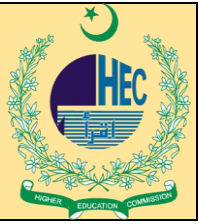




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Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17446409>**Trauma and Resilience: Examining the Impact of the APS Massacre on Pakistani Society****Syeda Shahida Shah**

M.Phil. Central Asian Studies

syedashahidashah@hotmail.com**ABSTRACT**

This article attempts to explore the impact of the post-9/11 acts of terrorism in Pakistan. It particularly focuses on the devastating 2014 incident at the Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The pervasive nature of terrorism, as viewed through the conceptual lens of Structural Violence (Galtung, 1969), suggests that violence built into societal structures exerts significant psychological and social impacts at the micro-level of the population. In order to quantitatively assess these psycho-social effects on individuals, the research utilized two established measurement instruments: Lieber's scale of PTSD was supplemented to gauge the level of post-traumatic stress, and the Social Capital was measured through Fang's (2008) 'Personal Social Capital Scale' (PSCS). The methodology employs a deductive, quantitative approach, comparing direct victims (those who suffered irreparable losses, such as parents of the deceased) against indirectly exposed victims (those who experienced reparable losses or indirect exposure). The results obtained from the statistical analysis indicate a number of key findings. Foremost, they confirm that the level of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is significantly higher for directly exposed victims compared to indirectly exposed victims. Correspondingly, the victims' social capital, i.e, the assets gained through social networks was found to be low among directly exposed victims than indirectly exposed victims. A notable and unanticipated finding was that male direct victims exhibited a significantly high level of PTSD and a lower level of social capital in comparison to women victims, suggesting that the intensity of structural violence varies amongst the demographics of the population. These empirical findings provide an addition to Galtung's Structural Violence Theory by detailing its impacts at the micro-level and offer critical information for humanitarian aid organizations, including the government, for the effective management of victims in conflict-affected areas.

Keywords: Structural Violence, PTSD, Social Capital, APS Massacre, Psycho-Social Repercussions.

Introduction

The cycle of terrorism has emerged as a highly disastrous phenomenon in Pakistan for decades. It has intensified significantly in the aftermath of the terrorist act on September 11, 2001 (9/11) in the US. The subsequent launching of the War on Terror (WoT) by the United States of America strategically positioned Pakistan as a key ally. This unfortunately, plunged the nation into a grueling series of militant attacks from across the border (Rauf, 2017). The period is documented as one of the darkest era(s) of Pakistani history (Umar, 2018). The consequences included: political instability, a worsened economy, high inflation, and massive internal displacement (IDPs). Pakistan, between 2002 and 2010, has endured a total number of 7,739 terrorist incidents. These terrorist incidents led to 8,875 deaths of both security personnel and civilians, alongside a direct economic loss estimated at \$67.93 billion (Javaid, 2011).

The waves of terrorism after 9/11 threatened the peace, stability, and well-being of the Pakistani people (Chachar et al., 2013). Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) particularly impacted acutely due to its

geographical proximity to the epicenter of terrorism (Tufail, 2010). Education, an important pillar for national progress, was specifically targeted, resulting in the destruction of almost 1,000 schools in KP and the Newly Merged Districts (NMDs) (All Voices, 2013). Amidst these attacks, the most traumatic incident was the killing of 132 students, along with teachers and the principal, at the Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar on December 16, 2014 (Khan et al., 2018). This attack is recorded as the most brutal and violent since 1970 (The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2015), and its impact increased the intensity and duration of the psycho-social effects on the Pakistani population (Nawaz et al., 2014).

Such traumatic events cause immense psychological stress in any society (Pereira et al., 2016). The APS Peshawar incident exposed the population of KP to psychological effects like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Galea et al., 2005). PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that an individual can develop after witnessing actual or potential harm, including serious physical injury or sexual abuse (Mansoor, 2015). While PTSD symptoms may reduce over time in some cases, they can get prolonged for years in most cases (Bano et al., 2008). The symptoms of PTSD are categorized into three groups: Re-experiencing Symptoms (e.g., bad dreams), Avoidance Symptoms (e.g., emotional numbness), and Hyper arousal Symptoms (e.g., lack of concentration) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

The repercussions of post-9/11 terrorism not only impacted psychological well-being but also affected the population's Social Capital, which refers to the social assets available to an individual. Social capital can be damaged by terrorism, leading to a loss of trust in others and fears of social interaction (Kayani, 2011). Researchers, such as Giordano (2016), have argued that terrorism tends to disturb mental health and negatively affect levels of social capital.

