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## The Invisible Wounds of War: Trauma, Identity Loss, and Social Disintegration Among Bajaur's Internally Displaced Persons (2008–2015)

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper addresses the psychological and emotional effects of forced migration on the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Bajaur, a tribal district in former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan, which witnessed forced migration between 2008 to 2015 because of military operation. With a qualitative framework based on narrative type inquiry and thematic analysis, the study looks into the multidimensional issues that these societies experience, more so on trauma, loss of identity, and social melting. Exploring the results on the basis of field interviews, case studies, and documentary analysis, it can be concluded that most IDPs display the symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The mandatory excursion was not only deprived of people of homes but, also, cultural integrity, sex roles and tribal integration proved to be shattered, thus causing confusion of identity and cultural dichotomy. The camps and the receiving communities failed to offer psychosocial support required to aid in recovery, but mostly offered a prolonged state of dependency, instability and normlessness. However, the research is also based on the Trauma Theory, Social Identity Theory, and the notion of anomie by Durkheim, which provides a duality of theoretical perspective and views on the affliction of the person, as well as the group. It further combines Forced Migration theory with the Resilience theory in evaluating coping strategies and survival mechanism. Policy implications make it clear that even procedural trauma-informed rehabilitation systems, ethnically aware education, and identity recovery programs are urgently needed in such post-violence zones as Bajaur. The study is also one of the few studies focusing on localized IDPs in Pakistan and further calls upon the need to adopt a humanistic and perspective that transcends physical settlement, and further more focuses on the internal wounds of a war, the invisible wounds of war or what the IDPs call it the feeling of emptiness.*

**Keywords:** Bajaur Agency, Trauma, Identity Loss, Displacement, Social Fragmentation, Mental Health, 2008–2015.

### Introduction

The tribal areas of Pakistan, especially the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), have been long plagued by violence, neglect and lawlessness. Bajaur Agency is one of these where one of the worst humanitarian crises was experienced between 2008 and 2015 due to the heavy military campaigns against the militant networks (FDMA, 2016). Bajaur, as a strategic frontier in the War on Terror, was a land of violence and counter-insurgency, and displacement of the indigenous Pashtun people became mass. An example was the drive of 2008 alone, operation Sherdil, which pushed an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 individuals out of their houses, and one of the biggest internal displacements in the history of Pakistan (UNHCR, 2008). The displaced people took shelter in crowded camps such as Jalozai, or in the host communities of the urban regions like Peshawar, Mardan and Swabi (PDMA, 2013). Although a lot of emphasis has been laid on the logistical and the humanitarian side of displacement, there has been little emphasis on the psychological and emotional cost that the displaced families are facing. Such disregard is carried on although the world has acknowledged that internally displaced persons (IDPs) are especially susceptible to trauma, a loss of identity, and social cohesion because their migration is forced and their historic support structures are broken apart (IDMC, 2020).

This paper aims to discuss the psychological and emotional impacts of displacement due to forceful migration on the displaced people of Bajaur, Pakistan, between the year 2008 and 2015, in specific reference to trauma, loss of identity and social breakdown. Based on qualitative data, this study examines how displacement not only disrupted the physical lives of these people, but also their cultural unity, ties and sense of belonging to a certain community. To most, the displacement brought a break in tribal loyalties, loss of their means of livelihood, generational trauma and long-lasting psychological trauma that included anxiety, grief and alienation. Despite the fact that repatriation processes began following the partial de-escalation in 2010, frequent violent attacks, inadequate infrastructures, and absence of long-term rehabilitation procedures continued to keep thousands of IDPs in a state of uncertainty deep into 2015 (OCHA, 2015). The case of the IDPs in Bajaur has been located within the broader theoretical boundaries including the theory of trauma and social identity theory in this paper in order to get a clear picture of the invisible scars left by war and displacement. Through the voices of lived experiences of the displaced people who left Bajaur, the study will aim at contributing to the minimal yet vital body of research on internal displacement in Pakistan and will also identify and discuss critical gaps in the psychosocial support and the study will recommend culturally appropriate methods that can be used in the post-conflict healing and reintegration.

