



Plight of Widows and Single Parent Orphans of Members of Armed Groups in Kashmir: A Sociological Study (A Special Focus on Health and Education)

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Abstract: Conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, a Northern Himalayan region in subcontinent, is one of the most intractable and long-standing disputes in the world which originated in 1947. The roots of the conflict can be traced from the emergence of India and Pakistan as two separate independent states on the basis of 'Two-Nation' theory. India has control on about two third area of Kashmir while Pakistan controls a third of the region. The implications of this protracted conflict are very far-reaching as thousands of people have died, since, armed conflict began in Indian part of Kashmir in late 1980's. In addition, to the human and material loss, the society experienced a new group of widows and orphans of members of armed groups who were killed in the conflict. This study is an attempt to bring out the devastating effects on the lives of these widows and their children who are single parent orphans and it is these families who had to suffer a lot on economic, health and social fronts. Consequently, they developed abnormal health issues. This study gives an insight of different prepositions based on the field work carried out across the Kashmir valley.

INTRODUCTION

The erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir (India) is situated between 32°17' and 36°58' North Latitudes and 73°06' and 80°30' East Longitude, territory in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent. The erstwhile state is spread out in a geographical area of 222,236 km^[1]. It is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual state having a population of around 12,548,926^[2].

Since, the partition of Indian subcontinent after the British left in 1947, conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir remains as one of the most intractable and

long-standing disputes in the world. Both the nuclear armed countries have fought three wars (1947-48, 1965 and 1971) besides several border skirmishes over Kashmir.

The armed conflict of the last three decades can be categorized into different periods ranging from discontent over rigged Assembly elections in 1987, leading to the rise of militant groups from late 1980s onwards, and the gradual reduction in violence in the region in recent years. A bomb blast in Srinagar on 31 July, 1988 carried out by Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), a nationalist and nominally secular group that seeks independence of Kashmir from both India and Pakistan,

in effect marked the start of the insurgency^[3]. It is widely believed that the rigging of 1987 elections proved a catalyst for insurgency in the Valley and within months several angry Kashmiri local youth went to Pakistan for arms training^[4]. But it was on 8 December 1989 that JKLF and militancy in Kashmir came into the limelight when the militant outfit kidnapped Rubiya Sayeed, daughter of then Union home minister Mufti Muhammad Sayeed as she left a government hospital in Srinagar. The kidnappers refused to release her until December 13 when five of their jailed associates were exchanged with Rubiya Sayeed.

By then, Kashmiri youth were crossing Line-of-Control (LoC)* in large numbers for arms training^[5]. In the weeks and months that followed, dozens of militant groups emerged and wreaked havoc throughout Kashmir, killing government officials, security personnel and civilians. In the last more than three decades, violence has shattered the population of Kashmir. Over the years and decades it has been seen that the government of India has failed to fulfill its political commitments and promises of development in Kashmir due to which people have lost faith in the system.

*LoC is a military control line between the Indian and Pakistani controlled parts of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir a line which does not constitute a legally recognized international boundary but serves as the de facto border. Fatalities due to Militancy in Kashmir from 1988 till march 2019:

- Total No. of killings: 44,729
- Militants killed: 23,386
- Civilians killed: 14,930
- Security forces killed: 6,413
- Source: Union Ministry of Home Affairs (UMHA)

Due to murky state of turmoil in Kashmir and lack of proper documentation, it is difficult to ascertain the exact figures of number of deaths in Kashmir, since, the beginning of the militancy in 1989. Though the government says <50,000 people including militants and security forces personnel have been killed in the last 30-years, human rights and separatists groups in Kashmir put the number at over a lakh^[6].

Literature review: Mir *et al.*^[7] studied the effect of armed conflict on mental health of youth in Kashmir. The study comprise of youth aged between 16-25 years. Youth was examined on the basis of age group 16-20 and 21-25 years, gender, residence and violence witnessed or not witnessed. It was observed that level of neuroticism was much higher in youth who have witnessed violent episodes and in youth from rural areas. The study reveals that the level of anxiety was higher in youth who have witnessed violent episodes and youth from rural areas

where as no major difference was found in groups based on age and gender. In addition, it was observed that mental tension and the level of guilt proneness in youth belonging to rural background, youth who have witnessed any kind of violent episodes and youth of late adolescent group is higher (16-20 years).