Therefore, this research aims to assess the levels of PTSD and Social Capital among the APS Peshawar victims to analyze the psycho-social impact of post-9/11 terrorist attacks on the Pakistani population's health.

Theoretical Framework

The methodological approach of this research utilizes deductive reasoning, starting with a broad theory and moving towards specific testable hypotheses. The foundation of this deductive reasoning is anchored in "Structural Violence Theory" articulated by Galtung (1969).

Structural violence, as defined by Galtung (1969), is a type of indirect violence built into social and political structures that systematically hinder individuals from fulfilling their basic human needs, thus causing harm. These harmful social structures are deeply rooted in the political, social, and economic organization of society (Farmer et al., 2006). Within this framework, war is considered a social institution (Gilbert, 1942), a concept also supported by Neff (2008) in his 'contractual theory of war'. Terrorism itself can be considered a form of informal structural violence (Galtung, 1969; Christie et al., 2001).

While Galtung (1969) focused on the impact of structural violence on the whole population at a macro level, this study seeks to provide a necessary theoretical addition by conducting analytical debates focusing on micro-level examination. This research explores how structural violence affects the psychosocial well-being of people at the individual and group level, finding that the intensity of structural violence varies among different demographics.

The study also draws on Judith Lewis Herman's categorization of trauma victims, specifically focusing on 'Type I' trauma, which is caused by a single, transient stressful incident, corresponding directly to the APS Peshawar incident (Marzillier, 2012).

Methodology

The study employs the Empiric Analytic Reason approach, characterized by its quantitative nature and reliance on the deductive method, commencing with the theory of structural violence and leading to the confirmation of hypotheses (Snieder & Larner, 2009).

Aims and Objectives:

1. To assess the level of PTSD among trauma victims of APS.
2. To find the social capital among the trauma victims of APS.

Hypotheses:

1. PTSD will be higher for those directly exposed to a high-intensity traumatic event than indirectly exposed victims.
2. The social capital will be low among directly exposed victims than indirectly exposed victims.

Procedure and Sample

Data collection utilized structured interviews, incorporating two major scales: a PTSD interview scale (based on DSM-5, derived from Lieber (1959)) and the 'Personal Social Capital Scale' (PSCS) (Fang et al., 2009). Demographic questionnaires (Annex-1) were also incorporated. Statistical analysis was processed using the 'Statistical Package for the Social Sciences' (SPSS) software.

The sample population was divided into two groups, or 'strata':

1. **Direct Victims (Irreparable Loss):** Parents and siblings who lost family members (students or teachers) in the APS attack.
2. **Indirect Victims (Reparable Loss):** Students and parents from the same APS school who suffered no/reparable loss or had indirect exposure to the trauma.

The total known population size (N) was calculated as 468 (288 direct victims and 180 indirect victims). Using the Yamane Formula (1967) with a 5% Margin of Error ($e=0.05$), the calculated sample size (n) was 216. According to proportional allocation, the sample comprised 133 direct victims (61.6%) and 83 indirect victims (38.4%).

The **Exclusion Criteria** were applied to ensure the study focused purely on trauma caused by post-9/11 repercussions (Type-1 trauma) (Marzillier, 2012), excluding trauma resulting from factors like religious minorities, disability, or children below class 8th.

Findings

The statistical analysis (processed via SPSS) revealed significant psycho-social differences between direct and indirect victims.

Demographic Findings

The total sample of 216 respondents was composed of 61.6% direct victims and 38.4% indirect victims. The majority of respondents fell within the 20-30 age range (44.0%). The sample included 59.3% male respondents and 40.7% female respondents. Geographically, the majority (98.1%) were located in Peshawar District. Educationally, the largest segment held a Bachelor's degree (52.8%). Employment status showed "Student" as the largest category (44.0%), followed by "Married" status for direct victims (39.4%).

PTSD Analysis

Overall group statistics demonstrate that direct victims scored significantly higher on PTSD than indirect victims, supporting Hypothesis 1. The mean score for total PTSD among direct victims was 24.9023 (Std. Dev. 3.60316), significantly higher than the indirect victims' mean score of 13.3012 (Std. Dev. 4.59516) ($t(24, 216) 19.553, p < .01$).

