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FROM “RING-A-RING O’ ROSES”TO “COFFINS FULL OF ROSES”: IMPACT OF EXPOSURE TO TERRORISM ON STUDENTS’ OUTCOME

Abstract:

We examined the impact of exposure to terrorism on students’ outcome (i-e anxiety and learning ability of students). Data was collected from the sample (N=182) of students from various universities of twin cities of Pakistan in order to get the better findings and to support our hypothesis. The results revealed that the exposure to terrorism has positive and significant relation with students’ anxiety but positive and insignificant relation with students’ learning ability. Those students who personally experienced exposure to terrorism were more inclined towards anxiety than those who just listened to the news or heard from some other medium. Particularly, those students who were physically present on the place of incident were more likely to be stressed, uncertain and scared. Similarly, the findings indicate that there is a positive but insignificant relation between exposure to terrorism and students’ learning ability. It means that higher the exposure to terrorism, higher will be the students’ learning ability. In other words, students who are directly exposed to terrorism are more motivated towards learning.

Keywords:

Terrorism, anxiety, learning ability, nervousness, fear

Introduction

Terrorism is one of the most common terms heard and used in Pakistan. (Jenkins, 1974) defined the term terrorism as “a campaign of violence designed by an organization to inspire fear amongst people and is usually devoted to gaining political results”. According to (Jenkins, 1974), terrorism is basically considered as an act of violence against civilians in order to achieve maximum publicity for particular demands by putting lives of people at stake. According to (Stern, 2000), many madrassas and religious institutions in Pakistan are funded by rich industrialists and most of the times, these madrassas are responsible for inculcating a sense of extremism among its students. Stern also mentions that the industrialists must not focus only on the years of schooling but also on the content of education.

“Deadly blast targets Marriott Hotel in Islamabad” (Pakistan,CNN, 2008), “Benazir Bhutto died in a suicide attack while greeting her supporters” (Pakistan, CNN, 2007), “Frequent assassination attempts had been made on President Musharraf” (Masood, 2003), “Extremists targeted girls’ school in Swat region” (Firdous, 2010), “100 above students was brutally killed in a destructive attack at Army Public School by terrorists” (Khan I. , 2014), these are the phrases children in Pakistan bringing up with. The innocent age, in which they have to recite sweet and simple rhymes and imagine the reflection of brighter future, they’re exposed with these kinds of incidents.

Terrorism is any act of violence through which a layer of havoc, fear and terror is created among civilians with the intention of terrifying the population or forcefully fulfilling their demands from government (UN National Security Council, 2004). There are no proper criteria which define this word “terrorism”. It is not an economical phenomenon where all other variables are kept constant while analyzing one thing. Many factors directly or indirectly affect this phenomenon. They could be political, social, legal, environmental, geographical, ethical and religious etc. (Zalman, 2007).

In Pakistan, terrorism has become the curse for people or it seems like it emerges as a social evil and becomes crucial issue. Pakistan has been facing disastrous terrorist attacks for last two decades up till present. These attacks badly hit every ground of life. They have completely changed the social fabric, politics and economy of the country. Terrorist activities are carried out in the form of suicide bombings or with the use of extensive explosives as a result of which more than 10,267 people have been killed in past few years. It is reported that Pakistan was the most affect country by terrorism with the highest death rates in 2008 (Khan M. , 2009). Maleckova & Kreuger (2001) states that nothing is left which is not affected by terrorism: from hospitals to hotels to public places to holy places to police stations to army headquarters to education institutions, no place is safe from this.

