



Terrorism and its Impact on Domestic Women: A Case Study of Peshawar (2005-2020)

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism has a detrimental impact on the social structure and economic stability of countries, with particularly vulnerable groups like domestic women facing severe repercussions. This research paper investigates the diverse effects of terrorism on domestic women in Peshawar, Pakistan, between 2005 and 2020. Utilizing qualitative research techniques, such as interviews and analysis of secondary data, the study reveals the psychological trauma, economic vulnerability, social disruption, and limited access to vital services that these women endure. The results show increased psychological distress, financial difficulties resulting from the loss of male family members, disruption of support networks, and educational challenges. The paper emphasizes the need for gender-sensitive policy measures aimed at providing psychosocial support, promoting economic empowerment, and addressing gender norms to build resilience and inclusivity. This research enhances the understanding of gendered aspects of conflict and underscores the importance of incorporating women's experiences in counterterrorism and rebuilding initiatives (Hassan, 2024).

Introduction

As the 21st century began, there was an increase in global terrorism threats, particularly after the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, which significantly altered international security landscapes. Ranking third in the 2014 Global Terrorism Index, Pakistan has been at the forefront of the fight against terrorism, undergoing significant societal changes (Aziz, 2020). Peshawar, the capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and close to the conflict-affected Afghanistan, faced numerous incidents of terrorism, such as suicide bombings and insurgent assaults, having a devastating effect on its civilian populace. Women were especially vulnerable due to cultural norms and reliance on male family members, a situation worsened by the considerable loss of men in terrorism-related violence (Hussain, 2020).

The effects of terrorism on women domestically are both direct and indirect, including psychological distress from exposure to violence, financial struggles from losing income providers, and disruption of social networks, alongside limited access to health and educational resources. Although women play vital roles as caregivers and contributors to the economy, these issues are frequently overlooked, resulting in their marginalization in both policy-making and rehabilitation initiatives (Khan, 2013). This paper provides a thorough examination of the consequences of terrorism on women in Peshawar over a span of 15 years, with the goal of highlighting their challenges and suggesting practical policy solutions.

Theoretical Framework

This research employs feminist theory to examine the specific effects of terrorism on women in Peshawar. Feminist theory highlights that women frequently encounter systemic discrimination, meaning they are subjected to unfair treatment in a structured and pervasive manner, particularly in societies governed by patriarchal values. Patriarchy is defined as a social framework in which men predominantly wield power, and cultural or institutional practices often hinder women's equal participation in decision-making and access to resources such as education, employment, or healthcare.

Utilizing this perspective allows us to recognize that terrorism is not merely a broad issue but one that exacerbates pre-existing inequalities faced by women. Acts of terrorism can disproportionately affect women by jeopardizing their economic prospects (such as loss of jobs or freedom of movement) and mental well-being (including heightened trauma or anxiety). Feminist theory also emphasizes the importance of advocating for gender equality, which involves striving to ensure that women have the same rights and opportunities as their male counterparts.

Additionally, it underscores the necessity of safeguarding women's rights in situations of conflict and ensuring that their voices and experiences are incorporated into recovery and reconstruction initiatives following violent episodes. This is crucial because women's viewpoints can be easily overlooked, yet they play an essential role in developing effective and equitable policies in post-conflict contexts.

In summary, this framework assists the study in concentrating on how terrorism uniquely affects women and highlights the importance of promoting gender equality to address these impacts.

Literature Review

Current research demonstrates that terrorism significantly contributes to economic instability and societal disruption globally (Aziz, 2020; Malik et al., 2019). Pakistan's engagement in counterterrorism operations intensified domestic vulnerabilities, particularly in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA regions, where women encountered multiple obstacles, such as unemployment, social displacement, and violence (Hussain, 2020; Wahab, 2021). Research indicates that terrorism has a severe impact on mental health, leading to widespread feelings of anxiety, depression, and trauma (Mehmood, 2012; Ahmed & Khan, 2016). Additionally, attacks associated with terrorism on educational facilities have disrupted academic progress and reduced literacy rates, with girls and women being the most affected (Khan et al., 2019). Although academic discussions generally acknowledge the detrimental effects of terrorism, there is a lack of focus on the experiences of women in conflict areas like Peshawar. This shortcoming highlights

the need for gender-sensitive research that explores the specific challenges faced by women and their strategies for resilience in environments of ongoing violence (Hassan, 2024).

Research Methodology

To conduct research, research method is an essential step. It is necessary in a sense to explain the overall strategy of the research. The study used is qualitative research tools and methodologies to gather data for study. The goal of this study is to figure out the miseries of women victims of the war. So primary and secondary data is collected and analyzed. For collecting primary data some interviews are conducted with victims, experts and policy makers. For this purpose, surveys are also conducted to collect the real data. Likewise, for the collection of secondary data books, articles, journals and online sources are utilized. The research subjects are randomly selected from affected families. The qualitative data collected tool gives us live experiences and interviews that can understand the problems and challenges facing by the victim women. (Hussain, N. 2020)

Overview of Terrorism in Pakistan and Peshawar

Definitions and Types of Terrorism

Terrorism generally denotes violence driven by political motives that aims at civilians in order to create fear and accomplish ideological objectives (Hoffman, 2006). There are various categories of terrorism, including revolutionary, sub-revolutionary, and establishment terrorism, which vary in their motivations and methods (Laqueur, 1999).