Specific PTSD symptom categories showed this high discrepancy:

- **Re-experiencing Symptoms:** Direct victims scored significantly higher for "repeated, disturbing memories, thoughts, or images" (Mean 4.2556 vs. 2.2169) ($t(24, 216) 21.829, p < .01$).

- **Avoidance Symptoms:** Direct victims scored significantly higher on "avoiding activities or situations" (Mean 4.1880 vs. 2.2169) ($t(24, 216) 19.555, p < .01$) and on "feeling distant or cut off from other people" (Mean 3.8872 vs. 2.2169) ($t(24, 216) 14.943, p < .01$).

- **Hyper arousal Symptoms:** Direct victims showed significantly higher scores for "feeling irritable or having angry outbursts" (Mean 4.2632 vs. 2.2169) ($t(24, 216) 14.943, p < .01$) and "having difficulty concentrating" (Mean 4.1729 vs. 2.2169) ($t(24, 216) 17.672, p < .01$).

Social Capital Analysis

The analysis generally supported Hypothesis 2—that Social Capital would be low among directly exposed victims.

Routine Contact (Bonding/Bridging Capital) Findings:

- **Internal Bonding:** Direct victims scored high on routine contact with family, neighborhood, and friends. For example, routine contact with family members for direct victims (Mean 1.5714) was higher than for indirect victims (Mean 1.3012) ($t(24, 216) 2.733, p < .01$).

- **External Linking:** Routine contact with country fellows/old classmates was low for direct victims (Mean 3.4286) compared to indirect victims (Mean 4.1807) ($t(24, 216) 5.263, p < .01$), concluding that the social capital of direct victims is low in this category.

Trust and Expectations of Help Findings:

- **Trust/Expectation in Internal Circles:** Trust and expectation of help in close circles (family, neighbors, friends, co-workers) scored high for direct victims.

- **Trust/Expectation in External Circles:** Trust and expectation of help from relatives and country fellows/old classmates were scored low for direct victims.

Participation and Representation Findings:

- **Participation in Formal Groups (Governmental/Political/Social):** Direct victims showed low participation (Mean 2.9549) compared to indirect victims (Mean 4.0964) ($t(24, 216) 8.110, p < .01$).

- **Representation of Rights by Formal Groups:** Expectations of rights representation by formal groups were also low for direct victims (Mean 2.9549 vs. 4.0843) ($t(24, 216) 7.752, p < .01$).

Gender Analysis

The gender analysis provided crucial findings regarding the micro-level impact of structural violence.

- **PTSD Gender Difference:** Overall (direct and indirect combined), female respondents scored higher on total PTSD (Mean 22.3636) compared to male respondents (Mean 19.1250). However, within the *direct victim group*, men scored higher mean scores on specific symptoms like feeling irritable/angry outbursts (Male Mean 4.3286 vs. Female Mean 4.1905).

- **Social Capital Gender Difference:** Male respondents overall showed low social capital scores across most components compared to female respondents. For instance, total male victims scored lower on routine contact with family members (Male Mean 1.3438 vs. Female Mean 1.6477). This led to the conclusion that, overall, the social capital of male respondents is low.

Correlation

Correlation analysis demonstrated a consistent positive relationship among the scores on PTSD and the components of Social Capital (trust, expectation of help, etc.), confirming the direct link between trauma incidence and the deterioration of psycho-social health.

Discussion

Structural violence, manifested through wars and terrorist attacks, presents potential threats to psychological health and social well-being (Galtung, 1969). This study confirms that survivors of structural violence develop serious psychological issues like PTSD and social functions

deficiencies. The findings validate that the magnitude of exposure to the incidence is significantly linked with the magnitude of PTSD and the loss of social capital.

Psychological Repercussions

The high and prolonged PTSD scores found among direct victims, even years after the December 2014 incident, support the fact that the intensity of structural violence is linked with the sustained duration of its repercussions (Nawaz et al., 2014). Factors contributing to this prolonged stress include the lack of psychological intervention, repetition of memorial events, and sustained frustration regarding the lack of justice.

