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**SOCIO-CULTURAL OBSTACLES TO PEACE BUILDING IN POST
CONFLICT AREAS OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA, PAKISTAN: A
SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF DISTRICT SWAT**

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Abstract:

Peace building efforts are durable in societies where the conflict is resolved with all its root causes, and the socio-cultural conditions and structures that become the reasons of violence and conflict. Contrary to this, in many of the conflict affected societies peace building initiatives are less effective and face the issues of post conflict fragility and insecurity where to resolve the conflict with a holistic and appropriate way and achieve lasting peace become difficult, and the societies have more chances of relapsing to conflict. Many of these issues are produced by the deep rooted and historical socio-cultural inequalities that are practiced in routine and mostly justified by the social cosmology, structure violence and cultural setup of the society that become the reasons of peace building failure. This research article is a part of PhD study which aims to explore the factors as obstacles to peace building process in post conflict areas of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa province specifically district Swat. Qualitative research methods like grounded theory and theoretical sampling are utilized for identification of participants, data collection through interviews and analysis. Findings of this study indicate that peace building efforts are mostly affected by the mismanagement of burgeoning young population, attitude and behavioral issues and gender issues.

Background of the Study:

Peace and peaceful life are intrinsic characteristics of human beings. Naturally human beings love to live in peace and wish others to have the same, but at same time they are unable to escape themselves from the inevitable phenomena of conflicts that occur in their everyday life (Brahnam, Margavio, Hignite, Barrier, & Chin, 2005; IQBAL, 2016). Conflict is basically a clash of interest or disagreement which occurs among or between individuals, groups, communities, and states. It occurs at all levels and affects people of every society, culture and religion, class and color, ethnicity, and nationality. Over the years, many countries of the world have experienced different kinds of conflicts. Of these countries, many have experienced more violent conflicts in 2016, in which nearly 26, 000 people have died from terrorist attacks, and 560, 000 persons have lost their lives due to violence (Vernon, 2019). Many of these conflicts that occurred after World War I, were intrastate rather than interstate. Similarly, many of the violent and armed intrastate conflicts that occurred after World War II, were either at local or regional level, and predominantly emerged in developing countries of the world (Seif, 2015). Of these, some of the recent racial, religio-sectarian, ethnic-lingual and many other armed violence have affected people of all continents and countries, however, their severity has mostly felt in Africa, Asia and Middle East (Nations, 2018).

Such conflicts cause wounding, large number of deaths, and trauma, as well as weaken the resilient capacity, well-being and development prospects of families, communities, and societies. For example, the violent activities in Burma, the destruction and damages brought by Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, and the exemplary incidences of violence due to terrorism and militancy and associated War on Terror in the countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan have suffered the populations of these countries to greater extent (Gupta, 2020).

As a result of destructions of such violent conflicts, the governments, civil society, and international community like the United Nations initiate certain peace building programs to provide some immediate relief to the affected countries. The aim of these programs is to restore the devastated communities and reconstruct the shattered socio-cultural and political structures of the societies affected by the conflicts by using the universal approaches of peace building (C. T. Call & Cousens, 2008). Thus, the practice and importance of peace building specifically post conflict peace building measures have increased with the aim to rebuild the destroyed societies and bring to them peace that is durable. Peace building in this context, takes the notion to use a set of initiatives to address the root causes of conflicts and violence, transform and strengthen the institutions the level to serve people's needs, deal with emerging issues and handle the local level problems that often become violent conflicts at society level (Cheng-Hopkins, 2010; Galtung, 2010; Office, 2010). It is also to transform the existing socio-economic and political structures and associated relationships that lead to violence and construct the post conflict environment in such a way to ensure security, justice and peaceful survival of human beings (Lederach & Appleby, 2010; Vernon, 2019).

Currently the scope of peace building goes beyond the mere military intervention- focuses on torturing, shooting and coercion, to a holistic effort in which the stakeholders like state

institutions, civil society and international community work jointly to help countries in bringing back them from conflict to peace (Paris, 2004). This sort of peace building is mostly characterized by the principles and values like transparent and accountable state institutions, committed leadership, inclusive state policies, political will, human rights, community involvement and participation (De Coning, 2008; Fukuyama, 2014; Murphy, Pettis, & Wray, 2016). Based on these principles, the peacebuilding initiatives not only focus on physical construction or infrastructure development but transform the structural conditions of post conflict societies and make such societies resilient to cope with the emerging issues and bring lasting peace (Donais, 2009; Vernon, 2019).

