

The Impact of Militancy on Female Education of District Swat Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The education of female is an important obligation for any society. The study investigated the impacts of militancy on female education of District Swat Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The study aimed at the exploration of damages done to the female educational infrastructure, injuries inflicted on female students, their teachers and parents by the militants and the overall adverse psychological impacts on female students of the area. The population of the study was all the 220 heads of the damaged female educational institutions of District Swat. A sample of 20 heads of the damaged female institutions was selected through stratified random sampling technique from the target population of fully and partially damaged schools. Semi-structured interview, documents analysis and researchers' observation were used as tools of data collection. The study reported the destruction of about half of the female educational institutions, loss of books and furniture, adverse psychological impacts for the female students, their teachers and parents, the present problems of female education in the area and the process of rehabilitation of the affected sector. The study suggested measures for improvement and identified areas for future research.

KEY WORDS: Impact, militancy, Swat, Female education, Pakistan

1 INTRODUCTION

Islam is a complete code of life and guides its followers in all the spheres of life. It lays special emphasis on the acquisition of education and knowledge and therefore, recommends its compulsory attainment for both the genders in order to know their lord, their world and themselves. According to Ashraf (2006) who quotes the Hadith of the Holy prophet (SAW) that it is the duty of every muslim (both male and female) to get education. In a similar vein, Khadija (2007) argued that the Holy Prophet (SAW) declared education to be compulsory for both male and female. Similarly, Quazi (2008) declared that the Holy prophet (SAW) described that if one had a girl child, educated her and gave away her in marriage, he will be with me (prophet, SAW) in heaven. The above statements testify the obligation of compulsory education in Islam for both male and female and clearly provide female children with their right to education.

It is an admitted fact that no nation in the world can prosper without female education. According to Ashraf (2006) none of the modern societies can neglect female education because education for the female is the education for the future family. Similarly, Sharma (2007) and Misra (2006) argued that the future of a nation is shaped by the educated mothers. The better educated, trained and skilled are the mothers the better educated, trained and skilled will be the nation. Verma (2006) viewed that both male and female children have the right to education. Similarly, Medel and Bochynek (2004) stressed upon the parity in education of both the genders.

The above lines strongly established the importance of female education and declared its negligence as a serious loss for any society in modern times.

There are many obstacles like, poverty, illiteracy, gender discrimination, violence, ignorance, child labor, early marriages and terrorism in the way of female education. According to Khan (2009) militancy is going to be the main hurdle in the way of acquiring female education. Similarly, Verma (2006) and Gaur and Rani (2007) declared poverty, illiteracy, sexual violence, cultural barriers, early marriages and child labor as hurdles for the female education. Similarly, Das (2006) and Misra (2005) described education as the most powerful tool for the empowerment of females in all spheres of life. Varghese (2005) declared illiteracy as the main cause of female oppression in the society. It became crystal clear that there are many obstacles in the way of female education and militancy is also one of the burning issues for the female education. Since its inception in 1917, the former state of Swat before its merging in Pakistan in 1969 encouraged female education along with the education of male. For this purpose a girl school was

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established in 1926. At the time of its merger in Pakistan, it had more than two hundred schools for education and even co-education was encouraged for the education of females (Sultani-Rome, 2008). It showed the love of the people of the area for the female education even in the period of Swat state.

According to Abbas (2007) the militants started their movement in the guise of Islam, termed themselves as holy fighters and guardians of the cause of religion. But later on they started misguiding the local people, turned violent, razed school buildings and banned female education. The illiteracy, poverty and ignorance of the local masses also encouraged the cause of the militants. Subramanin (2009) reported that in February 2009 the militants completely banned female education and termed it as a source of obscenity. Similarly, Hussain (2008) reported that the orders of the militants completely deprived female students of the area from education for a considerable period of time and teachers along with parents were terrified for the dire consequences if they went against the verdict of the militants. In the similar vein, Khan (2009) and Geller (2008) reported that female children were banned from getting education as it was meant for the inculcation of the western values.

