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Impact of security issues on social workers

A study of conflict-ridden areas of north-west Pakistan



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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of security issues on the lives and work of social workers during the on-going political conflict in the north-west Pakistan. This purpose was investigated by exploring the research questions focused on threats faced by the social workers, their impact on the personal and professional lives of social workers and the coping mechanisms they used to continue their work.

A mixed method qualitative research design was used to conduct the research. Initially nine one-to-one in-depth interviews were conducted followed by a focused group discussion with five social workers working in north-west Pakistan. Theoretical perspectives of power, gender and systems were used to analyze the findings of this research.

The findings show that the social workers found radical religious views of the clerics and Taliban, strong gendered ideas of the communities and discrimination against ethno-religious minorities as posing the threats to their personal and professional lives. The social workers work in a low profile so that they are not spotted by the militants and use prior engagement and networking with the communities as their key risk management strategy.

The study concludes that it is the power relations existing between different systems such as that of religious clergy, militancy and the gender systems encircled by a macro-system of radical religious norms and culture in the communities that create an insecure environment for the social workers. The study also shows that the social workers need to be sensitive to these issues when engaging with communities so not to disturb their norms and values before working in these communities. The study confirmed the need identified in previous researches for training and education for social workers to equip them with knowledge and skills to work in situations of political conflicts.

Key words: ethno-religious minorities, gender, militancy, Pakistan, political conflict, radicalism, social work, violence.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The world today is faced with many political conflicts which most of the time are also violent. In such situations of conflict the social workers need to provide crucial and varied services to those who are affected by the conflict. However, being part of the communities where the conflict is occurring or just being positioned in a conflict zone the social workers themselves are both directly and indirectly impacted by the security issues in a political conflict. In Pakistan a lot has been written on the social work practice in the country while there are international studies present as well that focus on various social work practices and social issues. However, the studies have not focused explicitly on the security challenges that social workers have to face while carrying out their practices in the conflict zones.

BACKGROUND AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

Pakistan has been a victim of violent conflicts since its inception. The conflicts have been of various natures. There have been sectarian conflicts, ethnic and linguistic conflicts, religious and political conflicts, conflicts over provincial autonomy as well as wars. The violence during conflicts had usually been impacting a part of the country and never had a countrywide impact. However, the conflict between the Taliban of Pakistan and the government of Pakistan that started as a result of Pakistan's alliance with the United States in war on terror impacted the whole country and people from all spheres of life. The Taliban retaliated against the government mainly through suicide bombings specifically on the armed and security forces but also on general public. Since 2007, militants have carried out many suicide attacks which have killed, as of 2010, over 35,000 civilians and 3,500 security personnel with thousands injured (Anon., 2012). The acts of terrorism by the Taliban continue today as well, however, their number and intensity has gone down somewhat since 2010 (Anon., 2012). The conflict has although affected the whole country, however, the Taliban insurrection is mainly confined to the Pathan areas, that is, north-west of Pakistan.

The north-west part of Pakistan includes the province of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa (KP), Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the northern part of the province of Baluchistan. These areas are mainly inhabited by Pathans who are an ethnic group living in north-west Pakistan and Afghanistan for centuries. In tribal and rural culture Pathans identify very strongly with Pathan nationalism before identifying themselves as Pakistanis (Lieven, 2011). Therefore the Pathans across the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan are connected with a strong ethnic sentiment. I will describe the three areas separately to give a brief overview of their key features before explaining why Taliban insurrection is mainly confined to these areas. The Pathan culture in KP, Baluchistan and FATA is different from the culture of Pathans living in other parts of Pakistan and thus cannot be generalized to all Pathans.

FEDERALLY ADMINISTERED TRIBAL AREAS (FATA)

FATA consists of seven semi-autonomous tribal agencies or administrative units. Map 1 shows the seven agencies of FATA bordering with Afghanistan on the west, KP on the east and Baluchistan in the south. Historically FATA has had a semi-autonomous administrative and political status since the British times (Anon., 2010). In the 1890s the frontier - Durand line - drawn between the British India and Afghanistan cut off the tribes living on both sides. However, this line was supposed to define the influence of each government only and did not impact the 'proprietary and grazing rights' of the tribes on each side (Lieven, 2011). To this day the tribes still see the Durand line as such and do not consider it a border dividing the two countries (Lieven, 2011) and there is free movement between the tribes on both sides of the border. The British never introduced a system of direct control in FATA as they considered the people of FATA to be too independent-minded and too heavily armed as well as inaccessible because of the difficult terrain (Lieven, 2011). Pakistan inherited the system as it is after its inception and continued with it. According to the official website of the government of Pakistan 'FATA has not been given the same priority as other parts of Pakistan in terms of development and their major population has been deprived of opportunities for social uplift and development' (Anon., 2010).

The population of FATA is mainly Pathan and apart from the Turi tribe in Kurram agency who are Shia (a Muslim minority sect) mainly belong to the

areas lack the culture and facilities for education. Similarly, the rural areas lack most welfare facilities such as healthcare, income generation activities for both men and women etc. Poverty is evident in the rural communities and according to UNDP it is 9% higher than the national average rate (Anon., 2011).



Map 2: Map of Baluchistan

BALUCHISTAN

Baluchistan is the geographically largest province of Pakistan but is inhabited by only 7% of the country's population. The province mainly has Baluch tribes as well as 40% Pathan population with some minorities such as Hazara. The major religion is Sunni Islamic while Shias and Ahmedis are also found in minority. Map 2 shows different districts of Baluchistan. The northern part of Baluchistan, specially the city of Quetta has the majority population of Pathans. Like KP, Baluchistan also has differences in rural and urban population in terms of education, health care and livelihood opportunities. Since 2001 Quetta and the Pathan districts of Baluchistan have become hosts to the Afghan Taliban. Much of the Taliban leadership regrouped in the Pathan districts of Baluchistan (Lieven, 2011). Baluchistan also suffers from nationalist conflict between the Baluch tribes and the government of Pakistan. Although this conflict is big, however, it is not discussed and focused in this study because its nature and impact on population is different from the one between the government and the Taliban. This study focuses on the Pathan

areas of north-west Pakistan since this is where the Taliban's insurgency and presence exists.

THE CONFLICT

The reason for Taliban's insurgency to be dominant in the Pathan areas only is because both in Pakistan and Afghanistan, Taliban is mainly a Pathan phenomenon with its deep roots in Pathan history and culture (Lieven, 2011). The Pathans have been involved in Islamist resistances to the British colonialists, the soviet invaders in Afghanistan in 1979, and for them the U.S. attack on Afghanistan in 2001 was a similar invasion of an Islamic regime which they considered should be resisted through '*jihad*' or holy war (Lieven, 2011). The appeal of *jihad* is understandable for the Pathan tribes of FATA, KP and Baluchistan because their tribal culture strongly instructs them to stand up to defend their tribal freedom which historically mostly had been done in the name of religion (Lieven, 2011). The upsurge of militancy among the Pakistani Pathans after 2001 was due overwhelmingly to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and the influence of the Afghan Taliban (Lieven, 2011). The Pakistani Taliban and Afghan Taliban are different movements. The Pakistani Taliban is not a tight movement like the Afghan Taliban, but they are a loose alliance of several autonomous Islamist radical groups and commanders under the nominal leadership of an *amir* (commander) (Lieven, 2011). These groups have come together in response to the government of Pakistan's alliance with the U.S. in overthrowing the Taliban government in Afghanistan. The current *amir* of Pakistani Taliban is from south Waziristan - a tribal agency of FATA. Some Pakistani Taliban are close to Al-Qaida and are involved in war in Afghanistan, while others focus on local power and transformation of local societies according to their versions of Islam (Lieven, 2011).

In 2004, the Pakistani army moved in to Waziristan to fight the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban who were taking refuge in these areas. The Taliban retaliated with both fighting on the ground with the army and also by attacking security forces throughout Pakistan. In 2006 the U.S. started drone attacks on the tribal areas of Pakistan where they claimed the militants were hiding. The drone attacks killed not only militants but civilians including women and children as well and displaced a population of around 3 million (Ghaus, 2010; Haq, 2008). This created a lot of resentment in the people of FATA against the U.S. and the Pakistani government and they supported Taliban in their fight against both. Until 2007 the Taliban attacks towards Pakistan were confined to the security forces. However, in 2007 the government carried out a major military operation against the militants operating through the *Lal Masjid* (red mosque) in the capital city Islamabad. As a result of this military operation the Taliban extended their attacks to general public (Lieven, 2011). The nature of conflict

is quite complex in the north-west Pakistan. The people in these areas have been supporting the Afghan Taliban for *jihad* against U.S. and its allies and even considered it wrong that the government of Pakistan is supporting the U.S. However, they also detested the terrorist attacks by the Taliban on the people of Pakistan because it impacts general public in the north-west Pakistan as well. Taliban, thus, face both resistance and support in the communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan for these reasons.

As the attacks became common, the media also started to report attacks on NGOs (Ghaus, 2010). However, these attacks seemed to be of more direct nature as the offices of NGOs were attacked in KP. During the last two years, there have been reports of kidnapping of social workers as well who are taken to Waziristan and held there for ransom. Social work is mainly carried out by the NGOs in Pakistan. The NGOs rapidly grew in number in Pakistan during the 1980s and 90s as response to various human rights violations, unstable and corrupt governments and inefficiency of the governments to carry out development and welfare for the people (Ghaus, 2010). The influx of donors during the 1990s also added to the growth of both national and international NGOs (Ghaus, 2010). These NGOs took up a number of issues as their agendas and have been active in social care and welfare for women and children, unemployable youth, people with disabilities, refugees, address the issues of domestic violence, honour killing, drug addiction, provide health and educational services, provide relief and rehabilitation during natural disasters, work for better governance and accountability and now on counter-extremism measures (Ghaus, 2010). Given that the rural and tribal communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan have been suffering from poverty, natural disasters and lately war, the NGOs started working in these communities but have had to face direct threats while working there. The kidnapping of the social workers is still going on. This situation motivated me to seek to understand that if the social workers are going to these communities to work for assistance and service why are they facing direct threats that are impacting their lives and their work.

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this research is, therefore, to understand what kind of unsafe security situation the social workers face when they go to these communities, what threatens their lives and work and how do they cope with these situations to continue their work and reach out to the people who need social work.

I am, therefore, investigating the following problem:

“The ongoing conflict in north-west Pakistan has created an unsafe security situation that impacts the social workers and their practices in north-west Pakistan.”

This problem is explored by seeking answers to the following research questions:

1. What kind of security threats are faced by the social workers in north-west Pakistan?
2. How the security issues affect the personal lives of the social workers?
3. How the security issues affect the professional lives of the social workers?
4. How do the social workers cope with the security issues to continue their practices?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM FROM A SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE

Social workers are not immune to the political environment especially when these conflicts are turned violent. The conflict has ramifications, of personal and professional nature, for both social workers and service users (Guru, 2010). There are currently many violent conflicts going on in various parts of the world and social workers have to work and deal with such situations where the security conditions are unsafe. This creates the need for social workers to have knowledge of working in conflicting situations (Campbell & McCrystal, 2005; Ramon et al., 2006; Baum, 2007; Guru, 2010). Moreover, the conflict situation can have psychological and emotional impact on social workers that can last very long (Covington, et al., 2002). Thus, they not only have to deal with traumas and sufferings of the service users but have to be concerned about their own emotional, psychological and physical health and personal safety as well. It is therefore important for the social work discipline to address these issues explicitly and have knowledge of the implications that conflict can have on their work.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM FROM AN ACADEMIC RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

In Pakistan there is usually a dearth of research in every area. Social work is a neglected area as well in this regard and not many researches are available reflecting the experiences of the social workers of working in conflict

situations. There are a few reports available from NGOs as well as from some private institutes of policy studies that have reported that along with people from other spheres of life, employees of NGOs also have to face security threats in Pakistan during various conflicts, but most of these reports do not incorporate information on why specific threats to NGOs and social workers are created and how they impact the social workers. Many researchers who have worked on similar topics in Palestine, Israel and Northern Ireland have expressed that despite the number of ongoing conflicts in the world and its importance for social work and similar disciplines this area is under-researched (Campbell & McCrystal, 2005; Ramon et al., 2006; Baum, 2007; Guru, 2010). The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) has funded a network called International Social Work for Peace (ISWP) to encourage research on impact of conflict on social work to generate knowledge on what social workers should be prepared for when they go to work in conflict situations that pose security threats to them and their clients. The IASSW also encourages generating knowledge to be included in social work curriculum so that the importance of ethical dilemmas can also be discussed when working in a conflict situation. This research can be a contribution to increase knowledge of working in a conflict situation and its impact on social workers and service delivery for the clients.