Hassan^[8] undertook a study “conflict and youth in Kashmir” a sociological study. The study was carried among youth enrolled in various degree colleges in six districts of Kashmir. They were under graduate and post graduate students aged between 18-26 years. The study revealed that majority of the respondents, i.e., 89.1% felt that the impact of conflict situation proved pervasive and mostly negative on Kashmir society. It was found that youth in Kashmir were raised in stressful environment which is not in their best interest. The study found that 51.4% respondents have participated in street protests for large scale killings, human rights abuses. The major problems of youth were found to be drug abuse, corruption, unemployment and mental health problems. Major concerns of the youth were peace deficit, physical security, employment, health care and education. Various suggestions have been put forward in the study for the betterment of youth.

Kashmir Corps^[9] in her paper aimed at providing the educational development in Kashmir historically as well as in context of current political conflict. The paper traced the history of education development; it began, since, 1857 by the second Dogra ruler Maharaja Ranbir Singh. The two decades of militancy completely demolished the education system in Kashmir. During this period several hundred schools were burnt down, the dropout rate increased tremendously due to lack of safe and proper school buildings. Moreover, large number of orphans and widows were caused by the conflict. In order to support their family children must leave school early to work which in turn led to increased dropout rates. Another phenomenon is that of recurring strikes, due to which everything comes to a standstill, it affects education as schools and colleges are closed down on these days. It was also pointed out that the conflict has crippled the economy of Kashmir and the issues of educational and economic under development are interrelated which must be addressed simultaneously for the real progress to transpire. The paper concluded that the ongoing conflict is the overall impediment to the true educational development that promotes equality and opportunities for all residents of state.

Statement of the problem: Although, a number of research papers have been published about the armed conflict in Kashmir over the years, hardly ever any efforts were made by the media, civil society groups or researchers to gauge the pain that killings of members of armed groups bring into the suffering families and also its

impact on their lives. In most cases, the death of the family head (member of armed groups) led to the problems with mental health as well as stunted intellectual development and physical growth of his children and widow. The psychological impact of such incident is ever lasting and losing their beloved ones has injured them psychologically forever. Conflict and violence cause a serious vulnerability of women and children as they remain extremely vulnerable. No credible research had been carried out so far in Kashmir to ascertain this facet of armed conflict. Though a lot of researches have been done on Kashmir conflict and its off-shoots, so-far no attempt was made to study the impact on the families of the slain members of armed groups.

The researcher felt need for such a study, imperative as >50% of the people killed in Kashmir in the last three decades were members of the armed groups. It is presumed that in the first decade of the armed conflict, a good percentage among those who picked up arms and became militants were married and had families. A good number of them were killed leaving behind devastated families. The trend of married people becoming members of armed groups dwindle after 1990s, however has not stopped completely even till now. However, there is no data available with any government agency or civil society group which can give an exact number of those members of armed groups who were married and got killed.

After surveying across Kashmir, the researcher presumes that 10% among the members of armed groups killed in the last 30-years were married and had children. And it is these families who had to suffer a lot on economic front as they were not entitled for any compensation from the government like the families of the slain civilians.

In this study, the researcher carried out complete profiles of 100 families of members of armed groups who died in the last 30-years of armed conflict. The aim of the research is to understand and analyze miserable condition of their families, their way of living and other details that help understand nuances and leftover of destruction were taken into consideration in the study. The process of research framework was designed which included the themes like impact on the physical and mental health of widows and single parent orphans of the slain members of the armed groups. The set themes in questionnaire were helpful to finding out the direct as well as indirect impact on them.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Main objectives of the paper: To assess the multi-dimensional problems faced by the families of the slain members of the armed groups. To gauge the physical health status and emotional/mental well being of the slain

members of the armed groups. To understand and analyze miserable condition of their families, their way of living and other details that help understand nuances and leftover of destruction.