### **Literature Review**

Internal displacement has exploded as a world-wide phenomenon in the last 40 years with the main drivers being armed conflicts, political instabilities and natural calamities. The Internal Displacement Index (2020) shows that there are more than 50.8 million internally displaced people at the end of 2019, and most of them had to leave their homes because of violence and armed conflict. According to the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998), the difference lies in the fact that unlike refugees, IDPs do not cross international boundaries, but they experience the same (or even more complicated) levels of vulnerability. IDPs do not have a specific international legal status and are usually systematically neglected in the country of origin (Koch,

2020). The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) has continued to point out that IDPs do not only encounter a lack of material wellbeing but also the decay of legal security and social order. Pakistan being a conflict-affected state holds a huge number of IDPs, most of whom are people of the tribal belt, specifically the people of former FATA region. Earlier sources indicate that already in 1995, IDPs worldwide were more than 25 million, almost two times the number of refugees (IDMC, 2020). The IDP rights and protection are however not consistent with some countries such as Pakistan lacking national comprehensive policies on displacement.

The situation of displacement crisis in the case of Pakistan escalated when military operations were launched in FATA after 2001 particularly when Operation Sherdil launched in Bajaur Agency during 2008. Thousands of people were evacuated without planning, communications, and infrastructural assistance by the state (Khan N., 2015). At year-end 2008, over 200,000 persons remained in camps or with host families, including the Jalozei and Kutcha Gari camps near Peshawar. According to the literature, there is a variety of physical, psychological, and socio-economic problems faced by IDPs in these environments. As Cantor et al. (2021) note, displaced people tend to experience more cases of chronic stress, illness, or trauma. Organizations such as Islamic Relief and Emergency Response Unit (ERU) have reported the extent of these problems and attribute the lack of food, healthcare and even basic sanitation facilities in the Bajaur camps. Personal accounts of the victims of the Bajaur area as stated by the IRIN (2009) show testimony of people suffering in temporary shelters, where old people and newborn infants are at risk of dying because of exposure to the elements, inadequate health facilities, and food shortage. The collapse of communal order and the fact that those displaced families had to witness violent conflict led to a significant feeling of loss of identity and inability to do something about it.

In Pakistan, in spite of the wide-ranging nature of internal displacement, legal and institutional frameworks of protecting the rights of IDPs have been lacking significantly. The lack of a national IDP framework, according to such authors as Din (2010) and Khan (2011), hinders long-term rehabilitation and social reintegration. Although the government had launched programs like the Watan Card program to streamline the process of returning and resettlement, most of the IDPs, particularly those of Bajaur, experienced a major setback in going back to the destroyed houses and the distorted social structures. By 2015, approximately 430,000 IDPs were still displaced, even though the authorities stated that de-notifications and the clearance of conflict areas are being conducted (FDMA, 2016). This defeat did not only increase material hardships, but also created long-term emotional trauma- an invisible scar that was experienced in loss of identity, lack of cohesion and an overall psychological scar that lasted many years. Researchers like Rahman (2015) and Khan M.A. (2015) request complete and inclusive policy changes that do not only take care of logistic requirements of the IDPs but also their psychological and social recovery in the long term. Moreover, the absence of coordination between the Pakistani military and humanitarian agencies, sporadic drone strikes and collateral damage (Gall, 2014) stoked distrust in displaced populations and further led to a pattern of multiple episodes of secondary displacement. Such a hectic and cyclical process of displacement that is characterised by hope, loss, and uncertainty requires further academic and policy attention so that the victims of war are not further victimised by the bureaucracy of the state and societal invisibility.

**Theoretical Framework**

The impacts of psychological and social breakdown of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Bajaur can be profoundly comprehended when analyzed using Trauma Theory with references to the works of Judith Herman (1992) who among others defines three major phases of trauma healing, namely safety, remembrance and mourning and reconnection. Forced migration particularly in a violent, sudden and protracted situation is usually chronic trauma. The Bajaur IDPs were displaced several times, exposed to military actions, lost their homes and lived in unsafe camp conditions. These trauma layers are consistent with the idea of complex PTSD in which victims not only deal with the isolated traumatic events but experience prolonged exposure to violence and chaos. This leads to disempowerment, emotional numbing, broken relationships, and broken sense of self. As an example, interviews and field experiences reveal that most of the displaced families in camps such as Jalozai suffered these feelings of depression, anxiety and confusion of identity-which is in line with the idea that trauma has the ability to disrupt the internal order of the mind and the social functionality of the individual. Trauma Theory applied in the study is not only used as a means of explaining the psychological symptoms of individuals but also as a way of linking the symptoms to larger systems of violence, displacement and marginalization.

