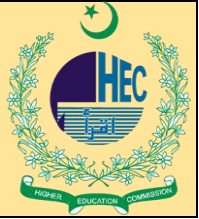




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Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17392393>**Post-Conflict Reconstruction of Social Capital in Dara Adamkhel, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa****Saiqa Bibi**

Lecturer, Kohat University of Science and Technology

saiqabibi@kust.edu.pk**ABSTRACT**

This qualitative study examines the impact of militancy on social capital and its post-conflict reconstruction in Darra Adam Khel, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Data was collected through 40 in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with elders, educated individuals, and students of both genders, and analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that militancy catastrophically eroded the region's social fabric. Core sociocultural values like unity, brotherhood, and cooperation were supplanted by individualism and distrust. Key institutions, including the conflict-resolution Jirga and the social hub Hujra, were co-opted or destroyed, losing their traditional authority. A complex gendered impact was observed; while women's status improved through educational access, they remained excluded from economic benefits and traditional justice processes. A generational divide in perceptions emerged, with youth favoring post-merger changes while elders yearned for past traditions. The study concludes that militancy systematically dismantled social capital, requiring a nuanced reconstruction approach. It recommends prioritizing conflict-free development, rebuilding educational infrastructure, and implementing inclusive policies that address the specific losses in trust, institutional integrity, and community cohesion to foster sustainable recovery.

Keywords: Social Capital, Post-Conflict Reconstruction, Darra Adam Khel, Militancy, Jirga, Sociocultural Values.

Introduction

The recent wave of militancy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has inflicted severe damage upon both physical infrastructure and social fabric, leading to significant human casualties. This was particularly devastating in the northern and southern belts of the province, where countless incidents paralyzed daily life. A poignant example is Darra Adam Khel, a town in the former Frontier Regions (FR) of ex-FATA, situated between Peshawar and Kohat. Inhabited primarily by the Afridi tribe, the area suffered extensive physical destruction, especially to its educational institutions, as a result of both terrorist and counter-terrorist operations. This devastation profoundly disrupted the local community's social structure and crippled the businesses upon which their livelihoods depended. Compounding an already dire situation, the region was historically plagued by an alarmingly low literacy rate of just 17% (Fair, 2009). The militancy further decelerated any progress, shattering expectations for educational improvement in the 21st century. The situation for women's education, already in a terrible state, deteriorated further as militants enforced restrictions that prevented girls from stepping out of their homes to attend schools (Shah, 2008). This multifaceted crisis marginalized the community and crippled the very foundations of their social life.

While the physical damages and human casualties from bombings, target killings, and other violent incidents were widely publicized by the media, the profound harms inflicted upon social capital remained largely invisible. This critical aspect of the community's well-being failed to

capture the attention of governmental and non-governmental organizations, which focused rehabilitation efforts predominantly on physical reconstruction. Social capital, a concept that gained significant academic and policy traction in the 1990s, refers to the networks of social relations that generate trust, facilitate the exchange of goods and services, and enable collective action (Putnam, 1995). Fukuyama (1999) differentiates between social orders based on familial ties and those based on a high level of trust that fosters broader community belonging. It is a complex concept encompassing social relations, interactions, norms, values, and institutions that promote solidarity and cooperation (Ramia et al., 2017). In the context of Darra Adam Khel, the armed conflict shattered this social fabric, displacing a large segment of the population as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Therefore, probing social capital in post-struggle settings is essential to pinpoint the specific damages and unearth indigenous mechanisms for mitigation (Barakat, 2019). Understanding its micro and macro levels, as outlined by Coleridge (2021), and its essence in shared values and ethics that preserve human dignity and foster the common good (Russell, 2009), is crucial for a holistic recovery.

The study of conflict has a long scholarly tradition, with more systematic approaches developing in the twentieth century (Enberg, 1996). The clash witnessed in Darra Adam Khel is aptly explained by Coser (1956), who relates conflict to a struggle over values and interests, often with political and economic underpinnings, where one group may seek to dominate another. In the aftermath of such conflicts, the field of Post-Conflict Reconstruction (PCR) becomes vital. Teron (2011) characterizes PCR as a comprehensive process of rebuilding a nation and achieving sustainable peace, encompassing security, governance, economic development, and justice. This post-struggle setting is a transitional period, often hindered by difficulties, displacement, and administrative constraints (Anand, 2005), and requires a broad, community-inclusive approach for effective recovery. A promising pathway for this is to conceptually link social capital to PCR efforts. Integrating the concept of social capital can connect indigenous ways of life with formal reconstruction processes, thereby providing a more sustainable and contextually appropriate response to crisis situations (Ramet, 2012). This linkage is supported by evidence, such as the findings of Cries and Miguel (2009) in Sierra Leone, where individuals who experienced violence were more likely to engage in community political life, demonstrating how social capital can be a positive outcome of collective trauma. Furthermore, social ties can be strengthened in the face of external threats, blending solidarity with the need for external support (Collette and Cullen, 2000), highlighting its potential role in healing a fractured community like Darra Adam Khel.

