

Impact of Armed Conflict on Female Education in Tehsil Matta, Kabal and Khawaza Khela of District Swat, Pakistan

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Abstract: *Female education remained a major target of the militants (Taliban) in Swat during 2007. As a result of rising violence the government military undertook two military operations in the region. This conflict has created disparity in the educational attainment of women and has restricted thousands of females from accessing their basic right to education.*

The study indicates that exposure to the armed conflict has had a negative effect on girls enrollment in higher education. Furthermore, it shows that the girls enrolled in secondary education during the time of conflict were more affected as compared those enrolled in primary education. The study also revealed that the militants specifically targeted female education as they considered it a western concept; and identified bombing schools and threatening of teachers as the most persistent type of violence against female education.

The Government of Pakistan should initiate emergency education programmes and provide funds to the local government for rebuilding schools and for enhancing the security of educational institutes to encourage female education.

Keywords: *Armed conflict, militancy, female education, District Swat.*

I. INTRODUCTION

There is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls. It is vital to the future prospects and development of children across the globe. Kofi Anan (2004).

Education plays a vital role in the development of society and is considered a pre-requisite for the development of a nation. The right to education is not only every individual's basic right but it has significance for families, societies and countries also. As education is a paradigm for sustainable and inclusive development, it is essential for every individual to have access to basic education. Pakistan has not been able to accomplish the targets of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with regard to access to primary education, gender equity and equality. Challenges in this sector are further compounded due to the consistent insurgency and the presence of armed conflict, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), where the literacy rate for males is 69% and for females 31%, whereas in district Swat the literacy rate for male and female is 68 and 24 percent respectively (PSLM, 2008-09). Conflict is a 'major obstacle' for the MDGs especially the universal attainment of primary education and gender equality in primary and secondary education (Buckland , 2005, p.1).

The armed conflict emerged in Pakistan in the post 9/11 era when Pakistan played the role of a 'frontline state' in the War on Terror with social, economic, and political implications for the nation. The various parts of the country like North and South Waziristan, Swat, Malakand, Bajaur, Shangla, Lower Dir, Buner, Orakzai agency and Khyber agency have been suffering increasing violence practiced by the militant groups. As a result of which the state military had performed numerous military operations in these regions.

1.1. Armed Conflict and Militancy in District Swat

The rise of militancy in Swat can be dated to June 1989, when Sufi Muhammad created a movement for the replacement of customary tribal law with Sharia law. This movement was known as Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) (Abbas, 2010). During 1990, TNSM took control of the region and in 1994 the members of TNSM launched the "Tor Patki" (black turban) movement in Swat. The purpose of this movement was to declare Sharia in the region', which was eventually accepted by the KPK Governor and on December 1, 1994, enforced Nizam-e-Shariat Regulation. In 2001 when America invaded Afghanistan, Sufi Muhammad along with his troop crossed the border to fight against the Americans and their allies. He remained unable to counter US bombardment and lost a large number of his supporter. And he along with his son-in-law Maulana Fazlullah, made his way back to Pakistan, where they were arrested by the security forces and were jailed (Sultan-i-Rome, 2009).

Maulana Fazlullah was released from the jail after seventeen months and settled at his home town (Imam Dherai), where he campaigned for the implementation of Islamic Sharia in Malakand Division. In January 12, 2002, General Pervez Musharraf banned TNSM organization due to the terrorist activities inside the country (Ali et al., 2013).

Fazlullah started an illegal FM radio channel in Swat in 2004 (Hussain, 2011, p.27), but it is not uncertain when exactly the FM broadcast in Swat were started by Fazlullah's militants. According to Asia Times (Online); "*It was Maulana Fazlullah, however, who excelled in the effective use of radio and ruled over the Swat Valley from his station in Mamdheri (also known as Imam Dheri). In late 2005, he started his FM service and within the short span of one year, Fazlullah was a household name throughout the Swat Valley.*" (Khan, 2009).

On 8th of October 2005, during the government of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), Fazlullah restored the TNSM as a chief commander in Swat valley. Amir Mir in his book says that Fazlullah ran his FM radio channel to preach his version of Islam and had a big circle of listeners. "*Strange to say most of his listeners are the women folk. On his FM channel, he warns the parents against sending girls to school unless they observe full Pardah (veil). Barbers in the area are understanding (sic) instructions not to shave beards, while shops proscribed from selling CDs and music cassettes. Interestingly, he is known to have ordered his followers not to administer polio drops to their children. Reason: the polio drops is part of an American-Zionist plot to render them sterile.*" (Mir, 2008, p. 97).

Fazlullah established a moveable militia, called Shaheen Force (Hussain, 2011, p.7), which nominated criminal gangs in and around Swat that provided him with trained hands in gun-running. He banned the television, Internet and girls' education in the region. The Frontier Constabulary (FC) and police launched a crackdown on Fazlullah's militia in July 2007 on the orders of the provincial government, which failed. Target killing of local influential, destruction of girls' schools, suicide bombings and attacks on state installations and security personnel became pervasive in the valley. Almost all state institutions, including the police, the local administration, public schools, banks and courts, retreated or closed down. And the militia gain control over Swat by occupying Kabal, Matta, Khwazakhela and Fatehpur sub-districts (Rana, 2011, p.74-75).

As a result of Lal Masjid siege in early July 2007 the militia of Fazlullah merge into the TTP Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (Ali et al., 2013) and declared jihad against the Pakistan army in retaliation for its siege of the Lal Masjid in Islamabad (Zafar, 2011). The intensity of the conflict in the valley increased after the July 2007 security forces operation against militants and seminary students holed up in Lal Masjid in Islamabad (Hussain, 2011, p. 8).