In the light of the above discussion, it is clear that Islam is clearly in favor of female education and makes it obligatory for the Muslims irrespective of gender. It is important for the progress and prosperity of all the nations but the militants in Swat had deprived them of their due right to education. Therefore, the researchers conducted the study in order to pinpoint the damages done to the female educational sector by the militancy and suggesting remedial measures for overhauling these damages.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Population and Sampling: The population of the study was all the heads of the 220 affected female institutions of the District Swat. Among these 123 heads were from fully damaged and 97 were from partially damaged schools. A sample of twenty 20 heads i.e. 10 heads from the fully damaged and 10 heads from the partially damaged female institutions was selected through stratified random sampling technique from the fully and partially damaged schools of the area.

2.2 Instrumentation: Semi-structured interview, documents analysis and researchers' observation were the main tools of data collection. Semi-structured interview was used in order to get an insight into the impacts of militancy on female education i.e. damages to the female schools, injuries to students, teachers and parents, adverse psychological impacts on the female students of the area and to have a close look at the present state of female education in District Swat.

2.3 Data collection: The data were collected through Semi-structured interview from the respondents. For this purpose a female volunteer was recruited and trained who collected data from the female participants. Ethical guidelines i.e. informed consent; confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants were observed.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the light of the research objectives, the following results have been drawn.

Table: 01. Number of damaged Govt female schools in District Swat.

Schools	Fully damaged	Partially damaged	Total
Higher	3	1	4
High	12	2	14
Middle	21	15	36
Primary	84	75	159
Grand Total	120	93	213

(Elementary and secondary education District Swat, 2012)

The above table shows that during militancy 213 female schools sector were affected. Among these 120 schools were fully damaged while 93 were partially affected.

Table: 02 Number of damaged Private sector Schools in District Swat:

Schools	Fully damaged	Partially damaged	Total
Higher	-	-	-
High	1	-	1
Middle	1	1	2
Primary	1	3	4
Grand Total	3	4	7

(Elementary and secondary education District Swat, 2012)

The above table identifies that during the war period seven (07) private sector female institutions were also affected. Among these three (03) were fully and four (04) were partially damaged.

Table: 03 Number of students in Govt sector damaged schools.

Schools	Fully damaged	Partially damaged	Total
Higher	2663	550	3213
High	4015	1574	5589
Middle	1878	1905	3783
Primary	12606	14992	27598
Grand Total	21162	19021	40183

(Elementary and secondary education District Swat, 2012)

The above table states that there were 40183 students in the damaged female schools. Among these 21162 students were in the fully damaged schools while 19021 students were in the partially damaged schools.

Table: 04 Number of students in Private sector damaged schools

Schools	Fully damaged	Partially damaged	Total
Higher	-	-	-
High	126	134	260
Middle	74	193	267
Primary	45	437	482
Grand Total	235	764	1009

(Elementary and secondary education District Swat, 2012)

The above table indicates that there were 1009 students in the damaged private sector female schools in which 235 students were in the fully damaged and 764 students were in the partially damaged schools.

3.1 Impacts of militancy on female education: The militants at first gained local support through their strong propaganda system and when they considered themselves strong enough to challenge the authority of the government, they turned against female education and termed it as un-Islamic. They banned female students to go schools and started razing the buildings of the girls' schools. Those who dared to go against the verdict of the militants were terrified for the dire consequences. This resulted in the destruction of half of the female educational institutions and deprivation of females from their right of education. One of the respondents described the situation in these words: "The militants started their movement on their radio and influenced the public opinion in their favor by saying that they were safeguarding the cause of Islam and then they banned female education and destroyed school buildings and no one dared to speak against them".

3.2 Impacts on female students: Female students were the easy victims of the threats of militants. They were terrified to abandon their education or be ready to face the wrath of the militants. They received threats on their way to school and in the society. Some female students were also impressed by the teachings of the militants and they bade goodbye to schools. Those who remained in schools and continued their education were under mental stress and anxiety due to the prevailing fear and frustration. They were not in a position to focus on their studies and this deteriorated their educational efficiency and led them to educational backwardness. One of the participants told:

"Female students were ordered to stop their education or they would meet death". Another participant told: "Our girl students were terrorized on the way to school". Another of the respondents told: "Our students were very much afraid and all the day used to speak about fear, they had become very weak and even teachers and school heads used to speak about fear all the time".