The next chapter reviews the previous research conducted on similar issues of social workers working in conflict and post-conflict situations. Afterwards the theoretical framework is presented for this study which is followed by the research methodology. This is followed by the chapter on findings and then a chapter on analysis. The final chapter presents conclusions and reflections on this thesis.

Chapter Two: Review of Previous Research

A review of previous research shows that the topic of political conflict and its impact on social work is an under-researched area in the literature. Most research on this topic has been conducted in Israel, Palestine and Northern Ireland (Ramon et al., 2006; Baum, 2007; Campbell & McCrystal, 2005; Baum & Ramon, 2010; Shamai & Boehm, 2001), whilst there are some researches on the role of social work in war on terror as well (Guru, 2010).

Campbell and McCrystal (2005) carried out a study on the impact of the violent political conflict on mental health professionals in Northern Ireland which inspired further studies in Israel and Palestine where researchers conducted studies on various social work professionals and their practice during the Arab-Israel conflict. Campbell and McCrystal surveyed 80 mental health professionals who were working within an environment of post-sectarian conflicts between the Catholics and Protestants. In this post-conflict environment the establishment of Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive which followed the Belfast agreement of 1998 encouraged reflections on the past violence, identify the needs of the victims of violence and explore new ways to address those needs (Campbell & McCrystal, 2005). There were numerous reports published that identified a breadth of needs of the victims, however, Campbell and McCrystal argued that the question of how well the social workers were equipped to deal with such wide range of needs of clients and their own painful memories and thoughts, remained unanswered. Campbell and McCrystal considered that this time of introduction of policy and practice change was appropriate to address the question of impact of the political conflict on the social workers and on the management and practice in this field. The study revealed that the social workers were working with complex religious and national identities and have faced high level of conflict related incidents as well while carrying out their duties in conflict-ridden areas. The study also revealed that most social workers had very little support from their organizations and very little training to deal with the problems faced.

Baum (2012) carried out a study with 15 social workers living in a stricken area of Israel that was subjected to repeated Qassam attacks during the one-month-long Gaza war (Baum, 2012). This study captured the experiences of social workers during war and differed from those that follow the impact of a single terror attack or natural disasters on the social workers. This study focused on the impact of the on-going war on the daily lives and professional duties of the social workers. The respondents in the study revealed the adoption of an 'emergency routine', that is, to stay constantly prepared and vigilant to meet with the demands of regular and emergency work (Baum, 2012). Since the war was on going, therefore, the threat of a new Qassam attack at any moment created a situation of constant anxiety for social workers for both home and work. As parents they had to plan safe child-care arrangements while they were at work and as professionals they had to deal with the pressure of both regular duties and emergency work. Here, Baum also points to the different feelings of social workers about work depending on whether they do or do not have young children to take care of. The respondents who did not have children or their children were out of danger zone found respite in going to work to find some meaning and normalcy in their lives as opposed to being at home getting the news about the war. The study also discussed the intense emotional pressure that the emergency routine caused and anger and resentment by the interviewees that they were being taken for granted by the system and were left to deal with their fears and needs on their own (Baum, 2012).

A study of impact of political conflict on social work looked at the experiences of social workers in three parallel studies in Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestine (Ramon et al., 2006). Despite the different contexts and nature of conflicts in the three areas, the study highlighted the burden of working and living in an environment of violent political conflict for both service users and social workers in all three areas. The common feelings of emotional stress, fear and anxiety among the social workers was also highlighted in all three areas. The study also details the problems faced by the service users due to the political conflicts and the challenges that the social workers had to face in dealing with those needs. Daily social work practices and daily lives of the social workers were also reported to be affected by on-going violent incidents such as bomb scares, physical injuries due to such incidents, traffic disruption and difficulties in reaching to the work place. In all three places the respondents also talked about the resilience they had developed and were continuing work despite all the challenges that they had to face. This study also gives importance to the ethical dilemmas that the social workers have to face when they are working in an environment of strong ethnic or sectarian conflicts. Not only that the social workers themselves have to face sectarian harassments in their daily lives but also they have to work with colleagues belonging to the conflicting sect or ethnicity. Moreover, they also have clients

belonging to the conflicting sects and ethnicities who may insult the social workers' sect or ethnicity. The study points out that in such situations the social work values are tested. These values and ethical dilemmas have also been addressed in studies by Surinder Guru (2010) who talks about the estrangements between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities in the United Kingdom after the 7/7 bombings. Baum (2007) also highlights these factors that can come in to play due to violent political conflicts in social work practice with members of the rival community. Ramon et al. (2006) refer to the study by Pinkerton and Campbell (2002) on Troubles of Northern Ireland, where the social workers usually took a neutral stance to the sectarian violence rather than challenging it because it was safer. Moreover, the issue of coloured perceptions about a client or a colleague belonging to an opposing group is also highlighted in most studies. For instance, Ramon et al. (2006) mention that it is highly difficult for a Palestinian care worker after being humiliated by the Israeli soldiers on the road to have an unbiased attitude towards an Israeli colleague.

Baum (2007) discusses the consequences of social workers trying to exclude any kind of political matter from social work. Baum refers to Shamai (1999) whose study suggest that avoidance of political matters can be attributed to the fact that controversial political issues are not related to the problems addressed by the social work and also because in social work it is considered that the political attitudes of clients and workers are not appropriate issues for intervention or discussion (Baum, 2007). Baum suggests that this can also be because of the social workers' feelings of helplessness to resolve a political conflict and reluctance to start a political debate. Baum also refers to Shamai and Boehm (2001) who suggest that ignoring the political conflict may miss the opportunities of working on new alternatives and can also damage the effectiveness of social work.

On a similar note Surinder Guru (2010) argues that the impact of war on terror on social work cannot be ignored and the social workers need to take a more political and critical stance rather than an 'objective' one. He talks about this in the context of the impact of counter terrorism policies initiated by the government of the UK on Muslim communities, especially after the 7/7 bombings in 2005, and suggested that a simple casework approach cannot address the whole situation. Shamai and Boehm (2001) more specifically focus on the impact of national politics on social work to address this issue. They argue that the national politics and social work have a connection but it is not very obvious and has not been discussed much in literature. Moreover, they suggest that in dealing with threatening situations that affect the clients and social workers the source of these situations, which mainly arise from the national politics, is usually ignored. Further Shamai and Boehm argue for the need to develop professional policies for politically oriented interventions that

create a safe context in which clients and professionals can open up to discuss political issues and not turn it into a political debate, and where professionals become aware of the contextual and professional dangers that can harm the mental and physical well being of the clients and workers (Shamai & Boehm, 2001).

The studies highlight that living and working in societies where conflict is prolonged have negative impacts not only on service users but social workers as well where they try to cope with the situation and sometimes avoid in silence the sensitive issues of moral and ethical dilemmas either for themselves or for someone belonging to the opposing groups involved in the conflict (Baum, 2007; Ramon et al., 2006). Apart from all the negative impacts of a conflict on the social work practice and the workers, the studies also highlight the positive developments among practitioners. Baum and Ramon (2010) mention the study of Batten and Orsillo (2002) who found out that the emotional intensity after 9/11 enabled the therapists to be in better contact with their clients' emotions and work more empathically with them. Other studies have noticed increase in desire to help victims, a renewed commitment and sense of purpose among the social workers and a sense of personal and professional growth (Baum & Ramon, 2010). All studies have, however, pointed out the need for training, professional development and support that is required for the social workers to deal with violent conflict situations (Ramon et al., 2006; Baum, 2007; Campbell & McCrystal, 2005; Baum & Ramon, 2010; Shamai & Boehm, 2001).

Chapter Three: Theoretical Perspectives

A discussion of the previous research shows that in situations of political conflicts there are often unarticulated power struggles taking place between the social workers, NGOs, clients and the governments. In my study of the challenges to social workers in Pakistan I explicitly explore these power relations that create threats and impact personal and professional lives of the social workers. This chapter presents a number of relevant theoretical perspectives and definitions of important terms used in this paper.

THEORIES OF POWER

The concept of power is an important one to explore within all social work practices. In a situation where social workers are in an environment of violent conflict and are facing direct threats to their lives and work, it is important to explore various power relations that play a role in creating such an insecure environment. Lukes (2005) gives a three dimensional view of power in which he suggests that one-dimensional power can be seen as power over someone when a clear overt conflict is present between the dominated and the dominant, where the latter makes the former do what s/he wants contrary to the interest of the dominated. In such a situation it can clearly be seen who gains and who loses.

In a two dimensional view power exists in a covert dimension when the decision making is triumphed by the dominant but also when the dominant - consciously or unconsciously - places or reinforces barriers in the ways of the dominated to make decisions (Lukes, 2005).

In the three dimensional view Lukes (2005) considers that the dominated does things that s/he wouldn't do if the dominant was not determining, shaping and influencing their will. This, however, can happen in a situation of latent conflict which is present in a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude (Lukes, 2005).

Lukes suggests that the third dimension or the radical dimension sees power as the manipulation of will of the dominated by the dominant whether conscious or unconscious. In order to explore the multitude of ways in which the social workers and their work is impacted when performed in an insecure environment exploring both latent and overt conflicts as well as mechanisms of dominations is important.

SYSTEMS THEORY

Systems perspective is important in social work because it focuses on its social perspective rather than the individualistic issues. Payne (2005) states that systems focus on connections between and resources of families and groups and their effective functioning. Payne refers to Pincus and Manhan (1973) to further explain that systems are entities with boundaries within which physical and mental energies are exchanged. Open systems exchange these energies across their boundaries, therefore, receiving input from outside, use this energy (throughput) and then provide an output of how they use the energy input from outside the boundaries. Pincus and Manhan (1973) gave the system that social workers use as part of their practice. This system includes four subsystems that impact each other and the social work practice. Payne (2005) refers to them as the following:

- i) change agent system: social workers and the organizations that they work in
- ii) client system: people, groups, families, communities who seek help and engage in working with the change agent system
- iii) target system: people whom the change agent system is trying to change to achieve its aims
- iv) Action system: people with whom the change agent system works to achieve its aims.

The client, target and action systems may or may not be the same. However, all four of these systems influence each other. The system theory further gives the idea of reciprocity, that is, if one part of system changes, that change interacts with all other parts (Payne, 2005). Also there are feedback loops in the system that informs it of the affect its outputs had on the environment (Payne, 2005). The systems also use their own energy to keep going to sustain themselves (Payne, 2005). The dynamics within the change agent system, that is, the system social workers are working within affect the rest of the systems and vice versa. Considering NGOs to be open systems that interact with other open systems in their environment, this theory provides important grounds to study

how different systems exchange energy and create an insecure environment for the NGOs.