Problem Statement

The militant conflict in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in Darra Adam Khel, caused profound devastation, extending beyond physical infrastructure to the very social fabric of the community. While physical reconstruction often receives attention, the rehabilitation of social capital—the networks, trust, and norms that enable collective action remains a critically neglected area. The violence fundamentally altered these social patterns, displacing populations and fracturing community cohesion. A paramount casualty was the erosion of indigenous conflict-resolution mechanisms, most notably the Jirga, a traditional council of elders essential for maintaining peace and unity in Pashtun society. This study therefore investigates the specific impacts of militancy on the various aspects of social capital in Darra Adam Khel. Its central focus is to analyze the post-conflict condition of these social structures and propose pathways for reconstructing this damaged social capital, which is vital for sustainable recovery and resilience.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the extent of damaged aspects/dimensions of social capital after militancy in the sample area.

2. To analyze the reconstruction of social capital in the scenario of post militancy situation in Darra Adam Khel.

Research Questions

1. What militancy-caused impacts happened to social capital in Darra Adam Khel?
2. What reconstruction of damages to social capital has taken place after the militancy period?

Literature Review

The concept of social capital, while central to social science, remains contested and multifaceted. It gained significant academic traction in the 1990s, with foundational theorists offering distinct definitions. Russell (2009) posits that shared values and ethics form its essence, while Coleman emphasizes the institutional aspect and the critical role of trust between individuals and institutions. Putnam further defines it as a civic virtue that fosters political participation and cooperation, distinguishing between societies based on kinship and those built on a high level of trust. Synthesizing these views, Ramia et al. (2017) characterize social capital as the shared norms, values, beliefs, social relations, cooperation, and reciprocity that facilitate collective action for mutual benefit. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) introduced the "capital metaphor," differentiating social capital from human and cultural capital and arguing that, like physical capital, it is a productive resource. This view is supported by Coleman (1990) and Putnam (1993), who note that while social capital enables the achievement of goals that would otherwise be unattainable, it is inherently embedded in the structure of social relations rather than in individuals themselves.

While the concept of social capital provides a broad framework for understanding post-conflict recovery, recent scholarship has emphasized the need for a gendered analysis. For instance, a study by Saiqa Bibi and Zakriya (2025) specifically advocates for a women-centered perspective in rebuilding social capital in Darra Adamkhel, arguing that women's unique social networks and roles are critical yet often overlooked resources in the reconstruction process. Social capital manifests in various typologies that clarify its functions and characteristics. A primary classification distinguishes between its structural and cognitive forms. Structural social capital refers to the objective, externally visible networks, rules, and organizations that facilitate collective action, such as clubs and associations (Uphoff, 2000). Cognitive social capital, in contrast, comprises the subjective, intangible elements like shared norms, trust, and attitudes of reciprocity (Uphoff and Wijayarathna, 2000). Another influential typology from Putnam (2000) and others categorizes social capital as bonding, bridging, or linking. Bonding capital describes strong, inward-looking ties among homogeneous groups like family and close friends, providing crucial social support. Bridging capital encompasses weaker, outward-looking ties between acquaintances from different social circles, which are vital for information exchange and community-wide solidarity. Linking capital refers to connections between individuals or communities and those in positions of formal power and authority, enabling access to resources and influence (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000). Further distinctions include Granovetter's (1985) "strong and weak ties" and the division between "horizontal and vertical" networks, all illustrating the complex, multi-dimensional nature of social capital.

