



RESEARCH PAPER

Exploring the Impact of Terrorism on Emotional and Psychological Wellbeing of University Students and Teachers in Pakistan: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism has stunned the peace and social fabric of the world. The educational institutions were being attacked to create unrest among students, teachers and parents in Pakistan. The present study was an endeavor to explore the outcomes of terrorism on emotional and psychological well-being of university students and teachers in Pakistan. The participants of the study were taken from Government College University, Faisalabad through purposive sampling method. In this qualitative research design, Focused Group discussion sheets were used as research instruments to collect data from respondents. There were 48 students and 29 teachers who participated and recorded their observations in five discussion sessions. The results indicated that students became psychologically imbalanced and terrorism had badly affected their emotional health. Moreover the paper suggests training sessions for students to develop emotional stability in universities. Furthermore it recommends that teachers should also get appropriate trainings to handle such psychological and emotional disorders effectively.

Introduction

Terrorism is an activity in which mental and physical efforts are made to create fearful situation and state of uncertainty. It is a sort of violence wherein the innocent people are being attacked for evil intentions. There may be a person or group involved in forceful and unlawful activities with the intention of spreading fear and nervousness among the masses. Terrorism is designed, focused and politically forced violence against unprotected people. The entire globe in general

and Pakistan particularly has been facing this man-made adversity since last two decades. The acts of Terrorism, its causes, lethality and consequences were the topic of great interest among researchers in existing situation. Therefore a number of researches are available in literature which describes its history, causes and its political, economic, social, psychological implications. So terrorists have changed their patterns and styles in terms of targets, lethality and cruelty. Terrorism is hidden activity and perhaps more devastating than the war moreover it spreads fear and panic with the intention of bringing about a political and social change. Terrorism appears in different forms and scenarios. Suicide bombing, abductions, and shooting of the innocent people has become major cause of stress in educational institutions.

Emotional Stability is a state which indicates a person's skill and competency to keep calm even when faced with certain pressure or stress. The individual with high emotional state is less likely to experience negative thoughts and reactions while the individual or person with low emotional health is more prone to experience negative thoughts and reactions. In the current wake of terrorist attacks especially on educational institutions, the students feel insecure in their surroundings and they have been facing several emotional and psychological disturbances. Sensed threats have negative impact upon our behavior and feelings. Important sensed threats effects are strain, helplessness, lack of safety and security. In the conditions where there is no sense of terror, students feel themselves secure and mentally well composed. Such condition is more conducive for study as well as whole learning process. Whatsoever we react, how we respond to a certain event is called behavior. Our behavior also changes with the change in situation, drastic and panic situation will also adversely affect our behavior and emotional well-being. Learning behavior is a study about how young one learns in a particular condition. Three elements are considered important while establishing behavior and that are self, others and curriculum. To increase learning potential, facilities and access to learning programs is very necessary. Without which learning behavior cannot be maximized. Students seek and deserve only a protective atmosphere for learning if they are not given fear free atmosphere, they would never be composed to learning. Stress also spread social disturbance in the minds of students. It results in social disconnection and most of the students under such a stress feel prone to social alienation and distancing. Isolation is taken as one of the major stress exhibition predictor. Stress creates tension and unrest among students. They tend to be irritated and de-motivated, even in meager issues they had to perform. This result in their social alienation; as their close friends leave them alone and they do not like to be with them due to his resentment. In solitation such student may also harm to himself. Stress makes the students to nag and complain. They can never tolerate any wrong doing with any of their fellows. They lose their zeal and zest to look at any wrong doing with any of their fellow. Such traits if not controlled or remediated well in time will have devastating impact on students and may damage their psychological and academic life.

