

Sufferings of Families who Became Victims of Bomb Blasts and Suicide Attacks in Pakistan: A Case Study of Three Cities

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Abstract

The paper attempted to identify the social, economic and psychological sufferings of the families whose members became victims of bomb blasts. It was carried out in twin- cities: Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The study was conducted under quantitative research design. A sample of one hundred and sixty respondents was selected among the families who suffered from such kind of terrorism. The study considers how the families whose kith and kins had lost their lives in bomb blasts find their family chain broken and to what extent their routine life has been affected. The study shows that bomb blast disturbed the whole social structure and function of the affected families in particular and society in general. The findings of the study reveal that the ratio of bomb blasts and suicidal attacks was almost equal. Their recreational activities were also affected as a result of these acts of terrorism. The study further indicates that the victims were not satisfied with the aid provided by the government. In fact the victim families were demanding proper financial compensation as announced by the government after the incident, as well as better medical facilities and job opportunities for one of the family member to restore their normal living. The study recommended that in order to alleviate sufferings of victim families, the government may provide livelihood support in the form of such equipment to female members which help them to generate income for their families.

Keywords

Victims, Family Suffering, Bomb Blasts, Suicide Attacks

Introduction

Terrorism and violence are harmful for human life and property and creates a high degree of insecurity in a society. The former is an organized effort that creates panic in a community while the later may be an organized or unorganized effort to achieve hidden motives. Mostly societies with history of ethnic violence, undemocratic rule and weak institutions easily became victim of terrorism. For some, terrorism is a crime and for others it is a tactic for hidden agenda. It is a crime for victim and considered as a holy duty for those who use it for their attainment of goals (Robert, 2006). Sponsors of terrorism select their target randomly. The motive behind such strategy is killing of citizens, destruction of property, creation of panic in the environment and generating insecurity in a society. In such situation everyone

feels to be the next victim. Multiple evidences suggested that security agencies and military remain the prime targets of terrorists (Burns & Kate, 2005) and these attacks also caused heavy damage to life and property of civilian population (Iqbal, 2010)

Pakistan is situated at important geo strategic position between South Asia and South West Asia, a shortest route to Arabian Sea for China, Central Asian States and Afghanistan. Security and business are the two aspects which accelerates the interest of developed nations in this region (Hashmi, 2007). Due to the important geostrategic and security position and to have control of this region, the Russians invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 and, consequently, various countries from Asia, Middle East, Europe and America were heavily involved in this war to end influence of Russia in the region. During this period foreign aid influenced Pakistan's economic and foreign policies and also facilitated common man to access improved grade weaponry. The history of ethnic violence and easy access to weapon provided opportunity for various ethnic groups to suppress opponents. Further, Russian defeat in Afghanistan diverted the interests of USA and its allies and left Pakistan alone to face the consequences of war. Moreover, the Indian occupation on Kashmir and indiscriminate killings of Muslims exacerbated the aggressive elements in a society. The ethnic violence, undemocratic rule, foreign elements left behind by Russian defeat and Indian occupation on Kashmir collectively contributed in the destabilization of peace in Pakistani society (Halena, 2005). Poverty also fueled the terrorism and various interest groups used the poor segments of society for their own benefits. The incident of 9-11 further changed the socio-economic and geo-political scenario of the world. This act of terrorism brought people in permanent state of emergency resulting war against terrorism (Townshend, 2002). Pakistan joined this war as front line state with USA as commanding position. The reaction of Anti-Allied Forces, US drone attack on Pakistan territory and other such actions converted the country into an undeclared battle field (Bush, 2008 and Gillani 2008c).

Anti-American sentiments prevalent in Pakistan further swelled when violation of human rights in Palestinian, Kashmir and on Muslims in other parts of the globe are supported by USA. Collaboration of Pakistan Government with USA in war against Afghanistan made the people to oppose the government policies, state agencies and general public. Multiple evidences suggested that lack of justice in the global setting deeply influence collectivity behavior at national level (Appiah, 2006; Beitz, 1972). The war against terrorism embarrassed the Government and destabilized Pakistan. Further dissatisfaction of USA and Allies on the performance of Pakistan in war against terrorism and their "DO MORE" tactics put the government and state agencies in embarrassing position in one hand and loss of