THEORIES OF GENDER SYSTEMS

Initially I had not planned to study the gender dimension of the insecurities faced by the social workers in the communities of KP, FATA and Baluchistan. However, after the interviews gender stood out as one of the main themes and it was clear that the male and female workers are impacted in different ways because of the security issues. Therefore, I consider it appropriate to use the integrated theory of gender-division of labour and reproduction of female disadvantage to study the gender dimension of security threats. Chafetz (1998) discussed various systems of gender division of labour to conclude that at the central support mechanism for the perpetuation of female disadvantage in gender stratified societies is the division of labour both at the micro level of the family and the macro level of the wider society. This gendered division of labour, by which women are primarily responsible for child rearing, familial and domestic tasks, and men's chief responsibilities to be in non-domestic tasks as those of polity, economy and other social and cultural institutions are the root of gender based power differences (Chafetz, 1988).

Chafetz (1988) uses the concepts of resource power and definitional power that men possess in the society which perpetuate the female disadvantage. Resource power refers to the power that can wield compliance from another through real or threatened bribery or coercion and it depends on the extent to which the wielder controls the resources that are valuable and not easily accessible to the complier (Chafetz, 1988). Definitional power is the ability of a person or group to impose values, norms, standards of judgment, and situational definitions on others. Definitional power is rooted in the resource power (Chafetz, 1988). Chafetz argues that in gender stratified societies men generally have a superior power over women. Both forms of power, resource and definitional, can then be used at macro levels of society and micro levels of family. I will use this theory to show how the gender stratification is maintained and reproduced in the conflict areas and creates an insecure environment specifically for women social workers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theories, therefore, provide a framework with power as an overarching concept to be explored in different systems present in the conflict situation. The different systems experience power within them and also influence other

systems around them when they exchange energies. The gender systems also fit within these systems of power. The resource and definitional powers defined by Chafetz (1998) can also be seen as third dimensional power where there is a latent conflict between the male and female gender. The real interests of the male elite who exercise power and the female complier are contradictory whether conscious or unconscious. This power is rooted in the social and cultural norms and values and thus perpetuates at both micro level of the family and macro level of the society.

DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

RADICALISM/RADICAL ISLAMISTS

There are numerous versions of Islam that are followed by the people of Pakistan as well as in the north-west part of the country. I am using the term of radical Islamists or radical religious views referring to a very rigid version of Islam followed by some sub-sects of Sunni Muslims. This version is mainly concerned about public morality and its followers are fundamentalists in the sense that they advocate a radical reform of the contemporary Muslim society (Lieven, 2011). This version is followed by the Taliban as well as many tribes in the tribal and rural areas of KP, Baluchistan and FATA, who emphasize on their way of Islam to be the only way. Thus Taliban would consider any one going against their version of Islam to be enemies of Islam.

SECURITY ISSUES/SECURITY SITUATION

Security issues or security situation in this research refer to an unsafe security environment or condition that threatens the physical and/or mental security of the social workers. Security situation is frequently used by the NGOs in Pakistan in the same meaning which is why I am using it here in this research as well.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology of this research. The chapter presents the research design and the rationale for choosing it, information about selecting participants for the research, validity, reliability and generalizability of the research. The chapter concludes with outlining the ethical considerations taken in to account while designing and conducting the research.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative approach to data collection has been selected for this research. A mixed methods design was used to do one-to-one in-depth interviews with various social workers and also conducting focused group discussions. Brannen (2005) suggests that the choice of methods to be mixed or otherwise depends on three kinds of rationales: paradigms, pragmatics and politics. The methods for this research are chosen on the rationale of paradigm. The paradigmatic rationale associates certain paradigms with specific methods. Brannen (2005) mentions that mainly two philosophical traditions are found in mixed methods debate, i.e., positivism (to gather data on actions and behaviour of people) and interpretivism (to explore how people make sense of their actions, behaviours and surroundings). Positivism has mostly been associated with quantitative methods while interpretivism with qualitative methods of research. Brannen (2005) further argues that a research usually comprises of a set of complex research questions rather than a single question. Therefore, some research questions might be framed with interpretivist assumptions while others can come from a positivist or realist assumption and thus might need different methods to find the best answers. The methods for this research are thus chosen in accordance with the particular framing of the research questions. The paradigm for this research is mainly interpretive as it seeks to find the experience of the social workers of working in a conflict situation and how that affects their lives and work.

Initially an interview guide was prepared to conduct nine semi-structured in-depth and face-to-face interviews with social workers. A semi-structured or semi-standardized interview guide not only provides a systematic and

consistent order to the interviewer but also gives them the space to probe far beyond the answers to the standardized questions (Berg, 2001). According to the research questions and the theoretical perspectives the interviews explored the security threats that the respondents have to face while carrying out their duties and the impact of these security issues on the social workers' lives and work, the emotions and feelings during these conflicts and how they are coped with, trainings and organizational support to deal with the challenges faced by the security situations etc. The interview guide was pretested through a skype interview and then finalized on the basis of the results of that interview.

After the preliminary analysis of the actual interviews an FGD guide was prepared based on the themes that arise from the interviews. Three major themes arose from the interviews; radicalism among the religious clerics and Taliban and their impact on security of NGOs, strong gender-roles and their impact on security, and impact on social workers belonging to ethno-religious minorities. Along with these, questions about coping mechanisms adopted by the respondents were also included in the FGD guideline. Only one FGD was conducted with five social workers to further explore these themes. Bryman (2004) explains that approaches to multi-research strategies are also chosen if it is considered that one method can facilitate or extend the findings from the other method. The FGD conducted later was used to further deepen the information by facilitating group interaction and discussion on the themes arising from the interviews. Berg (2001) suggests that the informal group discussion atmosphere in the FGD is intended to encourage participants to speak freely and completely about behaviours, attitudes and opinions they possess. Berg (2001) further suggests that FGD proves to be useful in situations where a one-shot collection is necessary. Usually one-shot collection is associated with survey questionnaires but it is also done in qualitative studies through FGDs. Since the time for this research was short, FGD seemed to serve the purpose of exploring the themes arising from interviews in a group discussion. Berg (2001) also argues that FGD if administered properly create a "synergistic group affect" where the resulting synergy allows one participant to draw from another and brainstorm collectively with members of the group which generates ideas, issues, topics and even solutions to a problem far better than generated through individual conversations.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

To select the research participants, an email explaining the purpose of the research was sent to existing email groups of social workers in Pakistan. The email explained that the research is focused on the conflict areas of KP, FATA and Baluchistan and invited participants who have experience of working in these areas in the last 3-4 years. I aimed to select 7-9 participants. Seventeen social workers volunteered to participate in the research. However, when

appointments were made in the cities of Quetta, Peshawar and Islamabad 9 participants were available in the end for the interviews. After the interviews all the social workers from the initial list of 17 were invited for an FGD in Islamabad in response to which 5 participants committed to take part in the FGD.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

As this research was conducted for a Master's thesis and the time period for the research from the designing phase to writing the final thesis was one semester (6 months), therefore, only nine interviews were conducted and one FGD comprising of five participants was conducted. Only one FGD was conducted because one or two more would not have increased the reliability of the research. For that purpose at least 3-5 FGDs should have been conducted and 15-17 interviews. However, given the limited time only one FGD was conducted to verify and explore the themes arising from the interviews.

The interviews were conducted face to face through a semi-structured interview guide that was divided into themes to explore the different research questions, that is, threats faced, impact on personal lives, impact on professional lives, and coping mechanism. The interviews took between 45-60 minutes and were recorded and the transcriptions were done without altering any speech. However, any irrelevant information to the research was omitted from transcription.

The analysis of the interviews was done by what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) has described as meaning analysis. All the interviews were first coded by labelling concepts according to the themes in the interview guide and following what all the interviewees have said about these concepts. These concepts were also looked at in the context of theoretical framework. Concepts other than the ones in the interview guide and theoretical framework were also labelled and followed in the interviews. The language of the interviews and the FGD were chosen according to the ease of the respondents. Both English and Urdu were used in all interviews and the FGD. The quotations used in the text have been translated to English wherever they were in Urdu, and have been presented as close to the original language as possible.

Berg (2001) details the basic ingredients of a focus group discussion that the facilitators should incorporate while designing and conducting the FGD. These include defining a clear objective for the FGD and explaining the structure and direction of the FGD to the participants, creating a comfortable environment for the participants where they are ensured of confidentiality, preparation of agenda for discussion in advance, and assessing the participants in advance to

be the appropriate group for the research questions. These were followed to ensure a smooth execution of the FGD and inclusion of all participants in the discussion.

The FGD was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Berg suggests that whether it is transcribed or not a technique of systematic analysis should be used. The FGD was analyzed through content analysis where the themes were categorized. This categorization initially came from the FGD guide, and then from the theoretical perspectives as well. Themes arising other than the ones coming from the FGD guide were also categorized. These categories were not identified in the interviews as main themes. After categorization in the FGD these themes were relocated and coded in the interviews to see if the interviewees and participants of the FGD support each others' views.

As suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) validity is not a separate stage of the research rather it encompasses the entire interview process from the thematizing to producing a scientific text of the research. In general Kvale and Brinkmann suggest that to validate is to check, question and theorize. To check is to control the outcomes which although cannot be done fully, however, is done at every stage of the interview process to specify the research on only what is intended to be researched. This particular research was made specific by selecting the social workers who work in the conflict areas of FATA, KP and Baluchistan. The research questions were specified to these areas as well. This was done because the nature of conflict in other areas of the country as well as a different culture in other provinces and ethnicities can have different affect on the security of social workers. This research was thus specified to the Pathan areas of north-west Pakistan only where the conflict is mainly between the Taliban and the government of Pakistan. The rest of the steps mentioned above illustrate the methods and reasons used for each step.

A number of researches and studies have been conducted on similar issues of security faced by the social workers in other parts of the world to which this study also refers to in order to draw parallels or comparisons to look at it in a global context.

GENERALIZABILITY

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describes that an analytical generalizability can be applied on the basis of analysis of similarities and differences of situations. As mentioned above the respondents are working in the Pathan areas of north-west Pakistan. Although these are only nine interviewees and five FGD participants, however, various organizational and media reports suggesting that such challenges are faced by the social workers throughout the north-west part of

Pakistan, the findings of this study can be generalized to social workers working under similar circumstances. The parallels drawn with earlier research conducted on similar issues also suggests some generalizability in terms of challenges faced by the social workers working in locations of political conflicts in other parts of the world and their need for knowledge to cope with it.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The respondents for this research were selected through voluntary participation. Since this research is undertaken at a time when the conflict is on-going and social workers who have been highlighted for their work have been threatened by the militants, therefore, voluntary participation was deemed the best choice for selecting participants. In the invitation email and before the interview the respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and that the information will only be used for academic purposes. The respondents were also informed beforehand about recording of the interviews for the purpose of transcription and analysis. The respondents were also informed that their confidentiality shall be ensured. Therefore, no names of persons and organizations have been mentioned in the text and also the quotations from the interviews have been used anonymously so that no respondent can be identified for what they have said in the interviews.

Chapter Five: Findings

This chapter presents the findings of this research. All the information presented here is obtained through the interviews and the focused group discussion. When it is necessary to clarify or explain specific details the presentation is supported by books written specifically on the culture and conflict in FATA, Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa (KP) and Baluchistan. I also cite media reports when respondents refer to them as a specific incident that affected their security or to describe the severity of security issues in a certain area.

The findings illustrate the impact of security issues on personal and professional lives of the social workers as well as the coping mechanism that they adopt to continue working. A preliminary analysis of the data revealed three emerging themes. The findings of the interviews are organized under these themes followed by a discussion on their interplay. The chapter concludes with presentation of findings from FGD on the emerging themes from the interviews and illustration of new related themes that emerged from the FGD.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

The study is comprised of nine individual in-depth interviews and one focused group discussion with social workers working in the province of Baluchistan, KP and FATA. There were five female and four male social workers among the interviewees while the FGD consisted of five respondents with four men and one woman. All respondents except two, were Pathans and belonged to either Pathan tribes of Baluchistan or FATA or KP. Two respondents were interviewed in Quetta (capital of Baluchistan), three in Peshawar (capital of KP) and four in Islamabad, while the FGD was conducted in Islamabad. However, all respondents worked in Baluchistan, KP or FATA. All but one respondent were married and had children. Only two respondents had young children aged 3-12.