The relationship between conflict and social capital is complex and often bidirectional as violence can severely damage social fabric. A growing body of literature has begun to document the multifaceted damage to social structures in conflict-affected areas of Pakistan. A pivotal study conducted in the same locale by Bibi, Alam, and Aziz (2024) provided an empirical investigation into how militancy corroded the core components of social capital trust, networks, and cooperative norms in Darra Adam Khel. Their findings on the disintegration of traditional social

fabric provide a critical foundation upon which this present study builds, with a specific focus on the post-conflict reconstruction processes and the nuanced changes within specific social institutions. Colletta and Cullen (2000) demonstrate that conflict erodes interpersonal trust, undermines collective action, destroys shared norms and values, and can deepen communal divisions. Evidence from Uganda shows associational membership and self-reported trust declined during the war (De Luca and Verpoorten, 2011), a finding supported by qualitative narratives (Pinchotti and Verwimp, 2007). Conversely, a growing body of research suggests conflict can also catalyze the formation of social capital, though often in specific forms. Cramer (2006) argues that violence, while destructive, can be associated with social creativity and innovation. In Sierra Leone, individuals who directly experienced violence were more likely to participate in community groups and local elections (Bellows and Miguel, 2009). Similarly, former child soldiers in Uganda showed a greater propensity for civic engagement and political leadership (Blattman and Annan, 2010). This indicates that while bridging social capital may diminish, bonding social capital within affected groups can intensify as communities unite against an external threat.

Conflicts are deeply embedded in their sociocultural contexts, influencing and being influenced by local values, institutions, and power dynamics. Sociologists acknowledge that values, which are culturally defined and variable, shape conceptions of the desirable and influence action (Boudon, 2017; Kluckhohn, 1951). Culture, comprising shared beliefs, traditions, and behaviors, is a fundamental lens through which conflicts are perceived and manifested (Bates and Plog, 1990). From a social perspective, conflict is a struggle over values, scarce status, power, and resources, where parties seek to thwart one another's goals (Coser, 1956; Schelling, 1960). The competition for social positions and power is a recurring theme in conflicts worldwide, from Somalia's clan rivalries to post-election violence in Kenya (Thome, 2015). These struggles are further complicated by intersections of interests and identities (Burton, 1991). In many societies, indigenous conflict-resolution mechanisms like the *Jirga* in Afghanistan and Pakistan have evolved to manage these tensions. The *Jirga*, a traditional assembly of elders, operates on consensus and relies on local norms and codes like *Pakhtunwali* to resolve disputes, representing a form of traditional authority distinct from Western legal systems (Wardak, 2002; Carter and Connor, 1989).

The role of governance, institutions, and religion in conflict is critical. Weak state institutions are a significant predictor of conflict, as governments lacking resources cannot fairly mediate between competing groups or maintain order (Fearon and Laitin, 2003). Factors such as poverty, political instability, and ethnic fractionalization further fuel violence (Collier and Hoeffler, 1998; Esteban, Mayoral, and Ray, 2012a). The quality of governance, indicated by the rule of law and control of corruption, is therefore crucial for conflict prevention (Kraay, Kaufmann, and Mastruzzi, 2010). The media can also play a destructive role, as seen in Rwanda where radio broadcasts incited violence (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014). The relationship between religion and conflict is highly nuanced. While some, like Huntington (1993), posit a 'clash of civilizations' driven by religious differences, most scholars argue religion is rarely the sole cause. Instead, it can be a mobilizing force, a justification for violence, or a source of peacebuilding ideals (Fox, 2003; Galtung, 2014). In post-conflict settings, reconstruction must therefore extend beyond physical infrastructure to the deliberate rebuilding of social capital. This process involves both restoring damaged networks and constructing new ones to foster citizenship, trust, and collaboration, which are essential for sustainable peace and development (Cox, 2001).

Research Methodology

Nature of the Study

Nature of this research study was qualitative. Data collected through qualitative research is generally non-numerical data because qualitative research works on people's belief, opinion, attitude, behavior and experiences. Keeping in view the complicated nature of the issue in hand, qualitative mode of inquiry was used for the purpose to collect more appropriate data. Qualitative investigation probes the social phenomena with threadbare explanation of all contributory elements of an issue.

Universe of the Study

This study was conducted in Darra Adam Khel. The researcher searched out the most affected areas of Darra Adam Khel and contacted those informants who experienced and observed the current militancy in terms of its damages particularly on the social infrastructure side. The participants of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions constitute the universe of the study.