In 2007, militants took full control of Swat district and enforced their ideology in the region (Rehman, 2014). With the support of more than 4,500 armed militants, Fazlullah had established a parallel government in the 59 villages of the Swat district in late October 2007 and got engaged in the clashes with the government security forces in the region (Ali et al., 2013, p. 63). As a result of it the Pakistan military launched military operation, known as Rah-e-Haq (Operation Righteous Path), against the militant in Swat on 25 October 2007 and announce victory against the militants in December 2007.

The first peace deal in Swat was struck on April 20, 2008 between the Awami National Party-led provincial government and followers of the TNSM led by Sufi Muhammad. As per the agreement, the government accepted the right of every Muslim to 'peacefully' work for the enforcement of *Shariah*. The TNSM dissociated itself from the elements attacking the security forces and a *fatwa* was issued against attacks on security personnel which were considered against Islamic teachings. The second Swat peace agreement was inked on May 21, 2008 between Swat militants operating under the command of Fazlullah and the Awami National Party-led government (Tajik, 2011).

In February 2009 the government of KPK signed an agreement with the Taliban of Swat introducing Nizam-e-Adl, but the Taliban refusal to de-weaponize, in addition to their occupation of Buner and Lower Dir, made the government reassess its policy towards Fazlullah. As a result of it the state military launch the second military operation known as Rah-e-Rast (Operation the Straight Path), against the militants on 28 April 2009 against the militants in Swat (Ahmad, 2010).

The people of Swat had to pay a huge cost in terms of losses to local economy and their livelihood. Preliminary reports estimated 141,582 families were internally displaced from District Swat as a result of the military operation against the militants.

1.2. Islamic Militants and their Ideology

Islamic militancy consists of two elements: the *fundamentalist* 'call for the return of all Muslims to true tenants of Islam'; and the other 'political militancy which advocate for jihad, in the sense of "holy war", against the foes of Islam. They are referred as Jihadi in Pakistani media. But a third group has emerged with a strict emphasis on the implementation of *Sharia* who are not interested in state building or any political action. They are known as 'neo-fundamentalist', which has emerged in Pakistan through the networks of the *madrasahs* (Roy, 2002). The three features of neo-fundamentalist group consists of the first as a narrow interpretation of *Sharia*; second,

reduction of politics to the application of Sharia and strict interpretation of Sunnah, and third, a violent opposition to western culture (Roy, 1995, 1998). Similarly, Waseem (2004) has identified the Islamic militants as first-generation; those are generally supra-sectarian and focused on changing the law. These militants struggling to come into power through elections, and operating through literature. While the second-generation militants attempt to change the rules of the law through violence and force rather than peaceful means (i.e. election). The members of Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) and the Pakistani Taliban are recognized as the second generation militants or neo-fundamentalists (Rana, 2010).

1.3. Militancy and Female Education in Swat

Swat was a princely state and was '*widely held to have been the most developed*' in the region. In 1917, Miangul Abdul Wadud, the first *wali* (ruler) of Swat '*developed a system of roads, public education for boys and girl*', and its own system of judiciary known as *Dasturul Amal*. During the reign of his son Miangul Jahanzeb from 1949-1969, access to higher education, health facilities and communication was improved for the sake of development. There were three colleges, 36 high schools, 30 middle schools, more than 270 primary and lower primary schools (both girls and boys), 16 hospitals and 45 dispensaries in Swat during this regime. In 1969, Swat merged with Pakistan as a Provincially Administered Tribal Area (PATA) (Fleischer, 2011).

But with the rise of TNSM in the region, the process of development was highly influenced. The militants not only affected the peace and harmony of the valley, but also the educational and judicial system. As in his interview with a private channel, Sufi Muhammad declared parliament of Pakistan un-Islamic, according to him in democracy Muslims, non-Muslims, male and female were equal which was against Shariah law. He also declared female education un-Islami, and presented his argument that women could come out of home only to perform Haj and forbade women to go out for health treatment outside their home. The Ameer (leader) of TNSM, Maulana Fazlullah also banned the female education in Swat, claiming that female could get Islamic education instead of modern education due to the Islamic customs and laws. And strongly opposed the participation of women in the election (Ali et al., 2013). Similarly in 2008, the Taliban group leader, Shah Dauran, of district Swat provided a justification for restricting female education: "*female education is against Islamic teaching and spreads vulgarity in society*". (Hussain, 2008). To ban female education in the region, the militants set a deadline of 14 January 2009 for all government and private school classes for girls to cease and made the announcement through their illegal FM channel, threatening them that failing this the schools will be bombed and violators would face death and school going girls will face acid attacks on their face. Parents stopped their daughters from going to school for the sake of safety. The Taliban later lifted the ban for the first four grades, but still parents did not send their daughters to school (IRIN, 2009).

In February 2009 about 80,000 girls were not attending the schools in district Swat, similarly the teachers were also threatened and attacked by the militants; it became particularly risky for female teachers as the Taliban ordered women not to venture outside the home unless accompanied by a man (IRIN, 2009). A female teacher of district Swat, who was a widow, and was supporting her three children had no other choice and continued to go to school for teaching. Taliban labelled her as prostitute and killed her (IRIN, 2009). In Swat 121 female schools were fully damaged while 161 were partially damaged due to militancy and armed conflict (ESP, 2012).

1.4. Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of the study is to examine the impact of armed conflict and militancy on female education in Swat. The specific objectives of the study were the following:

1. To find which age cohort of girls suffered more as a result of militancy and armed conflict.
2. To find the views of respondents regarding violence against female education.
3. To analyse the most persistent forms of violence by the militants against the school going girls.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

District Swat consists of seven *tehsils*. For this study, *tehsil* Matta Shamzai, Kabal and Khawaza Khela were selected purposively. Tehsil Matta Shamzai was one among the stronghold regions as well as it was the headquarter of the Taliban (Walsh, 2009), similarly tehsil Khwazakhela was also among the headquarters of Taliban. Whereas, tehsil Kabal was headquarter and hometown of Maulana Fazlullah. These three tehsils were the main hub of the militants. Further, from each *tehsil* one Union Councils were selected randomly, i.e. UC Shakardara (Matta Shamzai), UC Bara Banadai (Kabal) and UC Fatehpur (Khwaza Khela).