Literature Review

The term Terrorism lies the word 'Terror'. It originates and has its roots in the Latin word 'Terrere' which means 'to frighten' or 'tremble'. It has got French suffix 'ism' which means 'practice'. In this way 'Terrorism' would mean 'Practice of trembling' or 'becoming reasons of frightening'. Trembling and frightening has also other synonyms of being fearful, panic and nervousness (Zalman, 2007). Most of the theoretical work revolves around definitions of terrorism (Cooper & Marshall, 1976; Gibbs, 1989; Goodwin, 2006; Hoffman, 1998; Jenkins, 2001; Ruby, 2002). More than 200 definitions have been found during research studies. Simon (1994) is of the view that more than 212 definitions of terrorism are available around the world. Official institutions are using around 90 definitions. Merari (1993) viewed that US, Britain, Germany have taken up terrorism in their legal concepts: (1) exercising violence; (2) political motives; (3) propagating in intended residents. Terrorism is appearing in ever new shape and it can be seen as a daily part of the political drama in recent world. Enders and Sandler (2002) have mentioned that terrorism is actually cruelty or viciousness which is perpetrated by a group of people to realize their vested interest in political, religious or ideological sector. They target huge audience who is nothing to do with policy making. Hoffman (2006) explains that terrorist acts are beyond any doubt political in aims and objectives. They wish to get psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target; it is designed and conducted by some association or any particular group with command and conspirator group without uniform or insignia.

The terrorism is internationally aimed at non-combatant civilian population or some celebrity in order to gain some political or religious objective or significance. Terrorism is socially constructed (Barnett & Reynolds, 2009). Terrorism does not mean just murder, killing or damaging; rather it is meant to realize their importance more than their immediate target. They may influence governments or military. They may harm society and larger groups among civilians. It is not like regular crimes because its objectives are more powerful. (Rush, 2002) identifies that change is derived so desperately that any delay in this regard may be more devastating than deaths of civilians.

Terrorism in Pakistan is based on four major types of conflicts; Language, Sect, Race and Religion. Mohajirs who settled in Karachi had reservations about transferring capital of Pakistan from Karachi to Islamabad. They demanded their share and protested against lack of power in bureaucracy, lacking of jobs in government, shortage of homes and transport facilities. However there is a lot of ambiguity in finding the possible solution of such issues. On the other hand they have been severely criticized by the people for their demand of a separate homeland and province or even getting complete authority over the city like Hyderabad and Karachi. Moreover Sunni-Shia conflicts in this area were originated in the very early period of Islam.

Baluchi people are not developed economically. They do have lesser share in employment (civil services and military). They have strong reservations against Federal government as they have not been given due share in natural resources as these are distributed on the basis of population. On the basis of such deprivation, there are some moves of establishing a separate country for the Baluchi people (Hussain, 2010).

Religious militancy that is proliferating in the country distributed in various groups. They demand promulgation of Islamic law in country. They consider the government of Mullah Umar as role model. Their opponents are of the views that Pakistani law does not accord such type of government. Therefore a clear majority of Pakistani people wants to spend a life of modernity rather than following the pattern of Taliban in the region (Yaseen & Muzaffar 2018).

Terrorism has been increased in Pakistan after the declaration of 'War on Terror' by USA due to New York attacks on Twin towers. US decided to invade Afghanistan as it refused to surrender Osama Bin Laden to US authorities (Tellis, 2008a; Tellis, 2008b). Pakistan again became a front line state when it supported NATO and supplied logistic support. Pakistan militant religious element thought it rebellion. In the beginning foreign installations were targeted by terrorists but when Pakistan started operation to uproot militants' installations, they started targeting public and private places. Casualties per incident remained high which devastatingly increased in the previous decade (The Express Tribune, 2010). Pakistan have faced gross and severe impacts of terrorism. The greatest devastation was in the field of economy, politics, education society and culture. Millions of people have been displaced in the result of the operation in Swat and Waziristan. The number of these (IDP) internally displaced persons, is much higher than those of the Afghan refugees of 1979. It has caused high administrative problems and damaged social fabric of society. These have also been ruining our law and order situation. Terrorism has deprived the people from their basic human rights, economic opportunities and damaged their psychological balance. Country's repute is spoiled and chances of prosperity are diminished (Abbasi, 2013; Kashif, 2011).

Terrorism in modern age has become a serious predictor of depression, anxiety, stress and moral salience. The students at schools, colleges and university have suffered acute sense of insecurity. In such accidental closure of educational institutions, syllabus has to be completed in lesser period of time and sometimes students have to attend classes on holidays and weekends. Family culture in Pakistan is of great importance in building of mental and psychological behavior of students of Pakistan. The anxiety and depression is increasing to fearful extent not only among students but also among their parents (Husain et al., 2007).

