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Obstacles faced by adolescents due to armed conflict in Kashmir

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Abstract

The present study was an attempt to observe the awareness about early armed conflict among adolescents of Kashmir and to compare the level of awareness as per affect of conflict (intact and disrupted), dwelling and gender. The sample was selected through multi stage sampling technique. For the study, sample of 800 adolescents were selected from urban and rural areas of Kashmir. The sample was collected with the help of self constructed questionnaire. The study shows that the majority of intact-disrupted adolescents, adolescent boys-girls and rural-urban adolescents are aware about early armed conflict in Kashmir. As per majority of adolescents; obstacles in educational opportunities, killings, displacements, destruction of public property and terror and fear psychosis are major troubles that they face due to armed conflict in Kashmir.

Keywords: Obstacles, adolescents, armed conflict, Kashmir

Introduction

Armed conflict is a contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths (UCDP, 2015) ^[1]. There are three types of conflicts that are recognized by international humanitarian law: international armed conflict, internationalized armed conflict, and non-international armed conflict. (Chelimo, 2011) ^[2]. Adolescents have distinct experiences in armed conflict, distinct needs and distinct capacities for recovering. Most importantly, adolescents are at a stage in their development when, for the first time, they are actively seeking to attach meaning to their lives but upheaval of armed conflict leaves them despairing and vulnerable (Lowicki and Pillsbury, 2000) ^[3]. Adolescents today are increasingly deliberate targets, as well as unintended victims in armed conflicts around the world. Between 1985-1995 two million children were killed, six million were left seriously injured or permanently disabled, twelve million were left homeless, one million were orphaned or separated from their parents, ten million suffered from serious psychological trauma as a result of war and 300000 served as child soldiers (Gow *et al.*, 2000) ^[4].

Review of literature

Panter-brick *et al.* (2014) ^[5] studied that memories of violent events among Afghan youth are malleable, embedded in social experiences, and present heterogeneous associations with posttraumatic distress. Youth with chronic posttraumatic distress were more likely to be girls. The risks of rising distress and sustained distress showed a steady increase for youth recalling up to traumatic experiences.

Suarez (2013) ^[6] examined the resilience and post traumatic reaction of indigenous Quechua girls and adolescents in the after effects of the Peruvian armed conflict after two decades. The study devices were used on 75 participants who reported extreme exposure to violence i.e. sexual violence, torture, combat, death of family members and forced displacement. On the contrary, resilience and current stress contributed to the variance of trauma symptoms when measured by local idioms of distress.

Naqshbandi and Amin (2013) ^[7] executed a study on conflict region and developmental problems faced by youth in Kashmir. Interview schedule was used with 312 youth both male and female. It was revealed that most of the respondents face identity crisis, increased cultural degradation and family breakdown due to armed conflict in Kashmir.

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Sample also revealed that conflict has increased rate of drug habit among youth.

Gillham *et al.* (2008) [8] Carried out a study on Palestinian youth and the contradictions of resilience in protracted conflict to explore the construct of resilience by Palestinian youth in the 10th and 12th grades at educational institutes located in and around Ramallah in the west bank. Focus groups were performed with 321 male and female Palestinian students in 15 educational institutes. Findings reveal that Palestinian adolescents present a picture of resilience that shows contradictions and tensions. Regardless the desire for order, Palestinian adolescents complain of emotional distress and boredom. Feelings of desperation are fused with hopelessness.

Objectives

The present study is based on the following objectives:

1. To study the awareness among adolescents about advert of armed conflict in Kashmir.
2. To study the familiarity among adolescents about troubles faced by them due to armed conflict in Kashmir.

Material and Methods

The present study was an attempt to study the awareness about early armed conflict among adolescents in Kashmir and to compare the level of awareness as per affect of conflict (intact and disrupted), dwelling and gender. The information was gathered from adolescents in urban and rural areas of Kashmir region. The study was investigated through multi stage sampling technique. This type of sampling was taken because the size of population (i.e. Kashmir) was very large and was scattered as per socio-economic characteristics of adolescents. The sample selected by this method was more representative of population. It permitted the fieldwork to be concentrated and yet large area covered. Sample was selected from Kashmir region-800 adolescents were selected for the purpose, 400 adolescents from urban areas and 400 adolescents from rural areas. The tool used for the study includes a detailed questionnaire. The data obtained was carefully scrutinized, categorized and coded in order to fulfill the objectives. The data was analyzed applying appropriate statistical measures.