Universe and sample of the study: For the purpose of the study, the researcher carried out a sample of 100 families of the members of the armed groups who died in the last 30-years of armed conflict. Among them, 35 families were selected from south Kashmir districts of Anantnag, Pulwama, Shopian and Kulgam the epi-centre of new age armed struggle (Youth who are younger than 20 years of age, indifferent to their parent's pleas, are joining armed groups, only to be killed a few weeks later in last decade). Similarly equal number of families were taken from north Kashmir districts of Kupwara, Baramulla and Bandipora which saw maximum killings during 1990's and 2000's as all the three districts share border with the part of Kashmir administrated by Pakistan. In central Kashmir districts of Srinagar, Ganderbal and Budgam which comparatively saw lesser number of killings, 30 such families were interviewed. All these families were selected by random primarily because of less number of families.

For collecting primary data, interview schedule was prepared and was processed through sociological pre-testing before the actual fieldwork was taken up. The researcher surveyed the various districts of Kashmir to gather the information about the victim families.

The families (widows and children) of slain militants comprised the sample. The researcher used the snow ball sampling and selected the sample in each district with the help of accidental sampling method out of whole population. Sometimes the respondents themselves used to act as a source, itself imparting information about other victims or at times, accompanied the researcher to another fellow victim's home till the desired numbers of respondents were collected. This type of sampling was used as it is otherwise very difficult to identify such families. The information was also gathered from people like community heads, journalists and police officials.

Tools and techniques used: The study is an empirical one and all the prepositions and conclusions are based on an extensive field work carried out in various districts of Kashmir. To gather the data, primary sources and secondary data were used. The methods and techniques of primary data collection in this study were interview schedule (interview of families of the slain members of the armed groups) and questionnaire. A detailed questionnaire was formulated for the purpose of collecting primary source information from the respondents. It composed of questions on important and selected themes. All the set of questions were based on the themes of the study. The observation method was also used during the field work.

After all the relevant information was collected, it was aggregated and tabulated according to the set themes and objectives, the data was analyzed in the sociological framework and that led us to the formulation of findings.

Limitations of the study: The researcher faced innumerable problems while carrying out the field work as there is high degree of suspicion among people in Kashmir. They hesitate perceptibly while interacting with the strangers and when it comes to families of members of armed groups, the suspicion on strangers increases manifold. Some respondents were reluctant in giving the responses. It took quite a while to re-assure them that speaking to researcher would not endanger them in any way. They seemed cautious about what they could say on record. The researcher had to constantly assure them that their identities would not be revealed. The whole process was time consuming and approaching respondents and extracting information from them was a difficult job. As the topic of the research was sensitive, it sometimes used to be very emotional scenes when respondents were sharing their traumatic experiments directly related to them. But by handling the sensitive topic with intense care and by taking care of emotions of the respondents, who had already been suffering from trauma, the researcher was able to tackle the job with great patience and forbearance. The researcher developed good rapport with the respondents in order to get clear and fair responses.

Background of the respondents: While it is generally observed in conflicts across the world that people from lower and lower-middle class families usually join armed groups^[10], Kashmir is no exception. Poverty often deprives people of the ability to obtain an adequate education and a lack of education leaves many people vulnerable to negative influences. Feelings of deprivation that are caused by being unemployed or the fear of unemployment can lead to extremist thoughts in people, thereby inviting them to engage in violent activities. The respondents belonged to Table 1.

The Table 1 reveals the greater percentage, i.e., 45% slain militants belonged to the age group of 25-35 at the time of death while another 32% were in the age group of 35-45. The 16% deceased belonged to 45-55 age group and 6% of the slain militants were in the age group of 18-25 years and only 1% was above 55 years of age.

Table 2 shown above reveals that majority of 55% families of the slain militants belonged to Rs 1000-3000 per month income bracket. While 24% had per month income of Rs 3000-Rs 5000, 12% of the slain militants belonged to families whose monthly income was less than 1000 Indian rupees when they joined militancy. Only 9% of the slain militants belonged to well-off families whose

Table 1: Age distribution of respondents

Age groups	Responses	Percentage
18-25	06	06
25-35	45	45
35-45	32	32
45-55	16	16
55-65	1	1
Total	100	100

Table 2: Appx. family income per month (in Indian Rupees)

Income groups	Responses	Percentage
Up to Rs 1000	12	12
Rs 1000-Rs 3000	55	55
Rs 3000-Rs 5000	24	24
Rs 5000-above	9	9
Total	100	100

monthly income was above Rs 5000 when they joined militancy. Even in 1990s, per month income of below Rs 3000 for a family was not enough for them to have basic amenities of life. Most of these slain militant had joined militancy in 1990s or either in the early years of next decade.

