assess the impact of armed conflict on population of Kashmir valley.

Conflict

Conflict is a serious clash or argument, struggle, disagreement and fight arising out of differences of opinions, wishes, needs, values, and interests between and among individuals or groups (Hornby, A.S., 1995). Conflict in other words refers to clash of interests which is present in all times, places and almost in all societies and is experienced at all levels of human activity. Karl Marx, the father of communism has said that the history of existing hitherto human society is simply the history of class struggle and nothing else (George Ritzer, 1996). Conflict is basic to social institutions such as families, political parties and states (Asima Hassan and Aneesa Shafi, 2013). There are several factors which are responsible for emergence of conflict like competition over scarce resources, social inequalities, economic inequalities, caste based differences, absence of opportunities for political participation, differences in religious opinions, differences in political ideologies, etc. (Anstey M., 1991).

Stress

Stress is response to threatening conditions of life (R. S. Feldman, 1990). Stress is a word that is most used in the modern day busy lives of people. Stress is experienced as an inability of fulfilling a demand that is usually greater than an individual's resources. Usually the stress level of a person is directly related to the perception and demands by family, friends

and the society as a whole. Stress is an emotional pressure resulting from the challenges, conflict of interests, problems and difficulties of life and if not handled properly, may affect the person physically as well as mentally, ultimately deteriorating his performance in daily life activities. In today's world one cannot imagine life without stress. Stress is the psychological and physical state that results when the resources of the individual are not sufficient to cope with the demands and pressure of the situation (S. Michie, 2002).

Mental Health & Disorders

Mental health can be described as psychological well-being or absence of mental disorders. It is because of psychological well-being an individual is able to use his cognitive ability, works for

his society and meets daily life demands. Mental disorders are medical conditions that disturb persons thinking, mood, feeling and daily functioning. Mental disorders include depression, bi-polar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety etc.

Impact of Armed Conflict

After the initiation of militancy in 1989, the Kashmir valley has been subject to continual political insecurity and armed conflict, the region remains highly militarised. The prevalence and predictors of depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the 10 districts of the Kashmir valley is quiet evident from the survey conducted by Tambri Housen, Annick Lenglet, Cono Ariti, et al, 2017.



Diagrammatic representation of armed conflict in Kashmir and stress among people.

Terrorist activities are the means for causing mentally traumatic situations which affects the mental health of an individual (Mohammad Amin Wani, 2014). Before militant uprising in Kashmir valley usually middle aged women were found in major depressive disorders. Right from 1989 women with age group of 14 to 18 years are victim of stress, panic and anxiety disorders. Doctors in Kashmir valley believe that not more than 10% of those patients who need psychiatric care actually approach to hospitals; such patients are taken to cardiologists or neurologists rather than psychiatrists due to lack of knowledge or the stigma attached with a visit to a psychiatrist. (Mohammad Amin Wani, 2014). In Kashmir valley considerable increase in the number of people being diagnosed with serious stress, anxiety disorders, depressive disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder (Khan & Beg, 1993; Margoob, Firdosi, Banal, Khan, Malik, Sheikh, et al., 2006) whereas the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder is reported to be 15.9% (Margoob & Sheikh, 2006) which is quite dangerous and alarming situation for the Kashmir valley when compared to other places (Nuzhat Firdous, 2015).

Kashmir valley has become hot bed of conflict between security forces and militant outfits for three decades since 1989. Both the militants and security forces have caused serious misery to the people of Kashmir valley in the form of human rights violation by using Kashmiri people as shields as well as custodial and extra-judicial killings, torching of houses, abduction and torture of innocent people (Asima Hassan and Aneesa Shafi, 2013) and the like. Other forms of conflict-related violence like increased poverty and widespread insecurity, coupled with a lack of basic services such as healthcare, water and sanitation, education, housing, forced recruitment, restricted movement, forced displacement, harassment and intimidation and the dangers posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance exacerbate mental problems.

Constant restraint and hostile environmental setup is telling upon the mental health of Kashmiri people. Deterioration of mental health is manifested in several psychological disorders reported so far by the renowned psychiatric experts in the state's summer capital, Srinagar. Such reported disorders include anxiety, mood disorders, sleeplessness, fear, nervousness, anger, aggressiveness, depression, flashbacks, alcohol and substance abuse, suicide, domestic and sexual violence and post-traumatic

stress disorder. These in turn have given birth to general health problems among Kashmiri people like diabetes, heart related problems especially high blood pressure (The News, August 18, 2005). On an average in every family the conflict has rendered members of family as patients of cardiological, neurological, oncological related and other dreaded diseases.

The foreign aid agency called Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) is constantly exerting on managing the psychological problem faced by the people of valley due to ongoing armed conflict. Its representative in Kashmir namely Paul van Haperen has reported that there is almost no Kashmiri family that has not been affected (Izzat Jarundi, 2002). There has been alarming increase in mental disorders as such Jammu and Kashmir has one of the highest suicidal rates in India (Agence France Presse, April 8, 2001). The unexpected and sudden death due to violent acts has led to all kind of psychological problems (including mental health) in the survived family members of the victims (Asima Hassan and Aneesa Shafi, 2013).

