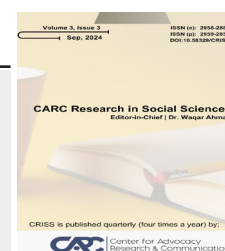




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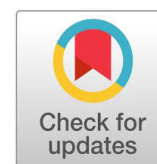
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Investigating Factors Causing Sectarian Militancy and Its Association with Rural Women Sufferings

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ABSTRACT

The study titled "Investigating factors causing sectarian militancy and its association with rural women suffering" was carried out in tribal district Kurram erstwhile known as Kurram Agency of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. A proportionally determined sample size of 335 female respondents was randomly selected within the age group of 30 years and above. The collected data was quantitatively analyzed and presented with the help of frequencies and percentages. The study concluded that sectarian militancy has devastating effects on rural women in terms of getting educations, access to health care facilities and administrative domains, social capital and networking, and political freedom. The prevalence of long standing sectarian tendencies and subsequent violence in the area, also contributed towards women increasing economic dependency on men. The study further concluded that women focused social institutions were socially disintegrated in terms of its physical infrastructure and deliverance due to sectarian conflicts. Likely, it's also resulted into weakened control of women over livelihood, while on the other hand; women opt for secular ideologies in migrated areas after their displacement from home towns. To overcome with women sufferings in war effected areas, strict regulations need to be implemented especially targeting women folks, introduction of consistent efforts to challenge the prevailing patriarchal social structure, creation of awareness among the local leaders about gender sensitivity and punishing anti-state actors like Taliban and Zainebiyoun etc., were forwarded some of the recommendations in light of the study results.

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INTRODUCTION

Among the scholarly community, a conundrum prevails regarding the definition of armed conflicts. However, coming up with a comprehensive definition, scholarly community reached to certain degree of consensus i.e. it is a disputed inconsistency of the non-state actors with government institutions relating to the use of arms to undermine state writ. Armed conflicts are further divided into wars and minor conflicts being measured through number of deaths within a given year. The former case is

spread over thousands of human losses while in the latter case, conflict frequency range up to nine hundreds ninety nine recorded deaths in a given year. Remarkably, armed conflicts are further divided into national and international conflicts i.e. inter-boarder intra-border conflicts (ICRC, 2008). The effects of such conflicts are not limited to a particular gender, but both genders are victims of conflicts and wars.

Bennett et al., (1995) concluded that during and after armed conflicts, women are confronted with number challenges like integration of family members within a community, children raring, food production, livelihood and economic responsibilities linked with women role that are required for maintenance of social order. These tasks performance often met with the risk of women lives during armed conflicts i.e. landmines in fields, shelling and bombing during water and firewood collection (Gardam, 1997). Although, women role in armed conflicts are not vivid but the activities performed by them during wars are obvious. El-Bushra and Lopez, 1994) and Charlesworth

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(2000) confirmed that the use of women as a bargaining commodity and the value of increasing violence opened panoramas of vehemence against women folk during conflicts in light of fragile women traditional status and male stereotypes. Across the globe, women most often faced the aftermaths of sectarianism, wars and armed conflicts and in this regard the role of conducive atmosphere could not be ruled out. Academic deliberation over sect and sectarianism while coming from general to particular i.e. armed conflicts and wars, sect referred to individual body pledging to religion based philosophies that are different from the recognized church and having voluntary associations and their recognition is purely based on the virtue of their religious credentials.

On the other hand, the concept of sectarianism is about prejudice, hatred attitudes and discrimination ominously linked with apparent disparities between subdivisions within the main religious denomination (Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1997). It is an extreme and stern connection and devoutness or redundant backing of a particular sect focusing on condemnation and violence against outer sect due to conceived ideological differences (Bradley, 2007; and Khan et al., 2014). Sectarianism also referred to politicization of a particular religious identity, where sect-based association possess prejudice and hate towards opposing sect, embarked violence between different groups (Gregory, 2014; and Sally, 2000). In this regard, Jalazai (1999) contended that sectarianism is motivated against others for their opposing dogmas, exclusively adhering to one own sect and considering others as absolutely wrong (Islam, 2003).

