

# Role of Militancy in Intensifying the Negative Attitude Towards Secondary School Education: Gendered and Religious Dimensions

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## Abstract

*The deteriorating impact of militancy on education is inevitable. For two decades, the recently merged tribal districts are examples of the deterioration brought up by militancy. Framed under a mixed-method research design, this study aims to determine the impact of militancy on education, i.e., the impact of militancy on secondary-level education. The study locale was the recently merged tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques have been utilized to select samples from the population. Sample size has been determined through the Uma Sekaran sample size table, whereas in qualitative data collection, sample size was determined through the saturation point technique. A structured questionnaire and an interview was prepared to collect information from the sampled respondents. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were tested before data collection. A total of 405 samples were taken, whereby 397 were for survey and 8 for focus group discussion. It is concluded that the situation of the locality was not feasible for good education in the locality prior to and during the case of war. Normative structure (Pakhtunwali), religious misperceptions, gendered-oriented barriers, lack of investment, and lack of focus from the government were a few notable barriers to secondary-level education in the study's locale. The militancy intensified these barriers and led to further deterioration of school-level education. There were specific impacts of militancy on education in the study's area, like attacks on schools, physical destruction of school buildings, migration of families, harassment of females to not go to schools and harassment of teachers, etc.*

**Keywords:** Militancy, Culture, Religion.

## Introduction

Education is the fundamental right of every individual. Today, those societies have excelled in every field of life where men and women are provided equal educational opportunities. Conflict and violence affect education in many ways, such as increasing inequalities, fear and anxieties, destruction of physical infrastructure, internal displacement, and lack of ability of governments to facilitate education due to economic issues (Buckland, 2005).

Sexual abuse and sadism are commonly observed during war and terror throughout the world, which affects child education. Such acts significantly reduce girls' enrollment and increase dropout rates among schoolgirls (Sierra, 2004).

Gender role reflects the weight of culture and traditions. Pakhtuns assign great value to their culture, and *Pardah* or veiling of women, is one of them. Pakhtun traditions demand women of a specific age to observe *Pardah*, and in rural areas, this *Pardah* takes the extreme shape of the shuttlecock. This is not only reflective of the culture, but Islam is also an essential and

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influential overlay. This *Pardah* usually is disadvantageous to girls when they go to school, and they drop out of high school mainly because of this *Pardah*. So, keeping in view the description mentioned above of Pakhtun's culture, their association with *Islam* and Pakhtunwali, we can say that girls are mainly at a disadvantageous side of this whole hegemonic male-dominated structure. Why they are not allowed to get education is yet to be explored. Still, the nexus of religion, patriarchy, and Pakhtunwali combine to not only impede girls' education but also exhibit the hegemonic masculine nature of men (Daraz & Khan, 2013). The nexus of religion also plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of people towards education. Pakhtuns all over are Muslims and vigorously follow their religion, Islam. Islam instructs its followers to seek knowledge irrespective of their sex. However, Islamization tends to reinforce conservative ideas regarding the role of men and women in the public sphere. Their emphasis on the traditional role of men and women is one of the barriers to education. Specifically, women are more affected by it; for example, the need to protect women's honour reinforces cultural norms that limit female mobility and discourage them from education (Islamization and the Pakistani economy). The religious parties' allied government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) banned co-education in the province while promising that separate institutions would be set up for girls. Still, due to financial constraints, they could not materialize their vision. The result is a vast literacy gap between the girls and the boys. This is one manifestation of the influence of religion or people associated with it and their misinterpretation of faith, which differentially affects women in society (Khan et al., 2018).

### **Problem Statement**

Pakistan is one of the most prominent examples of exploring the impact of conflict, violence, and war on education. Buckland (2005) and Jimenez (2006) mentioned in World Bank publications about the statistical evidence that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (previously known as NWFP) and tribal region (FATA), about 68 schools and three other educational institutions (a university, a degree college and a technical institute) were reported to have been attacked. Blowing up a school with bombs was common as in January 2009, three schools were blown up in Bajaur agency, Pakistan. In Khyber Agency, four schools were blown up in March 2010. Regarding the deaths of children (Masood, 2010) reported that 3 US soldiers and five schoolgirls were killed in a direct bomb attack on a school in Lower Dir, Pakistan. During 2008-2010, 95 schoolchildren were injured in direct attacks on schools in Swat, Dir and Bajaur regions during attacks on schools by militants. In addition, Walsh (2010) reported that some 15 schools were destroyed in KPK in 21 days due to the ongoing war between the Pakistan army and Taliban. In Dara Adam Khel (previously FATA), militants also blew up 16 schools in 2007. Bombs were also fired during the mentioned times in schools to threaten the government. Even after gaining control of the area still, schools were soft targets for the militants. Due to this situation, hundreds and thousands of children missed schooling years, dropped out, and showed poor educational performance (Hubbard, 2020).