Sample Size

In-depth interviews were conducted with 40 participants of both genders in analogy with Baker & Edwards (2012) who found it a reliable sample size for an interview-based qualitative study in the light of various studies carried out in different countries through qualitative mode of investigation wherein 40 participants constituted sample size. Data were collected from the people who had rich information regarding the local social capital and also those people who stayed as IDPs during militancy. The sample size of 40 participants included 20 males and females each. Sample size of 40 participants was further divided into 20 educated people, 10 elder members and 10 youngsters including both genders. Apart from it, four FGDs (two with each gender) was conducted in the most conflict-affected areas of Darra Adam Khel. Each FGD comprised of 6-11 participants in analogy with Neumann (2014). 36

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was used during the process of data collection. It is an appropriate sampling technique and often used in the case of qualitative study. Sampled respondents in the proposed study were identified through purposive sampling technique in analogy with Creswell (2014) who considered such technique as the most appropriate in study where respondents/participants are of specific purpose.

Tools of Data Collection

In-depth Interviews were used as instrument of data collection from the participants under the qualitative study. Preference was given to the educated male and female interviewees. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were also conducted with male and female participants with the purpose of cross examination of the data taken from indepth interviews. In short, FGDs were a source of comparing information gathered through in-depth interviews towards ensuring its transparency and accuracy. In order to properly communicate the spirit of questions, the researcher herself facilitated the FGDs. Audio device was used during the exercise of FGDs.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed through thematic analysis technique. Thematic analysis depicts the process of identifying the themes developed from the collected data. A good thematic analysis interprets and makes sense of it. Data collected through in-depth interviews processed through the set pattern of transcription, coding and categorization towards themes development in analogy with Clarke & Braun (2013). Seven themes were developed during the process of thematic analysis. During thematic analysis, proper care was done in reaching the last step of

Ethical Consideration

All sampled participants of indepth interviews and FGDs were apprised of the academic purpose of the study. They were assured that information given by them will be kept confidential and used for the study only. During narrating the extracts from interviews, their pseudo names were used as committed. No irrelevant or hesitating questions were put to them. They were given the liberty to discontinue as and when they wished so.

Data Analysis and Discussion

This study focused on understanding the social capital in post-conflict scenarios. The data obtained was analyzed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a data processing technique specified for qualitative research. Themes were developed after going through various phases of transcription, codification and organization based on data set. Such analysis is usually considered inductive (Braun and Clark, 2006). Initially, data was collected through in-depth interviews and then put to the abovementioned stages, leading to theme development. The following themes came to the surface in the light of the analytical procedure discussed above.

Theme 1: Socio-cultural Values

Participants consistently reported that these shared values were severely damaged. Where a strong sense of unity, brotherhood, and respect once prevailed, extremism and self-interest took root. As one female elder noted,

"No one cares for anyone; militancy creates class differences... Relations are based on money and interests."

The research finds that people became increasingly materialistic and individualistic, with a widespread trust deficit replacing former solidarity. Social gatherings in *hujras* (communal guest houses) and at wedding ceremonies, which were vital hubs for socialization and cultural transmission, were exterminated by militant decrees. This led to what one participant described as a depletion of social capital, where people became scattered, afraid, and "cold hearts," celebrating joys alone and severing the attachments that once defined the community. This aligns with Dawar & Iqbal's (2019) observation that militants exploited societal grievances, creating disturbances that allowed a new, coercive value system to disrupt the old.

A critical finding of the analysis is the deliberate targeting and subsequent degradation of key social institutions, with the *hujra* being a primary victim. The *hujra* was more than a physical space; it was a school for *Pakhtunwali*, a venue for dispute resolution via *Jirga*, and a social club for musical nights and political discussion. Educated male participants explained that militants strategically sought to replace the *hujra* with the mosque, pushing clerics (*Mullahs*) into a dominant social role to exploit religious sentiments. This shift marginalized the traditional authority of respected elders and Maliks. Furthermore, militants feared the *hujra* as a potential platform for organising resistance, leading them to target and destroy these structures. An educated male participant lamented the loss of vibrant social gatherings, noting that

"Participation in social gatherings has been limited due to fear of militants... Attachment to groups has also been reduced."

The destruction was so thorough that, as Elahi (2015) and Dawar (2014) found, the *hujra* is now on the verge of disappearing, often abandoned to drug addicts or used as temporary refuge for militants, with "dry leaves hiss[ing] as they spin in the verandas." This institutional vacuum shattered community networking, which was previously maintained through kinship, marriage, and business ties in bustling bazaars and educational institutions.