The respondents had work experience between 8-20 years. Four of the respondents were in executive positions in their employer organizations, three of whom were also the founders of the organizations. The respondents mostly had on-the-job trainings regarding working with the communities and issues such as women rights, livelihood projects, domestic violence, peace and development, education, child protection and disaster response and management. One respondent who founded her own organization had been a victim of child marriage herself and has been working for the empowerment of women in her own home town and other neighbouring areas for the last 18 years. None of the respondents, however, were educated as social workers, but it should be taken into consideration that the social work and development education has not been widely available in Pakistan until 6-8 years ago. The respondents had education in subjects as different as English literature, economics and business administration. Some, however, had education in related fields such as sociology, psychology or conflict resolution. Two respondents had been journalists by profession for 12-15 years before entering the field of social work.

FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

The findings of the interviews are grouped under three different themes to present the impact of radical religious values, gender and ethno-religious discrimination on the security of social workers during their personal and professional lives.

RADICAL RELIGIOUS VALUES

The majority population of FATA, KP and northern Baluchistan are ethnic Pathan. The Pathan culture is influenced by the religious values and thus places a lot of importance to the words of religious clerics and leaders. Taliban being a Pathan phenomenon and claiming to fight in the name of Islam have not only found support by the Pathans of FATA, KP and Baluchistan but have also found a fertile soil for their growth during the current Taliban insurgency (Lieven, 2011).

The low acceptance of NGOs among these communities is attributed to a negative perception of NGOs being involved in un-Islamic or anti-Islamic activities. This perception has mainly been formed by the fact that most NGOs are funded by western money. Western countries especially the U.S. and religions of Christianity and Judaism have been portrayed as enemies of Islam for many decades by the local religious leaders and clerics. The respondents mentioned that the radical religious leaders and clerics portray the liberal culture of the west and freedom of women as anti-Islamic values and equate

them with obscenity. Due to such portrayal there is a general resentment among the communities against any initiative funded by western money considering that these usually carry a western agenda to abolish Islamic values.

“The conflict areas such as FATA and KP, they are very conservative communities usually and they get influenced by religious extremism rather quickly and the NGOs have an image that they have vested interests and that they are foreign aided and so they must serve the interests of some foreign elements.”

The word NGO has thus acquired such negative connotations that it is sometimes considered to be a threat by the communities with whom the NGOs intend to work. The social workers abstain from mentioning the word “NGO” or even disclosing to strangers that they are associated with an NGO.

“I don’t tell anyone that I work in an NGO. My family and friends know but if anyone else asks me I never tell them, if I travel in a cab or on public transport someone asks me I never say because people have a very negative perception of NGOs here in KP [...] people usually say this is for America or that they are spreading obscenity.”

Nonetheless, NGO workers had been directly targeted by the Taliban who had not only threatened them by dropping letters at their offices but have also kidnapped and murdered local and international NGO workers. Four respondents from both Quetta and Peshawar mentioned receiving threatening letters from the Taliban to stop their work which they termed as anti-Islamic.

“We have received many letters, there have been letters dropped at our offices to stop this work...that we are spreading obscenity and we are working on western agendas and against Islam. Severe threats have been given to us. A recent letter said you people are working against Islam, the dirty and disgusting women that you employ is forbidden in Islam...and the charity that you are getting from America is too forbidden in Islam..and stop this work or else you will be responsible for the consequences and that we will know if you won’t stop this filthy business. The letter was signed by the commander of Tehreek-e-Taliban [Taliban’s movement] Peshawar.”

“While we’ve never been attacked directly, we’ve received threatening letters from militant groups to say that you know...close down your programme. I think one letter was signed by...it was called Commander Taliban Hazara Division...saying that if you don’t close your programme that is funded by Jewish money we will start kidnapping male members of your organization. The letter was delivered to the office by hand. ”

All respondents mentioned kidnapping as a major threat to NGO workers at the moment and expressed that they fear of it happening to them as well. Kidnapping also serves as a source of income for the militants and thus they demand high ransoms for the release of the kidnapped social workers.

“[...] several times our staffs have been kidnapped [...] a girl and driver were kidnapped on their way to work in the morning. She was not taken away but she and the driver were driven around for hours and they told her that they are Taliban and that she should stop working in the NGO because the work that the NGO is doing is against Islam. They then dropped her off on the road side but they took the driver away and then demanded 2.5 million rupees ransom for the driver.”

If the NGOs do not stop working in an area that Taliban ask them to, their offices or their project sites such as a school or a health center can be attacked. Some respondents reported being directly targeted by Taliban as they did not back out and continued their work.

“We were working in Khyber agency, there in our center, children’s center they had planted explosives and...but that exploded in the middle of the night so at that time there was no staff there, and we changed that, we moved from there to another place but we didn’t stop our work. Similarly, in Karak...there were explosives, there was a meeting and after the meeting I came back to Peshawar and in that night there was an explosive planted in the toilet of the office and it was blown...and in Peshawar also this happened.”

In 2008 the office of an international NGO, called Plan International, in KP was attacked by the militants who lined up their staff and shot them (Ghaus, 2010). This incident had a strong impact on all NGO workers throughout Pakistan, especially the ones working in KP. All respondents mentioned this incident and similar others where the offices of NGOs had been attacked to express that they also face the threat of something similar happening to them and their organizations.

“Even our office is threatened. I always fear that the militants might attack and make us hostages. This is an international NGO and we have foreigners in our staff too. They can be worth billions. If they just target with a missile everyone would die.”

The resistance to NGOs from the communities essentially comes from their perceptions of NGOs being un-Islamic or anti-Islamic. Such sentiments are developed and exploited by the local clerics or religious leaders who either hold radical Islamic beliefs or use these only for their vested interests.

“There was a research in North Waziristan in which we got to know how the clerics portray these NGOs...there was a cleric who asked the NGO to give him some money but the people from the NGO refused so he said don't worry when Friday comes you will know what happens to you...and then in the Friday sermon he said very negative things about them and they had to leave....stop their work.”

All respondents commented on the strong hold of religious leaders and Taliban on the communities. The respondents were of the view that this strong hold is possible in Baluchistan, FATA and KP because the communities are poorly educated or not educated at all. Not being able to read or write most people rely on the clerics for the religious knowledge and thus do not gain a first-hand knowledge of religion themselves. The clerics can distort the knowledge of religion to suit their interests.

“A primary school teacher has more criteria to be selected but a mosque leader has none, he comes from anywhere, says whatever he likes and issues religious decrees on whoever he likes and labels whoever he likes. This can cause violence anywhere.”

Hence there is almost always a faction that resists change in these communities as the clerics and Taliban had been using the ignorance and needs of the people to keep their authority and hold.

“[...] in a community where we are working it is sometimes that one faction listens to you and supports you while another is against you and wants to stop your work so the threats are always there.”

“NGOs are usually not raising a voice against the militants. They are service providers, giving food or water or education or agriculture. But militants don't want that, they want destruction and chaos and disturbance. Because that's what has room for them, they don't have a place in Islamabad or Lahore where things are in order.”

Although most people condemn the terrorist attacks by Taliban on general public and even on police and army, however, they still sympathize with the Taliban's retaliation against the U.S. invasion in Afghanistan (Lieven, 2011). Moreover, the retaliation is equated with 'jihad' or holy war as it is being done in the name of Islam (Lieven, 2011). Taliban are, therefore, considered to be holy warriors. As a result if someone from the community is accused by the Taliban of immorality or doing anything un-Islamic or anti-Islamic it is likely that such accusation would be taken seriously by the community. One respondent had to go in to hiding after he was accused by the Taliban of working on American agendas by taking money from church based organizations and was called to the Taliban court in Quetta to defend these

accusation. He had to close down his office and worked for 4 years over the internet. He expressed his concern on being labelled as an infidel if he were killed by the Taliban as this would also impact his family and children.

“Obviously my family and my children are also threatened. I’ll tell you something, since this operation began so many people have been abducted and usually there is not enough done for their release. If I am abducted or killed by Taliban then I might be labelled as an infidel in the community and my children will have to bear with that label as long as they have to live with this community. So now I avoid taking any such project which can put me in such danger.”

Religion or the religious leaders play a great role in shaping the opinions of communities in Baluchistan, FATA and KP. Moreover, religion and religious values are sensitive issue for these communities and any deviation from their religious norms is considered to be a threat. NGOs are synonymised with the west in these communities and the radicals portray them as a threat to cultural and religious values. This constricts the space for NGOs to work in these communities and the radicals can take extreme measures of kidnapping social workers, attacking their offices and even killing to stop them from working.

STRONG GENDERED ROLES

A second theme that emerged and one that is closely connected with the radical religious values is the sexually segregated Pathan culture specifically in the research areas. Gender roles for men and women are strictly defined and men and women are expected to adhere strictly to these roles and behaviour, any deviation may be termed as immorality. Women are considered to be carrying out the traditional roles of child rearing and domestic and familial responsibilities, while men are expected to be the bread earners and taking part in social, cultural and religious activities outside of home. With these gendered ideas the communities do not easily accept the presence of women social workers among them or the concepts of girl's schooling and women's inclusion in work force. These are considered as western concepts and have again been exploited by the radical clerics and propagated to be a western agenda to ruin the social fabric of the communities.

“I once did a radio show on women rights and I asked people to call in and share their opinion. I received 18 calls and all of them said that this is a western propaganda led by the NGOs in Pakistan because women here have no problems and they are just trying to lead our women astray. For the next 35-40 minutes I explained that women rights mean that your daughter has a right to education, that she should be given the same food

as the son, that she has a right to work and marry of her own choice, so I counted a few rights like that and then asked people to call in again. The response now was entirely different and people agreed that women have these rights. So to conclude basically there is a lot of labelling that the maulvi[cleric] has done in our society and had represented women rights as something leading to obscenity so people have a negative impression of women rights here.”

The gender context means that male and female social workers are affected differently and women social workers have to face resistance at least initially from communities since many of them when go to these communities try to engage women in education and livelihood projects. This brings change in the traditional gender roles and can be opposed by the radicals in the communities. Although women social workers do work and even belong to these communities, however, they have to be very careful about the cultural norms of these areas such as observing purdah (covering their heads or wearing a veil) and not mingling unnecessarily with men (outside of family) in the community. These two practices are considered marks of moral women and such women are respected in the community. Such behaviour can later open possibilities for women social workers to work with men in the community as well.

“If I go to Kohistan I will cover my hair...so I have some people saying to me that you are such a hypocrite and why do you cover your hair when you go there...but the question is that you keep the larger issues in mind...and I believe at this point if I go with my hair uncovered I will be giving space to others to detract from what I want to do...The fact that I am able to engage with the men of Kohistan is huge you know....I think you go step by step”

However, in communities where there is a presence of radical Islamists it is much harder for women social workers to engage with the community and for male social workers to work for women issues. All women respondents reported that local clerics in some communities where they have worked had tried to incite the communities against them by issuing *fatwas* (religious decrees) against them and their work and the local clerics and militants have attempted at character assassination and accusing them of being immoral women. On some occasions, the clerics had gone so far to announce that raping these women or forcing them into marriage is *wajib* (obligatory) on Muslim men. Rape is considered as something that strips a woman of her honour and so is considered to be an appropriate punishment for going against the so called Islamic teachings, while being married and thus conforming to the traditional gender roles would be considered as a way of bringing an immoral woman back to the right path.

“The clerics in Dir said that the women should observe purdah from the women who work in NGOs. But the women there knew that before they had no mobility or exposure and we were teaching something and they were seeing changes in their lives...so whenever something like this happens they directly talk against women’s mobility. So when nothing worked they said that where these women [of NGO] are seen in the area any man can force them in to marriage.”

