ROLE OF CONFLICT AND TURMOIL ON EDUCATIONAL AND SKILL PROSPECTUS OF YOUNG POPULATION

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Abstract
        The political conflict and its manifestation in terms of recurring turmoil in Kashmir region by now is more than three decades old and persistent. By now three generations have been involved with and impacted by this conflict. From direct impacts in terms of loss of lives and infrastructure to the indirect impacts of loss of working days, human capital deformation and growth reversal, the conflict altogether happens to be a negative externality. The greatest loss and damage caused by the conflict is caused to the population, its features and its attributes. It is in this wake the paper is written. The paper begins by explaining the Kashmir conflict, moving to the understanding and causes of the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder found in the general population. The paper traces the same as a proxy variable causing the diminishing interest in, investments and eventual returns from education. The paper using relevant data and empirics finds that there is a strong negative correlation between conflict and educational outcomes. The paper also finds that this negative correlation leads to a lag in skill development and the impact aggravates in every next time period. The study concludes by charting a way to maintain a steady educational level and skill development in the lingering state of conflict.

Keywords: Education, Conflict,

Introduction

        Claiming control on the dichotomous religious majority of the Indian Sub-Continent, division of India and Pakistan came with laying hands on the Hindu and Muslim dominated areas. This worked on the major parts of the territory leaving unresolved only a few. Kashmir stood on the most strategic location (Hajni, 2015). Stakeholders were many and personal interests seem to dominate over common interest. Instrument of accession got signed, no plebiscite followed. The raid from Pakistan divided Kashmir into India Occupied Kashmir and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Grievances of Kashmiri natives accumulated and have ever since been accumulating. Vent to this frustration has seen the light of the day from time to time. Struggle to attain the desired objectives has seen a perpetual metamorphosis over time, leaving Kashmir struggle to last longer than the usual average expected tenure of conflicts.

        Kashmiris see the salivation in seceding away from India. The same is taken on shoulders by the youth and they keep on joining Militancy ranks especially post 2016 turmoil. The same movement in Kashmir is backed by Pakistan. For India, Kashmir is its integral part. For Pakistan it represents a problem of partition that is yet to be resolved. And for the most important stake-holders, the people of Kashmir the problem corresponds their rights (Irfan Hashim, 2018). For them it is the freedom to choose how they want to live and with whom they want to live, having access to their domestic resources.

        Given the ever-increasing scenario of human rights violation, more and more Kashmiris are supporting the freedom movement against Indian atrocities. People from all walks of life are taking more and more part in the freedom anticipation's. This increases the number of families impacted directly from the conflict and internalizes the impact on the members. Property worth millions and human capital to perishable numbers gets destroyed in the phase-I and direct impacts of conflict (Biberman, 2016). Orphans and widows grow in number and financial delusion. This Carves a whole generation of children, parentless and left to grow on their own in situations of abject poverty and negligence. Leading to a second round and more deeply felt impact of the same problem.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Kashmir

        Being a chronologically lingering problem, the conflict situation in Kashmir is measured in terms of generations instead of years and decades. The constant confrontation of the Militants and security forces, an unending clash between the common men and the forces on the streets using stones and pellets leads to uncounted deaths and handicaps. Each Kashmiri in his lifetime witnesses unnatural deaths, disabilities of healthy masses and all the traumatizing visuals.

        Going as per the reports, 1.8 million adults summing up to be 45% of the population in Kashmir can be categorized as mentally ill. Among other figures, 22% of Kashmiri women suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) while the number of men suffering from the same is around 18%. The percentage of population having some or the other kind of conflict-related trauma is a whopping generalization of 93%. And the main cause of traumatization, witnessing unnatural, sudden or violent death of someone a person knows equals 70% in the violence-ridden region of Kashmir division.

        There was the youthful generation of the 1980s who grew up in a peaceful atmosphere. The political arena of the land, however, took a 'U'-Turn and these people in great numbers decided to fight for the land and rights thus embarked upon the task of

liberation. There was a sudden transition from the peaceful atmosphere to one of hostility, anguish, and anxiety. Following there was the next generation that was born and grew up in the conflict. For this generation, normal meant the order of the day that happens to be quite unnatural as a matter of usual definitions and occurrences. Currently, the growing up population is one that has seen spells and bouts of peacefulness and chaos.

Given such scattered exposures and experiences of various generations of Kashmir conflict, the situation has different bearings and impressions on the people living in this part of the world. Some people have internalized conflict while others fail to accept it. Some want a respite from it and some tend not to care. Altogether the people of the current times tend to live in the realization of uncertainty, insecurity, and fear. The flow of a smooth and rather expected life is absent. Doing a task this moment in no matter guarantees its continuation in the next subsequent moment.

