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Impact of Conflict on Children & Education: A Global Perspective

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Abstract

The lives of Children in armed conflict nations are characterised by hardships with a bleak outlook for their future. Children living in these regions have been the victims of widespread conflict, deprived of their right to education, access to skills and knowledge and the route to a better life for themselves and their country.The present study is descriptive in nature. In the present investigation researcher reviewed recent related literature & secondary data in an extensive manner in the form of books, e-books, journals, editorials and other reliable sources, which provided greater insight into all possible practical aspects of the research problem. The investigation reveals that conflict has affected both children and their right to education. The severity of violations against education incorporatesrecruitment to armed groups/forces, school attendance, school closure and reduction in schooling capacity. In addition to that, appalling levels of massacring, mutilating, recruitment and denial of humanitarian access, committing rape and other forms of sexual violence; engaging in attacks on schools; and abducting children in situations of armed conflict came under the domain of violations against children.

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Introduction

It is believed that 246 million of children residing in conflict areas are impacted by armed conflict worldwide, (UNICEF, 2015)prior several decades the conflict has affected schools, health facilities and health workers, thereby increasing its impact onconflict on children.[Education Under Attack 2014, Report on Attacks on Health Care in Emergencies (2106) Out of the 49 armed conflicts that happened in 2016, 12 were combats(Uppsala Conflict Data Program 2018; Dupuy, K. G., S. Nygard, H. M., Rudolfsen, I. R., S. A., Strand, H. et al 2017) Children who at early age are exposed either directly or indirectly to armed conflicts suffer harm that stays throughout their lives and beyond, to succeeding generations born after the conflict is over.

The lives of Children in armed conflict nations are characterised by hardships with a bleak outlook for their future. Children living in these regionshave been the victims of widespread conflict, deprived oftheir right to education, access to skills and knowledge and the route to a better life for themselves and their country.The severity of violations against education incorporatesrecruitment to armed groups/forces, school attendance, school closure and reduction in schooling capacity. In addition to that, appalling levels of massacring, mutilating, recruitment and denial of humanitarian access, committing rape and other forms of sexual violence; engaging in attacks on schools; and abducting children in situations of armed conflict came under the domain of violations against children.

It is estimated that“approximately 57 million children of primary school age did not attend school in 2011” (UNICEF, 2014, p. 18), amounting 10 per cent which means approximately one in five of the world’s primary school-aged children who should be in primary school are out of school and more than 13 million of those children are in the countries, directly or indirectly, affected by armed conflicts (UNICEF, 2015). The biggest and the most difficult barrier keeping these children out of school, is Armed conflict, which results in killing and injuring millions of children, Armed conflict disrupts normal life, forces millions of families to flee their homes, separates children from their families, and reduces schools to rubble. Taking a genuine note on these violations Special Representative of the

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Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict said, "The tragic fate of child victims of conflict cannot and must not leave us unmoved; a child killed, recruited as a soldier, injured in an attack or prevented from going school due to a conflict is already one too many," (Gamba, 2017). Expressing shock over the scale of violations documented in the report, UN Secretary-General reiterated his call on parties of conflict to accept by their responsibility to protect children, in accordance with their obligation under international humanitarian and human rights law. (Guterres, 2017).The severe effects of armed conflict on child health and wellbeing are among the greatest children's rights violations of the 21st century.

Armed conflict affects at least one in six children worldwide (Rieder, &Choonara 2012). The number of child fatalities in areas of armed conflict is difficult to establish. Children may die directly from trauma. However, it is thought that even more die from starvation or infections following armed conflict in an area (Rieder, &Choonara 2012). Children who lose their parents in armed conflict are far more likely to develop infections or die from starvation. As well as experiencing direct injuries, children may be affected in many ways. Health and educational facilities are often destroyed during armed conflict. The psychological impact of witnessing armed conflict is increasingly being recognised as a major problem for children (Jordans, Pigott, Tol, W*et al*, 2016 &Dimitry, 2012).

The aim of this editorial is to highlight both the problem and approaches to address the problem.

Definitions

Armed Conflictis defined as an organized dispute that involves the use of weaponries, firearms, warheads and armaments that resulted in violence and force, whether within national borders or beyond involving state actors or non-governmental entities. E.g., international wars, civil wars, and conflicts between other kinds of groups.

Armed Conflictis an arguedincompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties out of which at least one is the government of the state or between two organised armed groups, neither of which is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year.