“I was doing another project and we were in district Kohistan where we were doing a survey of poverty...where we were interviewing women and men and we had a team of two women and three men who were required to stay in the village for 24 days....and so there was resistance to that and the resistance was not just from the local people but from external maulvis[clerics] who had aligned with the political party Jamat-e-Ulma-e-Islam [a conservative religious party] and saying that you can’t do this...so there were hand written pamphlets distributed to say things like that raping these women is Wajib and those kind of threats were made to us.”

The traditional roles although strict do not pose a threat to social workers until they are faced with examples like above or by the Taliban. When Taliban acquired a strong hold in KP and FATA they banned girl's education and prohibited women from working outside of home in the name of religion. During 2007 - 2010 there had been numerous incidents of women teachers and health workers being murdered on their way to work (Richard, 2010). Taliban have specifically targeted such NGOs where women are in leadership roles or where the NGOs are working actively on women empowerment. Specifically, in FATA women's mobility is very restricted and men usually do not discuss anything about the women in their family with men or anyone outside their homes.

“The organization’s name itself says that it is a women's rights NGO and that is threatening in this culture where even mentioning how many daughters you have...mentioning the number of daughters is not considered good by men...if you ask a man how many children you have they say 3, and how many daughters...yes yes 4 daughters as well...so working with an NGO on women’s rights and where there is this impression that we are taking money from the west and spreading obscenity and...so it is extremely difficult to work in these situations.”

“Women’s movement is quite restricted in these areas. If a woman is travelling to these areas her identity is very open because people notice. When Taliban had a strong hold a few years ago, they clearly said that no woman worker should be seen here [...] but generally here they’ve said in the name of Islam that men and women should not be travelling

together in a car and not work in an office together [...] 2 or 3 of our female staff resigned because they had received threats although their husband were working with them.”

Issues related to women's sexuality, child birth and reproductive health are strictly disliked to be discussed in most parts of KP, Baluchistan and FATA. Although NGOs do not openly talk about these issues, however, many NGOs and also government employed Lady Health Workers (LHW) had been trying to raise women's awareness on their reproductive health and contraceptive measures. The radical clerics and Taliban have openly denounced these activities and thus pose a great threat to social workers who continue to work on these issues.

“A local NGO worker was coming back a few days ago from Pishin [a district of Baluchistan] after a session on reproductive health and she was shot dead. They murdered her and the driver, because they said that she was working on reproductive health and on family planning. That’s why they killed her.”

Even in the cities of Peshawar and Quetta women respondents considered that revealing their profession can be threatening for them. Since NGOs are considered to be anti-Islamic or un-Islamic, therefore a woman working in an NGO can be stigmatised to be immoral. Respondents in Quetta considered that the situation of extremism is becoming graver by the day and they did not have to face resistance on working on women issues and being women social workers in Quetta until a few years ago. However, now with the infiltration of Taliban and extremist groups in Baluchistan as a result of the military operations in FATA, they consider that extremism is on the rise in Quetta as well and the space for women is becoming narrower. Since Taliban are strictly against women's mobility and independence so if the influence of Taliban increases in a community they consider any woman who shows signs of independence as immoral and worthy of punishment.

“Before I used to feel much protected as a woman, I would go anywhere, I drive myself but now I feel as if someone might kill me only because they might consider I am very vocal about women empowerment. You wouldn’t know the reason, and anyone can kill anybody. We are living in a jungle, no one would even ask about it [...] Yesterday my colleague didn’t have a car so I dropped her off to a rikshaw stop. The rikshaw driver asked her a lot of questions about where she works and why another woman has dropped her here and why not drop her at home, so she got really scared. She had stopped driving herself because where she lives they had threw stones at her for driving. So I couldn’t go to that neighbourhood to drop her off.”

However, to work with women in a community the presence and involvement of women social workers is essential as male social workers cannot interact with women service users in these areas in an effective way. The NGOs have to come up with culturally appropriate measures that ensure that men and women behave in a way that is acceptable for communities so that women can go and work in these areas wherever possible.

“The problem is that we of course need women to work with us. If we are working on education and child protection and not reaching out to female beneficiaries...because men cannot go and work with women, then we try different ways such as arranging separate cars for male and female staff, or hiring a local woman who does not have to interact with male workers and try it to be culturally appropriate and we don’t get exposed but it is very sensitive.”

In summary, women social workers face particular threats from the radical Islamists and the Taliban when they attempt to work in conflict areas of KP, FATA and Baluchistan. Being sexually segregated communities people in these areas are very sensitive about morals and associate morality with traditional gender roles and thus place great emphasis on adhering to these gender roles by both men and women. It becomes a complicated issue for social workers as addressing the issues of women such as reproductive health, education and livelihood can be considered as disturbance of the norms and culture and they can face resistance from the community. Although social workers try to follow the codes of conduct of every community, once faced with radical elements female social workers may experience threats of being ostracized, murdered or raped as well. Security issues for social workers are influenced by how strict communities are about the gender roles.

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Belonging to an ethno-religious minority such as being an Ahmedi or Shia (Muslim minority groups) or belonging to Christian, Hindu and Jew minorities in Pakistan can itself be a threatening situation for a person in many parts of Pakistan. Christians and Jews have been propagated as enemies of Islam for a very long time in Pakistan. Similarly, other minorities such as Hindus and even some Muslim minority groups such as Shia and Ahmedi are considered to be enemies of Islam as well. Ahmedi Muslims have been considered as heretical by majority Muslim groups (Sunnis and their sub-sects) because they do not accept Muhammad as the last prophet of Islam. Shias on the other hand, do not consider the 1st three caliphs of Islam as rightful rulers and follow the family of Muhammad instead. This is also contradictory to the Sunni Islamic views. These historic differences between the sects have caused violent sectarian

conflicts throughout the history of Islam. In May 2010, an armed group of radical Islamist militants attacked an Ahmedi mosque in Lahore (the capital city of Punjab province neighbouring KP) and killed 70 people (Walsh, 2010). Thus social workers belonging to minorities try to avoid working in areas where they fear that the knowledge of their ethnicity would put their lives in danger.

However, a few social workers shared that they were directly targeted by being termed as Christians, Jews and Ahmedis even when they were not. One male social worker shared that being termed as an Ahmedi he had to lay low for 4 - 5 months to avoid any physical attacks on him and his wife.

“I fired an employee from our organization because he wasn’t working well, so he started spreading this information that I am Ahmedi [...] this was a very threatening situation because he spread this rumour in all communities that we work in so I had to go underground for 4 -5 months because although nobody said to me that they are going to kill me but in Pakistan if you are declared an Ahmedi, it means that there are so many people out there to kill you [...] I had to stop all activities in the communities and stayed in Islamabad.”

Although this situation started for him as a result of a personal grudge, however, given the intense prejudice against Ahmedis among radical Islamists and communities who live under their influence, this example highlights the sort of threats social workers actually belonging to ethnic minorities have to face. This particular social worker even considered himself lucky that it was a "toned down situation" and he was not killed at once. However, he not only had to hide himself but was also worried about his wife and how this rumour if spreads would impact her life.

“I closed my facebook page for some time. I am also a human rights activist so I had sometimes written facebook statuses in favour of Ahmedis and some articles as well. So whatever I could hide I did as if I don’t exist. My wife did the same things [...] I was also stressed for my wife. I dropped her at work myself but I was also stressed that if this rumour of me being Ahmedi reaches her colleagues she might have to face a lot of questions and ostracizing from her colleagues.”

A female social worker had to face a similar situation while working on women's livelihood projects in Swat (a district of KP), when it was rumoured about her that she was a Christian and only pretending to be a Muslim.

“[...] when I was working in Swat, although I used to speak the same language as the community, dressed like them, observed purdah like

them and even prayed five times a day but still they spread rumours about me that I am a Christian.”

A rumour like such can effectively create prejudice for a social worker in the community and s/he can be ostracized and in extreme cases killed by the community as well.

Although there are many minorities living in Pakistan, however, Christians, Hindus, Ahmedis and Shias have faced the most harassment in most areas of Pakistan. The situation for them is no different in KP, FATA and Baluchistan specially when faced with radical Islamist clerics and militants.

COPING MECHANISMS ADOPTED BY NGOs AND SOCIAL WORKERS

Given the strong influence of religious and cultural norms in the communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan the social workers mainly attempt to engage with the communities and seek their support before they start working with them. All respondents said that engaging with the community is the major risk management activity that they have to do before starting any project. This engagement usually includes gaining the confidence of the community by prioritizing their needs, meeting with the elders, influential and religious leaders especially the ones who do not hold radical or extremist ideas to establish that they are there for the benefit and not harm of the community. Usually when the projects begin and the communities see that they and their families are benefiting from it they start supporting the NGOs even against the militants and radical groups.

“We try to engage community as much as we can. We give them ownership of the projects. We work with them closely and all our staff is local. We employ and train them, so that created a positive image that we are culturally appropriate. Also we make community focal points who even inform us about security issues, for instance a sectarian riot, or a bomb blast. We also engage the elders of the community so that they do not consider us to be foreigners.”

“It is important that when you go to work with a community you show that you are genuinely there for them and that matters...so if you are there for peace you are not just there to do a project...you genuinely work for peace and if you are there for disaster relief you are not just there to hand out a few things... or feel good about it but you are there to help and that genuineness is what people can sense and if you are just play-acting people can sense that too and that creates resistance too.”

“So what is an important strategy is that you engage with everybody so we engage with the mauvis, we engage with...engaging doesn't mean that we give them something but we keep in touch with them and we do that with the political parties as well, we keep in touch with the media, we keep in touch with people you know [...]and a large amount of our activities is just risk management and this risk management is essentially... you know... keeping in touch...that's all it takes but it is critical for the security, for the continuation of the programme....for all kinds of things.”

The communities, therefore, can also provide protection and guidance to the social workers on how to carry out their tasks without provoking any resistance from the community.

“You cannot really stop your work so you have to take different measures, like if you work in an area where there are many threats you open your office in a safer location near it, so people who work in Waziristan are based in Tank or Peshawar and they set their local networks. So they guide as well, they can tell what is the right time to do or say something and who to say it to and how. How to campaign for something... in FATA, for instance, the most influential is the Imam [cleric] of a mosque so they take him in confidence. So locals work in these areas with the cooperation of tribal leaders or elders.”

Moreover, the trust of the communities is also gained by conforming to their religious and cultural norms while working with them and following the code of dressing and socializing between men and women. While travelling to the communities all respondents also mentioned having guidelines for their staff on keeping low visibility and not using the name or even the word NGO so that they cannot be spotted by the militants.

“We advise that everybody be more careful in terms of who they are engaging with etc. and we take regular precautionary measures to make sure that when the staff is out in the field, return before nightfall...so like basic things and things like removing the name of foundation from our cars so that it is not very easy to target [...] we also take care that we never have women travelling alone, so at least two women should be there. Then if we have to stay overnight we stay at a place where women and men are distinctly separate and in the car they are not sitting together, so that you are not very visible in the eyes of people.”

“We have just told the driver that if someone signals you to stop do not do that...we do not go to the field in a very threatening situation, but if we have to go to the field we strictly observe purdah. We do that anyways, whichever community we go to work with we observe purdah

according to them. Then we also do not use the word NGO instead we just say that we are here from an organization...and we've told the driver not to say anything if someone asks where we are from and all that."

The respondents were asked if they receive any training on dealing with the conflict situations or ensuring their security. Respondents from national and international NGOs replied to this differently. The international NGOs are able to provide extensive trainings and hire security staff that can provide protection and guidance to the social workers. They are given armoured cars and satellite phones to visit the sensitive areas.