The specific analysis of symptoms highlights the depth of the trauma:

- **Recurrence and Avoidance:** Direct victims frequently experience disturbing memories and avoid activities that trigger grief, such as public events (Mansoor, 2015).
- **Social Isolation and Irritability:** Victims actively avoid social gatherings and feel cut off from others. High rates of angry outbursts are linked to the inability to accept loss and frustration with the government over slow investigations and lack of justice.
- **Cognitive Impact:** Difficulty concentrating, including memory loss, was significantly higher in direct victims, leading some young survivors to discontinue their education.

Gender-Wise Comparison of PTSD

The gender-focused results are unique, showing that male respondents who directly experienced trauma scored higher on several core PTSD symptoms. This is interpreted within the societal context where patriarchal practices often compel men to resist expressing vulnerability, blocking the natural emotional release (Bhasin, 1997). This suppression leads to unresolved psychological stress, manifesting as higher PTSD scores compared to females, who may more readily express emotions and seek support (Van et al., 2017). This finding contributes to the realization of a need to change patriarchal concepts that are harmful to men's psychological health.

Social Repercussion and Social Capital

The findings confirmed that the social capital level was lower among direct victims. However, the components reveal important distinctions:

- **Internal Bonding Capital Strength:** Shared trauma strengthened the bond among immediate family members, neighbors, and friends. Direct victims reported increased routine contact and mutual trust with these groups, with cultural and religious values acting as a buffer in close circles.
- **External Linking Capital Damage:** Trust and routine contact concerning far relatives and the government were low. This detachment stems from perceived criticism from country fellows and disappointment with the government's response, particularly the delay in investigations and trials.
- **Low Confidence in Formal Institutions:** Direct victims expressed low expectations of help and low confidence in governmental, political, economic, and social groups regarding their ability to possess necessary resources (e.g., decision-making power, solid financial basis) or represent their rights and interests.

Post-Violence Social Change

A significant positive social change was identified: women victims increased their social networking and participation in public life. Many women, particularly housewives, were propelled into social and political networks, engaging in protests, press conferences, and seminars to express anger and grief. This increase in socialization and confidence provides visible evidence of positive social change induced by structural violence. Furthermore, high participation in cultural, recreational, and leisure groups (especially religious gatherings or 'Dars')

indicates that many sought refuge in spiritual activities for trauma healing (Zhou & Kaplanidou, 2018).

Mirroring the PTSD findings, the comparative analysis of Social Capital concluded that **male respondents exhibited lower social capital scores overall** compared to female respondents, suggesting men were more socially affected by the traumatic incident. Men showed low scores on routine contact, trust, and expectation of help across almost all categories.

Theoretical Contribution to the Structural-Violence Theory

This research provides an empirical and theoretical contribution to Galtung's Structural Violence Theory. While Galtung (1969) focused on the macro-level impact, this study contributes by exploring the impact at a micro-level of the population and confirming that the intensity of structural violence varies significantly amongst demographics.

The empirical contributions include:

1. **Gender Impact:** The finding that male victims demonstrate a higher level of PTSD and lower social capital compared to women victims.
2. **Social Change:** The documentation of women victims becoming more socially connected post-incident.

This research, based on firsthand knowledge, offers valuable data for governmental and international humanitarian agencies for effective victim management in conflict areas.

Conclusion

This research thoroughly analyzed the psycho-social repercussions of post-9/11 terrorism in Pakistan, using the APS Peshawar massacre as a case study. Based on Galtung's Structural Violence Theory (1969), which posits that war and terror are forms of structural violence that affect individuals directly and indirectly, the study successfully assessed the levels of PTSD and Social Capital among the victims.

The findings decisively supported both articulated hypotheses:

1. PTSD is higher for those directly exposed to a high-intensity traumatic event than indirectly exposed victims.
2. The social capital is low among directly exposed victims than indirectly exposed victims.

The high levels of PTSD, corroborated by the use of Lieber's scale (Lieber, 1959), observed in direct victims, underscore the critical necessity for sustained mental health support. Furthermore, the empirical data provides significant contributions by exploring structural violence at the micro-level. The discovery that male victims showed higher PTSD and lower social capital compared to women victims highlights the need for policy makers to address gender-specific needs and re-evaluate patriarchal cultural practices that suppress male emotional expression (Bhasin, 1997; Van et al., 2017). The documentation of positive social change, specifically the increased social networking among female victims, is a critical insight for social scientists. This research provides firsthand knowledge about the psychosocial miseries of victims, which should facilitate the effective management of victims in conflict areas (Galtung, 1969).

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