However, the countries in post conflict situations face difficulty to restore peace due to the issues of fragility and uncertainty that mostly discourage the peace actors as well as negatively affect their peace building processes (C. Call, 2004; Haughton, 2002). In these situations, peace building activities are suffered from lack of equal participation of community members and most importantly face the issue of compatibility with socio-cultural conditions of the society in which they are carried out (K. Khan, 2013). Similarly, to some of the scholars like C. Call (2004) and Fagen (2003), peace building efforts are failed to achieve the target goals because of the absence of national commitment and political will. In addition, due to lack of coordination among or between different national and international organizations and their weak performance to deal efficiently with the post conflict fragile and uncertain situations many of the peace building efforts remain ineffective (Paris, 2004). Thus, in the presence of these and many other reasons, although temporary or negative peace is established, but there is absence of durable or complete peace, which resultantly lead the societies to relapse into violence and conflict (Bannon, 2010; Collier, 2003; Lund, 2003).

Pakistan is one of the countries faces the issue of certain local or internal conflicts, in which the incidences of violence and human rights violations have not only become the fate of this country but affected the populations of its different communities negatively. However, the effects of violence raised in the form of militancy and terrorism significantly after the incident of 9/11 (Rabbi, 2012). Comparatively, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and its different parts including district Swat have been remained the hot zones of militant and terrorist activities. Since the militant groups have attacked many parts of the province, but the prolonged militancy has devastated the Swat area and its peaceful environment comparatively to greater extent where still the people face the dilemma of uncertainty and insecurity. With the end of active militancy and establishment of temporary peace, the government of Pakistan along with international community like United Nations, United Nations Development Program, United Arab Emirates, World Bank, and many others initiated different programs to reconstruct the conflict affected areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including district Swat and bring peace to these communities. Many of their peace building programs observed in the form of reconstruction of infrastructure, organizing cultural shows, peace melas, sports galas and festivals, constitution of peace committees, training for skill development of employees, strengthening of institutions like police, judiciary, and education through reforms. As a result of these initiatives, considerable changes and developments are observed – that of physical infrastructure development and restoration of people's routine activities at large (K. Khan, 2013).

However, the results of these peace building efforts do not present a satisfactory picture, as they hardly focus on the reasons of violence, people's grievances and the socio-cultural and politico-economic structures and conditions that mostly cause disputes. Here, the existing peace building measures are suffered from different factors to achieve a complete peace in the target areas. In

this regard, some of these factors that obstruct the ongoing peace building programs are identified and discussed in this study. Of these ,mis management of burgeoning young population, the issues of attitude and behavior and the prevalence of gender issue sare the major factors that affect peace building process and increase the existing fragility and uncertainty in the study area. In this study, all these factors are identified and developed with constant comparison of different categories and themes during data collection and transcription and then accordingly analyzed and discussed.

Statement of the Problem:

Pakistan is one the mostly devastated countries by the terrorism and militancy that surged in the world after the incident of 9/11. Initially, the recorded annual death rate caused by terrorist activities in the country reached from 164 in 2003 to 3318 in 2009 (Afzal, Iqbal, & Inayat, 2012). Similarly, as per the initial surveys, more than 35000 human killings being caused by terrorism and war against terrorism since 2001 to 2011 (Z. A. Khan, 2011). In addition, the country suffered with a total estimated cost of US \$68 billion to fight against terrorism and militancy (Malik, 2012). Social cohesion has been worn out by terrorist and extremist groups, receiving physical support from the local people especially in the Northwestern areas of the state. Beside many socio-economic and religious factors, engagement of youth in activities of extremism finally brought the country to a state of emergency, plaguing the Northwestern and Southwestern parts mostly populated with Pakhtuns. Despite of state efforts and international community interventions to abate the violation of human rights and bloodshed, the wave of terrorism has affect edmany parts of the country partially while such effects were comparatively severe in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in general particularly in district Swat. However, at the end of prolonged militant conflict and subsequent military operations in district Swat, peace is observed with restoration of routine life to greater extent. People see peace in this sense as there is no persistent physical violence, killings, and slaughtering, and most importantly there is considerable infrastructure and physical development, that are ensured by the post conflict peace building efforts of government, civil society, and international community.