"They've trained us on what to do if there is a blast in the office or if there is firing or if someone comes to snatch something in the car do not resist and while driving if there's a blast then how to escape from there. They've told us all [...]they give us armoured vehicles to travel to remote and sensitive areas and they give us radio sets and tell us to keep them turned on when passing through a sensitive area."

The national NGOs on the other hand cannot afford such measures and rely on networking with the community only. They do, however, expressed the need for training and a security system of advanced information on security measures required to visit a community.

"We don't have any training from a security point of view so that we could know how to be vigilant in the field, and it would be good if we have such sort of a training on alarming systems, exits on the organizational level...till now we are doing it all on our own judgement."

All respondents expressed anxiety and stress because of a constant uncertainty and constant security issues in their jobs. Only three, however, mentioned that their organizations provide psychological support to them.

"We give psychological support to our clients because they have faced many traumatic incidents and the deaths of their families and loved ones but along with that we also provide counselling to our staff because it is also important for them to deal with depression and trauma."

NGOs thus ensure their own protection and their outreach to the communities by building a relationship of trust with the members of the communities to make sure that they do not sense any harm from the NGOs to their religious and cultural norms and practices. The communities once start trusting the NGOs not only provide input to their activities but also provide protection to them against the militants.

INTERPLAY OF RELIGION, ETHNICITY AND GENDER

The radical religious values impact both gender and ethnicity. The strictness and rigidity with which the communities follow the gender roles come from their understanding of the religion. Most of these communities serviced by the NGOs are very remote and poor and haven't had means for proper education for a very long time. For generations the population has only been exposed to religious information through the interpretation of clerics. The role of a cleric is thus vital in shaping the opinions of the people. Should clerics decide that a certain sect or ethno-religious group is against Islam and the followers of that sect should be killed to protect Islam, people with emotional affiliation to religion or may be just a certain cleric would follow blindly. The areas where the religious views are not as radical people can be flexible enough to make small changes to their culture for instance sending girls to school once they see how it benefits them and their families.

"Initially if you talked about girls' education they said that no they are ruining are social fabric so there always has been a mild threat but if you go to these tribal areas which are very remote where there are not many people with religious influence they will send their daughters to school but where there is religious influence they would argue why we are doing what we are doing so then it becomes a threat."

Many times it is the vested interests of the authority figures whether religious or tribal to keep a strong hold and maintain authority among people. The perception of the west and especially America in the communities of FATA, Baluchistan and KP can be exploited by the clerics and Taliban because of people's sympathies with Afghan Taliban engaged in *jihad* against the American forces. As a result, the respondents are caught in a complex dilemma where they cannot disclose their funding sources because on the one hand it is the American drones that are attacking the tribal areas and on the other it is the American and western NGOs or their funding that are trying to help people affected by the war.

"The child protection center that we established is right next to the hill where the village of these children was destroyed by the American drone attacks. The center is funded by an American NGO and if people get to know that they will never let us stay there."

In general America is not popular among Pakistanis and the communities in FATA, KP and Baluchistan are no different. Thus the association of NGOs with America or any western country through funding or origin is bound to cause resistance and may be exploited by the radical elements who do not want NGOs to work in a certain area.

FINDINGS FROM THE FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION

The questions of the FGD were designed to discuss the themes emerging from the interviews. Much of the findings from the FGD confirmed the findings from the interviews as the participants talked about the strong hold of clerics on the religious knowledge and consequently on the communities. Participants were also of the view that the radical religious groups do not want development and education in the poor and remote areas of KP, FATA and Baluchistan because they fear losing their monopoly over religious knowledge and their authority over the people.

“They hinder development because if the areas develop then they will lose their control...the clerics, and so they don't want NGOs to work there and don't let media to work there openly either.”

Like the respondents of the individual interviews, all participants of the FGD considered that due to conservative religious and cultural values the remote communities with whom they work are always initially apprehensive to accept them. Women working in the NGOs are not considered to be women of good character and are accused of immorality.

“The word NGO is considered synonymous with the west and there is a concept that they are doing something wrong. If a woman is working with an NGO her character and morality are questioned immediately.”

While talking about the negative image of NGOs the FGD participants also emphasized the role of intelligence agencies and governments in contributing to this image. The participants mentioned that at times social work has been used by the intelligence agencies, for instance, the hunt for Osama Bin Laden in 2011 in Abbottabad district of KP was done under the disguise of a polio campaign while a Pakistani doctor aided the campaign (Latif, 2012). Since then the polio campaign is haunted by this incident while the fears of people that the NGOs work on American agendas are confirmed.

“The search operation for Osama was done under cover of the polio campaign and the lead doctor of the campaign was a spy so then people's belief in the fact that these NGOs usually have another agenda gets confirmed. Social workers and social work gets used as well.”

Other than the interference of intelligence agencies, the participants considered that the government attitude towards NGOs working in the conflict areas is also negative which translates to the communities and creates a low acceptability for the NGOs.

“There are two things. One that there is a negative perception about NGOs generally among the government as well that these NGOs might be working against the national interest of the country, which is completely wrong. They are concerned that why they get foreign aid [...] secondly, government itself is very dependent on foreign aid. All the huge western funded projects are implemented through the government and the biggest recipient of the War on Terror is also the government, so if NGOs also operate in these conflict areas, then the government considers them to be their competitors instead of looking at us to be in a supportive role.”

THEMES EMERGING FROM FGD AND THEIR PRESENCE IN INTERVIEWS

The sentiment about government's resistance was not very vocal in the one-to-one interviews. However, after the FGD participants explicitly discussed the attitude of government the interviews were consulted again to gather the interviewees' opinion on this matter. This sentiment of government's resistance was also expressed by a few respondents of individual interviews and in addition they mentioned that the governments demand that in conflict areas funding for all projects go through them. This has also created resentment between the NGOs and the governments.

“[...]the government also wants that the NGOs do their projects through government so that the funding goes through them. Now military is in FATA so they also want it that the funds go through them.”

“If your political leaders stand on stage and say that the funds...that eighty per cent of the NGO funding goes in corruption and if the establishment doubts you that you are carrying out anti-state activities then this negative attitude also translate to those communities and that is very unfortunate.”

Although the participants of FGD and the respondents of interviews agree that corruption exists among NGOs, however, they expressed that labelling the NGOs to be a corrupt institute especially by the governments has done damage to their image and impacted their acceptability among the communities. Like the interviewees, participants of the FGD also emphasized the importance of networking among the community and with the community leaders and influentials to create acceptance for the NGOs. They emphasized that if engaged properly, the communities and influentials can change their negative perception towards the NGOs.

"It is important to engage with them...educate them properly about our purpose. For instance, there was a cleric in Waziristan who was very much against the NGOs but when we met with him and talked with him about our purpose he started supporting us and in his areas NGOs started working....because if they see that this is something beneficial for them then they understand."

The FGD and Interviews have shown that the security situation for the social workers is impacted in a very complex way because of the interplay of radical religious and cultural values, concepts of gender and ethno-religious minorities among the communities of KP, FATA and Baluchistan. The NGOs have a negative image in these communities which is also impacted by the negative attitude of the government towards the NGOs and incidents of interference by the intelligence agencies. Due to this negative image the social workers have to work in a low-profile and engage and network with the communities for carrying out their practice and for ensuring their security.

Chapter Six: Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of the findings of this research. The analysis continues the themes from the previous chapters and looks at the different systems and their power relations that create an insecure environment for the NGOs and social workers and pose direct threats to their lives and their practice. Although the situation emerges to be a complex one, however, for the purpose of this research I have focused only on some selected aspects of power relations and relationships of different systems that produce an insecure environment to only focus on the experience of social workers of working in an insecure environment. I first analyse the power relations of the radical elements with the community and their impact on the NGOs and social workers. The impact on ethno-religious minorities have also been analyzed during the first section as they are mainly impacted by the radical religious elements as well. The second section looks at the power relations in gender and how the gender stratification is maintained and perpetuated in the communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan, and the impact of these power relations on the security of women social workers in particular. The chapter concludes by looking at the relationship between these different systems of power, that is, of the Taliban, radical clerics, norms and culture, and how they collectively create an insecure environment for the social work system in the communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan.

POWER RELATIONS

The direct threats that social workers face in the communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan are due to an insecure environment that is faced by anyone who is considered to be disturbing the religious, social and cultural values of these communities. I attempt to present the complexities of this insecure environment and how they impact the social workers and their practices through discussing the power relations between different stakeholders in the community.

The findings suggest that there is a strong hold of radical clerics in many of the conflict affected communities where the social workers intend to practice.

Most people in Pakistan have an emotional affiliation with religion although for many generations the knowledge of religion has been left to be explored and disseminated by the religious clerics. The respondents were of the view that the clerics in the communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan hold a significant position of authority and their words are accepted without questioning. The respondents also considered that the dominant position of the clerics give them the power to distort the knowledge of religion to suit their interests. According to Lukes (2005) third dimension of power occurs not only where there is domination but also where the dominated accept the domination without protest. Therefore the clerics play a major role in shaping and influencing the opinions and will of the communities. As expressed by the respondents a major part of the religious opinions shaped by the clerics is the perception of west and anything related to the western culture that can destroy Islam and its values. This view of the west being anti-Islamic was affirmed for these communities by the American invasion of Afghanistan and overthrowing of the Taliban government which was considered to be a fight against Islam. Being funded by the western countries the NGOs were placed in a similar category of enemies of Islam by the radical clerics. Here the power of affiliation with religion can also be seen in these communities who consider protection of their religion as a priority. However, as suggested by the respondents this power need not become a threat to the social workers' security unless there are radical and militant elements present in the community. The respondents in some cases have been able to change the perceptions of communities and even clerics by engaging and networking with them to help them understand how the work of NGOs benefits the communities. Thus the power of radical clerics is an important factor impacting the security of the social workers.

This power of clerics intensifies when any incident confirms their claims of NGOs working on western agendas. The respondents considered that the local politician's opinions of the NGOs to be working on anti-state agendas because of western funding is damaging for the NGOs as it conveys the confirmation of the clerics' claims to the communities. It is not necessary that the clerics and the politicians propagate such ideas with similar intentions, rather, as respondents said the politicians either believe in this notion or they want the funding for development of the communities going through them alone. Thus the politicians can also influence the opinions of the communities about the NGOs. Respondents also referred to incidents like tracking Osama Bin Laden's location in a polio campaign by the American intelligence agencies in the Abbottabad district of KP as damaging to the image of NGOs and social work in Pakistan. Respondents were of the view that the social workers had already been having trouble to expand their polio campaign because of the negative image of NGOs and this incident in May 2011 increased this resistance, as for

many communities the claims of clerics that NGOs work on western agendas have been confirmed.

Another form of power is that exercised by the Taliban which is more coercive and obvious as well as threatening to the social workers engaging in an overt conflict with them. This form is not manipulative like that of the clerics over communities but the Taliban use force and coercion to make the social workers do as they like. The respondents reported that the Taliban directly threaten them and other social workers and NGOs through warning letters, kidnapping, bombing and attacking of their offices and project sites to force them to stop their work which is termed as anti-Islamic or un-Islamic by the Taliban. This coercive power cannot easily be challenged by the social workers which is why they either do not work at places with a very strong hold of Taliban or they try to network with the communities who guide them to work despite the presence of Taliban.

The Taliban version of Islam is even stricter than those of the radical religious clerics in the communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan. Taliban have used force in these communities to stop girls' education, women's involvement in labour market, men's conduct of dressing as well as enforcing strict punishments for theft, robbery and other crimes. This sort of power although detested by many in the communities also finds support as Taliban claim it to be the true version of Islam. Lukes (2005) suggests that people's compliance to domination comes either from their actual belief in the values that oppress them or simply because they resign to these values. Although majority population does not support the Taliban and simply resigns to them because of their use of force but there are various pockets in these communities where people actively believe in the rigid and radical Islamic values taught to them by clerics and advocated by Taliban. Hence, this form of coercive power has also found its place in these communities because of the presence of the third dimension, that is, power of emotional affiliation with religion and the teachings of the radical clerics.

