ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

An armed conflict is defined as a political conflict in which armed combat involves the armed forces of at least one state [or one or more armed factions seeking to gain control of all or part of the state] and in which at least 1,000 people have been killed by the fighting during the course of the conflict. On the basis of fatality rate, armed conflict may be divided into three categories; first, minor armed conflict where the number of battle related deaths during the course of year conflict is at least 25 but below 1,000; second, intermediate armed conflict with more than 1,000 battle related deaths recorded during the course of conflict but fewer than 10,000 in a year, third, conflict with more than 10,000 battle related deaths in any given year. A Conflict situation which occurs between one and more states is considered to be an Inter-State conflict where as Intra-State conflict occurs between a Government and Non Governmental party, with no interference from other countries. Another kind of conflict which figures prominently these days is Intra-State conflict with foreign involvement. International weapons sales, especially of small arms help to ignite and sustain wars that victimize children and civilians. Small arms, light and easy to use are now so readily available
that the poorest communities can gain access to deadly weapons capable of transforming any local conflict into a bloody slaughter. All the conflicts are a major source of devastation, human suffering and poverty that affects all the aspects of economic, social and political life which continues from one generation to the next.

India has been experiencing a number of conflict situations starting from Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Telengana, Mizoram, Assam, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. The main reasons for the conflict in these regions were discrimination, threat to ethnic and cultural identity, economic backwardness, religion etc. There is no one reason, but multiple reasons mixed together in a complicated manner from conflict in any of these areas. Kashmir has been in conflict with Indian Union since its partition in 1947. The struggle for Right to self Determination or Independence continued in various forms; but in 1989 it exploded into armed struggle when youth employed violent means to achieve their objective of independence. They targeted Government offices with a view to declaring their resistance against the continued occupation of Kashmir by India which occupation they believe to be illegal.

The Government of India used its entire means to suppress this movement, through military and Para-military forces and soon this movement turned into brutal bath between militants and security forces.
The military and Para-military forces provided with many powers under draconian laws like Armed Forces Special Powers Act(AFSA), Disturbed Area Act, Prevention of Terrorist Activities(POTA) Public Safety Act(PSA) etc, have been committing various kinds of Human Rights Violations in Kashmir. The army used curfew, crack downs, search operations, arrest torture, custodial killings, and disappearances of youth, firing, shelling, rape, locals as shields and other atrocities as a weapon to suppress the movement. They also destroyed the private property like land and orchards, educational institutions, health care facilities, childcare centres by occupying them. In defence, militants both local and foreign used different strategies. They dictated shutdowns, carried out grenade attacks, bomb blasts, killing and torturing of informers, destruction of public property etc. They burnt down bridges to restrict the movement of troops. Furthermore, school buildings, health facilities, tourist hurts were burnt down so that they could not be used by security forces for accommodation purposes. There is hardly any sphere of life which remained unaffected due to armed conflict. The economy of the state, tourism, agriculture, trade industry, education and health sector all suffered a setback. It is estimated that the around one lakh people mostly youth have lost their lives in the conflict and more than 10 lakh have been injured. It has also created 32,400 widows, and 79, 200
orphans and nearly 3 thousand half-widows. Large scale displacement from different parts of the State to the urban centres and other States of India is another part of the conflict.

Women are one of the worst sufferers of the conflict. They become indirect victims of arrest, torture disappearance, displacement and loss of dear ones and direct victims of physical violence like rape, abduction and murder. The disruption of their education, job opportunities, disruption of services, breaks down of social support system etc led to a negative impact on the overall wellbeing of the women.

The demoralization, the dehumanization and almost brutalization of Kashmiri women by the armed confrontation has heavy toll upon the physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing of the women. Those who have been dying for the last two decades whether insurgents or counter-insurgents or those caught in daily cross fires have either been their fathers or sons, husbands or brothers. Furthermore, women have to carry out the burden of becoming a bread-earner and traditional role of a home-maker. This puts her under immense stress and feeling of insecurity powerlessness and depression. Fear of family’s future in such an uncertain environment is a question of deep concern for the women.
The present thesis will try to explain as to how the economic conditions of women in Kashmir, their psychological and physical health as well their educational proficiency have fared during the past two decades of militancy.

**OBJECTIVES**

The proposed study is aiming at achieving the following objectives:

➢ To study the impact of Armed Conflict on economic conditions of women in Kashmir.

➢ To study the impact of militancy on health [psychological and physical] conditions of women in Kashmir.

➢ To study the impact of militancy on educational conditions of women in Kashmir.

➢ To present the suggestions for the improvement of status of women on the basis of findings of the study.