Apart from other bearings on the people, a situation like this takes a toll on the mental health of the masses and results in the kind of distorted statistics we just discussed. There is an increase in the sufferings of common people as the conflict persists. Due to increased sufferings the chances of mental disorder(s) increase. The human body has limited resistance to all sorts of illnesses but once the threshold limit is reached, repercussions begin to show. In the same line of understanding, as sufferings increase, the coping mechanism of individual's psychology gets disturbed. The perceptions of such sufferers may never return to normal even after the relevant medical intervention is delivered.

Interaction of Kashmir Conflict, PTSD & Education

Conflict is a political phenomenon in essence but it gets translated into social, economic, identity and many other problems over the course of its existence. It is a phenomenon that has ruined a lot of human good and with changing times can ruin many more additional aspects of individuals and societies (Mohanty, 2018). Depending on the intensity of the conflict, education can be completely absent or absolutely present. The case in hand, i.e., Kashmir Conflict lies between these two extremes. The education (among other vitalities) has suffered a lot due to conflict but it is not absent.

During late 1980s a number of primary schools were turned into temporary army/military barracks. Given the situation was already tense and a sense of hysteresis prevailed among the masses, a lot of time was spent by school going children outside schools (Kaul, 2018). Exams went late, sessions ran delayed and class-work was almost inexistent. All these factors fitted in one equation give a crude result with low enrolment rates combined with high dropout rates and a small proportion of literates to the total population (Dr. Faizur Rehman, 2016).

Girl education was fairly good and improving in Kashmir up until early 1980s but with the onset of the conflict for that time period it came down in a geometric progression. From 1985 onwards for around a decade, families preferred to keep girls away from schools and other public places and preferred to marry them off as early as possible. As a consequence of the conflict hysteresis 50% of the workforce was left uneducated, unskilled and out from the job market. To make the bad worse, young men during that time joined the Militancy in huge number (AYJAZ AHMAD WANI, 2018). Many died, many were jailed and many left physically unfit. This took on to cast a negative spell on the economic front of these families with men unavailable to earn and women unable to provide. The results of the uneducated and unskilled women force showed the results after a number of lags.

The situation seemed to improve after the early part of 1990s. The movement was suppressed to a great degree by the state forces. The man-power was under decline and the women folk suffering. It was the time education was rejuvenating and at the same time the policies of central government to focus on education; beginning right from primary levels that too free was pulling more and more students towards schools (Siddiqui, 2017). The drop-out rates were under control and a large chunk of enrolled students completed primary education and moved up the ladder of next levels completing high school. Meanwhile simultaneous investments were made in the secondary level education and training institutes and enrolments grew there as well.

However, if the conflict is not yet resolved the jolts and fits are expected all the times. The outbursts can be sudden and disturbance felt anytime. Having said situation was turning (relatively) peaceful in the latter half of 1990s, enrolments in higher education institutes grew (Amitabh Hoskote, 2018). Enrolments in skill-based courses also increased so did the engagement of people in productive activities.

This peace however was short lived as predicted by experience and empirics. The fits of conflict manifestation returned in 2008 and since then have been recurring. The impact now is not direct, it rather is indirect. Education level has increased drastically in Kashmir with basic literacy rate 68.74%. Conflict is fuelled by youth and it is evident that more and more youth join the happenings as the jolts rise (Solimano, 2000). Now more and more educated youth (which now is the general characteristic of the population) join the (armed) conflict.

A huge chunk of the population does not get to actively participate in the struggle tasking. This part of the population fails to give vent to emotions and feelings. As a result, it takes a toll on their physical and mental health. This is shown by the ever-increasing number of patients received by the Psychiatric Institute of Srinagar in general and Psychiatric clinics in particular. One very common mental illness developed and developing in the Kashmiri population is the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

PSTD in broader terms refers to a disabling behaviour and disturbed emotional condition. It is a disorder generally characterized by a failure to forge any terrifying or disturbing event and thus being unable to recover and return to normal. This sort of distress is reflected by people who witness psychological trauma. The usual age of people suffering from this trauma globally ranges between 70-80 years of age while the case is appalling in the instance of Kashmir.

As reports and data have it confirmed, 1.8 million Kashmiris suffer from PTSD in Kashmir. Some of them are treated while others do not even know that they suffer from such an ordeal of mental illness. The population that suffers from these traumatic conditions ranges in the age of 18 and 28. Main reasons identified for the same are exposure to bullets, pellets, PAVA Shells, Arrests, and Nocturnal-Raids etc. Witnessing these events perpetually over the course of years fills the minds of people with unending fear and uncertainty.