The years 18-24 of young's life is of great importance. This phase transfers a young man from education to practical life. Leaving home and connecting multiple type of relation in society change its adulthood and causes of such transitions which

are a direct result of social changes and changing interactions are duly researched in USA and Europe (Settersten Jr, & Ray, 2010). Whereas these still has to be properly researched in Pakistan. A few students up to the level of university get proper health resources. The areas where there is high risk of mental health stigma; there the age group of 18-24 years are at high risk of being prone to mental health disorder due to sense of competition, parental expectations and sense of responsibility (Cook, 2007). As the process goes on, the number of students suffering from stress and anxiety keeps on increasing.

According to Haas, Hendin and Mann (2003) the mental health issues got increased during the last two decades. For example during 1980's to 2000's, suicide rate has doubled among women and tripled among men aging 18-24 years. Mental health problems which were observed comprises of depression, anxiety, self-mutilation and self-destruction (Dyrbye et al., 2008). What may be the cause but instead of getting any improvement, the cases of mental health are getting worsened with the passage of time. It has been found that 46% of the university students could not complete their university degree due to mental health issues (Vander *at al.*, 2012). In university, education, achievement, mental health and well-being should be interred linked. Especially those suffering from mental health issues should not be left untreated (Cook, 2007).

Material and Methods

The qualitative research design is applied as it is reliable and facilitates the researchers in the field of social sciences. The reasons for administrating qualitative approach in present study were (i) to seek deep insight of respondents regarding outcomes of terrorism on psychological emotional health of university students and teachers, (ii) to generalize the results through qualitative method which is highly acceptable in the field of social sciences. However focused group discussions were considered as an appropriate method to record the perception of respondents to identify various factors affecting emotional and psychological wellbeing of university students and teachers due to terrorism.

The Participants of the Study

The participants of the study revolved around the students and teachers (Lecturers, Assistant Professors and Associate Professors) of Government College University Faisalabad. The purposive sampling technique was adopted for the recruitment of participants for focused group discussions. The total sample of participants consisted of 48 students and 29 teachers from departments of Government College University Faisalabad. A notice having all details was displayed in front of each department and five banners for invitation had also been displayed five days before the sessions. A brief introduction of the topic and variables was also presented by the researchers. The focused group discussions were carried out by note taking and recording in-depth insights of the participants. Findings of Focused group discussion were verified through audio recording, snap

shooting and recruiting mediators. The details about departments and gender of the participants are given below in the table.

Table 1
Demographic information of Students participating in Focused Group Discussion

Departments	Male	Female	Age Groups
Political Science& Law	02	02	20-40
History	02	03	
Computer Science	03	01	
Psychology	04	02	
Education	02	04	
Sociology	03	02	
Fine Arts	02	02	
English	02	02	
Physiology	03	02	
Chemistry	02	03	
Total	25	23	

The above table demonstrated that there were 23 female and 25 male students representing different departments who participated and shared their views. The age group of participants was between 20-40 years.

Table 2
Demographic information of Teachers participating in Focused Group Discussion

Departments	Male	Female	Age Groups
Political Science& Law	02	01	25-55
Botany	01	01	
Computer Science	01	-	
Economics	01	01	
Psychology	02	01	
Education	02	02	
Sociology	01	02	
Pharmaceutics	01		
Fine Arts	02	02	
English	01	01	
Islamic studies	01	-	

Chemistry	01	01
Geography	02	
Total	18	11

The above table demonstrated that there were 18 male and 11 female teachers representing different departments who participated and shared their views. The age group of participants was between 25-55 years.

Instrumentation

The researchers conducted focused group discussions with university students and teachers. The self-developed focused group discussion sheets for students and teachers were designed in the light of the accessible literature on terrorism, emotional and psychological stability. The main objectives of focused group discussions were to explore the need of training programs and to identify the factors which had affected psychological and emotional health of students and teachers. The questions addressed in focused group discussions generally directed the researchers towards impact of terrorism on emotional and psychological stability of students and teachers as well.