The sample size selected for the study was 350 literate female respondents, selected randomly from the sample area. The sample consisted of girls between the age group of 10 - 24 years at the time of survey (August 2014), as the girls of this age group might have been enrolled in secondary or primary education at the conflict (2007-2009). 110 respondents were selected from UC Shakardara, while 140 and 100 from UC Fatehpur and UC Bara Bandai respectively, through proportional allocation. The research was a field-based study and for the purpose of primary data collection, structured questionnaire was administered as a tool for data collection.

The data collected from the field was analysed by using descriptive statistical tools, presenting the data in table, charts and graphs.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this paper is to summarize the collected data and the statistical treatment, and/or mechanics of analysis. As the objective of the study is to find the impact of armed conflict on female education, the data was collected in meaningful manner to fulfil the objectives of the study. This section briefly presents and analyses the data and the findings of the study.

a. Age and Education Distribution of the Respondents

As mentioned in previous section, for the purpose of data collection, 350 females were selected randomly. The sample comprised of 250 girls who were currently enrolled in school at the time of survey (2014) and 100 girls were enrolled in school before 2009, due to certain reasons like unavailability of school nearby, restriction from family due to fear of militancy, cultural and social norms (i.e. veiling), lack of family income to afford higher education, etc. as shown in Table I.

Table I: Current and Past Enrollment of Respondents

<i>Education Level</i>	<i>No. of Girls Enrolled before 2009</i>	<i>No. of Girls Currently Enrolled</i>
Primary	39	19
Middle	30	78
Secondary	26	48
Tertiary	5	105
Total	100	250

Source: Field Survey

In Pakistan the average age for secondary education in Pakistan is 14 to 16 years and for primary is 5 to 9 years (Husnain, 2013), whereas the age for middle school (Class 6th to 8th) is between 11 and 15 years. According to this, the girls of age group between 10 and 24 years, at the time of survey (during 2014), majority of them were enrolled in secondary and middle school during the time of conflict in Swat (2007-2009). The average age of the respondents was 17.6 years. The distribution of sample according to the age and education level is presented in Table II. The table shows a higher number of girls (40%) enrolled in middle school were drop out from the school before 2009 while 29% and 26% enrolled in primary and secondary education respectively. Tertiary education shows the lowest dropout percentage at 5% before 2009. The girls between 16 and 18 years of age showed higher percentage of dropout (47%) before 2009. In contrast, the 42 percent of the girls who were currently (20104) enrolled in tertiary education, showing that the respondents were progressive in education and motivated towards the higher education.

Table II: Distribution of the Respondents According to Age and Education (in percentage)

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Primary</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Secondary</i>	<i>Tertiary</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Attended school before 2007</i>					
10-12 Years	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.00
13-15	19.00	2.00	1.00	0.00	22.00
16-18	7.00	27.00	13.00	0.00	47.00
19-21	0.00	8.00	10.00	3.00	21.00
22 & Above	0.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	7.00
Total	29.00	40.00	26.00	5.00	100.00
<i>Enrolled in school at the time of the study</i>					
10-12 Years	7.60	5.60	0.00	0.00	13.20
13-15	0.00	23.20	7.20	0.00	30.40
16-18	0.00	2.40	11.20	16.40	30.00
19-21	0.00	0.00	0.80	24.00	24.80
22 & Above	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.60	1.60
Total	7.60	31.20	19.20	42.00	100.00

Source: Field Survey

b. Current Enrolment of Girls

Table III shows the distribution of girls, who were enrolled in school at the time of study (August 2014) in various classes. Among the 250 respondents who were enrolled in school, 24 percent of the respondents were enrolled in higher secondary education (Class 11 & 12), and less than one percent were enrolled in the primary (Class 1 to 5) and 50 percent were enrolled in secondary (Class 9-10) education. Whereas, about 17 percent of the respondents were enrolled in tertiary (Class 13 to 16) education, which revealed the willingness for higher education among the females of the study area. But less than 3% girls among the respondents were enrolled in postgraduate (Class 15 & 16) studies, showing that university education for girls was still not common in the region. According to the respondents the practice of co-education system at the university level as well as the distance from the university served as a hindrance to postgraduate education level for the girls in the region.

Table III: Current Enrollment of Girls

Class	No. of girls	Valid %
5 and less	20	8.0
6	21	8.4
7	29	11.6
8	29	11.6
9	24	9.6
10	23	9.2
11	23	9.2
12	38	15.2
13	26	10.4
14	11	4.4
15	4	1.6
16	2	0.8
Total	250	100

Source: Field Survey

Tehsil Khwaza Khela showed the overall higher while tehsil Matta showed the lower enrolment of girls, in both primary and secondary level of education in region at the time of study. As shown in Figure I tehsil Matta shows the highest (36%) dropout ratio of girls as compared to tehsil Kabal and tehsil Khwazakhela. In tehsil Matta the reason for the lower girls' enrolment was the unavailability of government high school nearby for girls in the region. As mentioned by the respondents, the high school for girls in Matta was destroyed by the militants in 2007, the primary and middle section of the school was rebuilt whereas the secondary section was still not rebuilt in 2014 as well. Girls from UC Shakardara used to attend the high schools located in UC Mingola at a distance of about 10 km from UC Shakardara. The other reason behind large number of dropout in Tehsil Matta was that, the region has served as headquarter of the militants at the time of conflict. According to the respondents, Matta was the hub of militants and they still apprehensive to attend the schools as well as their parents feel insecure while sending them (their daughters) to school especially located at a distance. Similarly, in Khwazakhela, there were number of High schools available as well as the destructed schools were rebuilt by the Pak military immediately after the conflict, mentioned by the respondents. The Figure I also shows that the percentage of currently enrolled (year 2014) is greater in all three tehsils as compare to the percentage of the girls who attended school in past (year 2009).