Despite of all these efforts, the study area still presents the hidden chains of uncertainty and fragility which are mostly observed in the form of target killings of people especially members and heads of peace committees and other persons of socio-political reput e and influence. Though, the state has been engaged with security centered interventions which have reduced the apparent intensity of violence to greater extent. However, the incidences of target killings of the mentioned persons and other acts of violence and public torturing at the hands of unknown elements being reported by local people of the area further increase the insecurity and uncertainty and resultantly the chances of reverting to conflict. Besides, the routine practice of injustice, human rights violation, socio-cultural inequalities, and structural violence negatively affect the current peace building process to achieve peace in its true sense which is lacking in the study area.

Aims and Objectives:

This study aims to find the reasons specifically the socio-cultural obstacles that hinder peace building in the conflict affected areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in general and particularly in district Swat.

Methods and Procedures:

This article is a part of PhD study which is framed under qualitative research methods and procedures. It specifically uses grounded theory approach which is one the choices of qualitative researchers especially sociologists who prefer it in case when they make less reliance on the existing theories and literature, rather they mostly focus on field data to derive insights and patterns that are contextual and relevant (Mohajan, 2018). This study covers different areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan that have been negatively affected by terrorism, and war against terrorism. However, it specifically focuses on district Swat for the purpose of data collection, as this area of the province suffered relatively a lot from the violent activities of militant groups that they started after the incident of post 9/11. Since many areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province get suffered from the menace of terrorism but as compare to other areas district Swat remained a hub of militants and their violent activities. As this area suffered more severely in terms of suicide bombing, number of casualties and other devastations, therefore, this study was delimited to Swat area for the purpose of data collection.

Further, this study uses theoretical sampling technique in which the researchers usually do not select sample size or number of participants in advance. Rather, it requires some data that is collected from few purposively selected cases and analyzed. Using this technique, researchers first purposively identify some cases as research participants and then search for others who they think fulfill their purpose. This process of identification of relevant participants continues until the data reaches to the point of saturation (Sbaraini, Carter, Evans, & Blinkhorn, 2011). For this purpose, this study purposively identified some segments of society as study units that include members of civil society and representatives of different organizations, political leaders, media and academia persons, government officers, common people as volunteers of peace building activities, and local elders as key informants. Identification of participants from these units was based on the notion that they were comparatively relevant and potential and could provide relevant information because of their experience to somehow with peace building activities in post-conflict situation of Swat. In this way, data was collected from a total of 36 participants through in-depth interviews, where the researchers conducted few of the interviews with the participants (purposively selected) of given study units while rest of the participants were identified and accessed through the network of friends and acquaintances.

However, during interviews, those participants were preferred who expressed their willingness and had know how about the militant conflict and related peace building initiatives. Similarly, the participants who had experience of being attached to peace building activities either in the capacity of peace building practitioners or beneficiaries of such activities were interviewed in this study. Further, interview guide as a facilitating document was used to conduct interviews, in which initially some open-ended questions were prepared as per little knowledge of the researchers about the research topic. In this study, the process of data collection and analysis was carried out side by side. Using the given questions, some of the interviews were conducted and transcribed, relevant categories and themes were developed, and the same were then compared with the given questions. Similarly, the same questions were then revised with the addition of new concepts and then used for other interviews. Thus, following a back-and-forth process of data collection, analysis, and continuous comparison, in this study all the factors as obstacles were developed through a constant comparison of the categories and themes. Finally, a detailed analysis and discussion of the factors included in this article are given in the following passages.