moral support from common man on the other. Pak Army operations namely; Rah-e-Rast and Rah-i-Nijat displaced million of poor families and made them shelter less for years increased hatred in effected families and their relatives in other areas. All these tactics and actions collectively provided indirect support to anti-state elements and terrorist groups. The daily incident of Target killing, kidnapping and suicide bombing disrupted the peaceful environment in the country. Pakistan experienced first suicide terrorism in 1995 and since then more than 280 such incidents have occurred in the country (Haira, 2007, South Asian Institute of Conflict Management, 2012). The bomber employed a variety of methods of suicide attack to succeed. These included use of car bomb, suicide vest, and suicide attack by bicycle or motor bike laden with explosive material were some the tactics employed by the terrorist to disrupt peace in a society (Pape, 2005). The effectiveness of such attacks can be judged from the fact that even the

This form of terrorism caused loss of more than thirty five thousand human lives in Pakistan which includes more than 30000 civilian and near about 5000 security personnel (Iqbal, 2010). In addition to loss of human lives, the destruction of private and state property caused loss of billions of rupees to nation. The families who lost their members in bomb blast and suicide attacks are continuously suffering on multiple counts. Thirty four bomb blasts and suicide attacks in twin-city Islamabad-Rawalpindi resulted 160 deaths comprising. Both cities are part of the present study. The death of head of a family or earning member resulted social and financial loss to the dependent members. Most of the victims were earning members or head of their families belonging to the middle class. Consequently, the female members had to manage food and other requirements for the dependents in these families. The financial compensation announced by the government was either very small or proved a mere announcement. These families are still living miserable life and are not in a position to satisfy food, health, education and other socio-economic needs of their children and other dependent members.

Many researchers have focused terrorism and its effect on economy at macro level but few efforts have been made to empirically study the problems encountered by these families. In view of importance of this social issue, a study was planned to collect information from families who became victim of terrorism in three cities namely; Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad. It was an effort to study the sufferings of the families who lost their family members in bomb blasts or suicide attacks. It tried to explore how wife and children are affected economically and socially when husband, head of the family is lost. The study also focused on difficulties faced by the victims who survived but inflicted with major and minor injuries.

Material and Methods

The universe of the study was limited to families who became victims of bomb blast and suicide attacks in three cities namely; Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Wah Cantt of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Islamabad is the capital city of the country; Rawalpindi is one of the major cities of the Punjab, a most populous province while heavy industries and other military installation are situated in Wah Cantt. All three cities became target of terrorist activities resulting heavy loss to life and property. With the help of police record and district administration, and by scanning media reports, list of victim families in the three selected cities was prepared. A sample of 160 families was selected for the study. An interview schedule comprising structured and unstructured questions was developed. The schedule was pretested to check work ability in field situation, revised and finalized before its application in full scale survey. The selected families were contacted for proper permission and for their willing participation in the study. The study sample included 61 respondents from families who lost their member (s) in terrorism and 99 respondents from families whose members got injured in bomb blast or suicide attacks. One male or female member from victim families formed the respondents of the study. The collected data was analyzed to extract the findings and to draw the conclusion. The result of analysis has been discussed in the forthcoming section of this paper.

Results and Discussion

Table I Percent distribution of the respondents according to the nature of blast, physical loss and injury of the victims

$$N=(\text{Injured:}99+\text{Deceased:}61=160)$$

Name of City Where Blast / Suicide Attack Occurred	% (Frequency)
Islamabad	48.7(48)
Rawalpindi	30.6 (49)
Wah cantt	20.6 (33)
Nature of Blast	
Suicide Attack	50.6 (81)
Bomb Blast	49.4 (79)
Nature of Physical Loss to Live	
Injured	61.9 (99)
Deceased	38.1 (61)
Types of Injury	
Minor Injury	33.3 (33)
Major Injury	66.7 (66)

Table I shows responses of the respondents about name of city where bomb blast/suicide attacks occurred and resulted major/minor injuries to them or death of their family member(s). The table shows that 48.7 % incidents of blasts had occurred in the Capital city of Pakistan; Islamabad, 36.6% incidents happened in Rawalpindi and remaining 33% attacks played havoc to the Wah Cantonment and other areas of this city where the military installation such as Ordnance Factory and its Heavy Mechanical Industrial Complex are structured. The table also indicates that 50.6% incidents were of grave nature i.e. suicide attacks while 49.4% were carried out through improvised use of explosive devices. The table indicates that in such combined attacks, 38.1% caused loss of human life and 61.9% resulted major and minor injuries to the victims. Out of injured victims, 33.3% received major injuries while remaining 66.7% secured minor physical wounds.