Sectarianism has devastating effects on various institutions of the society that in turn effected rural women plight. In this regard, Naseer (2015) highlighted the impact of sectarian extremism on the educational opportunities available to rural women and it was revealed that regions suffered from violence face disturbances in their educational facilities and resources. Further, sectarian violence sustains an atmosphere of apprehension and vulnerability, specifically for girls and young women. It results in higher rates of school abandonment and reduced educational achievement. Analogous to education, Khan and Adnan (2018) found that sectarianism has a significant impact on women's healthcare facilities. The destruction of healthcare facility and the relocation of healthcare staffs have detrimental impact on women's ability to obtain crucial maternity and reproductive health care. Moreover, Mohsin (2013) pointed out that there is evidence to imply that the presence of sectarianism leads to an escalation in women's economic reliance.

Disturbances in markets, livelihood prospects, and resource availability intensify women's dependence on male relatives for financial assistance. The perpetuation of sectarian violence contributes to the persistence of economic instability and poverty, with a particular emphasis on rural women, so constraining their capacity to attain economic autonomy and financial stability. In addition, Javed and Nabi (2018) revealed a positive correlation between sectarian militancy and the level of suffrage among rural women residing in conflict-affected regions. They emphasized on the manner in which sectarian violence amplifies gender-based prejudice and aggression. Further,

sectarian militancy ultimately deteriorates women's specified institutions. Women's organizations as well as networks have difficulties in mobilizing and promoting women's rights amidst sectarian violence and prejudice. Sectarian militancy undermines social networking among women belonging to different sects in areas affected by war.

That is why it has a detrimental impact on inter-sectarian connections and solidarity among women, as it perpetuates fear and mistrust among the local. Sectarian conflicts also give rise to divisions within communities based on religious affiliations. Likewise, Sameer (2020) found that sectarian militancy has a detrimental impact on the career prospects of women residing in regions affected by war. It affects women's opportunity for official employment and sources of income due to the resulting economic instability, relocation, and insecurity caused by sectarian violence. Additionally, Afzal (2018) disclosed that sectarian extremism in conflict-affected communities undermines women's ability to exert control over their livelihoods.

Market disruptions, agricultural operations, and limited resource accessibility affect women's capacity to maintain their livelihoods and provide for their families. In addition, Farooq (2012) added that sectarian insurgency limits the political autonomy of women in affected areas. Sectarian organizations' perpetuate fear, intimidation, and violence that hinders women's capacity to engage in democratic procedures and decision-making. Sectarian disputes also impacted the democratic systems and governance frameworks, resulting in the exclusion of women from political engagement and representation, while also sustaining gender-based disparities in influence and position of power. Furthermore, Mujtaba et al. (2022) demonstrated that sectarian radicalism also hampers women's ability to access administrative domains.

Such incidents have wider effect on women's involvement in decision-making and governance processes, attributing it to the presence of instability and insecurity. Likewise, it also slows down women's ability to move in areas controlled by the opposite sect. Women's freedom of movement and access to services and resources in areas controlled by rival sects are limited due to fear and insecurity caused by sectarian violence. In addition, the prevalence of secular beliefs among women tends to rise following their migration from their place of origin as a result of sectarian militancy. Moreover, Kalia (2012) concluded that hardships due to sectarian conflicts on women encourage them to reconsider their identities and beliefs, resulting in a transition towards secular principles and ideologies. Sectarian violence erodes religious unity and acceptance, leading women to adopt more comprehensive and forward-thinking perspectives as a strategy for dealing with displacement and trauma caused by conflict.

