

## Mothers' belief about psychological problems faced by the children living in conflict zone

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### ABSTRACT

The study was made on impact of armed conflict on children as perceived by their mothers. Mothers from an important part in the overall development of children and their perceptions about the effects of disturbed atmosphere on a child's psychology will be important in formulating policies and programmes that will be required to minimize the effects of these disturbances. The present study has been undertaken to study the psychological problems faced by children from 'intact' and 'disrupted' families of Kashmir as perceived by their mothers and to study the role played by their mothers during the time of crisis. The sample comprised of 100 mothers from intact families (50 mothers of girls and 50 mothers of boys) and 100 mothers from disrupted families (50 mothers of girls and 50 mothers of boys). The tool used for the study was interview schedule. Both open and close ended questions were framed for eliciting the responses. The findings revealed that mothers from both families reported that their children were scared of men in uniform. Mothers also reported that their children have become the victims of violence directly or indirectly. The girls from intact families were the least exposed to violence and this difference was statistically significant. The major response to experiences of violence was crying in case of girls and seclusion in case of boys. The mothers believed that the armed conflict has had an effect on the psychological health of their children and had developed a sense of insecurity among the children from disrupted families. On hearing incident related to armed conflict, mothers either used to find out the locality and intensity of incident or physically went out to locate their children. Imparting education is the best thing perceived by mothers that they can do for the betterment of their children.

**KEY WORDS :** Psychological problems, Conflict zone, Armed conflict

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In any catastrophe whether natural or man made within a population, three groups suffer the most-children, women and aged. Nothing significant can be done as far as the nature made sufferings are concerned but the last four decades have seen surge in man made sufferings. Armed conflict is one of the most common man made disasters that has uniformly affected all parts of the globe. The effects of armed conflicts lie in displacing people from their inhabited places and rendering them homeless and killings in these families to mention a few. The killings have an impact on the social environment thereby affecting the psychology of the survivors. Armed conflicts also alter the lives of children around the world when they experience violence or its indirect effects in terms of being witness to a violent event, loss of a parent or relative or by not getting the proper social setup which he or she should get in a normal society. UNICEF in 2006 reported that conflicts throughout the world in the last decade have killed an estimated 2 million children and

have left another 6 million disabled, 20 million homeless and over 1 million separated from their parents.

Jammu and Kashmir province has also been embroiled in turmoil for the last 20 years. This turmoil made the environment insecure and toxic for the population living there and has affected children at meso, micro, exo and macro-level. Public places in Kashmir like open fields, bus terminals, roadsides, residential areas and recreational spots have places that witnessed deaths due to incidents of cross-firing, grenade attacks, bomb blasts and landmine explosions. As a result of this disturbance, the Kashmiri women have become apprehensive about the safe return of the family members who go for jobs or the children who go to schools or playing outside. There are a significant number of mothers, grand mothers and spouses who have to come to terms with the agonizing experience of receiving the dead bodies of their loved ones. The ongoing conflict has resulted in a number of deaths shown different number by different sources up to 77,000 dead