To sum up, it can be pretended with confidence taking due consideration of earlier studies that the ongoing armed conflict situation in Kashmir valley has led to tremendous increase in psychological problems mostly exhibiting in the form of depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) coupled with physical discomforts like hypertension etc.

Conclusion

Due to emergence of armed conflict in Kashmir valley since 1989 infrastructure worth hundreds of thousands saw destruction. This in turn led to disorder in social fabric of people of Kashmir valley. Routine encounters between security forces and militants have caused serious misery to the people of Kashmir valley in various forms like human rights violation and other forms of conflict-related violence like increased poverty and widespread insecurity, coupled with a lack of basic services such as healthcare, water and sanitation, education, housing, forced recruitment, restricted movement, forced displacement, harassment and intimidation have exacerbate mental problems. All this has caused extreme helplessness and hopelessness among Kashmiri people and has culminated into degenerated cultural aggression.

Suggestions

To cope up with ever increasing psychological problems in Kashmir valley due to prevailing armed conflict the dire need of an hour is to organize a network of trained psychological counsellors across length and breadth of Kashmir valley for psychological counselling of victims through psychological counselling centres. A genuine negotiation between the two stakeholder countries of Indian subcontinent is mandatory and measures as well as efforts towards it must be initiated at earliest to make the people of Kashmir valley to feel sigh of relief as well as to restore their sense of security. This can help them to flourish by ending the day to day

stress, depression, anxiety, socio-economic disruption and disorganization. Moreover, the Central Government as well as the State Government must give impetus to already kick started schemes related to unemployed educated youth to channelize more and more young energy in positive direction. It will help in relieving the stress of Kashmiri youth caused due to ongoing armed conflict to a great extent until some permanent solution crystallizes.

References

- Anstey M. (1991). *Negotiating Conflict: Insights and Skills for Negotiators and Peacemakers*. Cape Town: Juta and Co. Ltd.)
- Asima Hassan and Aneesa Shafi (2013). *Impact of Conflict Situation on Mental Health in Srinagar, Kashmir*. *Bangladesh e-journal of sociology*, Vol.10 (1).
- Dr Irm Jalali Bodha, Ifra Showkat (2017). *Kashmir Conflict and Its Impact on the Life of People of Jammu and Kashmir*. *International Journal of Current Trends in Science and Technology*, Vol. 8, Issue. 01.
- Farooq A. Rather (2013). *Armed Conflicts in J&K and Its Impact on Society: A Case Study of Kashmir Valley*. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, Volume 3, Issue 2, February 2013.
- George Ritzer, *Sociological theory*, 1996, Singapore.
- Hornby, A.S. (1995). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (Fifth Edition)*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Izzat Jarundi, *The people of Kashmir, Features*, Vol., 2002. Murj 21.
- Khan, A. W., & Beg, A. A. (1993). *A study of psychiatric morbidity in Kashmir under stressful conditions in the valley*. MD Thesis, (Unpublished).
- Margoob, M. A. & Sheikh, A. A. (2006). *Community prevalence of adult PTSD in South Asia-experience from Kashmir*. *JK-Practitioner*, 13, 18-25.
- Margoob, M. A., Firdosi M. M., Banal, R., Khan, A. Y., Malik, Y. A., Sheikh, A. A., et al. (2006). *Community Prevalence of Trauma in South Asia-Experience from Kashmir*. *JK-Practitioner*, 13, 14-17.
- Mohammad Amin Wani (2014). *Study of mental health among the people affected by terrorism in Kashmir*. *International Journal of Social Science and Language* Oct, Nov, Dec-2014, Vol-01 Issue-01 (67-72).
- New Kashmiri generation victim of chronic depression, *The News*, August 18, 2005 at <http://www.infopak.govt.pk/news/kashnews/kashnews 2005/kash-aug18-2005.htm>.
- Nuzhat Firdous (2015). *Kashmir Conflict: Alarming Mental Health Consequences*. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology* Volume 3, Issue 1, October – December, 2015.
- People in Kashmir committed suicide in last Decade: Study*, Agence France Presse, April 8, 2001.

- S. Michie (2002). *Causes and management of stress at work. Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 59, 1, pp. 67-72.
- Rajni Dhingra and Vaishali Arora (2005). *At the Cross Roads: Families in Distress. J. Hum. Ecol.*, 17(3): 217-222 (2005).
- R. S. Feldman (1990). *Understanding Psychology (Second Edition)*. USA; McGraw Hill, INC. p. 230.
- Tambri Housen, Annick Lenglet, Cono Ariti, Showkat Shah, Helal Shah, Shabnum Ara, Kerri Viney, Simon Janes, Giovanni Pintaldi (2017). *Prevalence of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder in the Kashmir Valley*. Retrieved from <http://gh.bmj.com/> on October 17, 2017 - Published by group.bmj.com
- Waheeda Khan (2015). *Conflict in Kashmir: Psychosocial consequences on children*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281581535>