Results and Discussion

Since 1989, Kashmir has seen 27 years of military and militant activity. Hence, every single person in valley is fully aware about the burning issue that has become part and parcel of the region which is called paradise on earth.

Fig.1 shows consciousness about armed conflict in Kashmir among adolescents as per their category. The roots of conflict which is being witnessed by adolescents through uprisings of 2008, 2010 and 2016 are directly connected to insurrection of 1989. In this backdrop, 99.8 per cent (f=399) intact adolescents, 99.5 per cent (f=398) disrupted adolescents and on the whole 99.6 per cent (f=797) adolescents are aware about armed conflict in Kashmir. Insignificant differences are seen among intact and disrupted adolescents regarding awareness about armed conflict in Kashmir $\chi^2 (1,800) = 0.33, p=0.56$.

Fig.2 depicts dwelling wise awareness among adolescents regarding early armed conflict in Kashmir. Intensity of armed conflict usually varies as per localization and in Kashmir rural areas still remain more affected by armed conflict. For that reason fig.2 depicts that all (f=200) intact rural adolescents and 99.5 per cent (f=198) intact urban adolescents are aware about armed conflict in Kashmir. Likewise 99.5 per cents (f=198 each) disrupted urban and disrupted rural adolescents are also aware about early armed conflict in Kashmir. In general, 99.75 per cent (f=399) rural adolescents and 99.5 per cent (f=398) urban adolescents are aware about armed conflict in Kashmir. Rural and urban adolescents show insignificant differences vis-à-vis awareness about armed conflict in Kashmir $\chi^2 (5,800) = 1.33, p=0.93$.

Fig.3 shows that all intact boys and disrupted boys (f=200 each) are conscious about armed conflict in Kashmir. Similarly, 99.5 (f=199) intact girls and 99 per cent (f=198) disrupted girls are aware as well. Overall, all boys (f=400) and 99.25 per cent (f=397) girls are also aware. Adolescent boys and girls depict insignificant differences regarding awareness about armed conflict in Kashmir $\chi^2 (5,800) = 4.44, p=0.48$.

Osama (2012) [9] studied that after the 1987 State Legislative Assembly elections, some of the results proved to be disputed. Kashmir conflict reached to elevated levels when a wave of insurgency begun in 1989. The insurgency resulted in the formation of militant wings in Kashmir and is still present in Kashmir. Reported that rural Kashmir has a long and particular history of armed conflict. Stated that women have been excluded from conflict prevention and resolution efforts. Despite increased awareness and mobilization at the local and international levels, women and girls in conflict continue to face multiple challenges.

