

## Physico-social profile and academic performance of elementary school children in Kashmir valley

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### ABSTRACT

A sample of 60 children was selected with the purpose of knowing their psycho-social development and academic performance. The major tools used were interview schedule, interview guide, Sentence Completion Test and Psycho-Social Problem Checklist. The findings of the study revealed that children who were directly affected by the armed conflict faced more problems regarding psycho-social well being as they have lost one of their parents in militancy. Apart from disturbed psycho-social well being, they were not able to remain in touch with their studies due to low income source which created major hindrance in all aspects of their daily living. The findings of the Sentence Completion Test elucidated that children had shown below average to low scores in the entire three categories *i.e.* sociability, self-confidence and ambition. These children were revealing more negative responses as they had gone through traumatic situation which made their lives miserable and always being afraid of new situation which effected their confidence. On the other hand, indirectly affected children possessed high scores in all the applied tests as they were living in congenial families, which helped them to learn and cultivate positive attitude towards themselves. This group of children performed better in academics and showed participative approach in every activity of school and social gathering.

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Children are the most valuable possession and investment of any country. They are the future of our nation. A child should, therefore, be given the best to begin life and it is beauty of the society towards world of tomorrow. In today's world, a child who is not educated is disadvantaged in terms of income, health and opportunity. Elementary schooling gives children a better chance for full healthy and secure future. School may become particularly important in one's life as well as for one's future career. Education represent a state of normalcy during the period of conflict. Children are affected differently by armed conflict. The threats which they face are unique and directly related to their vulnerability. They valued their lives less and may suffer greater psychological setback (Graca, 1996). The destruction of education network represents one of the greatest developmental setback for countries affected by armed conflict. The violence of grief and anxiety suffered by the children during armed conflict has negative effect on their overall personality. As they have lost their loved one's, their emotions and thoughts are affected, their hearts are filled up with terror (Shreedharan, 1997).

Children who grow up living in violence are more likely to turn to violence themselves as a method of problem solving. The violence, grief, and anxiety experienced by children during armed conflict have both short and long term effects on their mental health, quality

of life and subsequent behaviour as adult (Fisher, 1998). Violence violate every right to child, the right to life, the right to be with family, the right to education and of overall development of elementary education has a crucial preventive and rehabilitative part to play in fulfilling the needs and rights of children in conflict and post conflict situation. Children get benefit during armed conflict from friendship and support of school, companion and from leadership and guidance provided by teachers. A teacher can promote peace and guidance and help to council the children who are distressed (Tolfree, 1995).

It has been accepted that healthy environment supports the all-around development of children. Children should therefore be given the best to begin in life as they are the vulnerable members of society and need special protection and assistance. The turmoil in Kashmir valley has an unprecedented impact on people, especially children living there. The lack of physical, congenial and social environment has taken its repeatedly and last hard hit among the children. The present study was focused on children affected by armed conflict in Kashmir. The major areas of study were framed into three objectives, to study the psycho-social problems of children who are directly and indirectly affected by armed conflict, to study the scholastic performance of both these groups and also to find out the relationship between the psycho-social development and academic performance of these two

groups.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Research design :**

The survey research design was used in the study. It involved various tools which were used for both children and parents in collecting in depth information.

**Subject :**

The sample for the present study comprised of 60 children in 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade in Kashmir. This formed the core group of the study. 30 children were those who were directly affected by militancy and remaining number were those who were indirectly affected by such turmoil. The parents and teachers of the sample children were also included so as to get in-depth information about the core group.

**Research instrument :**

Various tools were used to get desired information from the sample group. The self-designed interview schedule were constructed, Psycho-social Problems Checklist, Parental and Teachers Observation Data Sheet, Sentence Completion Test and Teacher’s Interview Guide and were applied on sample groups.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The data from Table 1 reveal that directly affected children ranged from below average (23%) to low (77%) on psychosocial problem checklist as rated by their parents. They felt that by losing one of their parents in militancy reflect various psycho-social problems which has effect on their overall personality. The horrible flashbacks had captured their mind in such a way that they loose interest in going to school and get easily afraid of new situation. The parents also observed that the children were not able to cope up with the past which has an adverse effect on their overall well being. These findings are supported with the study. (Graca, 1996) that when children experienced traumatic or other events in times of armed conflict they suffer from anxiety about being separated from their families or they may have

nightmares or trouble sleeping. They may cease playing and laughing, lose their appetite and withdraw from social contact. Children also face difficulty concentrating in school, become depressed and feel hopeless about the future. As far as the indirectly affected children were concerned, their parents observed average (56%) and above average (43%) psycho-social problems among them. According to their verbal and written information, children showed proper concentration in academics and other activities as they were brought up in a healthy and supportive environment which helped them to develop positive outlook towards themselves.