Wars not only includes killing of masses but had intense ramification on human beings with dare consequences for female folks including torture, raps, and sexual assaults (Ward and Lekson, 2007). But such women sufferings are often ignored by politicians and media personnel across the globe. Further, young girls and women are most often forced to satiate sexual hunger of men in return of their access to food. They forced to short terms marriages with

instance of rape and genocidal attempts. In consonance to the above, Human Rights Watch (2020) highlighted that opponent groups enslaved and kidnapped women during sectarian conflicts to create terror and control opponents. Women in such situations are suffered from physical labor, psychological traumas and sexual torture as a breach of human rights violations.

Moreover, Aafjes (1998) reported that gender-based violence has been used in armed conflicts but such violence widely under reported in terms of its prevalence and consequences. Women role, priorities and needs are different both in peace and conflict and their participation in decisions should be ensured to avoid cornering women folk during rehabilitation progression (Lund & Mitchell, 2017; and Naseer, 2019). Likely, Shaheed (2009) concluded with reference to the effects of sectarianism and added that it has multiple adverse effects on women and usually they faced the brunt of violence, insecurity and migration during their struggle to protect themselves and their families. Zia (2017) concluded that the societal structure of Parchinar is pointedly shaped by patriarchal ideals that exercise a deep influence on multiple facets of everyday existence. The prevalent traditional gender roles established clear boundaries of dominance on the basis of genders. Within such roles, males occupy influencing position with high power within domestic limits and broader social context. The prevalence of sectarianism worsened women oppression through upholding patriarchal norms and restricting women independence, exposing them to greater vulnerabilities (Yasmeen, 2013).

During sectarian conflicts, wars and conflicts, children get demotivated towards education resulting into discontinuation of education. In this connections, O'Malley (2010) highlighted that such environment negatively contributed towards lack of qualified and skillful teachers (Rafiq, 2014). Religious doctrines also has significant effects on women lives and in such turmoil they showed strong adherence to religious beliefs as a valuable source

of identity direction (Butt, 2012). It was further added that such tendencies of women offered a comprehensive framework for dealing and understanding the complex nature of religious disputes. In this regard, Karamat et al., (2019) further argued that sectarianism increased the impact of religious figures on women folks residing in regions plagued by sectarianism due increased power and control clerics.

METHODS & PROCEDURES

The present study was carried out in war effected villages i.e. Makhazai Gharbi, Makhazai Sharqi, Muzaffarkot, Kas Bilyamin, Bilyamin, Bagzai, Chardewal Jalamai, Chota Mandori, Marokhel and Balishkhel of tribal district Kurram erstwhile known as Kurram Agency of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. The selected villages were badly affected due to sectarian conflicts in 2006 and resultantly the local people in total migrated to other parts of the country. After their return to hometowns, this study was carried out to know about the effects of sectarianism on rural women plight. The nature of the present study was quantitative and the required data was collected with the help of questionnaire by the researcher herself. The questionnaire was based on Likert scale principals including three levels i.e. Yes, No and Don't Know. A sample size of 335 respondents out of 2559 was proportionally determined from different strata's of the study universe and then selected through simple random sampling techniques while considering house hold heads within the age group of 30 years and above as potential respondents for data collection. The collected data was entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences, 20 Version and then analyzed. After analysis of the data, the same was presented with the help of frequencies and their respective percentage distributions. Along with the study results in numeric form, the data was supported with the help of secondary information either inconsonance or in contrast.

Table 1

univariate results regarding sectarianism and its effects on rural women plight in District Kurram, Pakistan