An additional form of power that can be categorized within Luke's third dimension is the power to make people conform to the moral ways of living in the society. Respondents mentioned that being labelled as infidel or immoral is something that they want to avoid not only for their own but for their families' protection as well. Respondents expressed that the clerics are given high respect in these communities and Taliban are considered to be holy warriors fighting in the name of Islam, therefore, anyone who is punished by the Taliban or labelled as infidel or immoral by the clerics is bound to be categorized as a sinner and would face ostracizing from the community. This fear shows that the acceptable ways of behaviour are strongly ingrained in the communities and therefore legitimize the power of the Taliban and the clerics.

The labelling of social workers as belonging to ethno-religious minorities comes under the same category as above since they are considered enemies of Islam, whether they belong to a different religion or to Muslim minority groups of Ahmedi and Shia. Sectarianism has been an issue in Pakistan since the 1980s (Lieven, 2011). Shias had particularly been targeted by the Taliban in the conflict areas of KP, FATA and Baluchistan, the killing of whom is still going on (Joshua, 2012). However, by labelling these minority groups as enemies of Islam or infidels the militants and clerics use the same power of their position to pass judgment on anyone who does not follow their version of Islam and thus rousing the sentiments of the general public against them.

Understanding the power relations between the clerics, Taliban and the community is the key to understanding security issues as perceived by the NGOs and social workers, because the opinions of the community and their acceptance or rejection of NGOs play a great role in the security of the NGOs. The findings show that the social workers place great emphasis on networking with the communities because this networking can protect them and their practice from being harmed by the radical and militant elements. The communities themselves hold the power to either accept or reject interventions from the NGOs. Although a rejection does not necessarily pose a life threat or serious danger to the NGOs but should the intervention is accepted the communities provide vital local information from security and engagement point of view. This shows that the NGOs also hold the power to change the opinions of the locals through effective engagement and by showing that their interventions intend benefits rather than harm for the people. However, this power held by the people to accept or reject NGOs is again influenced by the local influential clerics and Taliban. The respondents considered that they have very "narrow space" to negotiate in these communities as they have to ensure that they do not pose any threat to people's religious or cultural ways of life.

Lukes (2005) suggests that there might be a latent rather than an overt conflict of interest between the one with the power and the one dominated where the third dimension of power exists. This can be seen among the communities where the Taliban and the radical clerics oppose any developmental activities in the name of Islam. The respondents explained this attitude in terms of "vested interests" of Taliban and the radical clerics since in a developed society there is no room for their authority. Although the people of these communities welcome the developmental activities by the NGOs when they see genuineness in them, but if the development is termed as a threat to religion or culture then the communities may reject the interventions by the NGOs under the influence of the clerics or Taliban. Hence, there is no overt conflict visible between the dominant (clerics, Taliban) and the dominated (communities) but the interests of Taliban and clerics are served at the cost of interests of the communities. The third dimension view also says that people's interests may themselves be a

product of the system which works against their interests, and their preferences may be different when given a choice (Lukes, 2005). The respondents emphasized that they have never faced resistance in the communities where strong radical religious influence of the clerics or Taliban does not exist. Moreover, given that the communities that accept the NGOs also protect them from militants shows that the communities might choose differently if the force or manipulation of the radical religious elements is not present.

In case of the presence of such a system, however, the interests of people can be very different and people also accept this power because it serves their interests. The Taliban, for instance, have not just been coercing and forcing people to follow their version of religion but have also provided services such as quick resolutions of communal and property conflicts in the absence of an effective government justice system, recruiting people for "jihad" for more salaries than they would have earned being a police officer as well as giving them honour in the community by including them in the "holy war" (Lieven, 2011). Therefore, people also resign to power when their preferred interests under a system are being fulfilled even if they do not completely agree with the system (Lukes, 2005).

The security of the social workers and NGOs in the radical communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan is impacted by both the power of force and manipulation. Force is being used mainly by the Taliban directly against the social workers while the communities are manipulated by both Taliban and the radical clerics, and those supporting Taliban and radical views of religion are simply influenced by both. All forms of power impact the personal and professional lives as well as the direct practice of the NGOs when they have to protect themselves from the direct physical attacks and deal with the negative perception that a community has of them to continue their practice in the communities which need social work interventions.

POWER RELATIONS IN GENDER

The Pathan culture of FATA, KP and Baluchistan follow strict codes of sexual and gender segregation and define different and traditional gender roles for men and women (Lieven, 2011). The findings of the research show that the particular threats that women social workers have to face in the communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan are mainly grounded in the culture of these communities and their expectations of how men and women should behave. Cultural identity and behavioural codes are integral to the Pathan culture (Richard, 2010) and rather strictly followed in the rural and tribal Pathan communities. Pathans generally associate their honour with their cultural identity and behavioural codes (Richard, 2010) which also includes the

behavioural codes for men and women and their separate gender roles. These gender roles are very traditional and expect women to be sticking to the familial and domestic roles. Women's inclusion in work force is discouraged and mainly women depend on male members of their families for resources which gives men the resource power to keep the gender division of labour as it is and consequently results in superior male access to valued resources to which women get access only by compliance.

This gender division of labour also results in the domination of men in elite positions in social institutions and so men decide what is proper, true, good, real and worthwhile in the society (Chafetz, 1988). The findings show that the most influential in the communities are the clerics, who are always men. The clerics along with other tribal leaders who are also men decide the social definitions, that is, religious ideology, norms and social values for their society. As Chafetz suggests, this is not necessarily done by conscious conspiring of the elite but because they overwhelmingly constitute of male members of the society, the social definitions produced come from a male experience and what they consider to be proper. Also these definitions do not anew in every generation but are historically rooted, and the historical members of the elite had also been men (Chafetz, 1988).

The findings show that women social workers often have to face labels or stereotypes of being immoral because they have left the traditional role of familial responsibilities and joined the work force. Moreover, they are working with the NGOs which are considered to be western organizations trying to change the culture of these communities. The NGOs' advocacy for the right of girls' to education is in conflict with the views of elites of the society who consider that girls do not need education to carry out their main responsibilities of child and family care. Moreover, as educated girls in the communities usually join the work force as well, therefore, NGOs' attempts at educating women is considered by the societal elite to be deviating women from the roles they are supposed to fill. Similar is the case of NGOs who try to include women in livelihood projects. The respondents claimed that given the low possibilities of livelihood even for men in the society, many communities have accepted this intervention, however, the radical clerics and Taliban have been strongly condemning this change in cultural values. During the last few years Taliban have bombed many girls' schools and killed many women health workers, social workers and teachers in FATA and KP (Richard, 2010). The respondents also said that the elite powers of clerics and Taliban always justify their motives in the name of Islam and propagate gender stratification as natural or God's will. Chafetz (1988) suggests that this approach usually makes the gender ideologies immutable or real in the societies. The gender norms are then accepted by both men and women as divine which cannot be refuted.

According to the respondents women social workers have to face resistance at least initially when they try to work with a community. To work in communities with strong traditional gender values they must be very careful in their personal and professional lives to follow the gender norms and cultural practices. The findings show that women social workers had been threatened because they were perceived as immoral by the radical elements of the communities. This is true for women social workers both from within and outside the communities. The presence of Taliban and radical clerics makes it more difficult for women to work in these communities. One respondent mentioned that in a letter that Taliban sent to her organization, they used the words "dirty and disgusting" for the women employed and clearly called that un-Islamic. The findings show that some women respondents had had *fatwas* (religious decrees) against them for working in an NGO and rape and forced marriage had been ordered as appropriate punishments for them. These punishments are rooted in the social definition of morality which can have serious repercussions for female social workers. Women's morality is a concept associated with guarding their sexuality and conforming to their gender roles. Rape is considered as an act that dishonours women because their sexuality has been violated while marriage and home is considered a rightful place for a woman. These definitions then provide social judgments on the characters of women and the elite call for making these women conform to the gender norms so not to disturb the gendered culture of the communities.

Talking explicitly about matters relating to sexuality and reproduction fall under the same category. Therefore, women social workers working on sexual and reproductive health and rights can be murdered or kidnapped for attempting to talk about these issues. The gender ideology of Pathans also do not see women as independent beings, rather their identities are defined with that of their fathers and husbands (Richard, 2010). Independent identity of women is a deviation from the social definitions of the societal elite. The respondents mentioned that any independent behaviour such as driving a car or taking a leadership role are considered un-Islamic by the Taliban and radical clerics which is why women social workers in leadership roles have been specifically targeted. This was confirmed recently when a female social worker and a peace activist Shad Begum who also runs her own NGO in KP was awarded in the USA for her courage, and right after that she was threatened by the Taliban who proclaimed that now she is on the militants hit list (Anon., 2012).

Chafetz (1988) further argues that the resource and definitional power held by the elites is often typically legitimated as authority and people do not see it as power. This is evident in the role of the cleric in the communities who is an authority on the religion and his word on social definitions is taken as the final.

This is why social workers try to engage with the clerics, who are not as radical, to gain their confidence when they begin working with a community.

The stereotyped expectations of women to follow the traditional roles of fulfilling familial responsibilities and refraining from joining the work force reinforce the tendency of the societal elite, that is, the cleric and the Taliban, to assign work roles according to gender and hence keeping the gender-division of labour. The stereotypes also support the gender ideology and norms that have produced them in the first place (Chafetz, 1988). Women are, therefore, expected to behave as they are supposed to and any deviation from that seems punishable by the society. By deviating from the expected gender ideology the female social workers have to face direct and indirect threats from the militants and radical elements in the communities.

SYSTEMS OF POWER

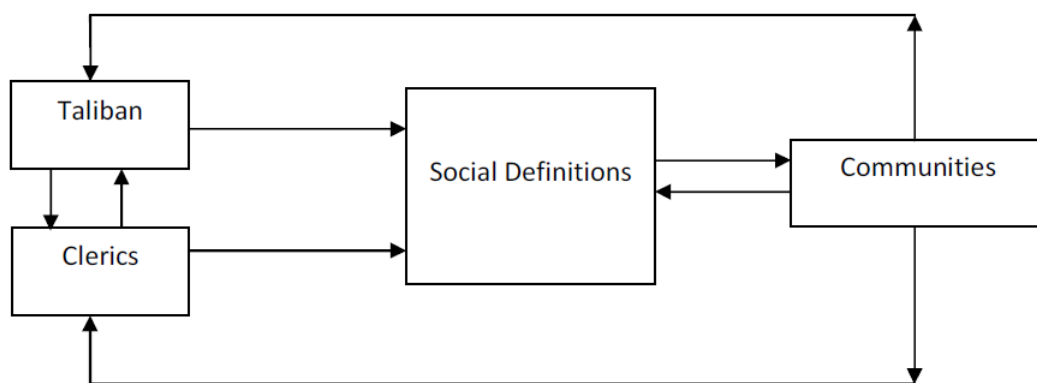


Fig 1: The system sustaining the authority of Taliban and radical clerics over the communities without outside intervention

The above discussions indicate the presence of a number of systems impacting the NGOs and social workers and their security. This insecure environment can be simplified for the purpose of understanding through a systems perspective.

In this research the systems of power have been studied through a social workers' perspective. This system of power that perpetuates in the communities and poses constant security threats to social workers can be summarized with the help of figure 1.

The figure shows how the power of Taliban and clerics who happen to be the religious elite and enforcers of religious values impact the production of social

definitions that is the norms, values, acceptable, moral, good, bad and true. These social definitions are followed and reinforced by the communities as they acquiesce or resign to the power of clerics and Taliban. The acceptance of these social definitions is what creates the culture that supports the Taliban and the clerics who have been instrumental in the production of the social definitions in the first place. The Taliban and clerics also support each other because they hold similar radical views of Islam. This system in the absence of any outside influence keeps supporting itself and this has happened in the rural and tribal communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan for years. This system will not work if the clerics are not radical Islamists because according to the respondents the non-radical clerics do not support Taliban or are not strict in opposing NGOs either.