Results and Discussion:

Mismanagement of Burgeoning Young Population:

Pakistan is ranked first in the world of having large population of young people. Currently, it is the youngest country in the world and second youngest in South Asia after Afghanistan. Of the total population, it has 64 percent below 30, and 29 percent is between 15-29 years of age (Fayyaz, 2017; Hafeez & Fasih, 2018). This country faces the challenges of human development and opportunities in respect of such burgeoning population of youth. In this context, it was found in the study area that young people are less empowered and given less chances to improve their human development skills and contribute to the country because of different hurdles they face. In field, majority of this research participants pointed out many factors which mostly contribute to the prevalent weakness of peace building process. Alarming of these is the rapid growth in young populations, where most of these young people are idle and unemployed who are more vulnerable to persuasion and recruitment into different militant and terrorist groups for violence and conflicts. One of the participants – a University student said in this regard that ‘young people are loyal and can do much for the peace and development of this area, but they always live in a state of uncertainty and frustration which refrain them from thinking and doing something positive’.

Further, it was found that young people are mostly inclined to violence not only because of unemployment but this relationship mostly depends on the extent to which they are included in social, economic, and political spheres of life and opportunities provided to them to avail the services like education and decision making. In this context, answering the question of ‘what factors affect peace building process in conflict affected areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa especially Swat’ one participant and member of civil society expressed his views as:

“In many of the Pakhtun communities, young members are considered comparatively emotional and less capable to handle certain tasks like protecting family and community members at time of emergency, resolving disputes which are locally emerged and participating in initiatives of peace building. Thus, many of the local level decisions such as reconciliation between opponents through Jirga³ or peace committees and to build peace are carried out by elders which further increase the frustration and deprivation of youngsters”.

Young people are often discriminated and excluded in different aspects of life that weaken their position to exercise power as recognized adult members of the society that lead to kill their potentials. A police officer – one of the participants shared his views about youth bulge, its management and how it affects peace building process of this area as:

“Young members of this society are inclined to violence due to the influence of culture - in which weapons and drugs are easily available, violence is often legitimized, and no emphasis is given to the dysfunction of family to control and socialize the youngsters. At the same time, the dilemma is that the ongoing peace building activities which are carried out by state, national and international organizations less likely engage young members to positively transform their attitudes and behavior”.

³Jirga is an informal mechanism of conflict resolution mostly practiced in Pakhtun society including the study area.

Though, the government focuses to improve the standard of human development and proposes new ways to overcome such challenges, but the desired results in terms of empowering youth and their involvement in peace and development activities have not yet materialized. In this context, the government along with international community tries to focus on three main aspects of people - youth development: people, opportunities, and choices to achieve the minimum level of Human Development Index (HDI), ensure human security and bring a lasting peace to the society damaged by militant conflict. Majority of the participants of this research raised different and contradictory arguments about the position, role, and contribution of young people, some of them presented the youth on two extreme levels. On one side, young people are considered as vulnerable to violence and conflict where they need to be protected from the easy target of terrorist groups. On the other side, youngsters are viewed as violent, apathetic, dangerous, and threat to society's overall security. Among the participants, one – member of a local peace committee and head of community-based welfare organization expressed his point of view as:

“Young people are associated to certain stereotypes of being emotional, violent, and drugged, especially those who were manipulated by Taliban (militants) during militancy. Most of such youths are viewed as less capable and mistrusted to involve them in current peacebuilding programs that are carried out in the area”.

The findings of this study present the dilemma of growing population of young and their positive engagement in constructive activities to avoid their manipulation and involvement in violence and anti-state activities. In this regard these findings are converged with some of the findings that are identified and focused by other scholars. For instance, it is stated that many of the conflicts and wars are emerged in different societies because of the increase in population especially the youth and decrease in average income of people living mostly in developing countries, and in this way smaller and wealthier countries of the world project comparatively lower risk of conflict or war (Dobbins, Miller, Pezard, Chivvis, & Taylor, 2013). In addition, it is believed that in Pakistan 9.45 million children at primary level were out of school in 2015 and increases with the ratio of 3.8 percent yearly. This country needs to create 4.5 million new jobs and enroll many out of school children in coming years to engage 64 percent young population that could play their role for the growth of national economy and peace sustainability (Najam, 2020). Similarly, the findings of this study affirm the international emphasis on the youth positive engagement and to reduce the ratio of youth radicalization. In this regard, for example, the international community specifically the United Nations take keen interest to assist the government of Pakistan to meet its vision of 2025 and achieve the minimum level of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – 2030. They focus to save the future of this country by creating opportunities of education, employment and positive engagement for the young population of age 15-29 that could empower them unleash their hidden potential (Hafeez & Fasih, 2018; Sathar, Kamran, Sadiq, & Hussain, 2016).

