

## **Psychological Impact Among Women Due to Armed Conflict in District Shopian, Jammu and Kashmir**

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**Bilal Ahmad Mir**

*Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Annamalai University*

**K. Somasundaran**

*Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Annamalai University*

### **Abstract**

The study examines the psychological impact among women due to armed conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. The quantitative, as well as qualitative strategies, were used for this study. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used for primary data collection from the respondents through an interview schedule. The Primary data collected from 339 married women belong to the age group of 18-40 years from Shopian district, Jammu and Kashmir, and some case study also conducted to collect brief information from six affected women for the study area. The secondary data gathered from published books, journals, articles, and websites. The psychological issues were studied using a five-point Likert Scale. The analysis revealed that 83.8 (284/339) per cent of respondents are profoundly affected psychologically which includes "feeling of hopelessness & helplessness", "sleep disturbance", "unable to concentrate", "feeling nervous, tense or worried", "Sleep disturbances". It could be concluded from the data analysis; the majority of the respondents were affected psychologically due to armed conflict in the study area. Among the various dimensions, mostly they are disturbed by "feeling of hopelessness & helplessness", followed by "sleep disturbance".

**Keywords:** Armed Conflict, Psychological Impact, women, Jammu and Kashmir.

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### **Corresponding Author:**

Bilal Ahmad Mir, Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Annamalai University  
E-Mail: [bilalahmad5113@gmail.com](mailto:bilalahmad5113@gmail.com)

## Introduction

The Kashmir Valley has seen the conflict between the state and non-state actors from the last thirty years. Bomb attacks, grenade, gunshots and cross firings between the armed groups affected the daily lives of common Kashmiris. Human rights violation from both sides of armed groups reported in the form of arrests, judicial killings, abduction, torture and street to street and house to house search operations. At any time, violent incidents could happen there, and the risk of getting caught in the crossfire is always present. The on-going conflict creates constant fear, threat, unable to concentrate and inadequate perspective future put a massive strain on the natural coping mechanisms among the individuals in Kashmir. Many individuals affected from stress, high amounts of psychosocial problems registered, and disorders such as anxiety, mood and post-traumatic disorders are mounting. Many senior experts of mental health in the capital Srinagar of Kashmir, said that there had been increasing the number of stress, and trauma-related cases were found, and these problems raised a common health problem such as diabetes, hypertension and cardiac (The News, 18 August 2005).

A psychologist from the Kashmir Valley Medical College in Srinagar reported, "that around 20 per cent of the patients in valley suffered from anxiety and tension due to fear, which later on turned into depression and suicidal thoughts. Besides behavioural symptoms like sadness and anger, the loss of weight, chest pain, digestive disorders, giddiness and nausea could also symptoms of depression (Majid Hyderi, Greater Kashmir 2004). The conflict-hit the women in Kashmir valley suffer from various psychological issues. The result shows that half-widows are affected more due to the disappearance of their life partners leave them where they find it challenging to meet the household needs. They are affected socially as well as economically due to their disappeared life partners and the legal struggle in knowing where their missing life partners further contribute to their psychological issues (Qutub, 2012). Besides those women who imprisoned in their homes, suffering from anxiety, tense, depression, worried and post-traumatic disorders.

The women in Kashmir have undergone traumatic conditions from the last two decades are found in common symptoms like stress, depression and trauma. The conflict increased the number of cases related to abortion and miscarriages among women. It also created distrust among the family members, which led to an increase in domestic violence (Irfan, 2015). According to Dr Arshad Hussain, as a senior Psychiatrist at the Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Srinagar says, "the relatives of the disappeared suffer from Complicated Grief, Unresolved Grief and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder especially the half-widows" (Qutub, 2012). Beigh & Manzoor (2018) reported the level of depression and anxiety symptoms where they found 11.93% of the respondents have mild symptoms

of anxiety, the majority of half-widows 68.81% have moderate symptoms of anxiety and 19.26% of respondents reported severe symptoms of anxiety. Further, 11.01% of half widow respondents have mild symptoms of depression, majority of half widows, i.e. 78.90% have moderate symptoms of depression, and remaining 10.09% of respondents have severe symptoms of depression. Shehna & Shekhar (2017) conducted the study to evaluate the differences between two age groups of Kashmiri women viz., 30-45 and 50-65 years on the dimensions of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Coping. The results revealed significant differences in all the dimensions, where the older age group of women scored higher on all the dimensions of Post Traumatic Stress Distress (PTSD) and the younger group of women scored higher on all the positive dimensions of coping.

**Research Methodology**

The methodology is a fundamental part of every research and plays a vital role in the research process. The researcher has examined the available literature cautiously in the area of research and assessed the ground realities existing in the study area to develop a methodology, particularly sampling design for the present study.