All these events result in the cumulative effects and the happiness factor is robbed from the normal daily lives of people. The perspective of the masses changes and the prism through which they see becomes bleak and opaque. As the situation has it, people do not see any hope approaching for the sake of good and peace and this makes their lives and existence dull. These factors cumulate to make their thinking pessimistic. At the same time, people witness actual and propaganda events that show all sort of killing and destruction. Over the course of time, this takes its toll on the minds of the people. Fragile minds being the first victims, trauma and mental disorders grow amongst the population.

Data analysis

The data in the below table is taken from the secondary source from the Mental health report published in 2015, pertaining to the Kashmir Region. Three main mental illnesses in the conflict zone that are most prevalent are studied here. The data is presented for Depression, Anxiety and Post Stress Traumatic Disorder. The averages for the Kashmir region are very high as compared to the other half of the state for one and extremely grim as it is compared with the rest of India.

Region	Depression				Anxiety				PTSD			
	Proportion	Se	95%	CI	Proportion	Se	95%	CI	Proportion	Se	95%	CI
Kashmir Valley*	41.3%	0.0106	39.2%	43.4%	25.6%	0.0095	23.8%	27.5%	19.2%	0.0095	17.5%	21.2%
Srinagar	27.5%	0.0252	22.7%	32.9%	15.8%	0.0181	12.5%	19.8%	10.6%	0.0178	7.5%	14.8%
Anantnag	37.5%	0.0300	31.7%	43.7%	19.4%	0.0215	15.4%	24.1%	17.8%	0.0239	13.5%	23.1%
Badgam	53.7%	0.0359	46.4%	60.8%	35.8%	0.0338	29.3%	42.9%	25.9%	0.0291	20.5%	32.2%
Baramulla	51.1%	0.0355	43.9%	58.2%	33.7%	0.0311	27.7%	40.3%	26.5%	0.0366	19.7%	34.5%
Pulwama	36.4%	0.0275	31.0%	42.1%	20.4%	0.0201	16.6%	24.7%	16.6%	0.0211	12.7%	21.3%
Kulgam	43.8%	0.0332	37.3%	50.6%	29.9%	0.0292	24.3%	36.1%	24.8%	0.0285	19.5%	30.9%
Kupwara	41.7%	0.0256	36.6%	47.0%	27.8%	0.0337	21.5%	35.1%	18.5%	0.0290	13.3%	25.1%
Ganderbal	37.7%	0.0268	32.4%	43.3%	22.0%	0.0246	17.4%	27.4%	14.7%	0.0168	11.6%	18.4%
Bandipora	41.7%	0.0349	34.9%	48.9%	27.5%	0.0329	21.4%	34.6%	17.4%	0.0332	11.7%	25.2%
Shopiyan	43.2%	0.0276	37.8%	48.9%	27.0%	0.0253	22.2%	32.5%	22.2%	0.0219	18.1%	27.0%

There however is a scepticism with the data. Since it comes from a 2015 report, it does not incorporate the major hysteresis of 2016. From 2016 onwards, the movement shifted mostly to south Kashmir. As a result, the psychological issues and pressures from 2016 onwards increase with a bias towards the southern part of the state. This includes mostly the districts of Ananatnag, Shopian, Pulwama and Kulgam. As the number of youth joining militancy ranks increases, the number of direct and indirect psychological problems increased and the issues spread across genders and age cohorts.

For a representative analysis, we take in for consideration the weighted prevalence of adults in Shopian with mental distress, by age group, 12 KMHS 2015. The data shows high number of depressions, anxiety and post stress traumatic disorder prevalent among the masses. Another fact of caution here is that the data pertains to reported cases. Due to a number of third world problems, it

so happens that people feel ashamed of psychological illnesses and in this process go on hiding and concealing the actual facts and figures. In the longer run this aggravates the problem and in the shorter run leads to information asymmetry.
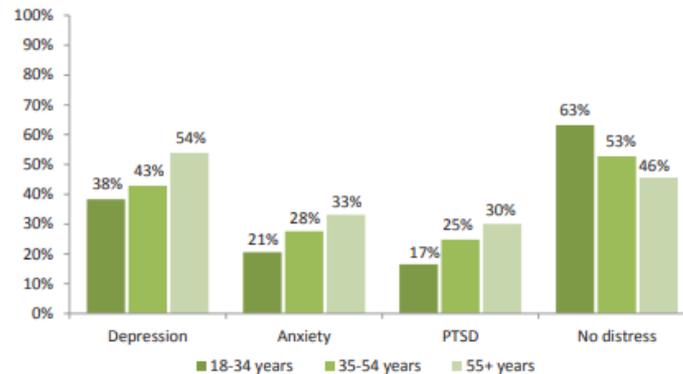
The profile is also not so good for other districts of the state. The problem is aggravated during post turmoil 2016. The figures by now are actually going quite high which in turn is an indicator of poor overall health of the population. One essential and fundamental cohort of the population is that of children.