Attitude and Behavioral Problems:

Peace building process is not only to resolve violent conflict but to deal with people of conflict mentality and their issues related to attitudes and behaviors, and social structures that mostly generate people's grievances (USAID, 2011). In this context, it was found in this study that peace related activities are affected because of the attitudes and behavioral problems which people have and often become reasons of personal and community conflicts. These problems exist

among individuals, families and larger society in which people do not cooperate with one another at time of tension and misunderstanding and make these happenings an issue of ego to show attitude or behave violently. In response of a question asked from participants that 'how attitudes and behavioral problems affect peace building efforts, many of them presented their views differently. One of the participants – a college teacher commented that:

“We often face problems because of our attitude and behavior. We hardly accept one another’s point of view and show attitude even to our family members on petty mistakes they commit. This type of familial environment makes our youngsters emotional and intolerant within the family and outside. They mostly become the source of small-scale disputes that occur among family members or relatives that lead them to enmity or violent conflict at community level and create hurdles to peace efforts at local level”.

In post conflict transition of the target area, the peace building practitioners have identified different factors that hinder their peace efforts. The most difficult among these was handling people with attitude and behavioral problems. It was found that peace building organizations working in the area such as Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Hujra Organization and many others adopt different strategies to deal with people of the mentioned problems. They do so, to get confidence of people who they think create hurdles to their peace building activities, make them involved in the sessions like dialogue and reconciliation as important methods of peace building, and transform their social relations that push them to conflict. In this context, one of the participants – representative of peace building organization said:

“We work on different projects to train people and enable them to solve their local disputes, tolerate one another and bring peace to the society. We use different methods like 1292 counseling or convincing to transform the attitude and behavior of people who do not understand the situation and go for conflicts on small issues at family and community level. We go personally to the houses of conflicting parties and convince them for reconciliation”.

Besides, it was found that problems of attitude and behavior are not only on the part of common people rather people who are on high position like political representatives who do not take interest and most of them show irresponsible behavior in peace and development related matters. They have always deceived the innocent people with false hopes and promises. Neither they have tried to help people in troubles like militancy and flood nor played active role in the reconstruction and peace development carried out in the area. During data collection, majority of the participants shared their views and experiences regarding swat’s crises and factors that derail the current peace building process. Among them, one participant – head of local organization and peace practitioner expressed his views as:

“I am local of this area and have more than 10 years field experience in peace building and development activities. I have observed people especially the leaders and politicians of this area who because of their ego and behavior do not raise their voice for the solution of their communities’ problems and do nothing

practically for the betterment of public. We have always been scapegoated because of the ego and attitude of our representatives”.

Another female participant and representative of the same organization expressed her point of view as:

“Our leaders are less mature and socialized, they do not know and understand the demand of situation. They have not spoken for people and took always irresponsible stance during the crises of this area. Even currently, they hardly take interest to address local issues of the people. These acts of irresponsible behavior of the leaders hinder the peace building and reconstruction process of the area”.

It was found that people with this problem always target others for their weaknesses and do not think about what they say and do by themselves. Majority of the participants were of the view that ‘mostly we people do not realize the effects of our tunes on others when we interact to them and become emotional if they go against our expectations’. Of the participants, one – a female student said:

“We all are change agents; we cannot change others’ attitude and behavior unless we change ourselves, hence we should start from ourselves. We must analyze our attitudes and behaviors and accordingly change if they are inappropriate”.

Another participant – a male student expressed his point of view as:

“We must role models for others. If we have inspiring behavior with others, they can be inspired easily, and adopting this kind of behavior, we can resolve many of our routine problems”.

The findings of this study show that most of the local disputes are emerged in the study area because of the issues of attitude and behavior people have in routine that affect the peace building process negatively as observed and shared by majority of this research participants.