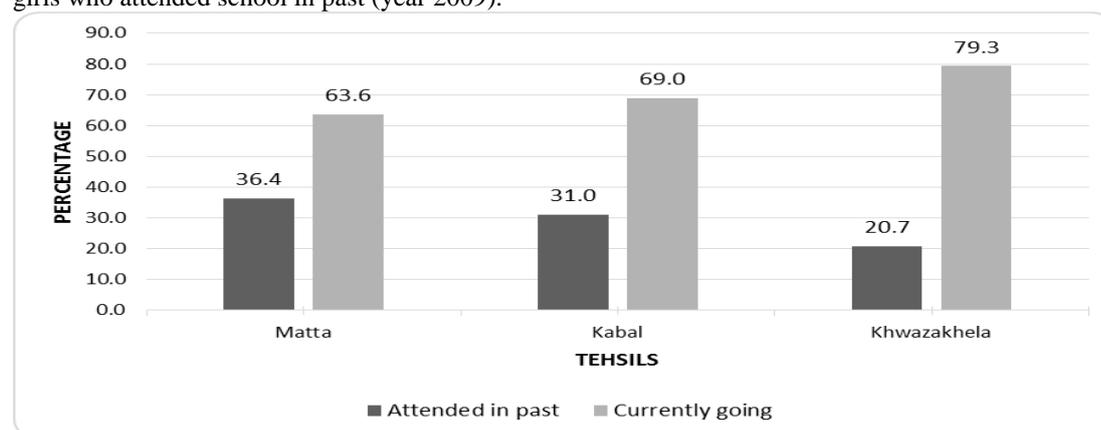


Figure I: Current and Previous Enrolment of Girls According to Tehsils
Source: Field Survey

c. Gap in Educational Years

According to Table II mentioned in section 3.1, about 10 percent respondents of the total sample were of age group between 10 and 12 years, among which only 6 percent were enrolled in primary education. About 28% girls of the total sample were of the age group between 13 and 15 years, but only 5% were enrolled in secondary education and 10 percent were enrolled in primary education. Similarly about 12 percent of the girls of age between 16 and 18 years were enrolled in secondary education. As 16 to 18 years and 13 to 15 years is not an average age for the student of secondary and primary school respectively, this reflects a difference of about 1 to 3 years from the average age for both primary and secondary education. The major reason behind the gap in education according to the respondents was the violence against the girls' education and attacks on educational institutes. The other reasons highlighted by the respondents included lack of income, unavailability of schools nearby, cultural and social barriers (i.e. restrictions on females leaving home and concept of veil) and early marriage. As shown in Figure II, in tehsil Matta more than half of the girls have about three years of gap and more than three quarter of the girls have two years of gap in education attainment after 2007. In tehsil Matta, the main reason mentioned by the respondent for gap in education years was the destruction of the only high school (Government Girls High school Shakardara) for girls in the region in 2007 and closure of private schools for long period of time after 2007. In tehsil Kabal and Khwaza Khela the gap was of about one year (2009). In tehsil Khwaza Khela the girls' high school was set on fire in 2009 but was immediately built back by the military (according to the respondents). A large majority of the population migrated from Swat during the time of conflict as well as the civilians were evacuated from the district before the military operation in 2008 (Khattak, 2011), causing a break in the schooling of students in Swat.

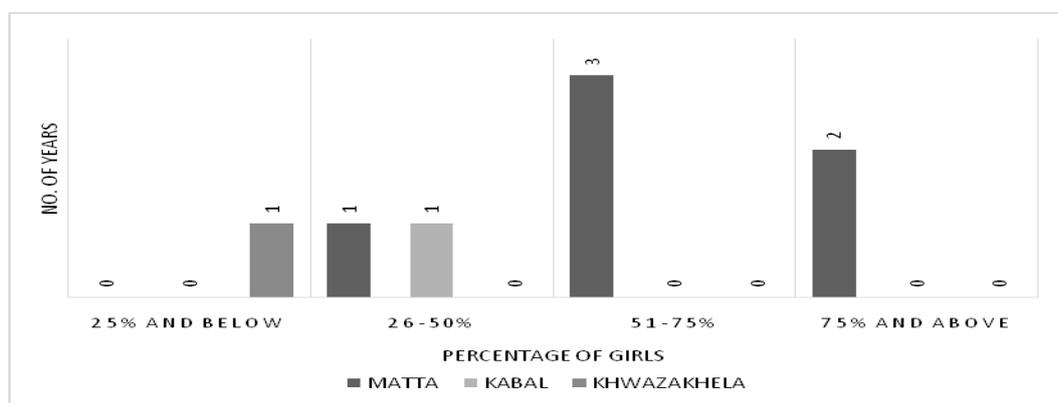


Figure II: Gap in Education (in years)

Source: Field Survey

d. Girls' Dropout from School

According to the study the dropout of girls from school in the sample area was high in the years armed conflict took place i.e. 2007 to 2009. Less than quarter of the respondents (i.e. about 23%) left the education in 2007 and about 38% left the education in 2009, as illustrated in Table IV below. On FM radio, TNSM leader, Maulana Fazlullah stated that "girls' education leads to obscenity and vulgarity in the society, deviating our younger generations from the right path of Islam". This declaration forced thousands of people to voluntarily withdraw their daughters from schools (Buneri, 2008). At the time of study (2014), 22 percent girls were dropout from school during 2012 and 2013 on the completion of secondary education (Matriculation or Class 9 & 10). As mentioned by those respondents they were not allowed to continue education for the reason of purdah (veil) and early marriage custom in family. This has been discussed in the later section.

