

Pulwama Attack: The possible role of Social Identities in Radicalizing Youth for Execution

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Abstract

It is evident that the youths play a prominent role as protagonist of violence in conflicts (Neumayer, 2003) and therefore, children and youth's susceptibility of being exploited in the bad hands has increased manifolds worldwide (Cairns, 1996). The attack on security forces in Pulwama District of J&K in the recent past is a testimony in itself. The behavioral patterns to support conflict are quite contrary to the "Victim" image that masses have about the children and youth living in conflict settings. Further, the role played by the Social Identities in shaping and maintaining conflict is also widely accepted. The present study, therefore, analyzed the role played by the collective social identities in instigating youth to perpetuate conflict and maintaining delinquency, low levels of morality and aggressiveness in such conditions. Linkage among certain personality variables and conflict were explored in the present study by analyzing the series of research papers by Orla T Muldoon and by corroborating it with the research report prepared by Christopher Anderson in context of Social Identities, Identity formation, and youth living in conflict zones.

Keywords: Youth; Social Identity; Conflict; Authoritarianism; Foreclosure; Kashmir, Identity Formation.

Introduction

India lost more than 40 security personnel (Jawans) when the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) convoy en-route Jammu-Srinagar National Highway was attacked by a suicide bomber on 14th February, 2019 and thus, making the untoward incident as one of the most deadly attack in the history of protracted conflict since the onset of militancy in J&K. The attacker was identified as Adil Ahmad Dar, a 22 years old locale recruit of the banned terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), originally hailing from Pulwama district of the Kashmir region. Reports reveal that Adil Ahmad Dar dropped out from the school and joined terror outfit in the year 2017. Being dropped out could be a possible reason to assume Adil Ahmad Dar's exploitation by some bad-hands just like numerous others who are being exploited as child soldiers worldwide. However, it cannot be attributed solely that Adil Ahmad Dar was exploited just because he was a drop out and consequently, became the member of terror outfit. In contrast, it has also been reported many a times that the youth who joined various terror fronts were possessing good qualifications. Manaan Wani (PhD scholar), Esa Fazli (B.tech) and Junaid Ashraf Sehrai (MBA) were many among those Kashmiri youth who had good academic background but joined terror outfits later on. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that something more latent is the precursor of such behavioral tendencies especially to inflict deadly harm on others besides their level of literacy. It may be possible development of certain personality profiles or certain environmental "presses" arising out of protracted conflict may shape the youth of conflict region more susceptible to pick guns and consequently, coerce them to execute events like deadly "Pulwama Attack".

The protracted conflict in Kashmir is chiefly ethnic-identity based and therefore, it shall be of immense importance to know how the severity of exposure to identity based conflict is affecting youth's response to conflict and various other dimensions of their personality. Accordingly, to achieve the objective, the present research paper analyzed series of research papers by Orla T Muldoon, who has done notable work pertaining to the role of collective social identities, political violence, mental health in conflict areas and youth's response to conflict & their susceptibility to pick arms against the out-group(s). The essence of series of research papers was corroborated with the research report prepared by Christopher Anderson's work on child soldiers in Myanmar.

Shrinkhla Ek Shodhparak Vaicharik Patrika

Authors	Variables	Sample	Place	Sampling	Design	Statistics	Key Findings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orla Muldoon • Keith Wilson (2007) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health • Ideological Commitment • Self esteem • Conflict 	N=96	Northern Ireland	Not mentioned	Comparative Study	Not mentioned	Experience to conflict and commitment to ideologies were positively related. Both interacted and predicted mental health and self esteem.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orla Muldoon • Katrina • Rougier • Karen Trew (2008) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Violence • Youth bulge • Motivation • Social Identification 	N=74	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irish Republic • Ireland 	Purposive	Not mentioned	Grounded Theory	Young people's para-military involvement was sought and analyzed via Grounded theory approach. Four categories were found, namely, Social Identification explanations, family and socialization explanations, pathological explanations, developmental explanations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ciara Downes • Orla Muldoon (2007) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PTSD • Political Violence • National Identity 	N=3000 Adults	Northern Ireland	Random Sampling	Not mentioned	Computer Assisted Telephonic Interview	Those with the clinical symptoms of PTSD were from low income groups, rated national identities as unimportant and had higher experience of violence.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orla Muldoon (2013) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence • Childhood • Social Identity • Psychological distress • Aggressive behaviour 	N.A	Review Paper	Review Paper	Review Paper	Review Paper	Paper reviewed psychological impact of violence on children. Political violence elicits both distress and aggressive behaviour among children. Social Identity approach was used to infer both the contrary clinical experiences.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kathrina Schmid • Orla Muldoon (2013) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived threat • Social Identification • psychological well being • Exposure to Conflict 	N=1515	Northern Ireland	Not mentioned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediation • Moderation 	Latent Class Analysis & SEM	Relationship between perceived intergroup threat and psychological well being was studied with the mediation effect of social identification and moderation effect of Exposure to conflict. Perceived threat was associated negatively and positively via social identification, with psychological well being.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kathrina Schmid • Orla Muldoon • Ciara Downes (2009) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Identification • psychological well being • Exposure to conflict 	N=3000	Northern Ireland & Republic of Ireland	Random Sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderation • Mediation 	ANOVA	National Identification mediates the effect of direct political violence on mental health. It also affects .individuals' experience of violence and psychological well being. These findings were consistent with ISIS model.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christopher Anderson (2009)s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity Formation • Armed Conflict 	N=14	Myanmar	Not mentioned	Framework From Grotevant and Cooper's manual.	Interviews (semi-structured)	A high rate of foreclosure Identity was found for most identity status domain. Results shows that spending formative years in conflict relate protracted refugee situation is willingness to take up arms.