Gender Issues:

Women and girls have major contribution in all stages of conflict resolution and peace building processes. This contribution cannot be minimized or ignored and without women and men’s full and equal participation durable peace cannot be achieved (Secretary-General, 2002). It means, in peace building efforts men and women contribute equally and because of their equal contribution the resultant peace remains durable as well as there is stability and smooth functioning in the society. In contrast, the societies in which women are not given their rights of freedom, participation and decision making cannot avoid violence and achieve the goals of peace development. In this study, it was found that in Pakistani society in general and particularly in conflict affected areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Swat women are hardly allowed to participate in public affairs. The participants of this study claimed in majority that women are discouraged to come out of the four walls and mix up to men except certain genuine reasons. This restriction on women is because of patriarchic norms of the society and structural barriers which marginalize them from the mainstream participation including peace building activities. It was found that extremism and militant conflict of the area has affected women’s mobility to a

greater extent and its aftermath effects still prevail. In this context, one of the participants – peace building practitioner said:

“At the time of Swat crises, Taliban (militants) had restricted women to their houses, women were not allowed to come out of houses for the purpose of job or access health and education services unless covered in veil and accompanied by a male family member. This restriction has not only affected their access to avail routine facilities of daily need but household income”.

Due to weak and restricted socio-economic status of women in the study area, they are more vulnerable and exposed to violence. They are easily targeted by men and mostly become the reason of both familial and communal conflicts. For example, a female participant pointed out that ‘many disputes or conflicts are resulted in the area because of the issues related to women such as inheritance, dowry, divorce, elopement, Swara⁴, infertility and so many others. These reasons instigate the locals especially the close relatives to have conflicts with one another, which suffer women in different ways’. She further elaborated her point as ‘first we - the women become source of conflict, then affected more severely by conflict as compared to men and at the end of conflict we are not given the opportunity equal to men to participate in post conflict peace building activities’. Similar views were also given by majority of this research participants that they shared in individual and group interviews. Among them, one participant – head of Dispute Resolution Council (DRC) commented on the issues of women and resultant conflicts as:

“Most of the disputes and problems in our Pakhtun society are emerged from the marital relation, in which there is lack of understanding and compromise between husband and wife. In most of the cases, the husband does not accept his fault and always blame and accuses his wife. I believe that, for a peaceful and happy family life both the partners and even all family members must understand one another’s limits, duties, and responsibilities in different situations. Husband always expects cooperation from wife and never gives her the same right. Although, wife contributes more as compare to husband, but he (husband) only thinks about his labor and ignores her contribution. These small-scale familial disputes lead to createsevere problems and conflicts at community and society level”.

Similarly, another female participant and representative of a peace building organization expressed her views about the status of women and reasons of conflicts among Pakhtuns as:

“In Pakhtun society, inadequate distribution, and division of labor among family members especially husband and wife create problems. Besides, in most of the families, one member contributes more, and others do nothing and the one who does more, is hardly appreciated. Many of our Pakhtuns do not realize the work, contribution, importance, and problem of others within the family and outside”.

It was observed in the field that because of the prevalent women’s weak status, they are not allowed to negotiate in the affairs of routine to end local disputes and hence their involvement in mainstream society is discouraged. For instance, it was found that at the end of militant conflict in Swat, women’s participation in the ongoing peace building initiatives is very disappointing. Many of the peace building efforts initiated in the area are mostly carry out by men while women

⁴ A female or girl(without her consent) is given to opponent party to resolve the dispute between two groups.

are believed as unfit to work for such type of activities because of culture sensitivity and religious pressure. In this regard, one of the research participants and representative of peace building organization working in the area shared his view about the reasons of women's less participation and involvement in reconciliation and peace building and how it affects peace building programs in the area:

“In our area, women face many problems including accessing education, due to which many of them remain illiterate, and this illiteracy of women being considered their weak point does not allow them to participate in public affairs including resolving women's related problems as well as peace building and development activities. The existing mindset and social norms support the traditional and restrictive gender roles that hinder women's active participation. Women of the area have been the victim of violence, militant conflict and military operations which have further exacerbated their access to justice as survivors of violence and militancy”.