3.3 Impacts on female teachers: Female teachers were under the continuous threat by the hands of militants. They were regarded as un-holy women and were only serving the cause of the westerners and propagating the secular ideology of obscenity. They and their families were under the continuous threat of the militants. They were not in a position to continue their duties of teaching and were suffering from mental torture. They had no option but either to obey the orders of the militants or to quit their jobs and migrate to the safer parts of the country. One of the participants told:

"We used to come for teaching in great fear". Similarly another told: "The militants used to call us un-holy women who were spreading only obscenity and we were compelled to leave our jobs or take shelter in safer areas of Pakistan."

3.4 Impacts on parents: The parents were terrified for sending their female children to schools. They were discouraged to send their females to educational institutions. They received threats and mental torture due to their worries for the safety of their daughters. They had no options but to obey the commands of the militants. One of the participants told:

“The parents were hesitant to continue the education of their girls, they got threats from people to stop their daughters from schooling or they along with their children will be slaughtered, the girls often used to remain absent from school”.

3.5 Impacts on society: The society in general was not in a position to support the cause of female education. Though they were staunch supporters of the female education but they were compelled to show hatred for the female education. No one even dared to speak against this situation and those who spoke they were made to pay for it. This resulted in a complete ban on female education for a considerable period of time. One of the participants told:

“Society in general was unable to favor female education because of fear and those who show any support were terrified, it encouraged them (the militants) to ban education of our children”

3.6 Present scenario of female education in swat: The affected schools have been reopened either in tents or in rented buildings, without furniture and other basic amenities. The reconstruction and rehabilitation of the affected school buildings is under process through the assistance of the foreign aid under the supervision of foreign NGOS and Pak Army. One of the participants told in this regard:

“We have started our schools in tents but we don’t have water and toilet facilities but we hope soon our schools will be built by the help of army and foreign NGOs aid”.

4. DISCUSSION

The study was about to determine the impacts of militancy on female education of District Swat. The militants started their campaign against female education as it was only meant for the propagation of obscenity. They destroyed female school buildings and most of the female schools in Swat, have either fully or partially been damaged by the militants. Two hundred and thirteen 213 government and seven (7) private sector schools have been damaged during the insurgency. These schools have re-opened either in tents or in rented buildings (Education department Swat, 2012). The militants bombed more than 200 schools and on January 15th 2009, completely banned female education by saying that it was promoting, western values and obscenity. They warned educators and girls students for serious consequences if they didn’t comply with the orders issued by the militants. Drivers were warned to stop transporting girls to schools (Irtiq, 2009).

The militants termed themselves to be the guardians of Islamic cause and that female education was against it, therefore, they were not in favor of it. They failed to represent the true spirit of Islam which guarantees female education. As they were devoid of the true teachings of Islam, therefore, they turned against female education and deprived girls from the modern education (Khadija, 2007).

Girls students have lost their interest in their studies and they are under mental stress. They consider themselves insecure and they are in uncertain situation but it is encouraging that they are coming to schools and are about to retain their previous tempo. Similarly, parents have also lost their confidence but they are hoping for the better futures of their daughters. Female teachers are also very much enthusiastic about their job and are working hard for the betterment of their students. The society in general is very much cooperative and the present scenario is quite encouraging for the female education.

In the light of the above study the following conclusion has been drawn. The militants started their campaign against female education in the guise of religious teachings and when they got hold of the nerves of the locality, they declared girls’ education as un-Islamic, threatened those students and teachers who attended the schools and finally, destroyed the female schools as they were the places for the propagation of the western cultures and obscenity. Parents and their girl children lost their interest in education. The female students of the area suffered from anxiety and psychological depression and their teachers were compelled to go to safer parts of the country.

Owing to the present situation of the female education in the area, the researcher made the following recommendations.

1. The infrastructure of female education must be re-established on war basis by the provision of necessary financial and technical assistance by the government.

2. There should be Guidance and Counseling programs for the rehabilitation of the psychologically affected students of the area to overcome the problems of anxiety and depression.
3. The government and non-governmental organizations should encourage female education through financial aids of female students for school uniform, books and transportation.
4. The society in general and parents in particular should actively participate and cooperate with the government in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the female education sector.
5. The ulemas and religious scholars should be encouraged to present the true Islamic spirit, as it is totally in favor of female education.
6. Future researchers may conduct studies on the Psychological impacts of militancy on the female school students of the area.

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