Terrorist activities in Pakistan have created a sense of insecurity among people which lead to ongoing mental hazards as they're exposed to these types of activities daily. In 2009, a survey was conducted by Gallup which revealed that round about 80% of Pakistanis are uncertain and hesitant in going to crowded areas. Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS) published a report which explains that most of the Pakistanis are suffering from mental complications like anxiety, depression, stress, and fear of death and one of key factors of this is terrorism (Pakistan Security Report, 2009). Most of the psychiatrists in Karachi have concerned about the increasing rate of psychological and mental ailments among people. The curse of terrorism also includes lack of patience, tolerance and rise in cognitive stress among the people of countries which are more likely to be perceived as unsafe (Psychological diseases on rise in Karachi after terrorism incidents, 2010). Many studies have been conducted to examine the outcomes of terrorism on mental health which revealed that terrorist activities cause long term and ongoing condition of stress among people. It also causes posttraumatic stress disorder, dissatisfaction, anxiety among the survivors of terrorism (Franklin.C.G., 2002).

Hokinson & Wirth (2000) argued that shocking events affect the learning capacity of people. If a person retained the traumatic incident in his mind, he is unable to follow communication. It is difficult for him to memorize things, to keep information and to utilize it when needed. According to (Hunt, 2010), those people who have experienced direct exposure to traumatic incidents have low degree of understanding things and processing information. Learning process changes during the incident, after the incident and for longer period of time when the incident happened. Difficulty in problem solving, accurate judgments and inability to think and other cognitive ailments are directly linked with shocking events happened in people's lives.

Unfortunately, kids and adults are also not safe from exposure to terrorism and its horrific effects on mental health and learning process. The horrific bomb blasts took place in International Islamic University Islamabad dated 20th October in which many students were killed (Iqbal, 2010). Unfortunately, one of the main gaps is that no such research has been conducted up till now on "terrorist attacks on educational institutions and their impact on student's anxiety and learning ability". This kind of research holds a great deal of importance because in Pakistan, not much research has been conducted up till now on the effects of terrorist activities on the daily routine lives of people and we believe terrorism is the topic that needs to be analyzed in detail. It will make people better understand the impact of terrorism especially it will help parents, teachers, students and other concerned authorities in formulating ways to deal with such problems. It will also provide us with a clear picture of the recent situation of terrorism and its implications on the lives of students in Pakistan.

The outcomes of this study will help teachers in developing various strategies to reduce fear of terrorism among students. The recommendations of this research will also help the government authorities in utilizing the valuable time of the students properly. The outcomes will help teachers in knowing and resolving behavioral issues faced by students. The results of the study will give a new insight to the researcher. The study will be helpful in making a suitable, secure, tangible and learning environment for the students. This study helps in knowing the causes of terrorism and tries to find the remedy in lessening the effects of it. The information of the study suggested the positive role of the media school and society to reduce the dropout of the students from the schools.

The main objective of this research is:

- Highlight the problems faced by students due to terrorist attacks on educational institutions.
- To determine the factors that directly and indirectly affects students' psychological behavior.
- To examine how these factors change the perspective of students towards studies.
- To deeply analyze the causes which make students lead to anxiety and lower their interest towards education.
- To find out how anxiety affects students' academic results. To investigate how terrorism affects students' attendance. To analyze how terrorist attacks cause a sense of uncertainty among students. To come up with a research that encompasses all above mentioned concerns.

Literature Review

Terrorism

The phenomenon of terrorism has no single definition that can define the term exactly. Generally, the term terrorism is defined by Thomas J. Bradley as the systematic use of threat and violence order to achieve a particular objective is called terrorism (Badley, 1998). Another definition is provided by US Department of Defense. According to US Department of Defense, it is defined as the illegal use of power and force to threaten or coerce people, civilian population and government to achieve political or social objectives. A number of researches have been conducted by a numerous researchers including (JD & L., 1990) to understand the effects of terrorist attacks on people in the long run. Researches have shown that, as a result of a traumatic experience, the intensity and frequency of post-traumatic stress symptoms fade over the long run but this is not the true in case of victims of terrorist attacks

Anxiety

Anxiety is basically a universal phenomenon and this phenomenon has been explained in multiple numbers of conditions and scenarios. According to (Jacobs, 2004), anxiety can be described as a vast sense of nervousness because of the expectation that something bad is happening or will happen. Fear, anxiety and stress are some of the most commonly used terms to define a person's perception towards some uncomfortable situation throughout his life. Various studies have been conducted to confirm a relationship between perception of being injured and anxiety with the hypothesis that any incident which is being perceived to harm a person in any way lead to anxiety. According to a research conducted by (Neimeyer, 1994), death anxiety comes as a result of perceived threats or dangers to life.