Statements	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
Sectarian militancy restrict rural women plight with reference to education	254 (75.8%)	62 (18.5%)	19 (5.7%)	335 (100%)
Women healthcare facilities were badly affected due to Sectarian militancy	261 (77.9%)	58 (17.3%)	16 (4.8%)	335 (100%)
Women economic dependency increased due to Sectarian militancy	246 (73.4%)	69 (20.6%)	20 (6.0%)	335 (100%)
Sectarian militancy is directly proportional to rural women suffrage	137 (40.9%)	177 (52.8%)	21 (6.3%)	335 (100%)
Women institutions get socially disintegrated due to Sectarian militancy	215 (64.2%)	94 (28.1%)	26 (7.8%)	335 (100%)
Women social networking between the opponent sects no more exist in the area	177 (52.8%)	128 (38.2%)	30 (9.0%)	335 (100%)
Sectarian militancy restrict women employment opportunities	144 (43.0%)	158 (47.2%)	33 (9.9%)	335 (100%)
Women control over livelihood get weakened due to sectarian militancy	257 (76.7%)	56 (16.7%)	22 (6.6%)	335 (100%)
Sectarian militancy restricted women political freedom	173 (51.6%)	145 (43.3%)	17 (5.1%)	335 (100%)
Women access to administrative domain get weakened due to sectarian militancy	162 (48.4%)	131 (39.1%)	42 (12.5%)	335 (100%)
Sectarian militancy decreases women access in opponent areas	136 (40.6%)	169 (50.4%)	30 (9.0%)	335 (100%)
Secular ideologies among women increased after migration from home-land	193 (57.6%)	83 (24.8%)	59 (17.6%)	335 (100%)

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Women being the most integral component of society has a wide ranging contribution in family integration, community stability and rearing of kids as per societal expectations. The above table displayed various attributes pertaining to rural women plight. Results show that majority 254(75.8%) respondents claimed that sectarian militancy restrict rural women plight with reference to education, 62(18.5%) respondents negated the notion while 19(5.7%) respondents remained uncertain. The impact of sectarian violence on the everyday lives of women, specifically in terms of their schooling can be of significant importance. This apprehension stemming out of violence, instability, and insecurity that had negative ramification on girl's education. Parents are reluctant to allow their female kids due to fear of their wellbeing at stake. Threats to life, honour and their abduction had put enormous pressure on parents with no option but to relinquish their education. Naseer (2015) had also discovered in his findings that sectarian violence had deep imprints on the women education. Women had little opportunities as a distributive practice pertaining to education had witnessed uncertainty, and non-consistency due to damage to institutional structure and the absence of staff imparting education. These apprehensions and vulnerabilities had negatively impacted women access to educational attainment, resulting into high dropout rate.

Similarly, majority 261(77.9%) respondents agreed that women healthcare facilities were badly affected due to Sectarian militancy, 58(17.3%) respondents were against the statement while 16(4.8%) were undecided. Sectarian violence impacts on women's are grave and substantial, resulting in the devastation of medical facilities such as health related centers, hospitals, maternal and childbirth units. The closure of medical centers can lead to a reduction in the availability of qualified medical personnel and emergency obstetric treatment, hence elevating the likelihood of maternal death and disability. These findings were similar to Khan and Adnan (2018) who revealed that sectarian militancy had damaged the women health care facilities with displacement of health practitioner. Such activities have negatively impacted women access to crucial services like maternity health and reproduction.

Likewise, majority 246(73.4%) respondents affirmed that women economic dependency increased in the area due to Sectarian militancy, 69(20.6%) respondents were disagreed with the statement while the leftover 20(6.0%) respondents remained uncertain. Sectarian extremism might potentially lead to a rise in women's economic dependence due to a variety of interrelated factors like lesser mobility, no access to market i.e. job opportunities and their access to education is also ceased. Additionally, economic endeavors such as farming, entrepreneurship, trading, and small-scale enterprises may be significantly disrupted. Sectarian violence has pushed women to extreme corner, their livelihood prospects, diminished access to jobs and prevalence of poverty undermines their ability to contribute on economic front. All such situations speak about the extreme vulnerability of women towards attaining economic autonomy and stability (Mohsin, 2013).