**Objective:**

To examine the psychological problems of armed conflict on women

**Reliability Test**

S.No.	Variable	Items	Reliability
	Psychological Impact	11	0.83

Content Validity

$$CVR = \frac{Ne - N/2}{N/2} \text{ Lawshe (1975)}$$

Where

N – Number of Experts

Ne – Number of Experts opined yes

$CVR = \frac{8 - 8/2}{8/2}$	$CVR = \frac{7 - 8/2}{8/2}$
$CVR = \frac{8 - 4}{4}$	$CVR = \frac{7 - 4}{4}$
$CVR = \frac{4}{4}$	$CVR = \frac{3}{4}$
$CVR = 1$	$CVR = 0.75$

**Research Design:**

In the present study, descriptive research design has been adopted, which is related to describing the characteristics of a particular woman or group or situation. It enables to analyse the problems, realisation, accessibility, knowledge and futuristic views of women in a conflict situation. The research work also describes the biographical characteristics of affected women's such as psychological issues.

**Data Collection**

The primary data for the study consists of information obtained from respondents through interview schedule and the secondary data information gathered through books, journals, articles, government documents, the internet and other published materials utilised in this research.

**Sample Design**

For selecting the sample, the Multi-Stage sampling technique was employed. The Shopian district in Jammu and Kashmir consists of 7 Tehsils, among them two were selected i.e. Hermain and Shopian for this study. The Hermain Tehsil consists of 22 villages, among them, three villages were selected. Besides the Shopian Tehsil is representing a town that consists of 9 Mohalas, among the 9 Mohalas, three were selected for the study. The three selected villages i.e. Hermain, Haji Pora and Hardu Nagisheran from Hermain Tehsil, 25% married women between the age group of 18-40 years were selected. The details of the total population and married women population in the age group of 18-40 years from these three villages were collected from the concerned Panchayats. From the 9 Mohalas of Shopian Town, 3 were selected, i.e., Batapora, Sheikh Mohala and Tak Mohala selected. From these 3 Mohalas, 25% of married women between the age group of 18-40 years were selected. The details regarding the total population and total married women population in the age group of 18-40 years gathered from the Municipal Corporation.

The details regarding selected Tehsils for this study, its total population, total women population and married women population between the age group 18-40 years and the samples selected are given below.

<b>Tehsil Hermain</b>						
<b>Name of Villages</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Male Population</b>	<b>Female Population</b>	<b>Women age group from 18-40</b>	<b>Selected Sample</b>	<b>Per cent (%)</b>
<b>Hermain</b>	3780	1850	1930	480	120	25%
<b>Haji Pora</b>	568	269	299	60	15	25%
<b>Hardu Nagisheran</b>	1276	638	638	112	28	25%
<b>Total</b>	5624	2757	2867	652	163	25%
<b>Tehsil Shopian</b>						
<b>Name of Mohalas</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Male Population</b>	<b>Female Population</b>	<b>Women age group from 18-40</b>	<b>Selected Sample</b>	<b>Per cent (%)</b>
<b>Batapora</b>	1520	697	813	228	57	25%
<b>Sheikh Mohala</b>	1877	944	918	280	70	25%
<b>Tak Mohala</b>	1285	607	673	196	49	25%
<b>Total</b>	4682	2248	2404	704	176	25%

### **Tools and Techniques**

The interview schedule technique was administered on the respondents to collect the empirical data from the field. The interview schedule technique was considered the appropriate technique because the sample included both educated as well as uneducated respondents. The structured interview schedule with a five-point scale was employed with close-ended questions keeping in mind the objective of the study.

### **Statistical Tool Used:**

Simple Frequency, Mean, and Standard Deviation applied for this study.