Table IV: Years of Girls' Dropout from Schools

Year	Girls Dropout (in percentage)
2006	1.0
2007	23.5
2008	1.0
2009	38.8
2010	8.2
2011	5.1
2012	12.2
2013	10.2
Total	100

Source: Field Survey

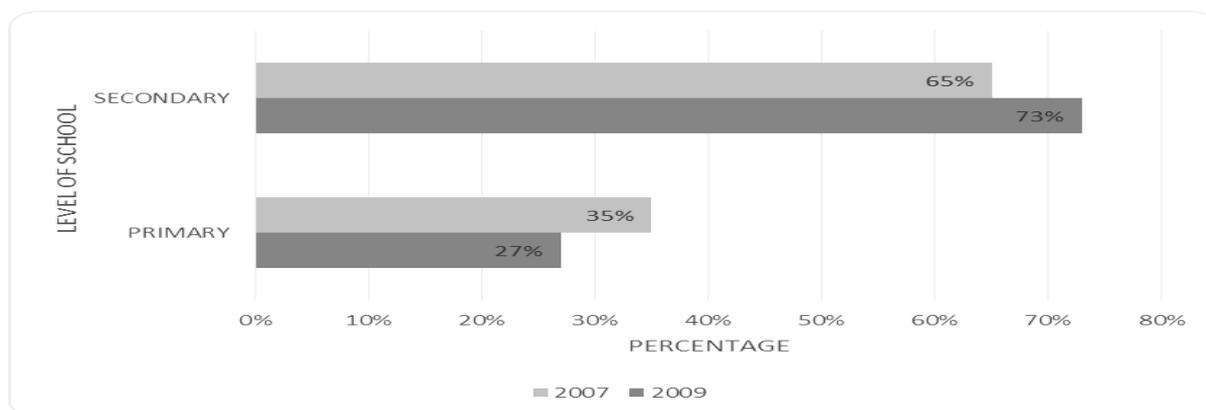


Figure III: Girls' Drop during 2007 & 2009

Source: Field survey

The dropout was common among the girls enrolled in secondary school, as the militants strictly forbade the movement of adult girls and women and they were only allowed to come out of their homes in veil and in the presence of the male member of the household. Only primary going school girls were allowed to be enrolled in schools. Figure III has been produced from the field data showing that the dropout ratio was higher among the girls enrolled in secondary education as compared to the girls enrolled in primary education. But during 2009, the dropout ratio of primary school girls was relatively low as compared to 2007, as mentioned by the respondents it was due to the relaxation by the militants for girls enrolled in primary education, to attend school.

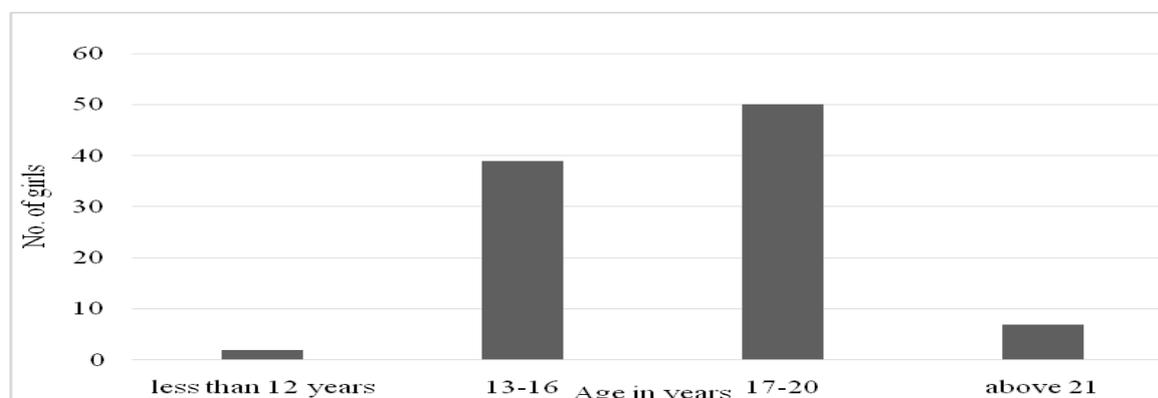


Figure IV: Age of Girls and School Dropout

Source: Field survey

Figure IV shows that the girls of the age between 17 and 20 years and 13 and 16 years had high percentage of dropout i.e. 50% and 39% respectively. These girls were mostly enrolled in secondary and higher secondary classes at the time of dropout whereas 2% of girls were dropouts from school during the primary education.

e. Reasons for Dropout from School

Schools can be attacked more easily as compared to other government security forces, therefore they make high-visibility "soft" targets. And the assailants attack schools more likely to seek the attention of the media attention, and weaken the confidence of people in government. The reason for targeting the school can be: the opposition groups (militants) may view schools as symbols of an "oppressive" educational system, sometime schools serve as hostile are attacked because armed groups are to the content of the education being delivered or because of the students being educated, whereas somewhere the schools are targeted because the curriculum taught is supposed to be secular or "Western," others simply because the schools educate girls. (HRW, 2010, p. 33)

According to O'Malley (2010), in Swat about 116 girls' schools were destroyed or damaged from 2007 to March 2009. According to Figure V, in 2007 the main reason mentioned by the respondents for the dropout was the destruction of school by the militants while 39% of girls discontinued their education due to the fear of militants. Early marriage and distance from school remain the least common reasons for girls' dropout from school at 5 and 4% respectively for the year 2007.