Educational background of slain members of armed groups: In the past decade, the focus of international and national strategies for countering terrorism has shifted from using hard security measures to combat violent extremism and terrorism to a more multi-sectoral and development approach. Initially, the development discourse attributed the root causes of Violent Extremism (VE) primarily to poverty and lack of education and many donor countries called for increased aid and educational assistance as a means of ending terrorism. Yet, some researchers found the link tenuous. Kruger and Malečková for example, noted that “any connection between poverty, education and terrorism is indirect, complicated and probably weak”^[11]. They also noted that drawing a connection between poverty and terrorism, if it is not justified, could be potentially dangerous. A study of Middle Eastern and North African youth demonstrates that individuals with secondary educations who are unemployed or underemployed have the highest risk of becoming radicalized^[12]. Regardless of whether lack of education in and of itself is a driver of radicalization, there seems to be a general consensus that education is one of the most important tools to reach young people and therefore can be used to address some of the “push and pull factors” that may drive young people towards violent extremism. Children and youth who have no access to formal education may be susceptible to recruitment and radicalization^[13].

In the current research study, the low income background of the families clearly depicts in the educational background of the members of the armed groups. A majority of 45% as shown in Table 3 showed that they had not attended any school and were illiterates while another 20% had dropped out of schools before

Table 3: Educational background of slain members of armed groups

Educational background	Responses	Percentage
Illiterate	45	45
Up to class 8th	20	20
10th Pass	12	12
12th Pass	11	11
Graduate and above	12	12
Total	100	100

reaching 9th class. 12% of the slain members of armed groups had passed 10th standard but couldn't continue their studies beyond while 11% after passing 12th standard discontinued their studies and started supporting the family financially due to extreme difficult financial situations. Of the 12% surveyed slain members of the armed groups who were graduates and above were either in a government job or from the families who had relatively better financial conditions. These 12% highly educated slain members of the armed groups were normally given leadership positions by the armed groups. Older members and commanders frequently were professionals such as lawyers, teachers and mid-level government officials.

Worldwide it has been observed that members of the armed groups are generally people who feel alienated from society and have a grievance or regard themselves as victims of an injustice. They are devoted to their political or religious cause and do not regard their violent actions as criminal. They are loyal to each other but will deal with a disloyal member more harshly than with the enemy^[14].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Although, conflict created by human beings is as old as the human civilization, any organized effort to study and quantify the impact of conflict and violence on public health particularly mental health of the population, started only in 1970s by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the context of the humanitarian crisis in Biafra, Nigeria. Thereafter many studies and researches were conducted in this regard and today it is an area of concern for everybody. As per assessment of the ICRC, after the physical health, mental well being of a human being is the most stressed area in conflict situations.

Simply proximity to the situations also can affect even those who are not directly involved in conflicts. Impact of conflict on mental health of individuals who go through it or even witness it, is influenced by several factors. Those who are victims of violent situations suffer psychological stress. Such stress may traumatize individuals. The acts of conflict in terms of death of a close family member may be the most difficult bereavement to bear and the sudden death in the family might have long lasting physical and emotional repercussions on the survivors.

On enquiring from the respondents about how the incident of killing in their family impacted them, the answer is as follows:

Table 4: Impact of incident on family

Impact of incident on family	Responses	Percentage
Positive	1	1
Negative	94	94
Unchanged	05	05
Total	100	100

Table 4 clearly shows that whopping 94% respondents (widows and single parent orphans) had a negative impact of the incident (killing). These killings occurred during gunfights with security forces, the respondents stated. Majority of the respondents revealed that constant raids and harassment by security forces when the member of the armed group was alive created a sense of fear among them. Added with financial problems and lack of social support, the incident had devastating impact on them. The respondents revealed that the sympathy of the people in the initial days after the killing of the member of the armed group vanished with time and they were later left to fend for themselves.

However, 5% respondents said that the incident didn't make any changes in them. These were the cases where either the slain member of the armed group had no children and the widow remarried or the family had a strong social and financial support. A negligible 1% respondent said that the incident had a positive impact as they received overwhelming support from the society after the killing of the member of armed group. These families had moved on in their life after the incident.