Results and Discussion

Summary of Discussion with Students

Incidents of Terrorism in Pakistan

The participants discussed several effects of terrorism on their personal, social and emotional life in general; they expressed their views about political disturbance, social segregation, emotional instability and situation of uncertainty in society due to terrorism. One of the participants from department of Political Science said, *“My aunt’s family is the victim of terrorist attack in 2011. Her husband lost his life in a suicide attack and she received serious injuries. This incident badly shattered her life, now she and her children are leading miserable life without any source of income and support”*. The other participants also narrated some incidents of terrorist attacks and their impact on personal, social, emotional and economical lives of people. They also discussed about security challenges to the lives of innocent citizen. They also showed deep concern that victims of terrorist attacks suffer the whole life as they got socially, emotionally and physically disturbed and could not carry out their activities effectively.

Impact of Terrorism Attacks on Educational Institutions

The participants of the focused group discussion were highly sensitive about the terrorist attacks on educational institutions, they expressed that educational institutions were badly affected by terrorism. A large number of students were victim of terrorist attacks. Infrastructure has been destroyed, learning activities

were badly affected and security challenges have been raised. One of the participants showed his grief and added, *"Students are suffering from sense of insecurity due to terrorist attacks on educational institutions"*. They also showed fear about security threats to educational institutions. One of the participants stated, *"Universities get threat from terrorists because educational institutions are soft targets for terrorist attacks. Such threats create fear among students"*. Another participant from computer science department shared an incident with great sorrow and told, *"My cousin was killed in a suicide attack at International Islamic University on October, 2009. His teachers and six classmates including two female students became the victim of that terrorist attacks. He was the only son of his parents and his mother got psychologically disturbed and imbalanced"*. A female participant from Psychology department stated with pain, *"My close friend was killed in parking area of Pakistan Navy War College at Lahore on 2008"*.

According to the perception of the participants, learning process has badly affected in universities due to terrorism. They expressed their views that terrorism has adverse effects on learning behavior of the students. One of the participants reported, *"The situation gets worse when educational institutions are forced to close due to threats of terrorism"*. One of the respondents from department of history said, *"When Army Public School Peshawar was targeted by terrorists on 16 December, 2014, all educational institutions of Pakistan were closed which created panic among the people of Pakistan. My university had also been closed for one month, my courses remained incomplete. I spent the whole time feeling shattered and disorganized when university reopened after closure, my mother showed great concern to send me back in the university, I got afraid and mentally disturbed"*.

Outcomes of Terrorism on Students

The participants expressed with grief and disappointment that the students were the direct victim of terrorism as some of them lost their lives in terrorist attacks while others were emotionally affected and got psychological disturbed. One of the participants from Fine Arts department told, *"Students and teachers are severe victim of terrorism, some of them lost their lives, some got wounded and disabled for rest of their life. My class mates and I remained anxious and worried that any awful incident may happen to us and our families"*.

Factors Affecting Psychological and Emotional Stability

The participants were unable to focus the effects of terrorism on their emotional stability. They expressed several factors such as political, social and economic dimensions of terrorism. The researcher again clarified the question in the right direction, after understanding the nature of question; they shared their experiences which correlated the situation of terrorism with emotional health. One of the respondents said, *"When I watched live transmission of terrorist attack on Bacha Khan University Charsada, I got much afraid and depressed, I could not sleep properly for a long time, the constant stress damaged my psyche. My parents were also confused, when*

they came to know that my university was also at high risk of terrorist attack". Another female participant from English department shared her views, "In this stressed condition, I am unable to focus on my studies; I feel sense of insecurity at university campus. I literally wept after watching the media coverage of Army Public School Peshawar where innocent students and teachers were killed. I lost my patience and I became psychologically unbalanced".

The participants' showed extreme concern about the existing situation of safety and security of educational institutions. One of the participants from department of psychology mentioned, "I feel decline in my academic performance, I cannot concentrate on my tasks and I think hard to regulate my emotions". After detailed discussion, participants highlighted the most specific factors which affected the emotional satiability of university students. The participants generally agreed that fear; anxiety and depression have negative impact on the psychological and emotional well being of university students.