The relocation out of Bajaur also led to a severe identity crisis, which explains why the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) is of particular importance. Identity, ethnic, cultural, religious, and national, is a source of belonging as well as vulnerability in the conflict zones. The Bajaur population was mainly Pashtuns who had traditionally led lives with intense kinship, language and other cultural practices, hence, displacing them out of the tribal environment into urban camps or host communities left them with a sense of identity dislocation as these cultural identifications were either devalued or impractical to adapt to. The process of displacement disrupted the traditional gender roles, hierarchies and the social expectations, causing a role conflict and psychological disorientation. Children, as an example, were brought out of school and forced to work; women were forced to adapt to the relief environment in which they had to work in open conditions instead of living in privacy in their homes; elders lost their power because of the aid systems that avoided the traditional structures of leadership. This undermining of cultural and social norms helped to cause what was termed by Emile Durkheim as anomie- a state of normlessness which occurs when the traditional structures of society are shaken. Most of them did not only experience a physical emptiness in the IDP camps, but also lost social reference points, hence the emptiness of meaning and belonging. Combined, these frameworks can assist in charting the unseen but extremely influential mechanisms through which trauma and displacement do not only destroy individuals but disintegrate the lives of whole groups of people. In a bid to effectively contextualize and analyze these psychological and social dynamics, the current study will utilize a dual theoretical framework consisting of Forced Migration Theory and Resilience Theory. The involuntary character of displacement caused by the military activities of Pakistan in Bajaur, 2008-2015 can be explained with references to Forced Migration Theory (Smith, 1989). This theory brings out the manner in which this forced uprooting brings about multi-dimensional disruption- economic instability, deprivation of shelter, worsening of mental health, and breaking of social bonds. Using this theory, it becomes clear that Bajaur IDPs were not ready

to migrate and they ended up in scarce resources, most of the time without government coordination and legal cover. On the contrary, Resilience Theory (Garmezy, 1991) permits an equitable examination of the coping styles, adaptive behavior as well as the community resilience that IDPs used during these challenges. Even after the destruction, most of the Bajaur families rebuilt the community structures, maintained the culture practices, and invented new survival mechanisms. Children went back to learning in tent schools, women formed informal support groups, and local leaders reached to NGOs to procure relief. This combination of perspectives demonstrates that despite the ubiquitous trauma and social breakdown, people responded to it with a display of resilience, resilience, and a desire to live. By combining these theories, the paper does not only evaluate the weaknesses and losses but also the agency and recovery processes of the Bajaur IDPs-providing a sensitive insight into their living conditions following war and displacement.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study adopted a qualitative research approach grounded in narrative inquiry and thematic analysis to capture the lived experiences, emotional complexities, and social ruptures experienced by internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Bajaur during the period of 2008–2015. Given the multidimensional nature of forced migration and its psychosocial ramifications, a qualitative lens enabled in-depth exploration of subjective realities, identity loss, and communal disintegration—phenomena that are often difficult to quantify but deeply embedded in the personal stories of those affected. The use of qualitative methods also aligns with the ethical and methodological necessity of providing voice to vulnerable communities in post-conflict zones.

#### **Sampling Size & Technique**

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants from IDP camps in Jalozei and host communities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as well as returnee areas within Bajaur. The sample included individuals of diverse gender, age, and occupational backgrounds to represent the heterogeneity of the displaced population. In total, 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted with male and female IDPs, community elders, youth, and NGO field workers. In addition to interviews, direct field observations and case studies were used to gather contextual data on the social environment of the camps and the conditions of return. This multi-method approach allowed for triangulation of data and helped construct a richer, more nuanced understanding of the displacement experience. Field notes were taken to document non-verbal cues, environmental conditions, and behavioral patterns, which were later used to support the thematic analysis.

