Ongoing Terrorism: Psychological Effects of Direct and Indirect Exposure

Rafia Rafique and Afifa Anjum
Faculty, Department of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan
Corresponding author: Rafia Rafique
Email: rafiawaqar@hotmail.com, Cell: 03004215694

Abstract - Terrorism is continuously affecting mental health of Pakistani population. Psychological repercussions of terrorism are not only limited to directly exposed population, but its aftermath is even experienced by those who are indirectly exposed, e.g. through media. To examine this hypothesis current study was conducted on adults living in Lahore city. Sample was taken from two strata: Frequently and directly exposed to terrorist attacks (individuals living in Allama Iqbal Town), and indirectly exposed (individuals living in Township). Participants from both areas were contacted individually. Those who volunteered to participate in the study were administered Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogatis, 1975) to measure self-reported clinically relevant psychological symptoms and Brief Cope Scale (Carver & Scheier et al., 1984), translated into indigenous language. Results indicated equal presence of six symptoms of Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI): obsessive compulsion, depression, anxiety, interpersonal sensitivity, hostility and psychoticism in both groups. Exposed group showed significantly higher scores on somatization, paranoid ideation and phobic anxiety symptoms. Both groups used religious coping, emotional support seeking and self blame. Use of active coping, planning, substance use and positive reframing was rare in both groups. Exposed group made use of self distraction and venting whereby non exposed group used denial, humor and acceptance. Implications for the implementation of community based psychological interventions are suggested.

Remark: The full paper may be found in www.inrit2011.com or www.ijcim.th.org.