Review of Related Literature

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Civilian casualties have increased from armed conflicts in the first decade of the 21st century (Garfield, 2008)a significant number of whom where children (Kruk, Freedman, Anglin, Waldman, 2010; Zwi, Grove, Kelly, Gayer, Ramos-Jimenez, &Sommerfeld, 2006; Toole, & Waldman,. 1997). In fact, both parties of the conflict target children and areno longer considered as collateral damage.Consequently, children bear a significant burden of conflict-related morbidity and mortality. Armed Conflictvia direct ways takes a heavy toll on the physical, mental, developmental (neonate), and behavioral health of children. Likewise, it also affected children via indirect wayslike deprivation and dangerous stress, which can have a lasting effect on the wellbeing over the existing course; e.g.,children shaken by armed conflict have an increased pervasiveness of posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and behavioral and psychosomatic complaints, which persist long after cessation of conflicts.Numerous armed conflicts right through the world are profoundly impacting the physical and mental health of children. The conflict in Gaza, Syria's civil war, massacring and maiming of unarmed children in Indian Occupied Kashmir, kidnapping and murder of school children in Nigeria, the recruitment of child soldiers by ISIS, and the street violence in inner-city America are among the reasons UNICEF identified 2014 as the most dangerous year in recent history for children (UNICEF, 2016).

Objectives of the Study

1. ***To study the impact of armed conflict on children.***
2. ***To study the direct and indirect effect of armed conflict on children.***
3. ***To study the impact of armed conflict on Mental & Psychological Health among children.***
4. ***To study the impact of armed conflict on Displacement.***
5. ***To study the impact of armed conflict on Access toEducation and Reduction in its Quality.***
6. ***To Study the impact of armed conflict on Death/Injury of Children***
7. ***To provide suggestive measures for Building A Protective Environment For Children affected by conflict***

Research Design & Methodology

The present study is descriptive in nature. In the present investigation researcher reviewed recent related literature & secondary data in an extensive manner in the form of books, e-books, journals and other reliable sources, which provided greater insight into all possible

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practical aspects of the research problem. The methodology includes the procedures, techniques and practices adopted to lay foundation, built database and to furnish with processed information for analysis to accomplish the research objectives. While following the research procedures the study have been undertaken on the strict lines of the stated objectives to make the study unbiased. The definitions of the technical terms have been cited from the published works.

Impact of Conflict on Children

Since 1990, Ninety (90) per cent of deaths related to armed conflict have been civilians and, of those, 80 per cent are children and women (UNICEF 2006). In the past decade, two million children have been killed in armed conflict. Three times as many have been seriously injured or permanently disabled.3 Millions of others have been forced to witness or take part in horrifying acts of violence (Machel, 1994). In conflict situations, children become separated from their families, displaced or abandoned, and are at risk of being recruited into armed forces.

The vast majority of armed conflicts involve the use of child combatants under the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2005). In 2003, more than half of armed conflicts used combatants under the age of 15(Project Ploughshares, n. d.). Because of the breakdown of family and community structures, children are alsovulnerable to sexual exploitation and being trafficked, and even more than usual areforced to work to support their families.

All of the 19 conflicts recorded as major armed conflicts in 2004 were classified asintra-state conflicts (Stockholm, 2005). However, in a globalised world, intra-state conflicts areincreasingly becoming international in nature and in effect. Almost all are lengthyconflicts. Only three–those in Iraq, in Darfur (Sudan), and against al-Qaeda – areless than ten years old.

It is not hard to find many more horrifying examples of how children have come under threat in educational settings where they should be safest. When the international community adopted the Universal Declaration, it had just experienced a terrifying world war in which such atrocities were numerous. At the time, world leaders were determined to build a fairer, more harmonious global order that would ensure basic protections for all.

But, clearly, the Universal Declaration is as necessary and relevant today as it was then. According to UNICEF, the number of children living in conflict zones has risen by 74% over the last decade. Moreover, a new report from the Global Coalition to Protect Education

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from Attack (GCPEA) finds that between 2013 and 2017, there were more than 12,700 attacks on educational settings, harming more than 21,000 students and teachers in at least 70 countries.