The theme of cooperation, a cornerstone of *Pakhtunwali*, presented a complex picture of decline, with a single notable exception. The overwhelming majority of participants reported that the spirit of cooperation had ceased due to the pervasive distrust sown by militancy. One

educated male participant stated that the community's reaction to non-cooperative behaviour had lost its power, and youth no longer obeyed family leaders as they once did. This indicates a breakdown in the intergenerational transmission of values. However, a contradictory perspective emerged from some male students, who argued that cooperation is now stronger, attributing this solely to the coal business creating new economic interdependencies. Despite this outlier, the general consensus, supported by female students, was that society had become more stratified, with financial status dictating respect. The overall impact, as summarized by participants, is that an "individual approach replaced the collective approach." The militants, as noted by Dawar & Iqbal (2019), violated the sacred tenets of *Pakhtunwali* through their strict interpretations, shattering the informal social contract. This, combined with the post-conflict merger of ex-FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the introduction of modern courts, has created a socio-cultural vacuum, leaving a traditional society struggling to reconcile its past with an uncertain future.

Theme 2: The Erosion and Resilience of the Jirga System

The Jirga, a traditional conflict resolution mechanism central to Pakhtun society, is defined as a gathering for consultation and collective decision-making, often conceptualized as a circle reflecting its participatory nature (Pashto Descriptive Dictionary, 1978; Rubin, 1995). In Darra Adam Khel, two primary types were practiced: the state-convened *Sarkari Jirga* under the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) and the community-based *Ulas Jirga*. The *Ulas Jirga* was a robust, representative assembly comprising respected elders (*Masharan* and *Maliks*) selected for their social prestige, economic status, and political patronage. Its procedures were deeply embedded in *Pakhtunwali* and local *Riwaj* (custom), operating through nuanced methods like *pa khano* (consultative), *pa obbo wary waak* (based on a formal undertaking), and *pa laray waak* (strictly adhering to the *Pakhtunwali* code) to resolve disputes over honour, land, and murder (Kamran et al., 2020; Mushtaq et al., 2016). Functioning as a judicial organ, the Jirga would hear evidence, pronounce judgments, and enforce decisions through mechanisms like collecting *Muchalka* (a security deposit) and imposing penalties such as heavy fines, social boycotts, or even exile for non-compliance, ensuring its authority was largely respected by the community.

However, the militant conflict targeted the Jirga as a direct challenge to their authority. Militants systematically assassinated hundreds of tribal elders in suicide attacks and target killings to create a leadership vacuum and dismantle this traditional power structure (Shinwari, 2011; Abbas, 2008). As one male participant noted, "With the arrival of militancy... tribal elders had been killed... creating a leadership vacuum," which severely weakened the *Sharista* (tribal militia) that enforced Jirga decisions. Despite this brutal suppression, the institution demonstrated resilience, with participants affirming it "has never stopped functioning." Nevertheless, its glory was diminished. Post-conflict, perceptions of the Jirga are divided. While many, especially male elders, still prefer it for its speedy and accessible justice, others are critical. Female participants highlighted its discriminatory nature, with one educated woman stating, "Jirga is just taking money from people with low incomes" and that its decisions are "against women's rights." This has led to a gradual shift in preference, particularly among the youth and educated cohorts, towards the state judiciary and new formal bodies like the Conflict Resolution Council (CRC), especially after the merger of ex-FATA and the abolition of the FCR, signaling a complex transition for this centuries-old institution.

Theme 3: Social institutions

The militant conflict inflicted severe and deliberate damage upon the foundational social institutions of Darra Adam Khel, with education and politics suffering a systematic dismantling.

Educational institutions were primary targets, as insurgents demolished schools, colleges, libraries, and laboratories through bomb blasts. One educated male participant detailed the devastation, stating, "Five primary high schools in Darra Adamkhel were blasted during militancy," leading to a "pause in education" that forced student migration to other cities. While the physical infrastructure was ravaged, the conflict also acted as a paradoxical catalyst for awareness. Participants noted that people began "realizing that without education, there is no other way," leading to a post-conflict resurgence in educational value, exemplified by the construction of institutions like FATA University and a growing acceptance of women's education. Politically, the traditional structure built upon elders, Maliks, and the Jirga system was violently overturned. Militants targeted these authoritative figures for assassination to erase opposition and fill the resulting power vacuum. This strategic decapitation of traditional leadership fundamentally altered the political landscape, shifting influence from Maliks, whose role one participant said was reduced "from 100% in the past to only 10%," towards religious leaders. This represented a profound inversion of the pre-conflict dynamic where, as another participant explained, "Politics was dominant over religion," a balance that was completely overturned during the militancy.