History of Terrorism in Pakistan

Throughout different periods in history, both state and non-state actors have employed terrorism on an international scale. As far back as the time of the ancient Greek historian Xenophon (c. 431–c. 350 BCE), there were discussions regarding the effectiveness of psychological warfare against opponents. Roman emperors such as Tiberius (reigned 14-37 CE) and Caligula (reigned 37-41 CE) resorted to tactics like fleeing, seizing property, and executing dissenters to maintain their power. A particularly notable example of early terrorism is found in the actions of the Jewish Zealots, also known as the Sicarii, who carried out violent assaults on fellow Jews deemed to be collaborating with the Roman occupiers. In the late 1800s, revolutionaries across Western Europe, Russia, and the United States turned to terrorism in their quests for political and social upheaval. Between 1865 and 1905, anarchists carried out multiple assassinations targeting kings, presidents, prime ministers, and various government officials using guns and explosives. The late twentieth century witnessed Puerto Rican nationalist groups like the FALN, anti-abortion movements, and international organizations committing numerous acts of terrorism within the United States. This period also experienced some of the most devastating attacks on American soil, including the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City and the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995. Moreover, there were significant terrorist acts directed at US federal buildings overseas, such as the bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and the assault on the USS Cole in Yemen's Aden port in 2000. Before the September 11 attacks, worries about the potential use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists were already present, as seen in the 1995 Tokyo subway attack in which the AUM Shinrikyo cult released nerve gas. These fears intensified after September 11, particularly with the anthrax-laced letters sent to political figures and journalists in the United States, resulting in numerous fatalities. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, US

President George W. Bush prioritized the fight against terrorism in American foreign policy, launching an extensive "war against terrorism."

Causes of Terrorism in Pakistan

Pakistan has faced terrorism, which has been exacerbated by geopolitical influences, especially due to the Afghan conflict and internal militancy (Rashid, 2008). The rise of militant factions in tribal areas and military counterterrorism initiatives following 9/11 has resulted in a surge of violence, with Peshawar being a common target (Khan, 2013). The persistent issue of terrorism in

Pakistan can be attributed to socioeconomic disparities, political instability, and extremist beliefs (Malik et al., 2019).

Impact of Terrorism on Domestic Women of Peshawar

Psychological and Social Impact

Women in Peshawar faced significant psychological challenges stemming from continuous violence, the loss of loved ones, and a lack of security. Conditions such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were common, worsened by a shortage of mental health services (Hassan, 2024). The disruption of communities due to displacement and the collapse of support networks led to feelings of isolation and increased vulnerability (Mehmood, 2012).

Economic Impact

The loss or disability of male relatives greatly constrained women's financial prospects, exacerbating poverty and reliance on others. Lack of education and societal constraints also hampered their chances of finding work and starting businesses (Hussain, 2020). Women engaged in domestic roles endured the combined pressures of caregiving and earning an income without sufficient assistance (Aziz, 2020).

Educational Impact

Violent attacks on educational institutions and the fear of aggression resulted in the shutting down of schools and a rise in dropout rates, with girls being affected more significantly. Such interruptions impede women's long-term empowerment by restricting their educational opportunities and skill acquisition (Khan et al., 2019).

Gender-Based Violence

The turmoil intensified gender-based violence (GBV), as women experienced increased threats of domestic violence, harassment, and exploitation during periods of social unrest (Hassan, 2024).

Women's Response and Roles amid Terrorism

Despite facing challenges, women in Peshawar showed resilience by engaging in community support initiatives and promoting peace. Some took on roles within extremist violence, complicating the discussions surrounding victimhood and agency (Hassan, 2024). It is crucial to continue efforts aimed at safeguarding women's rights and incorporating them into post-conflict recovery.

Government and NGO Initiatives

Numerous programs aim to empower women economically by helping them acquire skills that enhance their earning potential and promote financial independence. For instance, the Women Empowerment Organization (WEO) provides training that enables women to develop either vocational skills or business acumen. Other initiatives, such as Education Cannot Wait (ECW), focus on restoring educational access for children and young women whose lives have been disrupted by conflict. Education plays a crucial role not only in personal growth but also in ensuring long-term economic stability and social engagement. However, despite the significance of these initiatives, challenges remain. Policies aimed at assisting women are not always fully executed, resulting in the intended benefits not being accessible to everyone who requires them. Furthermore, a lack of coordination among various organizations and inadequate resource allocation hinders the overall success of these efforts. This underscores the importance of improved collaboration among stakeholders and greater funding or support to achieve the goals of economic and psychological assistance for women affected by war (Hassan, 2024).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The effects of terrorism on women in Peshawar are deep and varied, influencing mental well-being, financial stability, educational opportunities, and community unity. It is crucial to adopt a gender-sensitive perspective in counterterrorism and rebuilding efforts. This should involve enhancing access to psychosocial support, encouraging women's education and economic involvement, tackling gender-based violence, and confronting outdated cultural practices. Decision-makers need to ensure that women's perspectives are included in peace building initiatives to promote resilience and community recovery. Future studies should keep examining the links between gender, conflict, and security to guide effective strategies.

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