Terrorism and Anxiety

Handful of studies has been conducted on the impact of terrorist attacks on anxiety among people. A study has been conducted by (Stein, Elliott, Jaycox, & Collins, 2014) to reveal the evolution of psychological and behavioral reactions of public after September 9/11 attacks in the long run. A sample of 395 people was selected out of total of 560 adults. The selected sample was the group of participants of National Random Digit Dialing Telephone Survey. This survey was conducted from September 14 to September 16, 2001 about the level of anxiety and psychological distress due to 9/11 attacks. The results were that 16% of adults had persistent stress and the adults having high stress level were less successful at their jobs, avoid socializing and use drugs to relax and sleep at night. A considerable number of people (43%) did not share the memories of that traumatic experience with their family or friends because it made other people uncomfortable. The findings suggested that victims of September 9/11 attacks experienced stress and anxiety for a very long period of time.

One perception is that exposure to terrorist attacks have a long lasting impact on its victims. But, one of the researches by (Liverant & Litz, 2004) reveals the opposite conclusion. This research was conducted to investigate the level of stress among college students in Boston, Massachusetts after September 11 attacks. Results revealed that majority of the students were psychologically affected by the terrorist attacks. However, this affect seems to diminish over time.

Another study was conducted by (Nasim, Khan, & Aziz, 2014) to determine the relationship of exposure to terrorist activities with psychiatric morbidity among medical students in Karachi, Pakistan. This data for this research was collected by using Hospital Anxiety Depression Scale. A cross sectional survey was conducted in 2011. The sample comprised of 1032 students of the Institute of Physical and Medical Rehabilitation and the

Dow Medical College, Karachi. Out of the sample of 1032 students, The percentage of influence of terrorism on physical health was 3.9%, social health was 17.2% and mental health was 79%. A strong relationship was found between terrorism and psychiatric morbidity.

Another study has been conducted by (Kamal & Anila, 2010) to find out the impact of terrorism on perceived stress and death anxiety among students based on gender and region. A sample of 430 students (male: 183, female: 247) was selected from a number of universities in different cities of Pakistan i.e Islamic University, Islamabad, Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, Bahauddin Zakriya University, Multan, Islamia University, Bahawalpur and Peshawar University, Peshawar. The studies revealed that both genders suffer from distress and anxiety but the ratio is higher for female students. According to the study conducted on regional basis, students of Peshawar University were less affected by terrorist activities as compared to students of other universities in Pakistan. One of the most predictable reasons was that Peshawar has been a victim of terrorist attacks for a very long time.

Based on the discussion above, we believe that exposure to terrorist attacks causes high levels of anxiety among university students.

H1: Exposure to terrorism \propto Anxiety among students

Learning Ability

Woolfolk A. (2008) argued that learning is a special kind of activity in which children responded differently when they're exposed to particular stimuli in certain arranged situations. Learning is basically improvement in behavior of people through experience. These experiences bring about change in the behavior of an individual, this is what we called learning. Similarly, development and growth of an individual are dependent on learning. It occurs through personal experiences of an individual. Learning is a continuous change which reflects in the behavior as a reaction on different occasions to fulfill the needs of life. Learning is the outcome of experience. The change in behavior of an individual occurs when he experiences different situations in day to day life. These changes make up an individual's personality and inculcate attributes like habits, aptitudes, skill, knowledge, understanding and insight in him. Learning also enables an individual to properly adjust himself with the environment. It is kind of process that continues from birth to death. An individual keeps on learning different things from his environment in the entire span of his life. In short, learning is basically the acquirement of knowledge, attitudes and habits. It enables an individual to perceive and do new things. It also makes an individual able to overcome fears and hurdles in life and adjust himself according to new situations.