In addition, majority 177(40.9%) respondents opposed the notion that sectarian militancy is directly proportional to

rural women suffrage, 137(32.5%) respondents affirmed the statement while 21(6.3%) respondents remained uncertain. People, especially female, might be more hesitant to take part in outdoor activities, such as political procedures, when they feel unsafe. Fear for personal security can inhibit female from participating political rallies, casting votes, or sharing their opinions on the subject. It also restricts women's rights and supports conventional cultural norms by reinforcing established gender roles. All these factors could be contributed to the prevalence of patriarchal norms and only militancy is not the stumbling factor in hinging a change into their fate. Women institutions like schools and health care are the prime target of terrorism. Moreover, their limited role in political domain, coupled with limited autonomy and financial freedom has further deteriorated their chances of making a comeback (Mohsin, 2013; Khan and Adnan, 2018; and Javed and Nabi, 2018).

Furthermore, majority 215(64.2%) respondents alluded that women institutions get socially disintegrated due to Sectarian militancy, 94(28.1%) respondents negated the notion while 26(7.8%) respondents were undecided. The presence of sectarian violence adversely impact women's institutions, leading to social breakdown through several means and undermining their progress. The absence of trust usually potentially impede women's institutions from garnering support, fostering collaboration with other groups, and adequately addressing the needs of women within the community. These findings supported the preceding inferences that sectarian militancy had not only destroyed their institutional frame, but also destroyed women welfare i.e. health care, school and even economic constraints have deteriorate their social standings. Moreover, the persistent form of patriarchy and fear of a women abduction have further ruined their chances of social inclusion (Javed and Nabi, 2018; and Sameer, 2020).

Moreover, majority 177(52.8%) respondents asserted that women social networking between the opponents sects no more exist in the area, 128(38.2%) respondents repudiated while the remaining 30(9.0%) respondents were undecided. There is a risk of violence or retaliation against women who appear to be interacting with members of the rival group, has put at halt the interaction opportunities between women of revival sects. Individuals who strive to build bridges across different religions usually experience societal condemnation or criticism from their communities. Women who tend to be working with members of the rival sect usually faced social stigma and negative sanctions. It could be due to mistrust, taking revenge and extreme polarization of the people on the basis of sect putting ender the fabrics of social inclusion. Women mobility is restricted, they are denied of their rights to participate in political affairs along with decision making at household level and the fear of abduction by rivals have also deteriorated their mobility and social interaction with women of opponent sect (Javed and Nabi, 2018).

Similarly, majority 158(47.2%) respondents negated that sectarian militancy restrict women employment opportunities, 114(43.0%) agreed with the notion while the remaining 33(9.9%) respondents remained undecided. Sectarian disputes exacerbate conservative societal norms and reinforce conventional gender roles. Within such specific scenarios, a notable propensity for women

is to be subjected to prevailing societal norms existence that suggest compliance to established gender roles, primarily as carriers and housewives, rather than actively pursuing career opportunities beyond the boundaries of their homes. The presence of limited mobility put restrictions on the selection of job prospects available to women, hence impeding their ability to actively engage in economic activities. These findings were in negation to the conclusion of Sameer (2020) that sectarian militancy is highly detrimental to women in terms of their access to job market. It negatively affected women economy by impeding their chances of formal employment and also curtailing their income earning due to persistent instability in the economic corridors (Javed and Nabi, 2018).

Likewise, majority 257(76.7%) respondents agreed with the idea that women control over livelihood get weakened due to sectarian militancy, 56(19.7%) respondents were against the statement while the rest of 22(6.6%) respondents were undecided. Sectarian violence adversely affected all spheres of women life i.e. lose their houses, ownership of land, and reliable job prospects, hence disturbing their standard of living. Sectarian militancy has a direct relationship with the decline in economic prosperity with special reference to women folk. Women reliance on men increases due to non-availability of jobs for them, the prevalence of fear of life and situational uncertainty. Economic instability and poverty are the direct outcomes of persistent militancy, usually containing women abilities to gain economic autonomy and a stable monetary status (Mohsin, 2013; and Javed and Nabi, 2018).