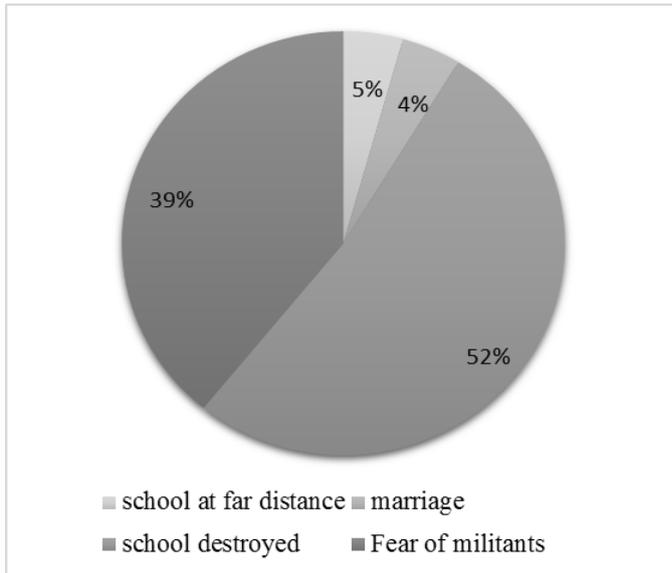


Figure V: Reasons of Dropout During 2007
Source: Field survey

In 2009, majority of the girls (60%) of the girls left education due to the fear of militants. They did not dare to step out of their homes due to the fear of persecution by the Taliban and were unable to attend school. The rising militancy and the feeling of insecurity compelled these girls to stay home and discontinue their education. 26% of the girls considered destruction of schools as the major reason for not attending the school. Whereas a very few considered purdah and distance from school as the major hindrance in their education. The reasons for dropout from school in 2009 are shown in Figure VI.

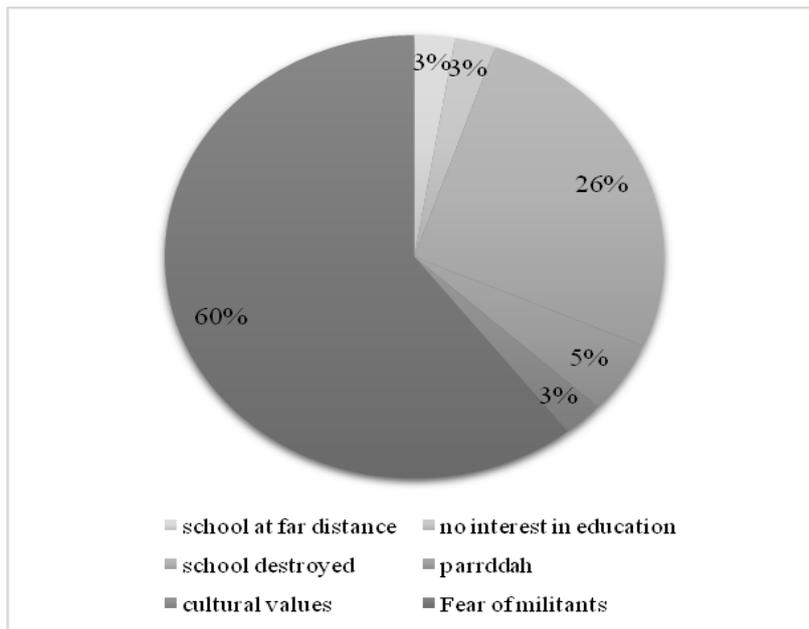


Figure VI: Reasons of Dropout in 2009
Source: Field survey

f. Violence against Female Education

The militants practiced severe violence against female education in different ways. According to this study the most repeated form of violence against the female education was the destruction of schools either through shelling, setting on fire or bombing the school buildings. As shown in Table V, more than half of the respondents mentioned that their schools were fully destroyed during 2007 and 2009, and less than 30% responded that their schools were not destroyed. Similarly 27% and 16%, of the respondents mentioned that their schools were partially affected during the conflict of 2007 and 2009 respectively.

Table V: Violence against Female Education by the Militants (in percentage)

Type of violence	Year of conflict	
	2007	2009
<i>Destruction of schools</i>		
Not destroyed	22.00	29.00
Fully destroyed	51.00	55.00
Partially destroyed	27.00	16.00
Total	100.00	100.00
<i>Threatening of teachers</i>		
Yes	45.00	16.00
No	55.00	84.00
Total	100.00	100.00
<i>School occupied by the militant</i>		
Yes	7.80	18.90
No	92.20	81.10
Total	100.00	100.00

Source: Field survey

The militants threatened the school staff and teachers by sending them threatening letters. These letters are known as “Shabnama” (night letters) and the Taliban of Afghanistan used them for intimidation against schools and teachers involved in female education (Johnson, 2007). In Balochistan, Tanzeem-ul-Islam-ul-Furqan, an extremist group threatened the school girls in district Panjgur by issuing letters to all private school owners warning them to shut down their school. But the schools remained open as a result a private school bus was attacked in Panjgur. (UNPO, 2014)

According to this study, 45 and 16 percent of the respondents agreed that the militants have threatened their school teachers by sending them threatening letters in 2007 and 2009 respectively. In 2009 sending threats to the teachers decreased as the schools were closed immediately as well as many of the teachers migrated from the region. The migration decreased the presence of female staff in the schools. Since the government girls’ schools had female staff only, and these schools remained the main targets of the militants, this factor discouraged the girls from attending school. During the armed conflict and militancy, schools were occupied by the militants and were used as their headquarters. About 8% respondents stated that their schools had been occupied by the militants during 2007, whereas about 19% confirmed that their schools had been occupied during the 2009. The attacks on schools interrupted the girl’s right to education in Swat. The students were abstracted and had affected their ability to learn even if the school remained open. It created an uncertainty and fear among the people that any school could be targeted. Parents are still terrified to send their girls to school, whereas the girls feel insecure of becoming a target. As shown in Figure VII, about 76% of the girls still (in year 2014) feel insecure while attending the school. The conflict has created an immense sense of insecurity among the people of Swat.