Thus, it can be inferred that killing of a person in a family created a sense of insecurity and fear in the survived family members of the slain member of the armed group. It was observed that the mode of death specifically due to violent act which was unexpected and sudden has led to all kind of psychological stress among the family members of the slain member of the armed group. This fact is confirmed by the results of the present study (Table 5).

According to official figures, armed conflict in Kashmir claimed a total of 41,000 lives from 1990 to 2017 which included 22,000 members of the armed groups, 14,000 civilians and 5,000 security forces personnel^[15]. According to the India's ministry of external affairs figures between January 1990 and December 2001, of these 22,000 killed members of armed groups, 14,356 were locals while 2358 were foreigners, mostly Pakistanis.

This was corroborated in the current research study as 82% of the members of the armed groups had been killed in gunfights with security forces from 1990-2000. Another 16% were killed in the next decade (2001-2011) and two percent died from 2011 onwards.

In response to a question whether the widow of slain member of the armed group remarried or not, responses put forward in Table 6.

Table 5: Year/Decade of death of militants

Year/Decade of death of the militant	Responses	Percentage
Died between 1990-2000	82	82
Died between 2000-2010	16	16
Died between 2010-2020	2	2
Total	100	100

Table 6: Whether widow remarried or not

Whether widow remarried or not	Responses	Percentage
Yes	15	15
No	85	85
Total	100	100

Majority of the widows in the study revealed in categorical terms that they didn't re-marry after the death of their husbands. This is a general practice in Kashmir, if the women have any child/children, they seldom go for remarriage. Widows are not typically acceptable brides, as Kashmiri society places a taboo on remarriage unlike Muslim societies in many other parts of the world. Even when remarriage is possible, many women prefer to remain single out of apprehensions for their children's welfare. A study carried out by the University of Kashmir several years back showed that 91% of widows surveyed had not considered remarriage.

The findings of the current research also revealed that a majority-85%-of women respondents didn't remarry after the death of their husbands. It was also observed that the widows who didn't remarry faced lot of problems which included loneliness at home, mental torture, lack of control and guidance in home, fearful moments, failure of control over children, social insecurity, economic hardships, social apathy, discrimination and rough treatment by relatives and neighbours. Only 15% of the widows of slain members of the armed groups in Kashmir have remarried. These include those who either had no children after the first marriage or were from well-off families. One of such widow of the slain member of the armed group had remarried with a senior Indian National Congress leader in Kashmir who was a cabinet minister in the erstwhile state government. Another widow of the slain member of the armed group who remarried had tied a nuptial knot with Pakistan-administrated outfit-Pakistan based chief commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen, Syed Salah-ud-Din. The researcher enquired the age of widow at the time of her husband's death. Table 7 portrays the results.

One of the major implications of the armed conflict in Kashmir, since, 1989 has been that thousands of women have become widows. At present, no accurate number of these unfortunate beings is available. However, according to some reports, there are over least 32000 widows which include widows of civilians and slain members of armed groups^[16]. First, they have suffered immediately after the death of their heads of families who were usually members of armed groups, sole bread earners of their families.

Table 7: Age of widow when her husband died

Age of widow when her husband died (Years)	Responses	Percentage
18-25	25	25
25-35	52	52
35-45	19	19
>45	4	4

In the present study 52% of the widows of the slain members of armed groups were in the age group of 25-35 years while another 25% were even younger in the age group of 18-25 years. 19% of the widows were in the age group of 35-45, only 4% were above 45 years.

It was observed during the study that the sudden loss of the head of the household, in conjunction with estrangement from relatives and loss of a support system due to social ostracism are two of the many burdens that befall on the young wives of slain members of armed groups.

The respondents were further asked how many children they had at the time of their husband's death, they gave the following response.

Though there are no official or unofficial records/ estimates on the total number of orphans including of slain members of armed groups, a study carried by the University of Kashmir in 2008 based on ground information put the total number of orphans (single or both parents) at 97,200.

In the present study as it was found that majority of the slain members of armed groups in Kashmir were in the age group of 25-35 at the time of death and most of them had more than three children when they joined the armed groups. Table 8 shows that 44% among the slain members of armed groups had 3 to 4 children while 16% had more than five kids when they were killed leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. The 35% slain members of armed groups had 1 to 2 children while only 5% were married but had no kids.