The economic and recreational institutions of Darra Adam Khel were similarly transformed, forced to adapt to a new and unstable reality. The region's historic economic backbone, a 160-year-old weapons manufacturing industry that employed 80% of the local population, was crippled. A male elder participant lamented that "militancy badly damaged the weapons industry," describing how families were forced to abandon their trades and relocate. The insurgents' control and subsequent military operations dismantled this black market, compelling a dramatic economic shift. The vacuum has been filled by coal extraction, which participants cited as the new primary source of income, alongside ventures in textiles and medicine. While this has led to a degree of financial recovery, with one participant noting the financial condition "is much better than it was before, and it is due to coal," there is significant local resentment over the government's failure to formally rehabilitate the skilled weapons sector. Concurrently, recreational life was severely curtailed. Male participants recalled outdoor activities like hunting and sports tournaments, while female participants highlighted the near-total absence of recreational spaces for women, whose social gatherings became limited to religious functions like *Quran khwani*. The post-merger era has seen some development of parks and gyms, but these facilities have not fully offset the previous deprivation or fully included female residents. Amidst the rubble of these institutions, the role of religion expanded dramatically, creating a complex and often contradictory legacy. Pre-conflict, the influence of clerics (*Mullahs*) was largely confined to mosques. However, the militancy period precipitated a significant rise in religious institutions, with a proliferation of madrassas for both males and females. Some community members, particularly male elders, viewed this as a positive development, with one stating, "We support the insurgents because they are the true Muslims," and crediting them for making people "more religious." This sentiment was echoed by female elders who saw veiling and new madrassas as "the blessings of the insurgents." However, this narrative was not universal. Educated female participants provided a more critical perspective, arguing that militancy "caused minds to change toward sharia," creating a "confusing situation" that left the community torn between their traditional *Pakhtunwali* and the militants' imposed interpretation of Islamic law. This internal conflict encapsulates the overarching impact on Darra's social institutions: a forced transition that has left the community navigating a fractured landscape where traditional structures have been eroded, new economic realities have emerged, and the

social fabric is strained by competing ideologies, leaving its people to rebuild amidst profound uncertainty.

Theme- 4: Kinship Ties

The militancy in Darra Adam Khel fundamentally fractured the intricate kinship ties that once formed the bedrock of the Afridi tribal community, leading to a marked decline in the traditional extended family system and a rise in individualism. Participants consistently reported that the intense bonds of blood and marriage, which structured the community into clans like Zarghun Khel and Bosti Khel, have significantly weakened. The conflict directly tore families apart, not just physically through displacement, but ideologically. As one educated male participant explained, "Militancy broke our family system. For example, some family members were supporters of the insurgents while others were against it; this situation disrupted social relations." This ideological schism, coupled with the pressures of modernization, eroded the collective spirit. Educated female participants observed that an individualistic approach has now become dominant, where people "only focus on their own rights benefits and concerns" rather than acknowledging others as community members, leading to weakened relations with parents and siblings as people increasingly prioritize their immediate nuclear families.

This erosion of kinship is further evidenced by the transformation of marriage practices, which serve as a critical mechanism for reinforcing social bonds. Where traditional customs like *Neewaka* (claiming an infant for marriage) and the payment of *Walwar* (bride price) were once prevalent, modern influences have taken hold. Female elders noted that these traditions are "almost finished," with practices now being copied from television dramas and Indian culture. While preferential marriages within the bloodline and among cousins persist to maintain clan integrity, the ceremonies themselves have transformed into displays of splendour, often funded by loans, reflecting new economic realities like the coal boom. Concurrently, the fundamental family structure has shifted from the joint system, where "five and six brothers and their families used to live together," towards the nuclear family model. As one educated male participant summarized, this change was driven by militancy, which divided families, as well as by "inflation and coal." This collective transition from a sprawling, interconnected kinship network to more insular family units represents a profound and likely permanent alteration to the social anatomy of Darra Adam Khel.

Theme-5: Women's Status

The status of women in Darra Adam Khel presents a complex and often contradictory picture, caught between a deeply entrenched patriarchal past and the turbulent changes wrought by militancy. Prior to the conflict, society was overwhelmingly orthodox and male-dominated, with women's roles largely confined to the domestic sphere and their significant, though often invisible, contributions to problem-solving going unrecognized. The militant period intensified these restrictions, as one female student recounted, creating a dual threat from both insurgents, who banned education and enforced harsh punishments, and state security forces, whose incursions into homes instilled fear. Despite this repression, the post-conflict era has witnessed a cautious, albeit uneven, progression. Female elders noted that women are now pursuing education and even employment, gaining a measure of independence, and taking on responsibilities once reserved for men, such as managing wedding arrangements.