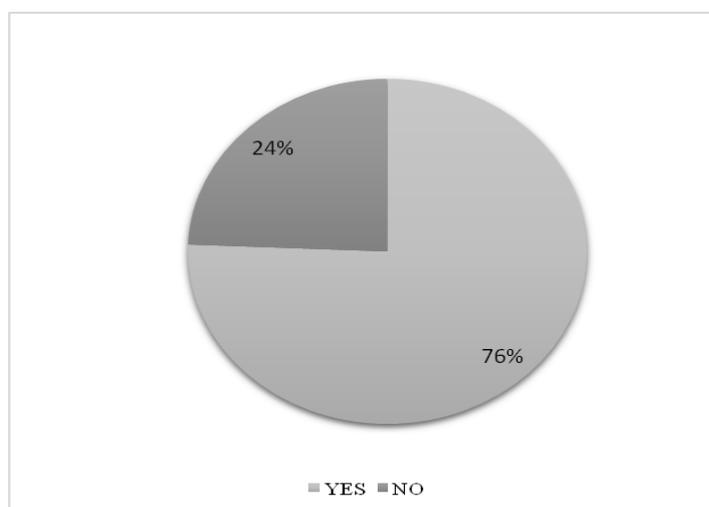


Figure VII Insecurity among the girls to attend School

Source: Field survey

g. Respondents' Viewpoint Regarding Ban on Female Education

This section analyses the respondents' viewpoint regarding the ban on female education and also highlights the reasons for which the militants attacked the female education as well as the main motive of the militants as understood by the respondents.

i. Ban on female education and importance of female education

According to Figure VIII, the study revealed that an overwhelming majority (about 98%) respondents fully opposed the ban on female education imposed by the militants and considered it injustice and violence against the women. More than 80 percent of the respondents agreed that education important for the woman in the modern world and considered it important for the society and individual development, as shown in Figure IX. Similarly, those more than 90 percent of the respondents were highly in favour of females acquiring higher education. According to the respondents, Allah had endowed women with skills through education which could be polished to serve the nation. She can empower herself and improve her self-esteem. Through higher education a woman can contribute in the social and national development more effectively. Islam also vastly values education for both male and female. According to the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), "to seek knowledge is the duty of every Muslim, both man and women." (Cooman and Sakhi, 2012).

But there were very few (about 2%) respondents who were in favour of ban on female education, and indirectly supported the ideology of the militants that female education is un-Islamic and women's roles in Islam are strictly limited to the four walls of home. Another study conducted in Swat also mentioned that women play an indirect role in talibanization, they are not involved directly but they support the ideology of the Taliban (Bari,2010).

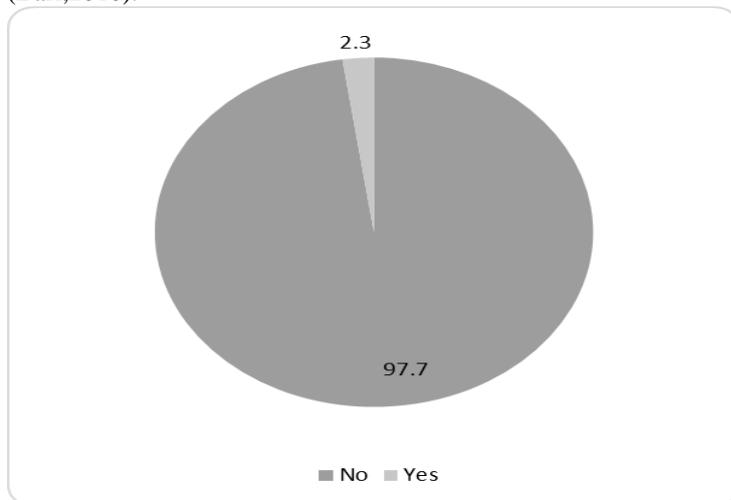


Figure VII: Support Ban on Female Education
Source: Field survey

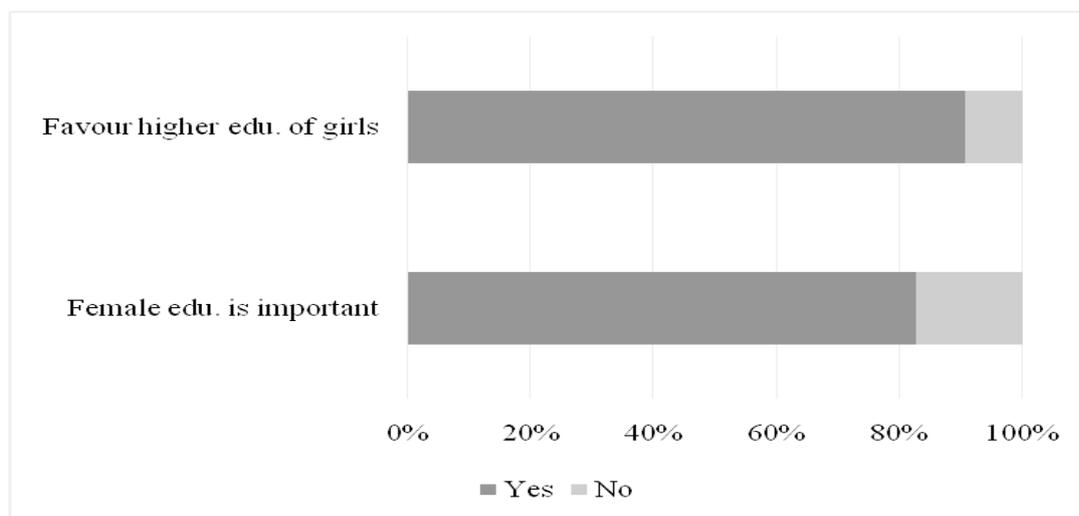


Figure IX: Perspective of the Respondents Regarding the Importance of Higher Education
Source: Field survey