Similarly, majority 173(51.6%) respondents claimed that sectarian militancy restricted women political freedom, 145(43.3%) respondents were against the notion while 17(5.1%) respondents were undecided. Limited mobility, deprivation of women in terms of access to education and jobs market, along with total exclusion in the political affairs i.e. no opportunity to contest election have certainly served as a major setback in the efforts of attaining self-reliance and respectability for women. Farooq (2012) had also unearthed that sectarian militancy has reduced the chances of political participation of women and hampered women political autonomy. Violence against women, persistent fear of honour loss, and intimidation had carried detrimental effects on the political careers of women in resting areas.

Further, majority 162(48.4%) respondents agreed with the notion that women access to administrative domain get weakened due to sectarian militancy, 131(39.1%) respondents were against the statement while 42(12.5%) respondents remained uncertain. It is because of conventional gender roles, which reinforce customary standards that place female mainly in household and caring tasks, therefore could obstruct women's doorway to the administrative sphere. Moreover, their limited exposure to the attainment of education and prevalence of patriarchy could be the other pushing factor behind their restrictions in accessing the administrative domains. These findings were similar to Mujtaba et al., (2022) that sectarian violence has encouraged radicalism, resisting women to explore their abilities to enjoy access to administrative domains.

In addition, majority 169(50.4%) respondents negate the

notion that sectarian militancy decreases women access in opponent areas, 136(40.6%) respondents affirmed the statement while 30(9.0%) respondents were undecided. Sectarian disputes give rise to escalated safety concerns, whereby women, being a vulnerable segment of society, may encounter elevated risks within areas controlled by an adverse group. Fears over acts of brutality, intimidation, or intolerance might serve as a barrier for women when considering moving into regions under the authority of an opposing faction. In certain instances, it is believed that rival factions may deliberately select women as targets for violence or intimidation, strategically aiming to destroy the resilience and cohesion of the opposing group. This may generate feelings of worries, so impeding women's ability to enter public places and engage in a range of societal, financial, or governmental activities. Sectarian disputes result in the deterioration of interpersonal relationships and a breakdown of communal bonds. Women, who heavily rely on social support systems, might face difficulties coping with new environments and acquiring necessary resources in regions under the control of rival groups (Farooq, 2012; Afzal, 2018; and Khan and Adnan, 2018).

Moreover, majority 193(57.6%) respondents asserted that secular ideologies among women increased after migration from homeland, 83(24.8%) respondents negated the notion while 59(17.6%) respondents were uncertain. The course of migration often involves the exposure of persons to a wide range of faiths, cultures, and approaches to life. When women immigrate to another places, they may find themselves in an environment that places importance on secularism and diversity. The experience of being exposed to many ideas push individuals to reevaluate their own beliefs and become more receptive to secular beliefs. Women, specifically, may experience better educational prospects in new environments, resulting in being exposed to secular ideologies, a development of critical thinking skills, and a reassessment of conventional or conservative values. As women establish social ties, develop friendships, and actively participate in their newly adopted society, they may discover shared values and beliefs with the prevailing secular philosophies of their new place as outlined by Kalia (2012) facing hardship reinforces women to adjust to new environment, internalize new values system and find a path of adjustment and salvation for themselves.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that sectarian militancy restricted rural women plight with reference to education, and healthcare facilities in the study universe. It's also contributed towards women increasing economic dependency on men in the area followed by socially disintegrated women institutions in terms of its physical infrastructure and deliverance. The social capital and networking of women with the opponent sect's women is no more in existence in the area. Sectarianism also contributed towards weakened women control over livelihood as well it's also restricted women political freedom. Likely, women access to administrative domain also get weakened due to sectarian militancy. On the other hand, secular ideologies among women were increased after their migration from homeland to other parts of the country. Although, sectarian militancy is less likely proportionate to overall rural women

suffrage, employment opportunities, and access to move in the opponent areas. Implementation of strict regulations especially targeting women sufferings, consistent efforts to confront the existing patriarchal values, creating awareness among traditional leaders regarding gender sensitivity and anti-state actors like Taliban and Zainebiyoun etc., should be brought into the court of justice for killing and injuring of local people were forwarded some of the recommendations in light of the study findings.

Conflict of Interests

The authors has declared that no competing interests exist.

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