Table 2 depicts that indirectly affected children scored very high to high in all the three traits of Sentence Completion Test *i.e.* sociability, self-confidence and ambitious. This group of children were brought up in a healthy environment which have good impact on their wholesome growth and development. They were flexible to get along with others and develop positive approach as depicted in some of the responses given like they feel good when they met any stranger and can travel alone without any fear.

**Table 2 : Scores of sentence completion test of indirectly affected children**

Response	Very high		High		Average		Low		Very low	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sociability	7	23	23	77	-	-	-	-	-	-
Self confidence	10	33	20	68	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ambitious	8	26	22	73	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	5	17	25	83	-	-	-	-	-	-

As compared to indirectly affected, directly affected children scored average to low in all the three traits of Sentence Completion Test (Table 3). This group of children were not able to cope up from the past experiences. Due to untimely death of parents and bad condition of the family, their approach was so much negative towards life that adversely affected their overall development. They were not able to adjust themselves in a new situation and always preferred to be in themselves only. The prolonged gap in academics could loose their interest to attend the school again and showed lack of concentration in day to day activities. Their mind was over powered by the mishap in the family. These findings are supported with one of the studies conducted by Longhurst and Tomkins (1995) that childhood became the nightmare when children lived in a war tore nations. The destruction by armed conflict affect their homes, separate families, disrupt the health and education service which undermine the foundation

**Table 1 : Analysis of psycho-social problems checklist**

Response	Directly affected		Indirectly affected	
	N	%	N	%
High	-	-	-	-
Above average	-	-	13	43
Average	-	-	17	56
Below average	7	23	-	-
Low	23	77	-	-

**Table 3 : Scores on sentence completion test of directly affected children**

Response	Very high		High		Average		Low		Very low	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sociability	-	-	-	-	10	33	14	46	6	20
Self confidence	-	-	-	-	17	56	14	46	8	26
Ambitious	-	-	-	-	5	16	16	53	8	26
Total	-	-	-	-	5	26	16	53	6	20

of children lives. When children witnessed the parent death, has severely affected the confidence and get threatened the death of themselves.

***The academic performance of these two groups and its relationship with psycho-social development :***

The findings of the present study also revealed that affected children (30%) showed average to poor performance in academics as the parents death badly shattered their mind and affected their overall well being. According to the information given by parents, children got badly stuck with the horrible past and did not consider the life worth living. The feeling of hopelessness affect their day to day activities, show lack of concentration and afraid to adjust themselves in a new situation. The mishap in the family created so many problems which affect their day to day living. Due to low income source, they were not able to continue their studies. They always preferred to be alone and showed least interest to get along with others. The traumatic past badly influenced the overall performance of children. As far as the indirectly affected children were concerned, they showed less psycho-social problems. The congenial atmosphere in a family provided both emotional and social security to children. They did not reflect any lack of concentration and showed interest in day to day activities. By living in healthy and complete family, children developed positive attitude which helped them to move forward. The teachers record also pointed out that majority of children showed good academic performance, participative approach and shared healthy relation with the peer group and teachers.

It is clear from the results that when an individual suffers from psycho-social problems, it has a direct effect on the personality whether it is the day to day work or any other task. Children who were directly affected by turmoil by loosing one of the parents showed various psycho-social problems which made their lives miserable. Their childhood became the nightmare as they were not able to forget the past fully. They had trouble in concentration and did not show any interest to get involved in any activity and considered life as worthless. These children show poor performance in academics and usually fall into below average to low scores in all the applied tests. The untimely death of parents makes them less ambitious and looses their confidence. But the indirectly affected children did not reflect any psycho-social problems as the congenial atmosphere and parental support always helped them to move forward and look positive towards life.

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