Thus, it can be inferred that there has been emerged increase in the number of single parent orphans as a result of loss of life due to armed conflict. It has also led to disruption in entire social, economic and health spheres. Hence it rendered the orphans without care and protection. When asked about the educational status of the children of the slain members of armed groups, the following responses were provided:

On enquiring whether the children of slain militants could complete their studies or not, following responses were received.

Table 9 shows that the majority of the children of the slain members of armed groups either couldn't study or had to drop from the school or the college after the death of their father. While 52% of the children of the slain members of armed groups had to drop out from the school 5% had to discontinue studies at the college level. Another 19% couldn't even attend the school due to the

Table 8: No. of children of slain militant

No. of children of slain militant	Responses	Percentage
No children	5	5
1-2 children	35	35
3-4 children	44	44
5 and above children	16	16
Total	100	100

Table 9: Whether children attended school/college or dropped out

Whether children attended school/college or dropped out	Responses	Percentage
Couldn't attend	19	19
School dropouts	52	52
College dropouts	5	5
Completed studies	19	19
Had no children	5	5
Total	100	100

lack of resources while 5% of the slain members of armed groups had no children. The 19% of the children of the slain members of armed groups who completed their studies, were either from the well-off families or had a strong social and economical support.

Scholarships are offered for MBBS and engineering seats to J&K students mainly the wards of "victims of violence"-under various schemes of the Pakistan government^[17].

It has been reported widely in Indian media in recent years that it (offering seats in the colleges) is an attempt by Pakistan to destabilize peace and stability in Kashmir as Pakistan's spy agency ISI and Hizbul Mujahideen armed group are offering admissions to children of members of armed groups either operating or slain in Pakistan's medical and engineering colleges. According to these media reports, Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin even recommends the selection of youngsters as candidates for medical, engineering and management colleges in Pakistan. These recommendations are then routed to the institutions through the ISI, an India Today report claimed citing a top Indian intelligence source^[18].

However, media reports further revealed that the 'reserved' MBBS seats offered in Pakistan and meant for the orphans whose parents had been killed in the conflict in Kashmir were sold by Kashmiri separatists for Indian Rs 10 lakh to 20 lakhs. These reports said that the separatist leaders allegedly used to take money from bureaucrats, top police officers, doctors and other influential people in Kashmir and send the recommendation letter to Pakistan so that the children of these affluent families could easily get admission into medical colleges. India's National Investigation Agency or the NIA has alleged that the money received from the influential was routed to fund armed conflict in the Valley. While red-flagging the authorities about the nexus between members of armed groups, the separatist groups and the Pakistan establishment, the NIA had said, "the three vertices and they are ostensibly patronising the

Table 10: Whether children of deceased militant got admission in MBBS in Pakistan

Whether children of deceased militant got admission in MBBS in Pakistan	Responses	Percentage
Yes	3	3
No	97	97
Total	100%	100

Table 11: Whether widow and orphans inherited property

Whether widow and orphans inherited property	Responses	Percentage
Yes	69	69
No	20	20
Insufficient	11	11
Total	100	100

Kashmir students in order to prepare a generation of doctors and technocrats in Kashmir who will have leanings towards Pakistan^[19]."

On being asked to the respondents whether any of their children got admission in MBBS under reservation quota in Pakistan (Table 10).

Some of the facts of the above media reports were corroborated in the current research study as out of children of 100 slain members of armed groups only three had been able to take admission for the MBBS in Pakistan under the scheme. In rest of the 97% cases, either the families were not aware of the scheme or the children of the slain members of armed groups could not study beyond 12th due to lack of resources. Five percent respondents said that despite attempts to secure an admission in Pakistan for MBBS under the scheme, they couldn't as separatist leaders whom they contacted showed no response to their pleas.

On asked whether the widow and her children inherited the property of the slain member of the armed group, the responses are (Table 11).

The 69% respondents said they inherited the property of their husband and father after his death. However, 20% respondents were denied the property share after the death of the slain member of the armed group. These included the widows who had remarried after the death of their first husband. While in rural areas such cases are rare, in Srinagar city a good percentage of widows and their children had been denied the share in the property. The 11% respondents said they were given insufficient share of the property.