Various news sources reported that three schools were damaged by militants in Peshawar, which was not even an active war zone. On 19 April 2010, the son of a police officer was killed by militants while going to school to internalize fear in the minds of the people. NBC news (2010) reported that on 26 March 2010, two primary schools in Bajaur were blown up. Hussain (2010) reported that on 13 June 2010, two schools in Peshawar were attacked by militants. IISS Armed Conflict Database (2010) said that on 13 June 2010, militants reportedly blew up four schools in Orakzai.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To present the status of attitude and perception towards education in the study's locale.
2. To explore the role of militancy in intensifying the negative attitude towards education in the study's location.

### Hypotheses and Assumptions

- Militancy significantly positively intensified the negative attitude towards education.

A negative attitude prevailed towards education in the study's locale even before militancy. The militants identified it and intensified the negative attitude towards education by internalizing the society with the notion that the Pakhtun culture has a significant resemblance with Islamic belief. The militants misinterpreted it in their favor.

### Methodology

The current study is mixed-method and cross-sectional, utilizing methods and techniques used in quantitative and qualitative research (Olsen, 2004).

The study locale is a recently merged tribal district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) is a badly affected region. The geographical arrangement of the seven Tribal Districts from north to south is Bajaur District, Mohmand District, Khyber District, Orakzai District, Kurram District, North Waziristan District, and South Waziristan District. The data has been collected from only three districts of FATA, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: The Number of Schools in 3 Districts of FATA**

| District         | Total schools | Secondary schools |
|------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Bajaur           | 653           | 249               |
| North Waziristan | 931           | 192               |
| South Waziristan | 785           | 172               |

Source: <https://bajaur.kp.gov.pk/page/educationdepartmentbajaur>

For the current study, a non-probability sampling technique has been utilized. The sample size for the study was 405 literate respondents, selected randomly from the sample area, i.e., 133 from Bajaur, 133 from North Waziristan and 131 from South Waziristan. The samples consisted of 339 (83.70%) males and 66 (16.30%) females. 68.64 % of respondents are from college level. The sample size was determined through the Uma Sekaran sample size table, whereas in qualitative data collection, the sample size was determined using the saturation point technique.

The research was a field-based study, and for primary data collection, a structured questionnaire was administered as a tool for data collection. A questionnaire was based on the Five-level Likert scale. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were tested prior to data collection. Factor loading/item reliability and Cronbach's Alpha have been used to check the questionnaire's internal consistency and content validity.

An interview guide was also used to collect information in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). A total of eight FGDs were conducted from the sample areas mentioned above. The collected information has been analyzed by study design.

### Data Analysis

The data collected from the field was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively using descriptive statistical tools, presenting the data in tables, charts, and graphs. The data was analyzed in univariate and bi-variate levels with the help of SPSS.

## Results

The different age groups of the respondents are demonstrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Age of the Respondents**