Developing Psychological and Emotional Stability

The participants were confused to present concrete suggestions about any strategy to deal with the effects of terrorism on emotional and psychological health of students. One of the participants from Physiology department said hopelessly, "Terrorist attacks cannot be stopped because the Government itself is confused in handling this critical situation. A number of students and teachers were killed and injured as a result of terrorist attacks on educational institutions by militants but nothing has been done to eradicate this evil. I am much confused and upset; I think that my future is at risk". Another participant from the same department disagreed and said, "We should not lose our hope, we can promote peace through education. We can counter the effects of terrorism through behavioral modification. The participants concluded the discussion by suggesting that there was a need of such training programs which can help university students in decreasing the effects of terrorism on their emotional stability.

Summary of Discussion with Teachers

Incidents of Terrorism in Pakistan

Faculty members of Government college university Faisalabad were the participants of focused group discussion sessions. The participants pointed out many aspects of human life such as personal, social and emotional which were directly affected by terrorism. They discussed about the situation created after 9/11 in all over the world and especially in Pakistan. One of the participants from history department expressed with sorrow, "Pakistan is a severe victim of terrorism in rest of the world and terrorism has emerged as highly destructive phenomenon". Generally the teachers of Government College University Faisalabad were fully aware that terrorism has badly shattered the lives of the people of Pakistan. They expressed that Pakistan has sacrificed the lives of innocent students, teachers, citizen and law

enforcing agencies against the war of terrorism. One of the participants from law department expressed his views, *"The Pakistan is in a state of war after 9/11, the people of Pakistan are not only fighting against terrorism but also sacrificing their lives"*. A participant from department of Psychology elaborated, *"Terrorism develops unrest in the society, terrorist attacks create panic in the minds of the people and the main objectives of terrorist organizations are to create horror in the country"*. Another participant from Punjabi department added, *"Terrorists wish to destabilize our political and social system by creating sense of insecurity among the people of Pakistan"*. The participants vowed that terrorists will not succeed in their evil designs, they cannot de-motivate them and they are ready to face this critical situation. The participants reacted that they were thoroughly vigilant about their responsibilities in current situation. One of the participants from department of Sociology expressed *"Teachers are also affected by the incidents of terrorism but they have to show more responsible behavior in their professional and social life"*.

Impact of Terrorism Attacks on Educational Institutions

Teachers as participants of focused group discussion were highly determined to defy the evil designs of terrorists in educational institutions as they wish to create panic in the minds of university students and teachers. The researcher observed that current fearful situation of terrorism has failed to demotivate teachers towards their academic and professional activities.

One of the participants viewed hopefully, *"Terrorism can never mislead me from my real destination, I never felt afraid of the evil strives of these devils as their major intention is to create panic among the society,"* he further added passionately, *"such incidents can never discourage me"*. Another participant added his views, *"When terrorist attacked Bacha Khan University, after a few days of that tragic incident, I personally visited that university without any sense of horror to show solidarity with the victims of that attack and I was pleased to see the high morale of university students and teachers"*.

Outcomes of Terrorism on Teachers

Some female participants were observed to be mentally horrified but male participants were found less scared in existing situation of terrorism. A female participant from department of Chemistry discussed, *"As a human being it is natural reaction to feel insecure in the current wave of terrorism but at the next moment, I took courage and felt my responsibilities as a teacher then I tried to counter my fear and remain calm"*. On the other side a male participant viewed, *"I tried to compromise with such tragic incidents of terrorism, it's my responsibility to give my utmost potential in such critical situation, I have no control to change these circumstances, the only thing which I can do is to strive for keeping my emotions stable."* He further commented, *"Terrorism is also a psychological war"*.

Factors Affecting Psychological and Emotional Stability

Majority of the participants expressed that our media should demonstrate its responsible role to diminish the effects of terrorism. Live coverage should be restricted to certain limitations by Government of Pakistan. One of participants from Department of Urdu said, *“When I sit for my breakfast at the start of my day, TV channels frequently repeat incidents of terrorism which has occurred a day before and such media coverage create fearful panic situation.”* Consequently, irresponsible media coverage scares all people of society including teachers. Majority of participants in the sessions strongly disagreed that their interpersonal relations were disturbed due to existing uncertain situation of terrorism furthermore they added that they visit educational institutions that have been directly targeted by terrorists for their academic and professional assignments, one of the participants from Department of Education told, *“I frequently visit that university where my supervisor was killed in terrorist attack”*.