Table II: Distribution of the respondents according to the socioeconomic characteristic of the respondents

Gender of the respondents		
Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Male	99	61.9
Female	61	38.1
Age of the Respondents (in completed years)		
16 - 25	40	25.0
26 - 35	37	2.1
36 - 45	27	19.6
46 - 55	34	21.2
Above 55	22	13.8
Family Pattern of the Respondents		
Nuclear Family System	119	74.4
Joint Family System	41	25.6
Number of Children		
Up to 3	16	10.0
4 - 6	106	66.2
7 - 9	30	18.8
Above 9	8	5.0

Table II shows data on socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents such as gender, age, and family pattern and number of children in the family. The table depicts that 61.9% of the respondents were male and 38.1 were female. It also shows that 25% of the respondents were in the age group of 16-25 years, 23.1% were in between 26-35 years of age, 19.6% were in age category of 36-45 years, 21.1% fall in the age category of 46-55 years while remaining (13.8%) were more than 55 years old at the time of interview. Moreover, the table explains that 74.4% respondents were living in nuclear family system which is a main feature of urban lifestyle where most of the bomb blast/suicide attacks had occurred. Remaining (25.6%) were members of joint family system which elaborates that victims used to come to cities to earn their livelihood or to satisfy educational or other needs. The table also indicates that 66.2% of the respondents had 4-6 children in their families, 10% had up to 3 children, and 18.8% reported 7-9 children. Being an important characteristic of rural families, where families have more number of children than their urban counterpart, another 5 % of the respondents' families had more than 9 children.

Table III: Percent distribution of the respondents according to the their marital status and dependent members of the injured respondents at home

Marital Status of Injured Respondent at Home		% (Frequency)	
Categories	Injured	Deceased	
Single	40.4(40)	37.7 (23)	
Married	59.6 (59)	62.3 (38)	
Total	100 (99)	100 (61)	
Dependent Members of the Family			
1 - 3	3	32.5 (52)	
4 - 6	6	59.4 (95)	
Above 6			
Male Dependent Members of the Family			
None		20.0 (32)	
1 - 3		75.6 (121)	
Above 3		4.4 (7)	
Female Dependent Members of the Family			
1 - 3		66.9 (107)	
Above 3		33.1 (53)	

Table III shows economically supportive status of the injured and deceased victims of bomb blast and suicide attack. The table explains that 40.4% victims who got injured during the blasts were single and 59.6% were married which explains the dependency of wife and children on the injured victim. Similarly 37.7 % victims were single who died in the blasts while majority of the deceased (62.3%) were married. Marital status of majority of the deceased points towards the level of family sufferings due to loss of husband or father. The table also reveals that 32.5% of the victims had 1-3 dependents, 59.4 % had 4-6 dependent members while 8.1% were supporting more than 6 family members as dependents. Out of these dependents, majority of the victims had 1-3 male dependents, 4.4 % had more than 3 such members, mostly the children. The remaining 20% had no dependent family members as they were unmarried. Furthermore, 66.9 % victims had 1-3 female dependent members. Similarly 33.1 % had more than 3 dependent female members.

Table IV: Percentage distribution of the respondents according to the earning status, family income and changes in role after injury

Earning Status of the Injured and Deceased Person		
Categories	Injured	Deceased
Earning Member	59.5 (59)	91.8 (56)
Dependent Member	40.5 (40)	8.2 (5)
Total	100.0 (99)	100.0 (61)
Family Income Before and After Blast / Suicide Attack		
Categories	Before	After
Up to 10000	26.9 (43)	41.9 (67)
10001 - 20000	30.6 (49)	25.6 (41)
20001 - 30000	16.2 (26)	10.0 (16)
Above 30000	26.2 (42)	22.5 (36)
Changes in Role After the Injury		
From earning to dependent family member		17.2 (17)
Loss of fitness due to physical disability		26.3 (26)
Loss in educational attainments		16.1 (16)
Individual having no change due to injury		40.4 (40)