Awareness among Adolescents about Armed Conflict

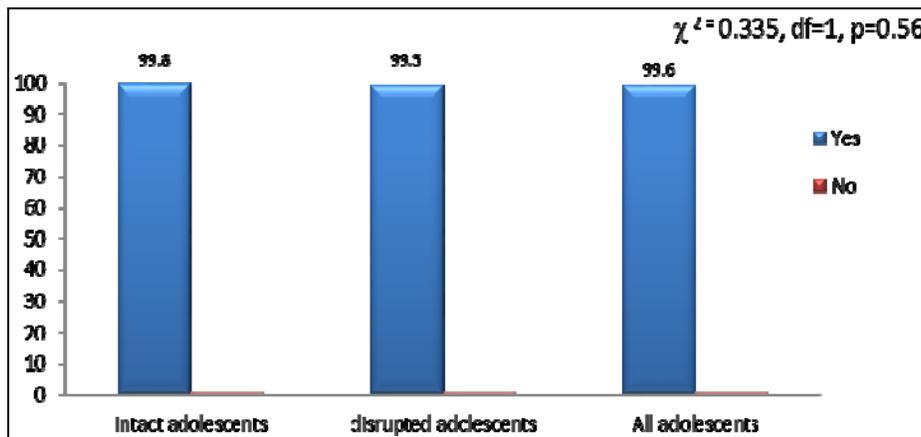


Fig 1: as per category

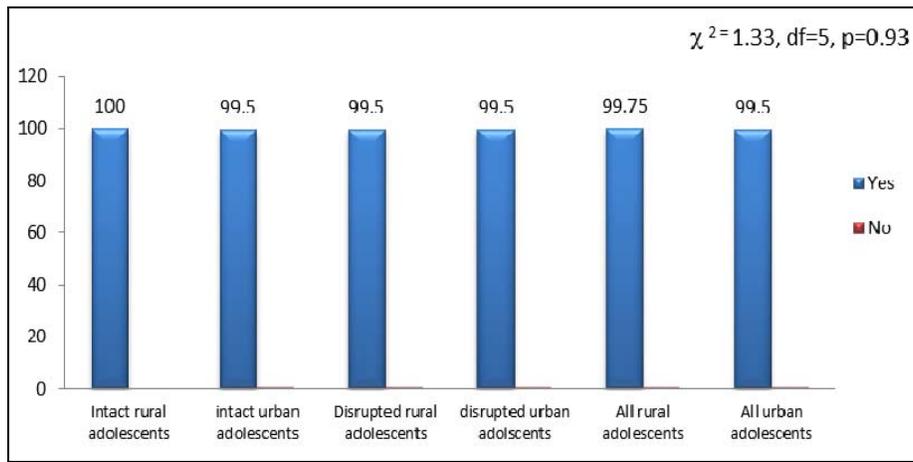


Fig 2: as per dwelling

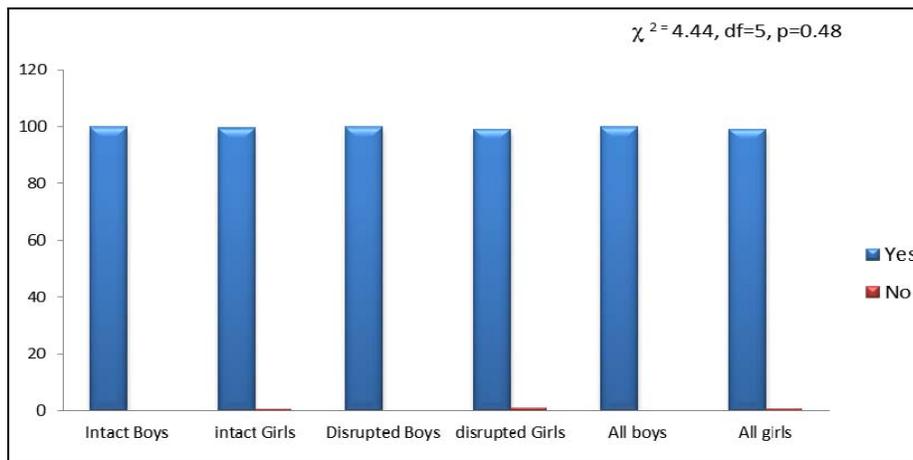


Fig 3: as per gender

Due to armed conflict, Kashmir has witnessed worst kind of abuses which range from mass killings, enforced disappearances, persecution, sexual violence, indefinite curfews, crackdowns, cordons and suppression of liberty of speech.

Fig.4 ascertains the acquaintance of adolescents about these kinds of miseries. As per 90.5 per cent (f=362) intact, 90.2 per cent (f=361) disrupted and 90.4 per cent (f=723) all adolescents, obstacles in educational opportunities, killings, displacements, destruction of public property, terror and fear psychosis are some of the major troubles that adolescents faced during early armed conflict. Familiarity about troubles faced by Kashmiri's due to armed conflict in Kashmir reveals insignificant differences between intact and disrupted adolescents $\chi^2(4,800) = 0.43, p=0.97$.