Terrorism and Students' Learning Ability

Bremner J. (2001) emphasizes that learning is the relationship between response and stimulus. He added that throughout our life from early childhood to the age of maturity, shocks can change the way of our perceiving things. They altogether transform our power of analyzing the surrounding environment, our handling of information and our reactions and responses towards other things. Schools must have some trauma specific intervention to deal with stressed students and make them able to minimize learning deficiencies and cognitive problems. To make the development of such interventions possible in schools after some major shocking incidents, one must understand the fact that how brain works after traumatic situation.

Sharma S. (2006) states that the painful events happened in early life effect individuals cognitive processing which lead to desperate behavior. The shocks which human experienced in their early age can altogether shift their thinking patterns. The brain which would never be exposed to any sort of traumatic or painful event works positively and able to cope the mental stress actively.

Levin (2007) believed that any unexpected event prepares human mind to automatically respond or resist towards that and any such events coming in the way in future. If this response is not ejected or omitted against that particular event, it causes behavioral and cognitive disorder among individuals as a result of continued stimulation state. In Columbine High School, when a huge massacre occurred, parents reached to the school immediately to take their children away from the affected school. Terror, uncertainty, hopelessness, thinking inability and fear were reflected in the behavior and thoughts of those students.

Perry (2006) emphasized that mental injuries or events which affects human's thoughts are long lasting and remained in the memory. Traumatic events store in human's mind in the form of thoughts, images, behaviors and emotions. These events cause a sense of powerlessness, terror and insecurity. These types of behavior persist as long as violence stops for a particular time and the children realize this won't happen again. After this, they would be able to process information, perceive, attend, focus and retain.

Levin (2007) examined that most of the children (90%) recall the traumatic events happening in their lives rather than the events which were more meaningful to them. This consistence memory of bad events affects children's learning ability.

Singh (2005) emphasizes that people learn from experiences, give better reasoning, and handle every situation. This all is done through their cognitive abilities. Singh (2005) stressed on the fact that fears and motivation have a direct relation among them. If a

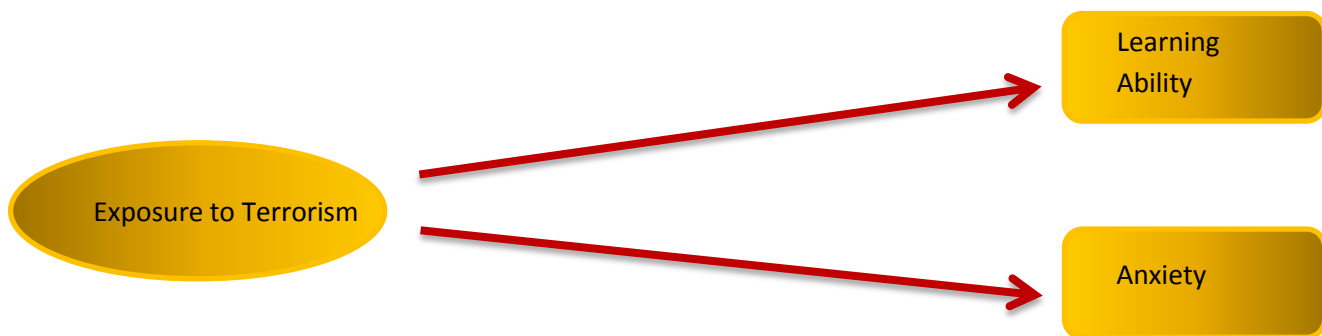
person is greatly feared from something, he is more motivated to get out from that fear instead of staying and fighting with it. Fear is basically a sense of helplessness, hopelessness and powerlessness in which a person is unable to control or manage the situation which he considered dangerous. Fear mainly occurs as a result of some events which happen unexpectedly and violently. Feared person respond quickly against any danger which he experienced previously.