Women feel reluctance when they participate or take active part in communal activities. Participants of this study in majority claimed that ‘women are poor and face problem of economic inequality due to which they are unable to control their household income, hence, they bear the burden of performing domestic roles and generating income, which hinder their participation in outdoor social activities including peace building’. Participants were of the view that the existing peace building organizations, international community, and state mostly involve the institutions and very often local leaders in peace building activities and consider the women as incapable for this job. Even, some of these organizations that favor and encourage women also face problems because of cultural and religious pressure.

In the current academic debate over the issue, the findings of this study are resembled to somehow to the findings of research studies like Justino, Cardona, Mitchell, and Müller (2012) which regard women's involvement and participation as one of the important aspects in peace building processes. The scholars support the fact that peace is built first at family level the way men and women relate to each other, and how children are socialized and educated. It is believed that women at family level play the role of mediators and decision makers; they can mediate and resolve domestic conflicts and build trust in their families and communities. Women's this active role in conflict resolution and peace building at micro level indicates that their role and participation as peacebuilders is meaningfully important in the larger socio-economic and political structures for ensuring peace and stability at macro and society level (Justino et al., 2012).

Besides, the importance of women and gender in mainstream activities of public interest are not only confined to cultures and different contexts, but they act as crucial factors for understanding the dynamics of peace and peace building (Anderlini, 2011; Baines, 2005; Cockburn, 2004; Hudson, 2009). Similarly, the international community and peace building organizations especially the United Nations give more emphasis on women's participation in peace building at all levels. Even, they have formally recognized the importance of the impact of conflict on women as well as the need to involve them in formal peace building efforts. It is because men and women have different experiences at conflict and post conflict situations, and that women as vulnerable segment of society have certain unique challenges regarding peace building and security (Swaine & O'Rourke, 2015). However, despite of this importance, in many of the societies, women's involvement and contribution is not credited and considered invaluable in

resolving conflict and building durable peace (Pratt & Richter-Devroe, 2011). In the same way, women's involvement is also ignored, and the issues of gender are marginalized in the formal and informal conflict resolution and peace building initiatives carried out in different parts of the world (Ellerby, 2013).

In many societies, women contribute mostly through an informal way to resolve disputes and build durable peace, but such contributions of women are not given much importance and are believed as invaluable (Pratt & Richter-Devroe, 2011). Similarly, in post conflict situations, the formal initiatives of peace building also ignore or comparatively give less importance to the issues of gender and women's involvement (Erzurum & Eren, 2014). In addition, many of the peace building initiatives use the essentialist approach regarding women which confines them to the traditional roles of mothers and caregivers, and thus hardly give them access to resolve local conflicts and build peace (Erzurum & Eren, 2014).

Conclusion:

This study concludes that conflict and peace are interrelated and core aspects of every society. They are intertwined in the way that one becomes the reason and result of another, and find the social, cultural, relational, and structural conditions for their occurrence, development, success, and failure. Conflicts occur in routine and are inevitable, they are not destructive or constructive in their essence, rather it is the society and its peace building mechanism to deal with the conflicts and make them either positive or negative. Peace building produces fruitful results in resolving the conflict in a society if it is aligned with its socio-economic structure and cultural setup and most importantly if it addresses the root causes of the conflict. On the other hand, peace building efforts specifically in post conflict situations often suffer from some reasons that are mostly the offshoots of the way, the society sets their priorities and approach the routine activities, such as controlling and managing the young population, defining the limits of gender, providing equal opportunities to public in peace building and development programs, and addressing people's needs and grievances. Moreover, peace building activities are mostly affected in a conflict-ridden society - like the one where this research study is undertaken which already poses the challenges of uncertainty and fragility, and where all these priorities are not clearly defined. In this sort of situation, mere the reconstruction of physical infrastructure and security centered interventions by the state and temporary humanitarian aid or relief by international community do not ensure a durable and lasting peace. Though, the use of these short-term mechanisms of peace building work to ensure security, a bane violent activities of militants and normalize the routine life of people after the armed conflict but they hardly address the issue of fragility, insecurity and uncertainty which further worsen the post conflict environment and increase the chances of reverting to conflict. Moreover, bringing peace to the conflict affected areas without considering the reasons or factors as mentioned earlier would not sustain for longer time.

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