Table IV explains earning and dependency status of the victims of terrorism, their family income before and after the blast/attack and the subsequent changes in the role of the injured members in family. As loss of earning hand is a major financial suffering of the victim families hence it is significant to compare income of the

victim families before and after blast. According to the table, 91.8% respondents said that deceased person in their families were earning members and 8.2% were non-earning members of their families. Similarly, among terrorism victims who received major and minor injuries, 59.5% were earning members, while 41% of them were dependents. The table further explains the family income of the respondents before and after suicide attack/blasts. As it is obvious when an earning member of a family is lost there is a sudden change in family income from higher to lower level. A similar kind of results were observed in the study where there were 42.4% of the families with income more than Rs 20,000 before members became victim of blast and suicide injuries. However, after becoming victim of blast 32.5% families reassured this income band. As a result of loss of income in higher categories, the percentage of families with lower income (up to Rs 10,000) increased from 21.9 to 41.9%. This shows that there was a fall of 10% victim families from higher income and 5% from middle income, collectively contributing 15% to lower income group. Such fall of income was due to injury and death of the earning member in family caused by bomb blast or suicide attacks.

The table under discussion further shows the changes in role of injured family member in the respondent families. The table shows that 17.2, 26.3 and 16.2% experienced change in their roles as from earning to dependent member in family, suffered from physical disability and loss of educational attachment respectively. In brief 60% encountered change in their role due to two act of terrorism.

Table V: Percent distribution of the respondents according to the members of victim families suffering from psychological effects

Victim Family Members Suffering from Psychological Effects		
Yes	155	96.9
No	5	3.1
Total	160	100.0
Types of Psychological Effects		
Categories	Frequency	Percentage
No Psychological Sufferings	5	3.1
Depression	30	19.4
Stress	23	12.9
Fear	80	51.6
Aggression	28	16.1

Table V reveals the psychological sufferings and its type which the victim families encountered after their family members became victim of bomb blast or suicide attack. The data in table under discussion reveals that 96.9 percent of the respondents' families were facing psychological sufferings whereas about 3 percent did not report such problem. The lower half of Table V further shows that majority of the respondents were still living fearful life due to various uncertainties after the death or injury caused to their family members. Besides the element of fear, 19.4 percent of the respondents reported depression, 12.9 indicated element of stress in their lives and 16.1 percent of them were suffering from aggression. The study data convincingly indicates that families who became victims of bomb blast or suicide attacks in Pakistan are continuously facing financial, general health and psychological health problems in their lives. The loss of earning member and dwindling financial resources made it impossible for them to meet their domestic expenditures on food, health, children education and to meet other social responsibilities such daughter marriage etc.

Table VI: Distribution of the respondents according to the suggestions to minimize sufferings of the victim families

Suggestions to Minimize Sufferings of Victim Families		
Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Provision of financial assistance through social safety net	67	41.9
Provision of skill development opportunity	23	14.4
Provision of free medical & educational facility to the children of victims' families	24	15.0
Provision of job to one of victim family member	20	12.5
Allocation of special quota in housing schemes	26	16.2

Table VI elaborates the suggestions of the respondents to cope with the grave situation confronted by the victim families. The table explains that 41.9% respondents suggested that immediate financial assistance may be extended to the victim families, 14.4% suggested skill development opportunities to change their status from dependency to independency and 15% were of the opinion to provide free medical and educational facilities to children and other dependent members of victim families. Similarly, 12.5% supported job provision by the government to any eligible member in victim family while remaining 16.2% proposed an allocation of special quota in housing schemes for provision of shelter to families who became target of bomb blast or suicide attack.

Conclusion

Pakistan has been suffering from severe wave of terrorism in the form of suicide attacks and bomb blasts. The victim families are passing through critical situation either due to the death or as a result of major injury to the earning members in their families. These acts of terrorism are continuously pushing them towards poverty and below poverty level. The families are unable to meet food, health and educational needs of their children and to fulfill their other social obligations. Besides, general health problems, psychological problems such as element of fear, depression, aggression and stress are common in these families.

Recommendations

Government of Pakistan, non-government agencies and international relief agencies need to establish social safety nets to help out victims of suicide attacks and bomb blasts. Provision of free education to children in these families as well as free medical care to injured and dependent members may help them come out of poverty. Skill development programs and provision of income generating equipment may save them from falling into below poverty line.

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