#### **Analysis Method**

The study employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, which involved familiarization with data, coding, theme identification, and interpretation. The narratives were manually coded for emerging themes such as trauma, loss of identity, coping mechanisms, and social breakdown. Each narrative was examined for indicators of Judith Herman's trauma recovery stages (safety, remembrance, and reconnection), manifestations of social identity dislocation, and expressions of anomic despair in line with Durkheim's theory. Ethical approval was secured before fieldwork, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Given the sensitivity of the

subject, trauma-informed research practices were followed—ensuring confidentiality, emotional safety, and the right to withdraw at any point. The study also adhered to humanitarian research ethics when engaging with vulnerable populations by minimizing harm, being culturally sensitive, and using language translators where necessary to overcome dialectical barriers.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Psychological Trauma**

A psychological trauma is one of the most widespread effects of forced migration among the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Bajaur district. The experiences of many of the respondents interviewed in the camps and the areas of returns involved recurrent feelings of anxiety, insomnia, and flashbacks. Mothers (and women in general) reported cases of insomnia due to the inability to provide food, shelter, or safety to their children at the initial stages of displacement. Men were frustrated and depressed that they were unable to do anything about joblessness and the fact that they were losing their traditional roles of being the breadwinner. These symptoms can be associated with the larger psychological typologies of the populations that have been exposed to chronic trauma and insecurity and often display indicators of complex post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as theorized by Judith Herman (1992). The three-phase model offered by Herman, safety, remembrance, and reconnection is especially applicable because many IDPs were not even at the remembrance stage, and some were still in a state of psychological limbo, living in a state of a perpetual crisis and uncertainty.

The field interviews with the IDPs in Bajaur showed that children were also not an exception in trauma. Most of them showed symptoms of emotional withdrawal, fear of loud sounds, and fear of open spaces, which are characteristics that are frequently attributed to premature exposure to trauma (Cantor et al., 2021). Psychological wounds were further aggravated by flare-up of war and sudden displacement, in most cases under fire or during military activities. Exposure to dead bodies, burnt homes, and the lack of mourning rituals were the points that were also cited by interviewees as making the process of grief harder to deal with. Trauma-informed care or counseling services were reported being unavailable in such camps as Jalozei and Sakhakot, which added to further mental health degradation. Such results resonate with those of other scholars such as De Jong (2002) who discuss the long term psychological dangers that can affect the displaced groups who lack avenues to therapeutic care.

### **Loss of Identity**

The second important theme that can be considered as an implication of the data is the loss of cultural and social identity by the displaced population especially the younger and the female population. The forcible evacuation of Bajaur disturbed well established tribal customs and stratum. To most elders, displacement resulted in loss of ancestral land, symbolic power and leadership, elements that were fundamental in defining them as custodians of Pashtunwali, the unwritten tribal code. Under Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the identity is formed by affiliation and recognition of the group. This structure was disintegrated through displacement by undermining communal identifications and cultural legitimacy. Elders moaned that young people did not follow traditional gender roles, tribal discipline or linguistic traditions any more.

There was dislocation of roles experienced by women also. Having been previously restricted to clear domestic roles under tribal practices, they were now faced with new tasks of caretakers and informal income earners following the death or incapacitation of male members in the family. The young girls complained of shame and confusion when they participated in the public activities that were designated to males like queuing up to receive rations or negotiating with the aid workers. Though to a certain degree this renegotiation of gender roles was empowering, it brought internal conflict and social stigma as is symbolic of the cultural friction that comes about when traditional identities are stretched to their limits (Khan, 2011). Displacement therefore caused twofold disintegration; loss of historical-cultural identity and the weight of assuming new social manners which are against tribal ethos in most instances.

### **Social Disintegration**

It is possible that the most obvious consequence of forced migration was the breakdown of social organization and the development of social fragmentation in the displacement environment. Respondents reported IDP camps as areas of normlessness, which were similar to the idea of anomie as discussed by E. Durkheim, who considered anomie as the state of social deregulation and a loss of moral codes of conduct. The breakdown of the traditional support structures e.g., jirga (tribal council), hujra (men guest house), and extended family structures was a domino effect to social cohesion. In the absence of such conflict resolution and collective decision-making mechanisms, the IDPs were at the risk of exploitation, wrangles and alienation. There was a high increase in intergenerational friction whereby the older generation is not perceived as an authority anymore and the younger generation are trying to find new identities driven more by need than custom.