Direct and Indirect Impact on Children

Children have been affected by armed conflict both directly and indirectly. Direct effects take the form of physical injury, developmental delay, disability, mental and behavioural health sequelae, and death. Military actions, violence associated with drug trafficking, indiscriminate airstrikes, and other forms of armed conflict have the intended and unintended consequence of killing and maiming children (Zerrougui, 2015). Indirect effects relate to the destruction of infrastructure required by children for their optimal survival and development, environmental exposures, and other downstream effects on social determinants of health, such as worsened living conditions and ill health of caregivers (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2015;(Left &Moestue, 2009; Guha-Sapir &D'Aoust 2011; Levy &Sidel, 2008; Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (n. d.). Hodgkin, & Newell, 2007).For example, the destruction of health infrastructure and the disruption of health systems result in breakdowns in vaccination programs, disease surveillance, and access to health and dental care (Guha-Sapir, &D'Aoust 2011; Requejo, Bryce, Barros, et al. 2015). Traditionally safe spaces for children (e.g. schools, hospitals, and play areas) are increasingly affected by both the parties'armed groups as a result of indiscriminate crossfire, looting, or direct targeting. The results are disruptions in schooling and impaired economic growth and development caregivers (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2015; Zerrougui, 2015; Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (n. d.); Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict 2014). Besieged populations or those whose farms and fields have been destroyed are vulnerable to acute and chronic malnutrition, with subsequent effects on growth, immune and metabolic systems functioning, and cognitive development Das, Salam, Imdad, &Bhutta, (2016). Many children affected by armed conflict are forcibly displaced from their homes United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2017). Of the 68.5 million people forcibly displaced worldwide in 2017, more than 25 million were refugees living outside of their countries of origin; over half of these refugees were children, many of whom had spent their entire childhoods as people displaced.21 The number of unaccompanied immigrant children has also reached record numbers, and this group is at a high risk for exploitation, trafficking, and psychological

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problems United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2017;Bhabha, 2004; Danish, 2014; International Organization for Migration 2011; & Council on Community Pediatrics, 2013). Hundreds of thousands of children worldwide are also thought to be involved in armed conflict as combatants Betancourt, Borisova, de-la-Soudière, & Williamson, 2011; & United Nations Children's Fund 2007). Children associated with armed groups (child soldiers) are victims of severe human rights violations. They may be threatened with death, deprived of food, given drugs, or forced to take part in armed combat in other ways Betancourt, Borisova, de-la-Soudière, & Williamson, 2011; & United Nations Children's Fund 2007). They are at risk for physical and mental injury, death, sexual exploitation, rape, and sexually transmitted infections. After escaping, these children are also at risk for prolonged detention, during which they are treated as perpetrators rather than victims (Zerrougui, 2015).

Impact on Mental & Psychological Health

One of the chief consequences children underwent during and after the conflict are psychological and mental disorders. Children caught in conflict by and large are subjected to at least one form of trauma; varying from distraction, hostility, emotional instability, sorrow, argumentativeness, withdrawal, difficulty in sleeping, nightmares, and suspicion (Kohrt, et al. 2008 & Al-Eissa, 1995); depression, Irritability, aggression, isolation, symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, and paranoia (Rashid, 2012); nervousness, anxious arousal (Dimitry, 2012); loss of the ability to concentrate, passivity, loss of spontaneity, and sorrow (Guy, 2009), and suicidal tendencies (Flink et al., 2013). It is pertinent to mention here, that the worst consequences arise from the atrocities committed by children themselves playing the role of soldiers, whether that be voluntarily or involuntarily (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, NCTSN, 2005). This process goes temporarily beyond the conflict. Once the conflict is over, many children suffer from "appetitive aggression" (Crombach et al., 2013) and even maintain a symbolic link to the armed group, becoming their points of reference (Jiménez-Caballero, 2009).

Prolonged exposure to violence increases the risk of accumulation of major traumatic events and daily life stressors, including physical and economic insecurity, all of which have negative mental and psychosocial consequences [Miller, & Rasmussen, 2010; Reed, Fazel, Jones, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012; Steel, Chey, Silove, Marnane, Bryant, & Van-Ommeren, 2009; Tol, Barbui, Galappatti, Silove, Betancourt, & Souza, 2011).

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Concern has been raised that children exposed to armed conflict are more likely to develop long-term aggressive behaviour themselves(Qouta, Punamäki, Miller, *et al*, 2008).These psychological disorders often lead to behavioural disorders, found in the studies of Dimitry (2012) and Miller et al. (1999), thereby making the task of teachers as well as the children's attendance difficult at centres of learning. Most of them became subjected to aggressive and/or regressive behaviour (Al-Eissa, 1995). Even the children themselves allude to behavioural problems among the academic staff, reporting beatings, insults, corruption and cruelty (Winthrop & Kirk, 2008).