### **Analysis**

**Table: 1. Distribution of the respondents by Psychological Impact due to Armed Conflict**

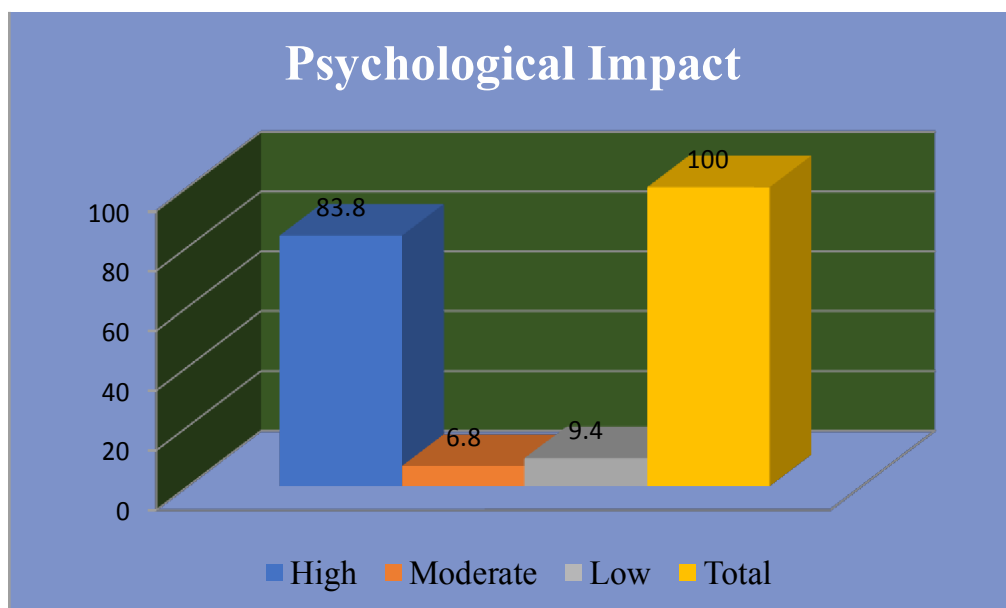
<b>Factor</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
<b>Psychological Impact</b>	High	83.8
	Moderate	6.8
	Low	9.4
	Total	100.0

Source: Primary data

The above analysis reveals the level of psychological problems of armed conflict on women. The level of psychological problems among women due to the armed conflict is high

among 83.8 per cent of the respondents, 6.8 per cent of respondents are moderate, and 9.4 per cent of the respondents is low impact.

It could be concluded that majority of the respondents facing psychological problems due to armed conflict is high.



**Figure: 1. Indicated Psychological Impact among Women in the Armed Conflict**

**Table: 2. Mean and Standard regarding Psychological Impact due to Armed Conflict**

Statements	N	Mean	SD
Sleep disturbances	339	4.8083	0.77818
Easily frightened	339	4.7227	0.44832
Feeling nervous, tense or worried	339	4.7758	0.41766
Feeling of hopelessness & helplessness	339	4.8260	0.40240
Unable to concentrate	339	4.7994	0.40103
Suicidal thoughts	339	4.2445	0.42321
Loss of interest in life	339	4.7758	0.41766
Loss of interest in things	339	4.7640	0.42524
Trouble in thinking clearly	339	4.6785	0.51588
Aggressive behavior	339	4.7168	0.45121
Loss of energy	339	4.6962	0.47948

Source: Primary data

The above analysis reveals the mean and standard deviations of the statements of the scale psychological impact of armed conflict on women. The scale based on eleven statements with five points Likert scale. The mean value ranges from 4.83 to 4.24. The mean shows that there is a little bit of variation among the statements. The calculated standard deviation lies from 0.78 to 0.40. It is clearly shown that the statement "Feeling of hopelessness & helplessness" among women due to armed conflict has the highest mean score value (4.83), "Sleep disturbances" are found among respondents comes second in the order (4.81), "Unable to concentrate" comes third in the order (4.80), the statements "Feeling nervous, tense or worried" and "Loss of interest in life" are found in equal according to mean score value (4.78), the mean shows the statement "Loss of interest in things" (4.76) among respondents because of armed conflict, two more statements "Easily frightened" and "Aggressive behaviour" are found in same mean score value (4.72), "Loss of energy" (4.70), "Trouble in thinking clearly" (4.68), and "Suicidal thoughts" are seen in last according to the statements mean score value.

The above table shows that according to the standard deviation value; it inferred that the Psychological impact of armed conflict on women is found to be at the same level.

As a qualitative method, six case studies were conducted, which supported the findings of quantitative measures. Apart from that, it has given a range of findings of psychosocial problems of women faced due to armed conflict.

Apart from the miseries, women face due to the disappearance/death of their husbands, collapsed business, breakdown of social relationship etc. in this ongoing armed conflict. The societal pressure, cultural inhibitions and the indifferent attitude of their family members put them in a state of complete distress. It has also found from the field that the traumatic experiences in the life of women have created problems in the average psychological performance in day to day life. The persistent issues identified during the study were irritability, less efficiency to do the routine work, aggressive and challenging behaviour, anxiety and tension. The development of self-harming behaviour or suicidal ideation was also observed among respondents. The feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness and persistent socio-economic problems can be attributed to the suicidal ideation.

The six women were selected, and a case study was conducted among them; while giving vent to her feelings, a mother said *"I suppose, I have this determination and courage because of anger, if my son was a militant, then, fine he would have killed and gotten killed, but he was a civilian. This injustice is giving me a feeling of helplessness and insecurity. It has snatched peace out of me. I am in a state of perpetual limbo"*.