However, this empowerment is sharply constrained by persistent economic disenfranchisement, exemplified by women being denied equal shares in lucrative coal profits, and a social structure that continues to enforce male authority within the household.

This tension between gradual progress and enduring tradition is starkly evident in the realm of marriage and personal autonomy. While there is a noted shift towards slightly higher marriage

ages and some young people now have a say in choosing partners, deeply problematic practices remain prevalent. Underage marriages are still justified by male and female community members alike for reasons of reproduction and controlling sexuality, and preferential cousin marriages are common to maintain clan stability. The most severe manifestation of patriarchal control is the continued practice of honor-based violence, sanctioned by traditional institutions like the Jirga. An educated woman highlighted this brutal reality, citing a case where a Jirga decided to kill a woman who left her husband. This underscores the grim truth that despite increased educational access and some social mobility, the fundamental power dynamics have not radically shifted. Many women continue to live within the confines of the local proverb, silently enduring difficult marriages, indicating that their status, while evolving, remains a site of struggle between emerging opportunities and resilient traditional oppression.

Theme 6: Militancy and Youth Character

The relationship between youth and militancy in Darra Adam Khel is highly contested, with data revealing a complex interplay of coercion, ideological manipulation, and systemic failure. Many educated male participants argued that young people were tragically caught between militants and state forces, often used as pawns in a violent struggle. The government's tactic of arming local *Lashkars* (tribal militias) to fight insurgents, a departure from their traditional dispute-resolution role, was cited as a key factor that pushed youth into the conflict and made them targets for militant retaliation. Simultaneously, militants actively recruited through potent pull factors: ideological sermons in mosques and *hujras*, promises of a heroic religious jihad, and exploitation of the local *Pakhtunwali* revenge culture. This aligns with external studies noting recruitment in displaced persons camps, where frustration and a lack of state support created fertile ground for radicalization. Coercion was also rampant, with accounts of kidnappings, indoctrination in militant-sponsored schools, and the forced training of children as suicide bombers, many of whom were heavily drugged.

Despite evidence of youth participation, the community's perception of their role is deeply divided, reflecting broader narratives of blame and victimhood. Some educated female participants held youth directly responsible for the scale of destruction, while others, particularly female elders, vehemently defended them as innocent bystanders who merely provided food to local militants out of necessity. A significant counter-narrative, especially among male elders, placed the blame squarely on external actors, asserting that "the government and security agencies of Pakistan are responsible for all such destruction," citing controversial foreign policies and the region's historical marginalization. This perspective is supported by analyses pointing to the area's long-standing role in a regional nexus of arms and narcotics trafficking, an economy that predated the recent militancy. Ultimately, the data suggests that youth involvement was not a monolithic phenomenon but a spectrum ranging from voluntary, ideologically-driven participation to forced conscription, all set against a backdrop of state failure and a socio-economic environment historically shaped by conflict economies.

Theme 7: Local people's Perception

The perceptions of Darra Adam Khel's residents regarding their social future reveal a deep generational and ideological divide, oscillating between a romanticized past and a cautiously anticipated modernity. Elderly female participants, for instance, expressed a profound nostalgia for the pre-conflict era, asserting that "our past was far better" and that "old is gold," valuing the former unity, respect, and happiness over modern facilities that "cannot give us pleasure." Conversely, the younger generation, particularly students, actively champion's progress, stating a desire to "move ahead with the new trends of the current age" and welcoming further improvements for prosperity. This schism is further complicated by divergent views on the role

of religion and culture; some female elders perceived the militants' influence as a "positive change" that fostered religious piety, while educated males vehemently distinguished their native *Pakhtunwali* which respects music and personal choice from the coercive doctrine of the insurgents, questioning why the two are conflated.

Amidst this dichotomy, a more nuanced, critical perspective emerges, primarily from educated males and elders, who advocate for a hybrid model of development that integrates modern facilities with indigenous social capital. They demand change and infrastructure "We want to live like city people" but insist it must be on their own terms, leveraging rather than erasing their traditional systems. They criticize the post-merger government policies as ineffective and alienating, stressing that "their trust must be restored in the new system" by giving locals responsibility and excluding outsiders. This cohort calls for a polished version of their local mechanisms, such as integrating the traditional *Riwaj* and *Jirga* systems with formal agency judges, while simultaneously pressing for urgent economic investments to address pervasive poverty the very gap they identify as the root cause of militancy. Thus, the collective perception is not a simple binary but a complex demand for a future that heals the fractures of conflict by blending authentic tradition with meaningful modernization, all under a framework of local ownership and justice.