There was also escalation in domestic stress. Interviews showed that there was an increase in family quarrels and men were frustrated because they could not support their families and this resulted in more cases of domestic violence and drug abuse. These tensions were aggravated by the tight living conditions in tents and the overcrowded shelters, as in families, privacy could not be reached. Often children found themselves in the crossfires between conflicting values - traditional rules passed down by the adults and the survivalist attitudes developed as a result of displacement. Some of the respondents even said that they withdrew education because of the inaccessibility, further compromising their future and strengthening the cycle of disempowerment. These findings can be correlated to the studies of the social consequences of long-term displacement, in which the disintegration of systems of familiarity results in new and frequently unstable structures of social order (Jacobsen, 2001).

### **Dependency and Disempowerment in Camps**

Although camps played a critical role in offering basic shelter and food, they also created a culture of dependency that negated the self-sufficiency of the IDPs. Interviewees narrated how rationing, medical assistance, and resettlement decisions were determined by the outside players without the participation of the community. The absence of participatory mechanisms was also criticized by several IDPs who explained that they were unlikely to feel dignified with their position as recipients of aid. The feeling of helplessness was real especially to the community leaders who had previously been the main villagers in the village politics but were now considered marginalized

and powerless within the camp bureaucracy. Those descriptions highlight the irony of humanitarian aid: it is needed, but it may accidentally isolate the same people it is supposed to help by dislodging local systems of governance and local action (Harrell-Bond, 2002).

### **Fragmented Coping Mechanisms**

In spite of these overbearing predicaments, the study established that IDPs had an array of coping responses that were based on resilience. Women organized their support groups informally exchanging childcare and food. Elders attempted to recreate mini-jirgas in the camp areas to settle disputes and ensure social control. Religion practice, group prayer, and Eid festivals became some of the psychological anchors that helped IDPs to restore a sense of normalcy. But these coping strategies were weak and ranged considerably camp and host-community situations. In places where NGO work was uniform, resilience measures were improved but where that work was intermittent or non-existent, the coping strategies decayed rapidly into hopelessness, particularly among young people.

### **Long-Term Implications and Return Dilemmas**

The lengthiness of the displacement situation developed a lasting liminality position of numerous IDPs. Though the government initiatives like Watan Card helped the returnees to live temporarily, a number of respondents who returned to Bajaur faced the destruction of their houses, damaged infrastructure and the inability to make a living. To others, returning meant fresh vulnerability and insecurity; and they became displaced again. Others were in serious identity crisis- no longer regarded as insiders in their home countries and foreigners in their new destinations. Such stories disclose that forceful migration is not a momentary event but a longitudinal process that keeps on redefining identity, psychology, and community well-being even after the physical movement has ceased. This further amplifies the necessity of comprehensive reintegration policies that should not be limited to logistic reintegration; rather it must involve rehabilitation and reconstruction of the psyche, and restoration of the community.

### **Policy Implications**

Though the displacement due to counterterrorism activities in Bajaur was massive between 2008 and 2015, there still is a dire lack of mental health support among internally displaced persons (IDPs). The thesis evidence shows that Bajaur IDPs are experiencing massive psychological distress and people complain of anxiety, depression, insomnia, and PTSD-like condition. However, physical infrastructures and material repairs still remain central to national and local disaster response systems with little focus on psychological health. IDPs, particularly women, children, and the elderly, are living in silence with the burden of unresolved trauma due to the absence of any special programs on trauma recovery and lacking clinical outreach within such communities. Such a lack is further aggravated by the level of cultural stigma that is associated with psychological disorders, which makes a lot of people unable to seek help even when it is available in small scale. The absence of skilled mental health workers in IDP camps or resettlement zones demonstrates a policy gaping hole that disadvantages personal recovery as well as community resilience as a whole.

Post-conflict FATA has been very bureaucratic and distant policy-wise in terms of ground realities. Although the process of reconstruction has necessitated structural rebuilding, such as roads,

schools and houses, there has been little or no investment in mental health services or in other emotional support mechanisms. According to the thesis, the trauma of IDPs is complicated, as it considers not only the displacement process, but also the experiences of violence, death, and loss on their escape. Rehabilitation policies, therefore, have to assume a trauma-informed perspective that acknowledges the compounded psychological effects of forced migration. Inclusion of trauma counseling into the wider recovery strategies, including school reintegration programs and vocational training, can provide safe environment to heal the mind. Psychological first aid training could be provided to the community health workers and local religious leaders who would serve as mediators between clinical professionals and IDP populations. Besides, local governance systems such as jirgas, traditionally applied to resolve conflicts, can be re-energized having the embedded psychosocial support goals in order to re-establish displaced people into the well-known systems.