It was also observed that most of the half-widows are avoiding the public places and have restricted their social associations because they feel socially isolated and stigmatized, as one of the sisters expressed, *"When people want to hurt me they say things like; your face is like this, you deserve this, that is why your brother got disappeared."* In this same parlance, half-widow women revealed, *"I went to a wedding function, people start pointing that, 'she is the one whose husband was taken by the army and subjected to disappearance' then they would comment on my clothes, 'look, she is wearing a nice dress'. Whom is she trying to attract? Now I stopped going outside'.* They often feel a psychological breakdown, which leads to constant stress and perpetual trauma. A persistent state of fear and alienation is common among women. As one of the respondents revealed *"I am not able to sleep properly and feel isolated from others. I easily get feared even by the sound of mild nature and feels panic if somebody return late to home from outside. I have many apprehensions regarding the safety and security of my family. Because of these problems, my family suffers immensely".* The families of these women, especially their kids also suffer regularly; initially due to the death/disappearance an individual member and then by continuously witnessing the deteriorating physical and mental health of their mothers. While talking to the daughter of one of the divorced women, she said, *"My mother is not able to sleep at night. Even at day times, she limits herself and does not even visit any neighbour or relative. She is suffering internally, which is quite apparent, but she will not tell us either that is what hurts more".*

Another recent incident was narrated by *"Musmaat a 61-year-old mother of 25-year-old son Rayees Ahmad Ganai, living in Shopian District, Narpora village. Ganai was going nearby village, his aunt's house, where a group of young protesters were throwing stones at security forces. The security forces retaliated by opening fire at protesters, in which 19 years old Javid and 23 years Suhail died on the spot. More than twelve protesters were injured in that firing. Ganai also hit by a bullet in his head and immediately shifted to Srinagar hospital where he passed away after four days. Though Ganaie was not involved in the stone-pelting and his family members insisted that he had not involved in stone-pelting, nobody has accepted that. Ganai's death has changed everything for his 61-year-old mother, Musmaatt. She talked afterwards rarely, "said her elder son Aijaz Ahmad". When she talked anything, it would be about her dead son. Loudly she says that my Rayees was innocent, but they shot him. The world shrank to her home, the graveyard where he is buried and the road where her son was shot. Every day she was visiting his graveyard due to her mental depression. After three months and thirteen days, Musmaat left home in the morning, but she did not come back for more than three hours, her elder son went*



*out to look for her. He searched here and there in the community but did not find there, and finally, he went to the nearby graveyard where his younger brother was injured. His family members and neighbours also helped him where they found his mother's dead body lying near a stream, close to that site where Rayees was shot. "She probably had a cardiac arrest," says her elder son, Ajaz Ahmad "*

Besides the many physical and psychological consequences of armed conflict on women, which has broken the social bonds as women feel isolated themselves or isolated by their families and communities. A legacy of bitterness towards the perpetrators may make reconciliation and community reconstruction particularly tricky. *"As we progress, from a developing nation to developed nation, every care must be taken to compositely develop and empower women along the way to stand true to what our great said by Jawaharlal Nehru, "You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women"!*

### **Findings**

The following are the summary of findings of the empirical data collected from the respondents and analysed by using statistical tools.

The result shows that the level of psychological impact due to armed conflict on women is high among the majority (83.8%) of the respondents. The study also has shown that the majority of the respondents are found to have suffered in the form of a feeling of hopelessness & helplessness, sleep disturbance, unable to concentrate, feeling nervous, tense or worried and loss of interest in life, loss of interest in things. The study also shows that a large number of respondents suffer from psychological problems due to the death or disappearance of their family member.

### **Discussion**

The findings from the above literature, it is realised that the literature supports the findings. For example, In relation to mental health, studies in the literature showed that armed conflict has greater effect on mental health of women in so many ways (Irfan, 2015; Qutab, 2012; Beigh & Manzoor, 2018; Shehna & Shekhar, 2017); all these authors agreed and concluded that armed conflict intensity worsened women anxiety, Traumatic Stress, heart-related problems, depression and all dimensions of PTSD and coping. Looking at the current psychological issues in Shopian district, Jammu and Kashmir, it can be realised that the married women are profoundly affected psychologically due to armed conflict such as Feeling of hopelessness & helplessness, sleep disturbance, unable to concentrate their work, feeling nervous, tense or worried easily and most of the respondents are affected due to disappearance or death of their husbands.

## Conclusion

The above study reveals that the majority of the respondents are profoundly affected psychologically due to the armed conflict. Multiple psychological issues faced by the woman which includes "feeling of hopelessness & helplessness sleep disturbances, unable to concentrate, feeling nervous, tense or worried, loss of interest in life" etc. So it could be concluded that the women psychologically face a negative impact due to the armed conflict. In this regard, both governmental and non-governmental organisations can intervene in the areas of health, especially mental health, by providing adequate health facilities and psychosocial support services to the women. The services may include psychosocial counselling and emotional support.

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