Conclusion

This research study conclusively demonstrates that the militancy in Darra Adam Khel precipitated a profound and systematic degradation of social capital, leading to a severe social and humanitarian crisis. The conflict did not merely cause physical destruction but engineered a deliberate dismantling of the community's foundational sociocultural fabric. Core values of unity, cooperation, brotherhood, and collective honour were supplanted by a climate of fear, distrust, radicalism, and a self-centred worldview. The insurgents strategically targeted the pillars of traditional authority, assassinating Maliks and elders to create a leadership vacuum and systematically destroying or co-opting key institutions like the *Jirga* and *Hujra*. These spaces, once dedicated to conflict resolution, socialization, and cultural transmission, were transformed into platforms for militant ideology and shelters for foreign fighters, severing a critical artery of community life. This erosion of trust and shared values fragmented the community, pitting individuals and even family members against one another and eroding the very concept of collective action and social unity.

The impact of this devastation permeated every facet of social organization. The study reveals a complex and often contradictory post-conflict landscape. While the merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has brought some progress, such as a cautious improvement in educational access and a shift from the decimated weapons industry to coal extraction, these developments occur within a deeply fractured society. The traditional political institution has been critically weakened, with religious figures usurping the roles of traditional elders. Family structures have shifted from extended to nuclear units, often divided by the ideological legacies of the conflict. Furthermore, the status of women presents a paradox; while increased education has offered new pathways, patriarchal norms persist, evidenced by concerns over property rights and the continuation of practices like honour killings sanctioned by compromised traditional justice systems. The youth, tragically caught between militant propaganda and state counter-insurgency tactics, represent both a lost generation and a potential key to future recovery. Ultimately, this research underscores that the reconstruction of Darra Adam Khel necessitates more than physical rebuilding; it requires a dedicated, nuanced effort to restore trust, re-empower legitimate local institutions, and mend the torn social fabric that is essential for sustainable peace.

and development. This study serves as a critical foundation for understanding these complex dynamics and formulating policies that address the root causes of social capital's collapse.

Recommendations

This study does not claim to answer a certain question; rather, it provides a policy approach based on the reconstruction of social capital in Darra Adamkhel. Due to armed operations and militancy, the social capital of the area was significantly damaged. The particular focus of this study was to stop the deterioration of social capital caused by militancy and envisage steps that can restore social harmony, integration, cooperation and informal institutions of the area. Before merging and conflicting situations, Darra Adamkhel had needed more social policies in the broad sense; there needed to be more provision of social services such as health, economic, education and political institutions.

This research clearly shows that the special status of FATA, Talibanization, local and foreign policies, involvement of different banned groups, violence-related activities and displacement are vital factors that deteriorate social capital. This requires certain steps and measures to rebuild damaged social capital. In light of this study, certain recommendation is given below:

1. The structure of militant groups that were involved in killing hundreds of innocent people should be dismantled. This is one of the significant factors in developing cooperation and social networking. Dismantling requires an institutional structure that will charge the stakeholders and leading figures if such a situation occurs again.
2. Strict actions against those who create violence. Restoring security to the lives of citizens, preserving their dignity and individuality, and respecting their local informal system.
3. Guaranteeing the right to participate in public and private sector decision-making, authority should be given to locals. Ensure the right of individuals to participate in decision-making and free voting at the local and national levels.
4. Reconstruct the educational infrastructure, providing basic facilities, lab instruments and libraries. Revise the educational standard and restore the functionality of schools that are out of service due to conflict and rehabilitate the educational personnel so they would be able to enhance the educational standard.
5. Locals are concerned regarding their economic resources, particularly the weapon industry. 160-year-old weapon industry must be rebuilt through training institutions. People in business, influential people, and skilled workers must invest money in different economic sectors. Their direct contribution to reconstruction through a voluntary or cooperative approach makes them a key player in the future development of Darra Adamkhel.
6. Empowering local social institutions, including jirga and hujra, by facilitating their established process, their continuation and sustainability can encourage voluntary work for the region.
7. Developing programs for building youngster capacities, competency, and qualification, especially for those affected by the conflict. This will accelerate the process of integration in society.
8. Reconstructing the health system to provide health facilities, services, rehabilitation of the medical sector and establishing a particular industry for militancy victims.
9. To strengthen the sociocultural system, a strong institutional environment should be provided for effective and inclusive participation of all.

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