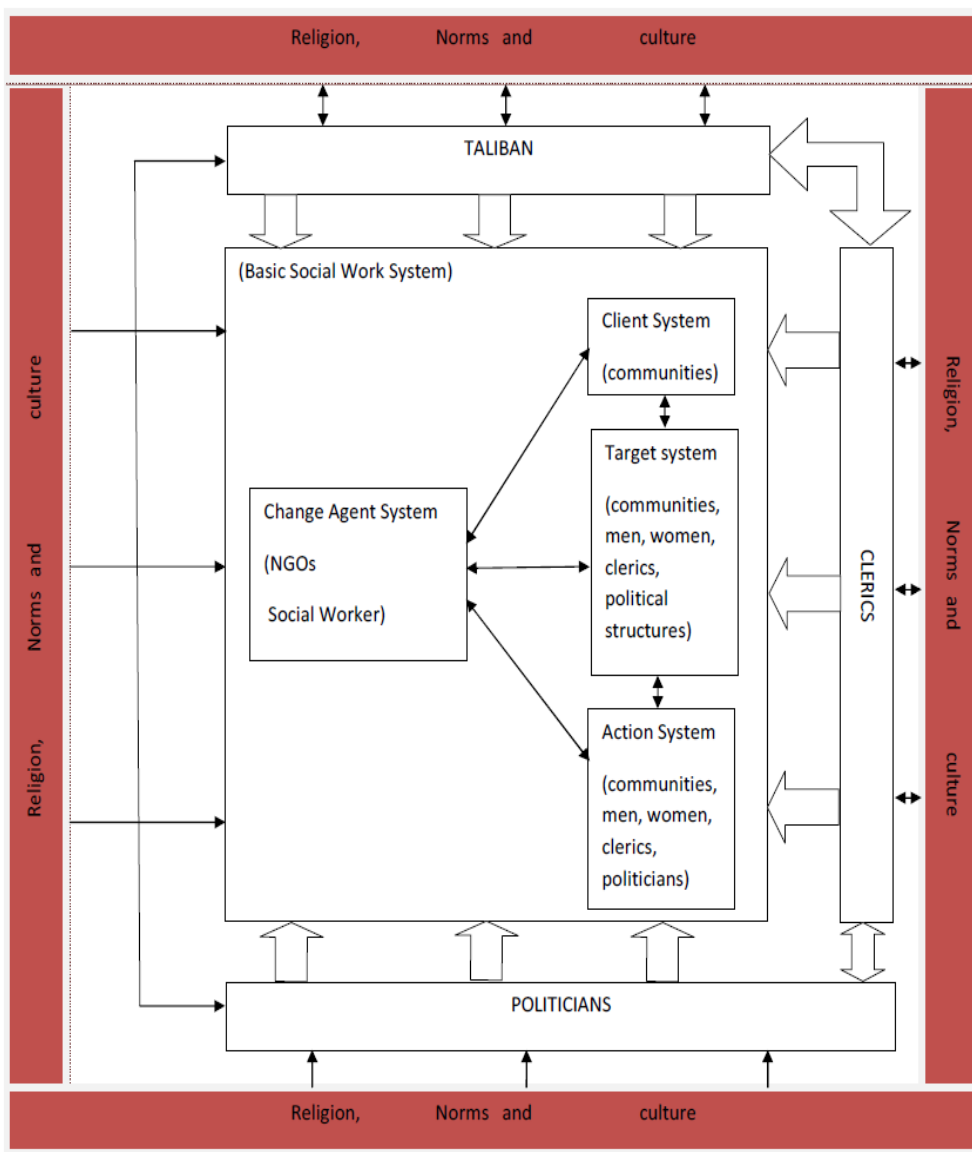


Figure 2: Systems and their power relations - impacting the social work system and its security environment

Figure 2 sets the power relations in a broader perspective where the different systems in a community encircled in a macro-system of religion, norms and culture affects the social work system. This figure is also a presentation from a social workers' perspective. The basic social work system in the figure comprises of NGOs and the social workers who are the change agent systems whose aim to work with the client system, that is , the communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan arise from the poverty and deprivation of these communities. The target system includes people like radical clerics, as well as people from the general community who resist the developmental activities of the NGOs to bring permanent change in the society. The findings from the FGD suggest that this target system may also include the local politicians who do not want NGOs to intervene. The action system essentially includes the communities themselves and the local influential people who can also be a part of the target system. All four systems impact each other within the social work system.

On the other hand, the clerics, although a part of the community, also make up a separate elite system that holds power and influence over the local community through their authority on religion. This power and influence of the clerics lie in the power of the macro-system of religion, norms and cultural values, that they themselves have been instrumental in producing. The system of militants that is mainly Taliban in the communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan also holds power over these communities. Their power also lies in the power of the macro-system of religion, norms and cultural values that they themselves influence as well. The politicians also make up another system whose opinions impact the social work system. The clerics and militants interact and support each other when they hold similar radical values, while the hostile attitude of politicians towards NGOs also supports the hostile positions of clerics and militants towards the NGOs in the communities.

Being open systems energy or influence crosses the boundaries across systems and subsystems. Therefore, when the norms, culture and religion get their input from a radical perspective of the Taliban and the radical clerics it creates a radicalized environment in the communities.

The output of this energy flow in the system is the acceptable environment for radicalism that sustains the authority of the Taliban and radical clerics and produces an insecure environment for the NGOs and the social workers. This output is also what the radicals in communities seek to conserve and therefore resist any outside influence. Pincus and Manhan suggest that change in one part of the social work system impacts all the other parts (Payne, 2005). Thus if the client system, that is the communities, is influenced by the militants and the clerics, it impacts the change agent system of social workers and the NGOs, their aims as well as their engagements with the action system and the change

they aim to bring in the target systems. Similarly, the impact on the change agent system in an insecure environment where they have to take care of their personal and professional security also impacts their effectiveness in outreach to the client system as well as their capacity and capability to engage with the action system and impacting the target system. The respondents were of the view that the insecure environment has impacted their efficiency to work for the benefit of the communities. The respondents considered that along with designing the projects for these communities a large amount of their time, money and energy also goes into developing security measures for themselves. They also sometimes have to shut down projects in the middle and relocate their offices which costs in terms of time and funds as well.

Guru (2010) suggests that the connections between social work and national politics are often not talked of, but conditions like war and political conflict affect the whole society which includes the social workers. The conflict between Taliban and government of Pakistan created as a result of war on terror has impacted social workers directly. The findings and analysis of the research show that the social workers in FATA, KP and Baluchistan face direct threats to their personal and professional lives when faced with radicalism in the communities that they intend to work with. As illustrated by the figures above the macro-systems of norms and values that is impacted by the clerics also justifies their power to the communities. The degree of power and presence of Taliban and radical clerics determines the kind of security environment the social workers would face when they go to a community to work. The social workers try to engage with the communities without disturbing their norms, culture and religious values to gain their confidence. The impact of an unsafe security environment on the NGOs and social workers impact the whole social work system in which they are working and that they intend to change or address for assistance and service.

Respondents in this study, although working in conflict affected areas, are not faced with a war like situation. As one respondent puts it, "there is no bombing, shelling or firing going on all the time." However, like the respondents in the studies conducted in Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestine, the respondents of this study also expressed that violence is pervasive in the areas where they are practicing. The respondents in this study emphasized more on the direct threats of being kidnapped or killed by the Taliban if they are highlighted too much in their work. The threats faced by social workers in the studies of Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestine (Campbell & McCrystal, 2005; Baum, 2012; Baum, 2007; Ramon, et al., 2006) were because of being caught in the violence such as missile strikes, bombs, traffic disruption etc. but no direct threats were reported for being social workers. Nonetheless, respondents of all studies are affected by the political conflicts in their respective countries.

For instance, in Northern Ireland social workers faced some incidents of direct threats where they reported of being victims of sectarian harassment. Given that the conflict in the Northern Ireland had its roots in sectarianism, the social workers also had to face this harassment (Campbell & McCrystal, 2005). This is similar to FATA, KP and Baluchistan where the minority sects of Shias and Ahmedis are harassed by the radical Sunnis and the Taliban. However, the social workers in Northern Ireland were not harassed for being social workers specifically but just fell victim to the conflict going on in the area where they were stationed. Moreover, the harassment in north-west Pakistan is much more severe as it can end in murder and also extend to the families of those who are known to be Ahmedis or Shias. A difference between the studies of Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestine and the study of KP, FATA and Baluchistan is that the social workers in the latter are facing threats due to radicalism in the society which sees social workers and NGOs as threats to the strict social definitions of the communities. This study also focuses on women in particular as the strong gender-stratification in the communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan put women social workers in specific vulnerable situations of being murdered or ostracized. The previous studies have not talked about gender differences in the impact of conflict on the social workers.

Despite their varying natures political conflicts in all studies impacted the respondents emotionally and psychologically. Respondents in all studies mentioned to feel 'vulnerable' in their respective situations because of constant uncertainty and constant threats. They all suffer from stress and anxiety because of the constant threats not only to themselves but their families as well. Living and working in conditions of prolonged conflict, therefore, impacts the social workers in all cases. However, the context of political conflict and cultural differences can have varied affects on the security of social workers and their coping mechanisms.

Conclusions and Reflections

The general aim of this thesis was to study the impact of security threats on social workers and their practices in the conflict areas of north-west Pakistan. This aim was explored by investigating the research questions focused on security threats and their impact on personal and professional lives of social workers as well as the coping mechanism they used to continue their work in the conflict areas. A mixed method of qualitative interviews and focus group discussion elicited the social workers' perspective on security threats faced as a result of radicalism, entrenched gender roles and discrimination against ethno-religious minorities. The respondents expressed that these factors determine the kinds of threats they would face in the communities and the coping mechanisms required to ensure their security.

The theoretical perspectives of power, gender and systems used in this study illustrate that in the communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan the power relations existing between the systems of religious clergy, militancy and the gender systems is strongly encircled by the macro-system of religious norms and culture. The analysis shows that the degree of power and presence of Taliban and radical clerics determines the kinds and severity of security threats that the social workers would face in a community.

The respondents mostly relied on engaging with the communities to gain their trust as their most important coping mechanism. Social workers in north-west Pakistan have to be careful while working in communities in disclosing too much about themselves and following the norms and culture of the communities. Since they had been directly targeted by the radicals and the Taliban it is hard for them to engage communities where the religious views are radical, but as cited in the research the respondents consider that through working in culturally appropriate and sensitive ways they are able to make their space in a community to work. Most respondents considered that their long work experiences have given them the understanding to deal with radicalism and to work in a low profile so that they are not highlighted too much. However, when faced with violent threats they have to stop their work for some time or move it to another community where they do not come face to face with Taliban or radicals.

This study also confirms the need expressed in previous researches for concerted efforts at the global level to design trainings and education for the social workers working in situations of war and political conflict. Respondents from all studies expressed similar sentiments on lack of security trainings and trainings to deal with a conflict situation and even conflict resolution. In the current study it is mainly the international NGOs who have security departments and provide security briefings for their staff which is a matter of affordability. Similar is the case of Northern Ireland and Palestine where such organizational support was minimal. This support in Israel was more widely available and the organizations provided group supervision and guidance for emergency work. Nevertheless, all studies show that the respondents in absence of effective security systems considered vigilance and preparedness at all times to be important for their protection and used their own judgements to continue practice. Respondents in this study like the studies from Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestine have demonstrated considerable resilience especially in the face of direct threats to their lives. They are still finding ways to work in the communities of FATA, KP and Baluchistan despite facing direct threats to them and their organizations.

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