Aim of the Study

The aim of paper is to find out the adaptive personality variables in conflict zones and the possible role of social identification in shaping such variables.

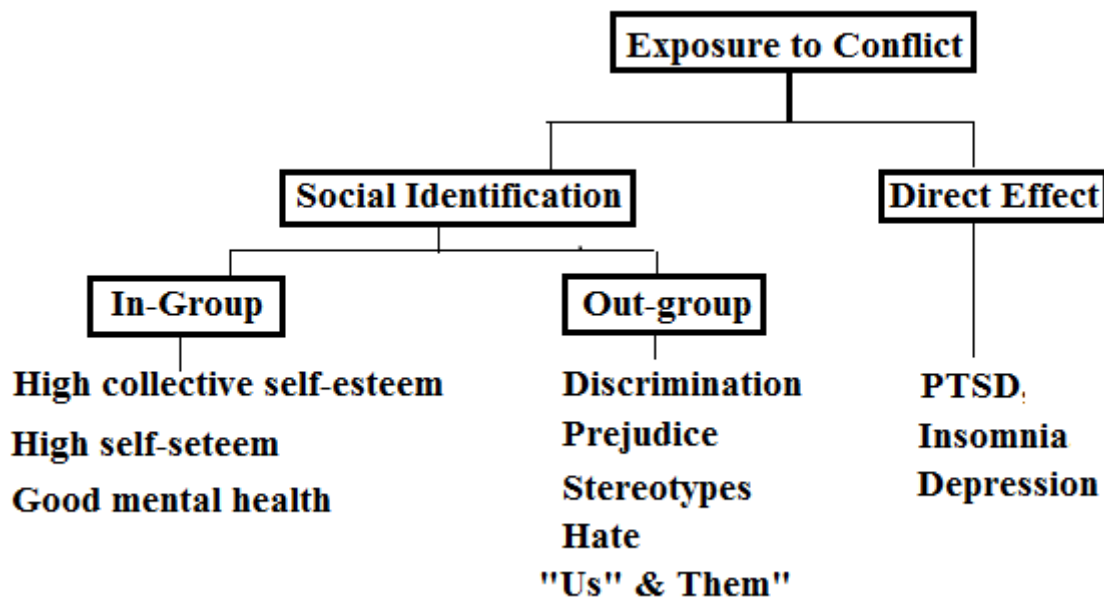
Conclusion

The series of research papers reviewed points out that collective social identities play crucial role in violent settings. These social identities not only play important role in creating and maintaining conflict but also protects mental health of youth who identify more with their in-groups. The role of social identities becomes more salient when conflict with the out-group(s) is based on identity. Since conflict in the Kashmir province is also based on ethnic identity, it may be assumed that both the contrary clinical observations (Protection of mental health as well as instigating youth for aggression) can be observed in the youth of Kashmir also.

The relation between conflict and collective social identities is often viewed from the prism of Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Self categorization theory (SCT) developed after the 1st World War. Both the theories try to explain the discrimination and prejudice towards the out-group(s). However, the protective role of social identities

in protecting psychological well being of youth residing in conflict areas is also evident in various studies now-a-days. Therefore, it can be assumed that identifying more with a group has two possible repercussions. First, identifying more with a social ethnic group helps people to feel better about their group and as a consequence, about themselves. Thus, identification helps in raising collective self esteem of an individual by identifying with a group, which in turn raises the self esteem of an individual. Secondly, while understanding the group dynamics in the context of political violence, Social Identity approach has delineated possible reasons for group level or collective violence because identifying more with a group also helps in the development of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination (authoritarian attitude) towards the out-group. Since distress and aggression are the two possible consequences of any political conflict, Social Identity theory tries to explain both of them explicitly along with the protective role it plays in removing the ill effects of the distress in such settings and secondly, the role it plays in proliferating violence. Diagrammatically it can be explained as below:

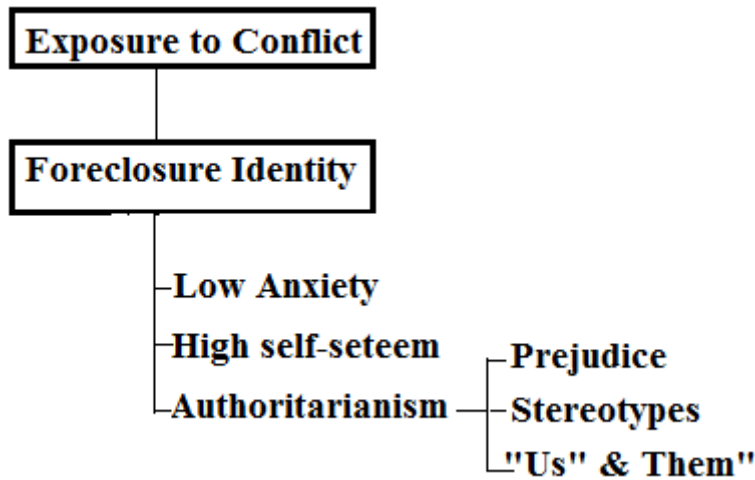
Table: 1 showing the protective role of Social Identification in conflict settings



The qualitative study conducted by Anderson (2009), in which he tried to find the linkages between identity formation processes in sensitive periods of life while living in refugee situations and further, the child's chances of proliferating conflict in later years of their lives. He designed and analyzed the interviews through the

prism of Ego Identity Theory given by James Marcia in combination with Urie Brofenbrenner's Ecological Systems model. Results revealed that ten out of fourteen respondents were in the category of foreclosure identity status, a very high dimension of authoritarianism.

Table: 2 showing the identity formation process in conflict zones

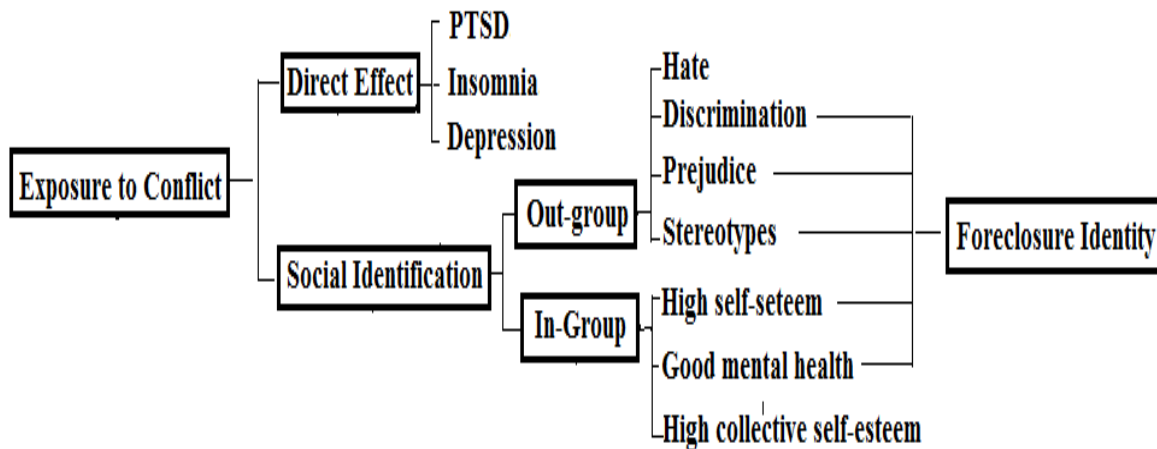


Discussion

First, it was observed that over identification with the in-group(s) in conflict settings protects mental health of the youth and sideways, increases the ability to aggravate conflict in a violent manner towards the out-group(s). Second, it is also evident from the literature that the Foreclosed identity is most suitable identity to which the youth adapts in conflict settings and help fomenting conflict. Perusal of both the observations hints that the

variable which social identification facilitates shares similarity with the personality variables found in Foreclosed Identity. Refer tables (1&2) above in this context. Therefore, it can be assumed that social identification in any given context of conflict setting may shape foreclosed identities, that is, the most suitable identity to which the youth adapts in violent settings. Diagrammatically it may be represented as below:

Table: 3 showing the possible linkages between social identification and foreclosed identity status



Summing up, it can be assumed that the whenever identities are salient in violent settings, they play a major role in creating, sustaining and proliferation of conflict. Further, they may shape personality variable which are adaptive in such settings and have the ability to aggravate conflict without any sense of guilt. Since the protracted conflict in Kashmir is also identity (ethnic identity) based, it can be assumed that the suicide bomber who attacked on the CRPF convoy in Pulwama in February, 2019 may have had strong commitment toward his collective ethnic identity and further, personality variables close to identity status, namely foreclosure.

Limitations and Recommendations

The present paper made conjectures on the basis of some limited papers only. Accordingly, it is recommended that a quantitative and qualitative analysis

of the above mentioned variables should be done to arrive at strong conclusion.

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