Education: Reduction in Access and Quality

Education is a fundamental human right: every child is entitled to it (UNGA, 1948, art. 26). Unfortunately, rather than being safe havens for children, schools can be dangerous places for many. Schools may not function due to rampant instability or due to the fear that students will be abducted or attacked on the way to school. The restriction of access to and quality of education represents one of the main indirect impacts of armed violence on children and youth.

Education is disrupted when fighting forces specifically target schools and teachers themselves. Schools may be deliberately attacked for political reasons—for example, because schools are government assets and hence perceived as 'soft targets'—or for practical reasons. School buildings may be occupied and used as bases for fighting forces because they have decent facilities, including toilets and kitchens. A UNESCO report finds that some of the highest numbers of attacks on schools and teachers in recent years took place in Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Nepal, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Thailand, and Zimbabwe (O'Malley, 2007, p. 6). Incidents include the bombing, assassination, abduction, illegal detention, and torture of staff, students, education officials, and trade unionists; the risk of such incidents occurring—and of children being forcibly recruited by armed groups—increases with the bombing and burning of educational buildings and the closure of institutions.

According to a 2007 report by Save the Children, half the world's out-of-school population—39 million children— live in conflict-affected fragile states, even though these countries make up just 13 per cent of the world's population (International Save the Children Alliance, 2007, p. 4). In such environments, a child's ability to travel safely between home and school is often limited. Additionally, risk of abduction, rape, landmines, or being shot

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may make travel to school perilous, and, in extreme cases, may cause schools to shut down completely (see Box 6.6). In Afghanistan and northern Pakistan, the number of attacks on schools, particularly girls' schools, limits access to education. Many of the attacks on girls' schools are carried out by extremist Islamic groups (BBC, 2009b; O'Malley, 2007). In Afghanistan, the Ministry of Education has reported that militants attacked 250 schools between 2005 and 2008 (IRIN, 2008). In January 2008, 400 schools remained closed, mostly in the southern provinces of Afghanistan, due to attacks or the fear of attacks (IRIN, 2008).

In Nepal, Maoists and the Royal Nepalese Army targeted schools to further their offensives during the civil war. Some schools closed—both temporarily and permanently—due to damage to facilities, lack of staff, and military operations by both the Maoists and the Nepalese government (AI, 2005b). The Watch list on Children and Armed Conflict reports that several hundred schools were shut down due to the armed conflict, affecting at least 100,000 students (WCAC, 2005, p. 21). LikewiseIn the state of Jammu & Kashmir, armed conflict broke out in 1990, access to education remained extremely limited due to curfews, strikes/hartals. Conflict. The three decade conflict in Kashmir collapsed educational sector in particular. In Kashmir students are among the worst affected in conflict and turmoil. The unpredictability that prevails over their homes, hearts and lives is gut wrenching. The education had been disturbed, disrupted or discontinued for many reasons connected with the conflict. The conflict breeds sickness among valley which caused additional disruptions. On an average day, a student has frequent sightings of terror attacks, stone pelting on soldiers, rifle snatching, throwing petrol bombs, military barracks, and checkpoints. Moreover the curfews and hartals are now part of Kashmiri Culture. These strikes are recurring phenomenon that happens on a monthly, sometimes weekly basis. Everything comes to a standstill when these strikes and curfews take place. In 2008schools were closed for three months due to protests and stone pelting; in 2010 again schools remained suspended for a period of three months. In the same manner in 2012 and 2016 the prolonged strike didn't allow schooling for four (4) months and six (6) months respectively.

Armed violence prevents both students and teachers from moving freely to and from school without the risk of being shot, sexually violated, or abducted. Schools located in areas subsumed by armed violence may therefore find it difficult to recruit well-qualified staff. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, for example, movement restrictions, bombardment of schools, and closures have all limited children's and teachers' access to schools. Restrictions

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on movement in the West Bank include roadblocks and checkpoints, often accompanied by body searches and reported harassment by Israeli security (DCI/PS, 2006, pp. 55–62).

In many developed countries, weapons are being carried and used in fights between peers within and around schools. A study of 35 developed countries finds that anywhere from 10 to 21 per cent of boys and 2 to 5 per cent of girls carry a weapon. Among weapon carriers, 7 to 22 per cent of boys and 3 to 11 per cent of girls opt for a firearm. In nearly all countries included in the study, both physical fighting and weapon carrying associated with an increased risk of injury (Picket et al., 2005).

The nature of violence within schools often reflects the levels and patterns of violence in the communities that surround them, and prevailing political and socioeconomic conditions, attitudes, traditions, values, laws, and law enforcement (Pinheiro, 2006, p. 111).