It was observed by the researcher that, a significant number of widows and single parent orphans faced the problem of dislocation because of the denial of the property share from their husbands and father's property. It was because they had to leave the houses of their husbands and fathers and had to take refuge in the houses of their matri-kins, i.e., widow's parents, brothers, sisters and others. Though the stay in others 'houses was welcome for some time, it was not liked and even was not tolerated by the family members, especially women. This also created domestic conflict in which widows and

orphans felt safe by shifting to other places or in rented accommodation. In some families many orphans had to drop out from their schools. Majority of the widows and children had to come out of their houses for working and earning money. This directly and immediately led to the increase in child labour and women labour.

In a conflict situation, the direct impact on health is due to death, injuries or disabilities caused by violence. The indirect impact associated with conflict is a result of the disruption of daily social life and setback to economic activity. The accompanying traumas have devastating consequences on a whole lot of people. Armed conflicts mean the destruction of homes, families torn apart, the disturbance or complete disarray of health and education, a loss of trust in people, the experience of suffering, all of which undermine the very foundations of life particularly of widows and orphans and destroy the vision through which they look into the world.

On enquiring how the incident impacted on emotional/mental well being of the family, following responses were received (Table 12).

The findings of the current research study clearly revealed this aspect as 93% of the widows and single parent orphans of the slain members of armed groups had a negative impact on their emotional/mental well being after his death.

During the research study it was observed that the respondents were having multiple psychological problems which included being fearful and feeling insecure. The respondents were having sleep disorders because of fearful thoughts which resulted in fear of getting victimized again. They didn't enjoy the life after experiencing the death in their family and lost interest in life.

Since, studies have indicated that exposure to physical traumatic component (experience/witnessed a life threatening event) to be the strong indicator for psychological well being, the results of the present study in this regard are also in agreement with the previous studies.

The 7% of the respondents whose emotional/mental well being remained unchanged included those widows who remarried after the death of their husband and had no children, or the families who had strong social and economical support.

On enquiring about the impact on respondent's physical health, the responses are as follows: the look on Table 13 clearly depicts that the majority-81%-of widows of the slain members of armed groups experienced multiple health problems after the incident. The respondents believed that the underlying cause of their deteriorated physical health had been the emotional trauma. However, the physical health status of 19% respondents remained unchanged after the incident

Table 12: Impact on emotional/mental well being

Impact on emotional/mental well being	Responses	Percentage
Positive	00	0
Negative	93	93
Unchanged	07	07
Total	100	100

Table 13: Impact on physical health

Whether physical health deteriorated/unchanged?	Responses	Percentage
Unchanged	19	19
Deteriorated	81	81
Total	100	100

(killing of the member of armed group). These mostly included the widows who either remarried or had a strong social and economical support.

Sociologists have time and again raised the issue of social implications of the armed conflict in Kashmir with some suggesting that girls of members of armed groups, dead or alive such as their sisters, daughters, cousin sisters and other female relatives suffered a lot. In actuality, they lost the chance of getting "good, equal and choicest" boys. Though marriage with girls related to the members of armed groups has not emerged as a taboo, they were considered undesirable and were often avoided. This was done because of the reasons which included harassment on the part of security forces and the feeling that these families could not pay the dowry^[20].

This fact was corroborated in the current study as shown in Table 14 that 37% of the families faced difficulty in finding suitable match for their children after the death of their father. In 27% of the cases, the children were still young and had not reached to marriageable age or the respondents didn't want to answer this question. 36% respondents stated that they didn't face any problems in finding a suitable match.

Over the years, there have been allegations that some vested interest individuals/groups have been embezzling money and aid coming for the families of armed conflict victims in Kashmir. Even the NIA which has been probing terror financing cases in Kashmir in recent years, has alleged that separatist leaders received funds from abroad and utilized them for personal gains-from amassing properties to paying for foreign education of their kin^[21].

During the current research study, 62% of the respondents revealed that the money/aid meant for them after the death of the member of armed group was usurped by some greedy people. They didn't elaborate as to whom these people were and where from the money/aid had come. Some of them were of the opinion that money was sent by Pakistan for their rehabilitation, but it didn't reach them. However, 38% of the respondents said there was nothing like that and nobody usurped the aid or the money (Table 15).