**HYPOTHESIS**

➢ There is no significant difference in economic condition of women before or after armed conflict in Kashmir.

➢ Health, both psychological and physical deteriorated during militancy.
Educational situation for women became challenging during militancy in Kashmir

METHODOLOGY

Focus of the Study

The present study is based on such two categories of women i.e. Widows and Half-Widows.

The focus of the study was on three particular aspects of these women. First, efforts were made to know the economic problems of widows and half-widows faced immediately after the death or disappearance of their sole bread-winner. Also during the course of investigation the emphasis was on identifying the existing support system on which these women survived. Second, an attempt was made to know as to what extent militancy has affected the physical and psychological health of these women. Third, to what extent the death/disappearance of the sole bread winner has affected the education of their female children in the family.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in two districts of Kashmir valley i.e. Baramulla and Kupwara. (Including district Bandipora which was carved from district Baramulla in 2007)
Sample of the Study

To meet the objectives of the study, a sample of 300 respondents was selected from the two districts of Kashmir valley. Each district was given an equal representation of 150 respondents comprising 75 widows and 75 half-widows. The sample of study was purposive and in the process of selecting respondents, a list of most affected blocks was identified. Among the most affected blocks the most affected villages and then most affected families were identified for the study.

Collection of Data

The data was collected from different sources that include documents such as police and army records, school records, hospital records, personal interviews with family members, teachers, social workers, physicians, psychiatrists etc. District and block level data was also collected from their respective headquarters.

Subsequently, wider empirical investigation about the topic was carried out through the survey among the respondents.

Questionnaire

Questionnaire was prepared for this study before holding the interview. As most of the respondents were illiterate so the respondents
were asked questions in the local language and their responses were entered in the questionnaire by the research investigator.

Subsequently analysis of all data/information were aggregated and tabulated manually on the percentage basis and t-test was applied to find out the monthly income of the deceased before and after the tragic event.

Limitations

1. The sample of the study was selected mainly from two districts of Kashmir valley namely Baramulla and Kupwara which are border areas of Kashmir where the impact of militancy has been comparatively greater than any other district.

2. Another crucial limitation of the study was its small sample size of just 300 respondents.

3. The sample was restricted to the rural areas only so as to make in-depth study of the problems of women in rural areas where the assistance from the Government and non-Governmental organizations are minimal.

Findings

The economic conditions of women were worst. In terms of monthly income, it is found that the economic condition of these women was worsened with the death/disappearance of the sole bread winner. No
doubt, the women were found to be helped and supported by many organisations and agencies like parents, in-laws, Government organisations, Non-Government organisations, sons/relatives etc. but this support was often extended for a while and not up to the mark.

The women started working outside their home environs and most of them being illiterate started working as labourers, at handicraft centres, and as domestic servants and it was found that they were exploited and were given meagre wages that let them to live from hand to mouth and they often make unacceptable compromises with a view to eking out their existence.

Besides economic instability, the continued armed conflict in the valley has also taken a heavy toll on the health of women. The daily exposure to a variety of severe shocking stresses has lead to an escalation of their physical ailments like hypertension, cardiac trouble, headache and general weakness and psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, Post-traumatic Disorder.

The children of these families were also found to suffer from several diseases like depression, cardiac problem, intestinal complaints and aggression in their behaviour.
Women were harassed from time to time by different groups. However, the single largest group who harassed the women most were security forces followed by militants and ex-militants. They were tortured and harassed in several ways where physical punishment was on the top followed by psychological torture, demand for food and shelter and sexual harassment.

Of all the sectors, the impact of militancy on education was the most terrible. The academic atmosphere in the entire Kashmir was disrupted to its foundations. All principles, standards, norms and criteria of education were thrown to the winds.

It is found that 53.25% female children dropped out due to multiple reasons and among them economic problem topped for male drop outs followed by shouldering the responsibility of the family and poor health condition. In case of female children most of them dropped out due to economic reasons besides social restrictions, occupation of school buildings by security forces and poor health condition. It is found that

The male drop-outs were working as labourers, some were working at handicraft centres. Some were found to work at Government offices and some were staying idle at home due to poor health condition. Female drop outs were found to help their mothers in their domestic work
besides; some were working as domestic servants and some at handicraft centres.

SUGGESTIONS

The first thing that needs to be done is to collect inclusive data about all the dimensions of the problem – in particular, the number of widows, half widows and orphans left to fend for themselves by this conflict.

There is an urgent need to listen to the voices of women in Kashmir. There is need to give representation to the women in any peace process, as that will bring a fresh and proper approach not only to women’s problems in Kashmir but will definitely bring out a holistic approach in general to the problems of people in Kashmir.