Hypothesis

Based on the discussion above, we believe that exposure has a negative impact on the learning aptitude of students.

H2: Exposure to Terrorism \propto 1/ Learning aptitude of students

Theoretical Framework



Methods

Sample and Data Collection Procedures

The main purpose of this research is to analyze the impact of exposure to terrorism on the anxiety and learning ability of students. The main population from which we had to collect data was of students. For this research, a major share of data was collected from 182 students from a number of universities from Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The sample of research included 79 males (43%) and 103 females (57%) from different universities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi including Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Rawalpindi Medical College (RMC), Fatima

Jinnah Women University (FJWU) and many others. The data was collected through the technique of snowball sampling.

Measures

Terrorism Catastrophizing Scale

We have used Terrorism Catastrophizing Scale developed by (Sinclair & LoCicero, 2007) for the measurement of impact of terrorist attacks on students. Terrorism Catastrophizing Scale is basically a combination of three different subscales i.e. Rumination subscale, Magnification subscale and Helplessness subscale. TCS consists of total of 13 items. Out of these 13 items, item no. 1,3,5,9 and 12 are taken from Rumination subscale, item no. 6,8 and 10 belong to Magnification subscale and item no. 2,4,7,11 and 13 are derived from Helplessness subscale. We have used 6 point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree (1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Somewhat Disagree, 4= Somewhat Agree, 5= Agree, 6= Strongly Agree). One of the questions asked in Terrorism Catastrophizing Scale was "There is little I can do to protect myself from terrorism". We have conducted the reliability test on TCS and the alpha co-efficient of reliability for TCS is 0.707.

Perceived Stress Scale

We have used Perceived Stress Scale developed by (Cohen & Mermelstein, 1983) for studying the extent of anxiety among students. This scale consists of total of 14 items out of which we have used 4 items for analysis of our research. The responses to these items are collected through a 6 point scale ranging from Never to Very Often (0= Never, 1= Almost Never, 2= Sometimes, 4= Fairly Often, 5= Very Often, 6= Always). One of the items of Perceived Stress Scale was "In the past few months, how often have you been angry because of things that happened that were outside of your control?" The reliability co-efficient for Perceived Stress Scale had the value of $\alpha = 0.755$.

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire

We have used Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire developed by (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990) to study the extent of learning motivation among students. This scale consists of a total of 44 items out of which we have selected 13 items for conducting our research. One of the items of Learning Questionnaire is "I often choose topics though which I will learn something from even if they require more work" We have used 6 point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree (1=Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Somewhat Disagree, 4=Somewhat Agree, 5= Agree, 6= Strongly Agree).

We have conducted the reliability test on Learning Motivation Questionnaire (LMQ) and the alpha co-efficient of reliability for LMQ is 0.836.

Procedures

For the purpose of collection of data, students from different colleges, universities and institutes were approached in their college/university timings. Some of the data was also collected through internet (online questionnaire). Respondents were properly briefed about the nature of research being carried out and that their consent and cooperation holds a great significance. Students were requested to give the responses to different items in the questionnaire as fairly and honestly as possible. They were also provided with the guarantee that their collected information will be kept confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

Results

The Table 1 shows the correlation between independent and dependent variable where 'exposure to terrorism' is independent and 'anxiety and learning ability' are dependent variables. The finding of our table reveals that exposure to terrorism has positive relation with anxiety ($r=0.330$, $p=0.000$) which mean that higher the exposure to terrorism, higher will be the anxiety among students. In other words, we can say that those students who are directly exposed in front of terrorism are suffered more from anxiety, stress and other mental ailments. Our findings disclose an interesting fact that exposure to terrorism also has positive relation with leaning abilities of students ($r=0.123$, $p=0.098$) which mean that increase in exposure to terrorist activities in educational institution will increase the learning ability among students. It reflects that it creates more passion and enthusiasm for learning amid students.