Table 14: Whether children faced any problem in finding suitable match due to the militant background of father

Children faced any problem in finding match	Responses	Percentage
Yes	37	37
No	36	36
Don't know	27	27
Total	100	100

Table 15: Whether any one played politics over death or usurped money/aid meant for next-of-kin of deceased militant

Politics played over death or money usurped?	Responses	Percentage
Yes	62	62
No	38	38
Total	100	100

Table 16: Whether deceased militant was treated as role model?

Deceased militant treated as role model?	Responses	Percentage
Yes	60	60
No	40	40
Total	100	100

Right from the start of the armed conflict in Kashmir in 1989, there was belief among security agencies that neutralizing members of armed groups would end armed conflict in Kashmir. However, this didn't happen even after more than three decades due to multiple reasons. One of the major reasons could be that the killing of every local member of armed group resulted in youth queuing up to join and replace him (Table 16). The 2017 calendar of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank, the region's largest bank, sparked a debate over who Kashmir's role models were after young Kashmiri achievers were picked to feature in it. Following this, a few copies of the calendar were set ablaze outside the Jamia Masjid (Central Mosque) in old city, Srinagar, the regions capital^[22]. Soon, calendars featuring slain commander of Hizbul Mujahideen, Burhan Wani* began doing the rounds of the internet. Later, online activists circulated calendars featuring other slain members of armed groups and civilian victims.

*Burhan Wani was a commander of Hizbul Mujahideen militant outfit and wielded massive popularity among the local populace through social media presence. He helped in conveying a more youth-oriented image of militancy in Kashmir, recruiting numerous foot-soldiers before being killed in 2016.

This was corroborated in the current research study as in 60% of the cases, the slain members of armed groups were treated as some sort of role models in their respective areas. They inspired others, including their close and distant relatives, friends and neighbors, to join armed groups before and even after their death. The other 40% who couldn't inspire others to join armed groups were those who were not much popular and were killed soon after picking up arms.

CONCLUSION

The present study depicts miserable and pathetic condition of the widows and orphans of the slain members of armed groups in Kashmir, their worst health conditions; educational backwardness and social disorganization. No credible research had been carried out so far in Kashmir to ascertain this facet of armed insurgency. Though a lot of researches have been done on Kashmir conflict and its off-shoots, so-far no attempt was made to study the impact on the families of the slain members of armed groups.

The unending violence of the last three decades has devastated thousands of families in Kashmir which includes families of security forces personnel who died in the line of duty, civilians who were killed by the members of armed groups and security forces or died in cross-firing and the families of the slain members of armed groups. While the living conditions of widows and single parent orphans of police and security forces personnel are better mainly because their concerned agencies and organizations have taken sufficient care of their needs, especially in the field of education and employment to family members, the families of the slain members of armed groups are living in miserable and pathetic conditions. Economically and socially they have been debased and some of them even face starvation.

The findings of the current research also revealed that a majority-85%-of women respondents didn't remarry after the death of their husbands. It was also observed that the widows who didn't remarry faced lot of problems which included loneliness at home, mental torture, lack of control and guidance in home, fearful moments, failure of control over children, social insecurity, economic hardships, social apathy, discrimination and rough treatment by relatives and neighbours. The present study shows that 44% among the slain members of armed groups had 3 to 4 children when they were killed leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. The children of the slain members of armed groups have become educationally backward permanently. Majority of the children of the slain members of armed groups either couldn't study or had to drop from the school or the college after the death of their father.

The findings of the study have also divulged that the loss of life an irreparable damage and families of the deceased persons undergoing bereavement are more prone to psychological stress. Killing of a person in a family creates a sense of insecurity and fear in their daily life. The mode of death specifically due to violent act, which is unexpected and sudden, has led to all kind of psychological problems (including mental health) in the survived family members of the victims.

The current research has a vast significance in the present circumstances as it can sensitize various sections of the society. The study will hopefully generate interest of media and in future they will try to focus on this vital area and see how they can project the miseries of the families of the victims irrespective of their links and affiliations. It is also hoped to create sensitization among the stakeholders about need for urgent conflict resolution with a dignified exit to ensure lasting peace. Since, the study had several limitations, such research with a bigger sample size needs to be carried out. The future study has more scope, if carried out at the sample of at least 300-500. That can reveal more unhidden facts and details about the victim families. More important, that study must cover totality of the situation related to orphans and widows of slain militants in Kashmir.

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