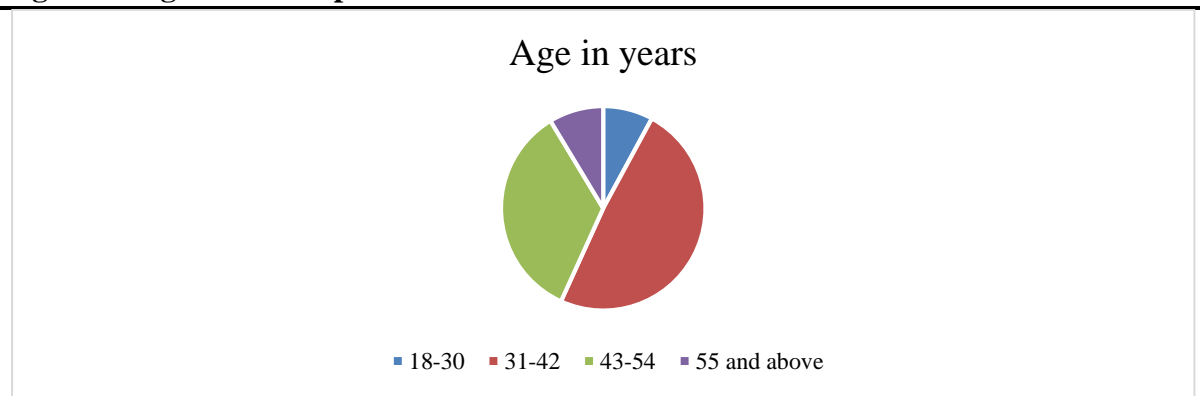


Table 2 demonstrates the gender and religious dimension regarding the role of militancy in intensifying the negative attitude towards secondary school education. With a high mean score of 4.02, it has been observed that the normative structure of tribal culture is responsible for lowering the educational ratio in secondary education, whereby 209 (52.6%) agreed and 162 (40.8%) strongly agreed with the statement. The reason for discontinuing the girl's education is found in early marriages. 204 (51.38%) and 143 (36.02%) respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the social norms preferred to marry girls soon after primary education, with a mean score of 4.02. 209 (52.6%) respondents agreed, and 170 (42.82%) strongly agreed that the misperceptions and interpretations regarding the early marriage of girls are the religious beliefs of people that strengthen their conservative attitude towards female education, with a mean score of 3.61. 201 (50.63%) respondents agreed, and 52 (12.84%) strongly agreed that females are independent of men, a significant trend and social stress to avoid girls' education. The mean score is 3.61. Girls' education is considered a social stigma, specifically with growing age, with a high mean score of 4.58. 139 (35.01%) and 215 (54.15%) respondents agreed and strongly agreed.

**Table 2: Gender and Religious Dimension**

| Statements  | Strongly disagree | Disagree    | Don't know  | Agree         | Strongly Agree | Mean Score |
|---|-------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| The normative structure (i.e., Pakhtun and tribal culture) Pakhtunwali is responsible for lowering the educational ratio at secondary education | 11 (2.8 %)        | 10 (2.5 %)  | 5 (1.3 %)   | 209 (52.6 %)  | 162 (40.8 %)   | 4.26       |
| The social norms prefer to marry girls as soon as possible; therefore, after primary education parents tend to discontinue female education     | 09 (2.26 %)       | 29 (7.30 %) | 12 (3.13 %) | 204 (51.38 %) | 143 (36.02 %)  | 4.02       |
| Religion (misperceptions and interpretations) is used to strengthen the conservative attitude towards female education                          | 10 (2.5 %)        | 4 (0.9 %)   | 4 (0.9 %)   | 209 (52.6 %)  | 170 (42.82 %)  | 4.56       |

|  |                |                  |                |                  |                  |      |
|--|----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|------|
| Conservative attitude towards women employment hinders female education  | 24<br>(6.1 %)  | 107<br>(26.95 %) | 13<br>(3.39 %) | 201<br>(50.63 %) | 52<br>(12.84 %)  | 3.61 |
| To ensure that female remain dependent on men, there is significant trend and stress in social norms not to educate females  | 24<br>(6.1 %)  | 107<br>(26.95 %) | 13<br>(3.39 %) | 201<br>(50.63 %) | 52<br>(12.84 %)  | 3.61 |
| Continuation of female education is considered as social stigma specifically with growing age; therefore, many of the female children discontinue education at secondary level | 09<br>(2.26 %) | 17<br>(4.28 %)   | 19<br>(4.78 %) | 139<br>(35.01 %) | 215<br>(54.15 %) | 4.58 |

A bi-variate level chi-square test was used. The relations between dependent and independent variables have been judged by using the formula designed by Karl Pearson (1900).

**Table 3: Chi-Square Test Militancy \* Gender and Religious Dimension**

|  | Value | Exact Sig. (2-sided) |
|--|-------|----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square   | 6.65  | 0.000                |
| a. 678 cells (94.0 %) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.00. |       |                      |
| b. Computed only for a 2x2 table.  |       |                      |

With the value of  $p=0.000$ , the chi-square test showed a significant result. This shows that there is an association between militancy and gender and religious dimensions.

**Table 4: Regression analysis of Militancy\* Gender and Religious Dimension**

| Variables Entered/Removed <sup>b</sup>                 |                   |                   |        |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|--------|
| Model  | Variables Entered | Variables Removed | Method |
| 1  | Militancy         | .                 | Enter  |
| a. All requested variables entered.                    |                   |                   |        |
| b. Dependent Variable: Gender and Religious Dimension. |                   |                   |        |

In the above table militancy is entered as independent variable and Gender and Religious Dimension as dependent variables. Therefore, it was hypothesized that militancy is strongly correlated with Gender and Religious Dimension.

**Table 5: Model Summary**

| Model                                | R                  | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1                                    | 0.823 <sup>a</sup> | 0.828    | 0.799             | 1.84112                    |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), militancy |                    |          |                   |                            |

The above table includes the  $R$  and  $R^2$  values whereby the  $R$  value is 0.823 (in the "R" Column), which indicates a high degree of correlation between militancy and Gender and

religious dimension. The  $R^2$  is 0.828 which is large in this case showing a high degree of correlation between militancy and gender and religious Dimension.

**Table 6: ANOVA<sup>b</sup>**

| Model |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1     | Regression | 21447.118      | 1   | 11507.011   | 6.234E4 | .000 <sup>a</sup> |
|       | Residual   | 1239.624       | 368 | 5.185       |         |                   |
|       | Total      | 14896.415      | 386 |             |         |                   |

a. Predictors: (Constant), militancy

b. Dependent Variable: Gender and Religious Dimension.