Each and every corner of valley suffered in dark period of 1990s. No one was left be it urban or rural dweller. Fig.5 reveals that 98 per cent (f=196) intact rural adolescents and 91.5 per cent disrupted rural adolescents feel that obstacles in educational opportunities, killings, displacements, destruction of public property, terror and fear psychosis are some of the major troubles that they face due to armed conflict. In the same way, 83 per cent (f=166) intact urban adolescents and 89 per cent (f=178) disrupted urban adolescents are familiar about troubles faced due to armed conflict. Overall, 94.75 per cent (f=374) rural adolescents and 86 per cent (f=344) urban adolescents feels alike. Rural and urban adolescents spot highly significant differences in terms of familiarity about troubles faced by them due to armed conflict $\chi^2(20,800)$

=48.55, p=0.00.

As per fig.6, per cent (f=170) intact boys and 83.5 per cent (f=167) disrupted boys think that obstacles in educational opportunities, killings, displacements, destruction of public property, terror and fear psychosis are some of the major troubles that they face due to armed conflict. Correspondingly, 96 per cent (f=192) intact girls and 97 per cent (f=194) disrupted girls too consider obstacles in educational opportunities, killings, displacements, destruction of public property, terror and fear psychosis as foremost sufferings for everyone due to armed conflict. Highly significant differences are noted among boys and girls relating to familiarity about troubles faced by adolescents due to armed conflict in Kashmir $\chi^2(20,800) = 87.01, p=0.00$.

Peerzada (2012) [10] reported that in 1989, Srinagar became the focus of the Kashmiri uprising and the area continues to be a highly politicized ground of activity with frequent spontaneous protests and strikes. Similarly, found that in Sopore town three major graveyards house the collateral damage of last 25 years. Besides casualties, Sopore suffered a massive destruction. It was set ablaze eight times since nineties. observed that women in Kashmir have been at the receiving end of armed conflict as direct and indirect victims of violence. Women have lost their loved ones; husbands, brothers and sons, some of whom were killed and some never returned. This gave rise to a new sub-category among women, called 'half-widows', women living in the hope of knowing whether their husbands are alive or dead.