ii. Why the militants attacked female education

According to the respondents the militants attacked female education for certain reasons. As shown in Figure X, 98 percent of the respondents mentioned that the militants were highly against the female mobility and wanted to implement strict purdah in the region. For this reason they attacked the female education and discourage the girls to attend school by targeting their schools. Whereas, 88 percent of the respondents said that the motive of targeting the female education was the wrong perception of the militants that Islam does not allow female education.

As discussed in the previous section, schools are considered as legitimate targets and are used for the military activities. Therefore about 40% of the respondents mentioned that militant’s target the schools both male and female to use these schools as their headquarters.

According to the militants’ ideology, female education is a western concept. Militants’ belief that the education system in Pakistan was introduced by the British and its purpose was to promote obscenity and vulgarity in society (Azhar, 2012), the schools were teaching an “infidel curriculum” which needed to be replaced with an “Islamic” one to produce “mujahideen and honest people” (Jamil, 2008). And 64% of the respondents agreed that militants consider female education a western notion and target it. The militants have targeted the education sector of the country by strictly focusing on the female education for three prime reasons; firstly, female education was against the Islam; and, secondly, female education was a western concept. Thirdly, they considered it a medium of spreading vulgarity in the society. of Pakistan and opposes female education violently by destroying schools, threatening the school teachers and by occupying the girls’ schools in the area (Shaffer, 2006).

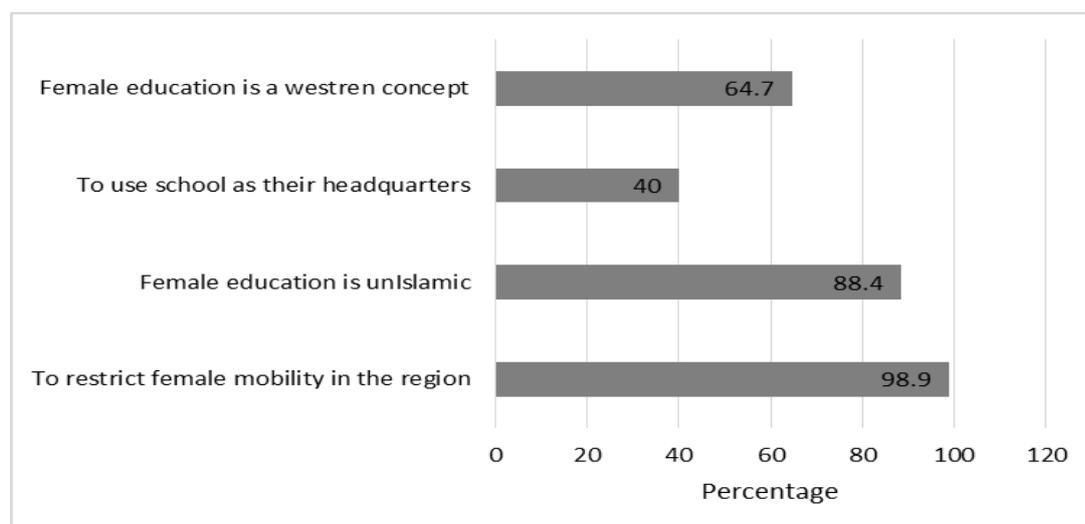


Figure X: Why Militants Targeted Female Education
Source: Field survey

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The rising militancy, and the armed conflicts between the state military and several local militants affected the female education in district Swat. The militants termed themselves to be the guardians of Islamic cause and declared female education un-Islamic and a western phenomenon. Therefore they were not in favor of female education and started their campaign to target female education, as well as they called modern education as source of propagating obscenity in the society. The militants practiced violence against the female education by destroying the female school buildings. Most of the female schools in the region have either fully or partially been damaged by the militants. The rising violence and the military operation against the militants bring a gap of 1 to 3 years in the girls’ education. And the girls enrolled in secondary education were highly influenced during the militancy and armed conflict as compare to the girls enrolled in primary education. This study shows that the militants failed to represent the true spirit of Islam which guarantees female education, they also failed to deprived girls from education as majority of the respondents continued their education after the conflict. And a large number girls were in favor of higher education of girls as well as considered it important for the nation and society. The girls in the region still consider themselves insecure and they are in uncertain situation but it is encouraging that they have continued their education.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, following recommendations are proposed to the policy makers and the government:

- The provincial/local government should rebuild the schools affected during the conflict and should establish more secondary schools in the convenient geographic locations to make secondary education accessible and affordable for every girl. It can also be done by upgrading of primary schools to middle schools or secondary schools.
- More budget should be allocated to the education sector to fulfil the requirement of quality education. To encourage female students, the needy students should be provided scholarships and financial aid.
- The educational institutes should be provided strong security to assure the safety of students. Adequate steps should be taken by the local and provincial governments to provide a safe school environment for girls in the conflict areas. Safety should be provided to the female teachers so that they cannot be targeted by any militant or terror group.
- The government should take initiatives for the provision of education services at the time of conflict and emergency in such a manner that the education process of the individual is not interrupted.
- Promote gender equality and female education through awareness campaign in the light of the Holy Quran and *Sunnah*.
- To counter the rising violence by the militants and to prevent militancy in the region, the local government should ensure political strength in the region as well as provide strong security system to the region by implementing strict law and order.

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