Armed Conflict & Death/Injury of Children

Over recent years a number of sources have cited figures that purport to the proportion of civilians injured by weapons in various conflicts. Many of these sources put the proportion at 80 to 90% of all people injured. It is important to note that these estimates are almost always provided with no indication of how they have been arrived at. Most commonly, a reference is given which merely refers to an earlier report quoting the same figure. Thus, in recent years, a large number of documents by non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and even articles in the peer-reviewed medical literature have cited figures which are increasingly being used as 'evidence' by those concerned with weapons availability and misuse, but which are difficult, if not impossible, to substantiate.

Of the 20 country situations included in the report, at least 4,000 verified violations committed by Government forces and over 11,500 by non-State armed groups. Afghanistan recorded the highest number of verified child casualties since the UN started documenting civilian casualties in 2009, with 3,512 children killed or maimed last year – an increase of 24 per cent compared to the previous year. The report also documents 851 verified cases (more than double the number in 2015) of children recruited and used in Syria, and 1,915 in Somalia in 2016. It also notes that in Yemen, at least 1,340 children were killed or maimed. In Syria that number stood at 1,299.

The Armed conflict in Jammu & Kashmir has resulted in grave violations of the rights of children. From January 2003 to December 2017, 318 children were killed in Jammu &

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Kashmir, 144 of whom were killed during operations by Indian armed forces and Jammu & Kashmir police, 147 were killed by unidentified gunmen, 15 children died as a result of heavy artillery fire across the LoC, and 12 were killed by militants.(JKCCS, 2018) On 3-4 August 1998, 11 children were among 19 people who were shot dead in their homes in Sailan Village in Poonch District by Special Police Officers (SPOs) and armed forces (JKCCS, 1998).

Building a Protective Environment for Children

Government Commitment and Capacity

To protect children during war, government priorities must include assisting the most vulnerable, recognizing that displaced children have the right to receive the same level of public services as other children, and protecting humanitarian assistance and personnel. State and non-State entities must commit themselves to ending the recruitment and use of children as soldiers or adjuncts to armed groups by signing international legislation. In addition, children need to be protected from the effects of sanctions. As conflicts end, peace-building and peacekeeping efforts need to focus on child protection issues. Governments, for example, can ensure that crimes against children are addressed and that child-friendly procedures are developed for children's involvement in truth and justice-seeking processes.

Legislation and Enforcement

International treaties must be respected and enforced by those in charge, including State and non-State entities, and criminal legislation should be reviewed to ensure that grave breaches of international humanitarian law are recognized as crimes. Adequate training for armed forces in the rules of international humanitarian law and human rights, especially those concerning the protection of children, is essential.

Attitudes, Customs and Practices

Many of the discriminatory attitudes that existed prior to a conflict intensify during violent clashes. Promoting codes of conduct and child-rights training for all military and civilian peacekeeping personnel is essential to eliminating maltreatment and use of children in armed groups.

Open Discussion

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Media and civil society have tremendous potential for influencing public opinion – and promoting action – through discussion of such crucial issues as sexual violence against children and women, and reducing the availability of small arms and light weapons. Children's life skills, knowledge and participation Children's involvement in their own protection is strengthened by the creation of child-friendly spaces, especially in situations of displacement, and by peer-to-peer counselling on such issues as avoiding landmines or protection from HIV.

Capacity of Families and Communities

Bolstering the capacities of families and communities creates an effective resource for a wide range of activities. With the proper training and materials, they can prevent the separation of children, provide psychosocial support for war-affected children, develop mechanisms to eliminate sexual abuse and exploitation, support landmine awareness and victim assistance, and distribute lifesaving information on HIV/AIDS.

Essential Services, Including Prevention, Recovery and Reintegration

These services include: disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for children whether or not they have weapons in their possession; tracing and reintegration programmes for children who have been separated from their families; assistance to survivors of sexual violence as well as children who have been disabled; education services for children; prevention of HIV infection; and care for children orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS.

Monitoring, Reporting and Oversight

Systematic and comprehensive monitoring, reporting and oversight, as requested by the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1539 and 1612, should cover all violations against children affected by armed conflict and could be performed by governments or non-State parties to the conflict.

Conclusion

Children in conflict situations should enjoy full protection and realisation of their human rights in compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols (particularly OP on children in Armed Conflict) and other relevant international

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standards; and be enabled to develop their potential as fully-fledged responsible members of society while looking to be actors of change and peace during and post-conflict.

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