Table 1
Correlations

	Exposure Terrorism	Anxiety	Learning Ability
Exposure Terrorism	1		
Anxiety	.330**	1	
Learning Ability	.123	.000	1

** . N= 182, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 exhibits the regression results for the impact of exposure to terrorism on students' anxiety and learning ability. The findings showed that the exposure to terrorism has positive relation with anxiety ($\beta = .330$, $R^2 = .109$, $p < .000$) and learning ability ($\beta = .123$, $R^2 = .015$, $p < .098$). Our results depict that exposure to terrorism is significantly positive relation with anxiety but relatively insignificant positive relation with learning ability.

Table 2

Regression Results for Exposure to Terrorism, Anxiety and Learning Ability

	Anxiety		Learning Ability	
	β	R^2	β	R^2
Exposure to Terrorism	.330	.109*	.123	.015**

Note: $N=182$ Standardized Coefficients are reported

* $p < 0.1$. **"highly significant", ***"relatively insignificant"

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this paper suggest that terrorism has positive relation with anxiety which means that more the incidents of terrorism happen higher will be the anxiety among students. The curse of terrorism not only badly affected the mental health among students but also limit their daily functioning and causing stress and anxiety among them. Furthermore, very interesting findings have been exposed after results drawn from our survey that although terrorism affects students' learning ability but in a very slight manner or one can say that nearly equivalent to zero. These results show that students become more keen and enthusiastic about learning and studying after experiencing any such incident of terrorism. A recent incident of terrorist attack on Army Public College (APS) Peshawar best supports our findings that after experiencing and seeing their loved ones badly affected with the incident, the students didn't lose heart in fact came up with more eagerly for going to school. They conveyed a positive message especially to the entire nation and generally to the whole world that these types of cowardly acts don't stop us from learning. In fact they gave an exemplary gesture with the slogan "Hmein dushman k bachon ko parhana hai" (We have to teach the kids of our enemies). They went to the same ill-fated school again and this time more passionately and warmly. In short, overall our findings suggest that increase in terrorist attacks cause anxiety, stress and other mental health issues among students but at the same time they never limit students' learning ability. In fact they enhance students' fondness towards learning and studying.

One reason behind this can be that may be students want to get rid of this curse through education, learning and studying. They want to change the mind set of people and even of perpetrators through education and make these surroundings better place for future generations.

Contributions to Scholarship

In this research, we studied the impact of exposure to terrorist activities on anxiety and learning ability of students in Pakistan. To our knowledge, no such research has been conducted internationally up till now on the impact of exposure to terrorism on learning ability of students. Although, we did find a research conducted on how increased terrorist activities are causing anxiety among students. (Kamal & Anila, 2010). In order to test validity of our research, we made a comparison between our results and results of research by (Kamal & Anila, 2010). The results of our research confirmed results of the previous study by (Kamal and Anila 2010). The results revealed that higher exposure to terrorist activities result in higher sense of anxiety and nervousness among students.

Implications

We believe that this research will be quite beneficial to society as it will help teachers to better understand and resolve different psychological problems faced by students. It will also provide assistance in formulating coping strategies e.g. rehabilitation programs for dealing with such problems. It will also prove helpful in medical field and psychiatrists will be able to cope up with the mental issues faced by students due to shocking and traumatic events. It will also help government in formulating policies regarding such problems.

Limitations

One of the main limitations is that we collected data from different colleges and universities. Although most of the students could understand English quite easily but still we think that questionnaires should have been translated into Urdu for better understanding and proper responses. We had chosen probability sampling for conducting our research but due to shortage of time, we were unable to use this technique. Students were reluctant in providing data for our study as our study was focused on prevailing anxiety among students.

Suggestions

1. We can conduct research in the future on the level of anxiety and working capability of people belonging to different disciplines e.g. police, army, fire fighters, doctors etc.
2. Similar kind of research can be conducted by examining the impact of exposure to terrorist activities on different variables e.g. frustration, anger, academic performance etc.
3. Future research can also be conducted on formulating coping strategies to deal with consequences of terrorism.

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