The significance value is  $p=0.000$ . This indicates a significant correlation between militancy (as an independent variable) and Gender and Religious Dimension (as dependent variable). The data is good for fitting.

**Table 7: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

| Model |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | T      | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|       |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| 1     | (Constant) | 5.113                       | 0.194      |                           | 15.149 | .000 |
|       | militancy  | 4.169                       | 0.056      | 0.825                     | 43.114 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: Gender and religious dimension

The Coefficients in the regression analysis provide a statistically significant relationship among militancy (as an independent variable) and gender and religious dimension (as dependent variable).

### Focal Group Discussion

The following are the specific extracts from the focus group discussion which are about the role of militants in intensifying negative attitude towards education in the study's locale.

*"... The situation of education was not good at the time of militancy. When the militants took control of this area, the educational situation deteriorated further. It was because of the policies and the perception and the acts of the militants, for example, they told people that they are doing the right things in context of not educating their children because it is a system made by the West to modernize the Pakhtun culture and to hurt Islam, so it was sort of their philosophy..."*

A participant added that:

*"...In my opinion, yes, the people were negative and had negative perception about education in this locality, but what militants did was inculcating and strengthening their perception about education that was to not educate their children to preserve their culture. And one thing which is very important in this regard is the comparison of Islamic values with Pashtun culture. Look, I know that Islam is something else and Pashtun culture is something else, but they mixed it, and this mixed*

*ideology deteriorated education in significant ways, specifically, if we consider the situation of female education....”*

## Discussion

Attacks on students and educational infrastructure have a disastrous effect on literacy rates, government, and society. It is difficult enough for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a resource-poor province, to afford to repair and renovate schools (Nawab, 2021). Addressing the psychological impact of militancy or terrorism on afflicted students and their families adds another burden to school administrators who are already stretched thin.

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 schoolgirls were allowed to be enrolled in schools.

Throughout history, girls' education has been a contested social, economic, political, and religious issue in the Pakhtun region of Pakistan. Studies suggested that the root causes of this gender gap are multifaceted and complex. Poverty, the lower status of women in society, and sociocultural issues coupled with poor access to schools, security, transportation, and lack of female teachers are some key areas discussed in the literature. Two decades of continuing war and conflict, extremism, and the introduction of strict cultural and religious ideologies have further complicated and magnified the issue of gender justice in education (Jamal, 2016).

Higher education projects planned for Bajaur, North Waziristan, and Hangu had to be shelved due to concerns about reaction from militant organizations; as a result, hundreds of scholarships offered to FATA students were wasted (Khan, 2018).

The situation of the locality was not feasible, or good education existed before and during the war. In this regard, Rizvi (2005) elucidated that in tribal regions of Pakistan, the situation was never supportive of education, specifically considering the 20th century. Embedded in the traditions of tribalism, the people of the locality always tried to remain as conservative as possible to avoid social change. People of the locality perceived that education threatened the normative structure (Pakhtunwali). Religion, culture, and the government's economic situation were also responsible for the lack of education in the study's locale. Jensen and Nielsen (1997) and Filmer and Pritchett (2001) support these findings by enumerating that in the developing world, numerous barriers prevail regarding schooling, including culture, religious misperception and, specifically, poverty. Nawaz (2018) also asserted that the educational setup was poor in tribal areas even before militancy.

The situation of education in tribal districts of KPK was not good at all, but the militants contributed significantly to further deterioration. Militants added to the misperception that schooling is a Western type of education and a threat to local culture and Islam. Elias (2014) and Khan (2016) support these findings. Militancy brought uncertainty, contributing to the deterioration of education as the government could not focus on investing in education. Khan and Khan (2021) assert that uncertainty is one outcome of militancy and war. In this connection, financial variables are significant.

## Conclusion

It is concluded that the militancy affected students' enrollment, dropout, and attendance in schools. Parents were affected in different ways; for instance, they were compelled because of fear of withdrawing their children from schools due to instability, migration, needs, and even threats.

The non-militant causes are also concluded to be significant in conjunction with militant causes. For instance, the location of schools from outside the village is a barrier, especially for females, to enrolling and attending the school, along with non-existent roads to schools. Culture

was also a barrier to secondary school education along with militancy. Religion was misinterpreted by the militants and coincided it with the Islam to intensify negative attitude towards education.

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

- The provincial/local government should rebuild the schools affected during the conflict.
- More budget should be allocated to the education sector to fulfil the requirement of quality education.
- The educational institutes should be provided with solid security to assure the safety of students.
- Promote gender equality and female education through awareness campaigns in the light of the Holy Quran and Sunnah.

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