Children having a poor mental health are in no position to fare well in studies and excel in co-circulars. This increases the drop-out rate of school going kids. As kids stay away from school, they get more affected from the conflict through its direct and indirect channels. This pushes back into conflict one another generation of people in a manner that the people suffer, the conflict remains unresolved and the problems linger, aggravating in effect and appeal.

Skill lag in conflict
Having endeavoured upon creating a generation with sound education and understanding, the next step in the completion of the life-cycle process of a generation comes in the development and broadening of the avenues to make a sound living (Prasad, 2010). History bears testimony to the fact that economically unsound and poor people have a battle of their own to fight; a perpetual quest and attempt to keep their body and soul together. This pursuit takes up all their time and anything outside this domain doesn't affect them much.

For the youth of a conflict zone a serious problem needs to be addressed; solution to the conflict! Having a poor youth with economic instability can-not help the difficulty at hand. The solution rather demands a youth that is skillful, bountiful and influencing in a number of ways. This puts up the task of having a young population that is skillful and talented, recognizable globally for their achievements and valour (Chapman, 2011). At the same time the limited number of job availability calls for the job-seekers to be job-providers and self-employed to the best possible levels. Most feasible way to do this is to train the youth in technical pursuits apart from giving them high end quality and creative education.

Coming to the particular case of Kashmir, data below shows the details of courses offered across the valley in various Polytechnic colleges and Industrial Training centres. All the skills listed in the tables have a stable and well-paying market. If the youth takes these training programmes and specialize in one or another course of their choice they can form guilds and earn handsome that too being self-employed and, in a job, -providing manner.

These vocations have more feasibility in Kashmir as there is a perpetual conflict situation going on. A sound income will be generated as the tasks are decentralized and need not go to some specific working place during specific office hours all the time. If one member of the family who happens to be the otherwise solo earning-hand gets impacted physically due to the conflict activities, the household can still survive on these alternative incomes. This keeps the impact of conflict limited; it is restricted to being a social and emotional loss and does not get translated into economic and other losses (Thapar, 2011). The stability of the household is maintained and the future of the young members is saved.

Long term negative impact
Having deliberated upon the problems children face in attending classes, the simultaneous reality is that the 21st century world is a global village. In order to live an independent life, it is important that each person has the best of capabilities imbibed into his self (Swamy, 2001). People who live in Kashmir do not show any interest of migrating or moving out from Kashmir. Nor is there

any history of native Kashmiris moving out of the valley (save the case of Kashmiri Pandits migrating to Jammu). The people have been living in the conflict situation and have shown high levels of adjustments to the changing natures of conflict.

There have been some coping strategies that have evolved overtime. But there need to be some well-defined surviving strategies so that education feels the least impact. The journey begins from encouraging children to think independently. The conflict situation cannot persist forever; it has to have an end sooner or later (Indurthy, 2003). If it doesn't settle sooner, later these children as grown-up adults have to solve it one way or another. Therefore, the base to their sound and proper education begins from an independent thinking backed by reason and logic.

The education systems coexisting in conflict ridden environments cannot afford to aspire spoon feeding the students everything. Instead, the need of the hour for these setups is to imbibe and inculcate the art of self-study and self-learning among children. This makes them fit to be independent and enhance their learning with self-efforts rather than relying on external support systems (Poplin, 2011). The positive spillover of self-study is the simultaneous development of creativity and creative expression. Students get to develop in a holistic manner and they come out of textbook world to a real and meaningful practical world. They ponder and quench their inquisitive thirst one way or the other.

Over the course of years there develops a generation of aware masses. People, who know the ways and means to help themselves, know what the theory says and how reality exists. This way a generation will be created that will have a say in every affair. And that is how conflicts are to be resolved in the most ardent and meaningful manner.

Ways out

The paper is an attempt to chart a way that saves a generation from the torments of conflict. As the empirics and experiences have it recorded that the sudden outburst of political conflict and confrontation between the two parties in late 1980s lead to the destruction of generations. The people who had grown up in peaceful and serene settings got to witness and be a part of the conflict. It claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, left a number of children orphaned and a number of women widows and half-widows. Post Stress Traumatic Disorder became a routine ailment and the valley of Kashmir turned into a sorrowful graveyard.

Having all that witnessed and experienced the aim of the present generation is to save the next generation and all the henceforth generations of the land from the torments of conflict and its negative side and aftereffects. This calls for a broad-based policy intervention, more from the side of people affected than from administration and state authorities. Each single individual needs to be trained holistically and independently so that irrespective of gender and family background, (s)he is capable of leading a meaningful life anywhere across the globe.

Market orientation is the fundamental cornerstone that needs to be strived if the current young generation is to be safeguarded from the negative externalities.

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