The participants of discussion shared that fearful conditions do not directly affect our nervous system but when such panic situation shattered the minds of our students then we get worried about their emotional health. One of the participants added that, *“when any incident of terrorism took place, I get worried how I will manage the emotions of my students in university”*. Majority of participants have sharp vision and they were clear about evil designs of terrorists, they were fully determined to defy the furious objectives of terrorists. Another participant of focused group discussion from Urdu department expressed his view, *“No doubt terrorism affects cognitive functioning of university teachers but we should know ways to counter these negative effects.”* He further added, *“Our students are the severe victim of terrorism, they get mentally horrified and their academic performance suffer due to such tragic events.”* He emphasized, *“University students should be trained properly to maintain their emotional stability”*. One of the participants viewed, *“I am always worried about the mental health of my students. Terrorism creates unrest among them so I used various counseling techniques in maintaining their emotional health”*.

To assess the need of training program to develop emotional stability among university teachers. When the researcher inquired about the need of a training program to maintain emotional health of university teachers, the participants viewed that no doubt terrorism affects the emotional health of teachers but the teachers try to stabilize their emotions and they have courage to face such critical situations, but on the other hand students are terrified and they cannot manage their emotions and get worried. One of the participants contradicted and said, *“Teachers are also human beings consequently they are also the victim of terrorist attacks, they also feel themselves anxious and disorganized. There should be cognitive behavioral therapies to counter the effects of terrorism for students as well as teachers”*. Another participant of focused group discussion from department of education responded, *“There is a fear in the minds of teachers, but they can counter the effects of fear so there is no need of any training program for university teachers while the students are severely affected”*.

by such terrorist attacks, so there is a need of such training program for university students”.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Participants of the focused group discussion revealed that they were confused and sensitive about the terrorist attacks on educational institutions, they emphatically expressed that educational institutions were severely affected as a result of terrorism. A number of students were victim of terrorist attacks, infrastructure has been destroyed, learning activities were badly affected and security challenges have been raised high. The University students were much frightened as something fearful might also happen with them. They disclosed that they remained worried and disappointed about their future. The Participants expressed that terrorism has developed fear and uncertainty in students. Most of the participants showed great concern about the existing situation of safety and security of educational institutions. The participants of focused group discussion exhibited that they remained upset, disorganized, disheartened and their academic activities had been disrupted due to terrorism. The most of the Participants mentioned that they were mentally disturbed and were unable to complete their responsibilities in distress. The Participants generally established that terrorism has developed fear; anxiety and depression which had shaped negative impact on their emotional and psychological health.

As the faculty members of Government College University Faisalabad were also the participants of focused group discussion sessions, they have pointed out many aspects of human life such as personal, social and emotional which were directly affected by terrorist activities. The participants expressed that Pakistan was suffering severely due to terrorism whereas terrorism had emerged as highly destructive phenomenon for the people of Pakistan. They were of view that terrorism had developed unrest in the society, terrorist attacks had created panic in the minds of the people and the main objectives of terrorist organizations were to create a sense of horror in the country, educational institutions were the easy and soft target for the terrorists. They mentioned that teachers were also human beings therefore they also remained worried and terrified due terrorist attacks. The participants concluded that teachers were also the victim of terrorism but they showed responsible behavior in their professional and social life. The participants viewed that terrorism had affected the emotional and psychological health of teachers but the teachers could manage to stabilize their emotions and they had courage to face such critical situations. The participants vowed hopefully that terrorist could not succeed in their evil designs as teachers were thoroughly vigilant about their responsibilities in current wake of terrorism. However study suggested the need of training programs for students and recommended that;

1. Universities with the collaboration of Higher Education Commission should organize seminars, workshops and training programs to reduce the impact of terrorism on emotional and psychological health of students.

2. Education should enhance the competency of the teachers and provide necessary skills which enable them to play their role in supporting positive behavior and stabilizing emotional health.

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