Familiarity about Troubles Faced due to Armed Conflict

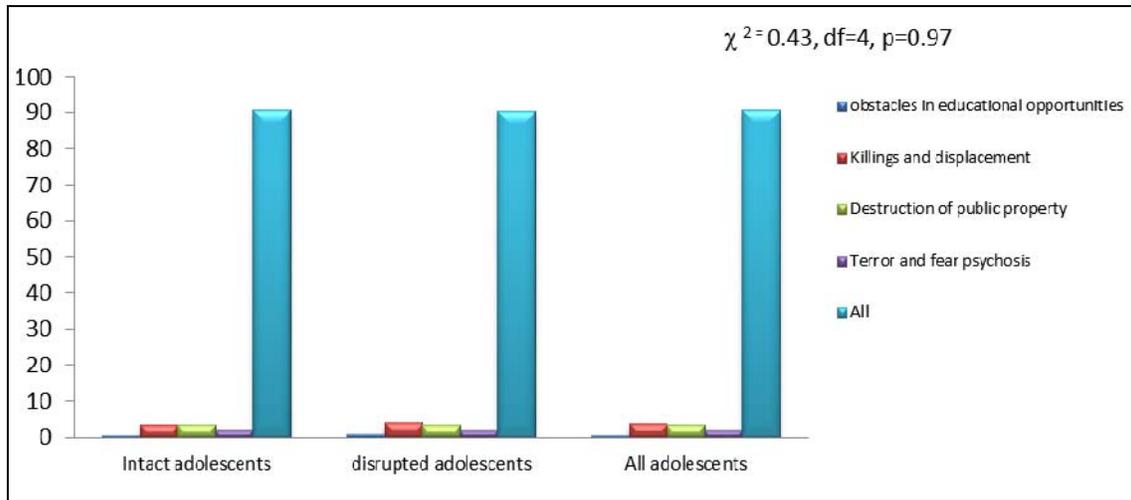


Fig 4: as per category

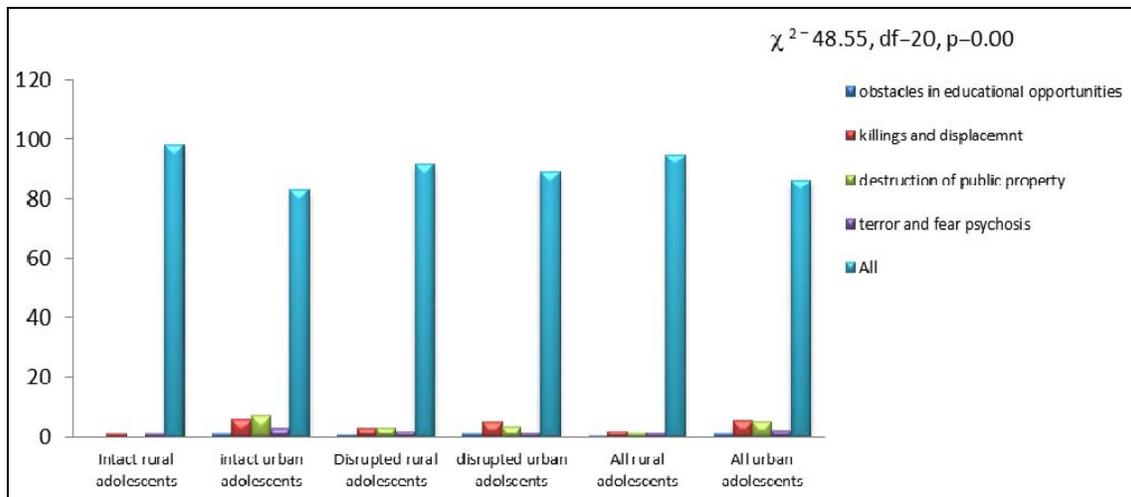


Fig 5: as per dwelling

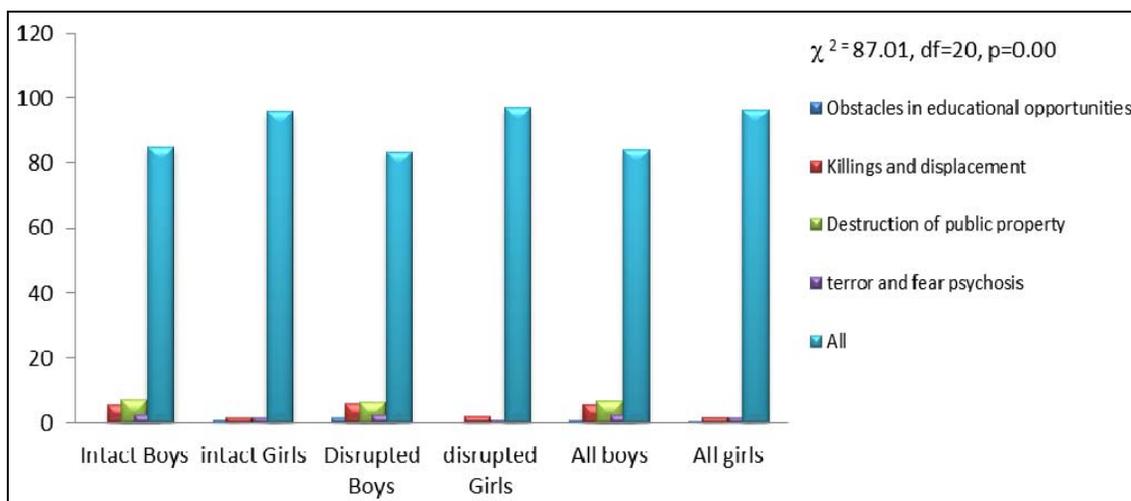


Fig 6: as per gender

Conclusion

The number of adolescents who are being directly affected by armed conflict is enormous and unprecedented, and their rights, well-being and protection merits special attention. All

intact and disrupted adolescents were aware about armed conflict in Kashmir. Same is the case with rural and urban adolescents as well as adolescent boys and girls. According to all adolescents, obstacles in educational opportunities, killings

and displacement, destruction of public property and terror and fear psychosis are major troubles faced due to armed conflict in Kashmir.

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