To effectively address the mental health demands of IDPs, there should be provision of psychological services within the national disaster management structure. This necessitates the move of the reactive, infrastructure-based disaster preparedness and response towards proactive, people-based disaster preparedness and response. The thesis indicates that when they were displaced, most families faced unfriendly, overpopulated, and under-staffed camps that only worsened their condition psychologically. A mental health component ought to be incorporated in the standard operating procedures of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) to avoid such consequences in the event of future emergencies. NGOs and local universities could provide a periodic assessment and therapy sessions through mobile mental health clinics. Such interventions should also be culturally bound, and they should be compatible with language and values of the affected populations. Moreover, a trauma surveillance system on displaced persons may be established to inform long term recovery plans and mental health workforce planning in conflict-torn areas.

A key psychosocial impact of the crisis that is outlined in the thesis is loss of identity especially among the youth and women. Disruption of tribal systems, community rituals and educational pathways in the course of displacement resulted in a massive loss of orientation and alienation. Restorative policies are thus to be expected not to simply rebuild physical structures, but also rebuild the cultural and educational fabric of the displaced communities in Bajaur. Setting up community centers to teach the traditional Pashtun arts, narrations and customs may be a step towards reconnecting the displaced people with their culture. The same applies to the literacy and school reintegration programs, which must be planned in a psychosocially sensitive manner, where curriculum contents are reinforced to help in identity reconstruction and resiliency. The programs dedicated to resettled girls and women should focus on the twofold burden that they experience: trauma and redefinition of their roles within the new environment. The policies of treating cultural heritage and education as the main recovery assets can help in building long-term social cohesion, which would make the communities more resilient to any future crisis.

### **Conclusion**

The results of this work highlight the tremendous and long-term impact on the psychological, emotional, and social damage that the internally displaced persons (IDPs) of Bajaur faced

throughout the entire 2008-2015 period. Although the material aspects of displacement, including loss of homes, livelihoods and infrastructure, have been partially covered by the government and humanitarian interventions, the mental scars left by trauma, identity loss, and social fragmentation remain largely unscathed. This study shows that IDPs did not only experience forced migration in life-threatening conditions, but also suffered chronic stress, emotional breakdowns, anxiety, and complex PTSD symptoms following it. By its abruptness, usually under military bombardment or in the middle of active warfare, the displacement made the healing of the mind impossible or postponed until too late. The families that moved were devoid of the closure, mourning ceremonies and a sense of security, and thus were deprived of the crucial first measure in the healing of trauma. In addition, the abrupt change of tribal and rural life to the crowded camps or to new host groups interfered with the strong cultural and social values. The outcome was internal fragmentation which caused confusion over identity, changes in intergenerational roles and collapse of community based institutions like the jirga or hujra adding to the distress of the displacement itself.

In addition to personal trauma, social structure of the displaced communities in Bajaur was devastated greatly. The existing leadership hierarchy, gender roles, and cultural patterns had been either undermined or made inapplicable in new settings and formed a gap in social belonging and meaning. Children lost their education, women needed to bargain their roles in the society and men lost their mental dignity in not being able to support or defend their families. Temporary relief camps- turned out to be permanent grounds of despair and dependence, creating an element of voicelessness to already traumatized people. Although most of the IDPs exhibited resiliency and adaptive behaviors, these mechanisms were reported to occur in situations where no formal support systems were available. This conclusion points to the fact that the future rehabilitation and displacement response solutions should no longer be based on brick-and-mortar reconstruction but on the more human-centered, culturally sensitive approach, which focuses on psychological well-being, identity restoration, and social reintegration. The multi-faceted pain of IDPs can only be alleviated through recognition and treatment in order to allow post-conflict areas such as Bajaur to heal in a healthy, lasting manner. With the reverberation of forced migration still echoing in the lives of the people of Bajaur, it is high time to formulate policies and practices that would acknowledge trauma as a shared experience and not an anomaly of an individual, but an experience based in war, abandonment, and disrupted belongingness.

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