Are they stable…? Can the conflict related experience that are trickle down to the minds of children be transformed to the minds adolescents in the milieu of post war?

(Special Reference to Jaffna District in Sri Lanka)

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ABSTRACT

Warfare in any country invents instability of the living pattern of the civil community and it is a common feature that war creates drastic negative Impact on the human and physical resources. The protracted war lasted for 3 decades in the Northern and Eastern regions of Sri Lanka paved the way to create varied social menaces. Also, the impact of the war directly affects individuals those were in their childhood during the war. The keynote objective of this research was to determine the current status of youth within the age range of 18 to 24, selected as a sample from families faced the war and related impediments. In this regard 132, youth /children (58 girls and 74 boys) were selected as a sample and the data collected through; questionnaire, discussions, observation and recorded case studies.

It was a key characteristic that 62% of children out of the total respondents showed noticeable features such as; disentitled school education, bereavement due to loss of close associates, Health problems, and psychological imbalance. The research findings affirm that children who experienced critical outcomes of the war, continue within their adulthood creating an unstable life style hence, early intervention of Govt. as well as non-Governmental sectors are needed to ameliorate the youth.

Keywords: **Conflict, Youth, C*hildren& Childhood, Adolescents Post war.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Child may also describe a relationship with a parent (such as sons and daughters of any age)https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child - cite_note-3 or, metaphorically, an authority figure, or signify group membership in a clan, tribe, or religion; it can also signify being strongly affected by a specific time, place, or circumstance, as in "a child of nature" or "a child of the Sixties".   There are definitions of a child in several terms. 'A young human being below the age of puberty or below the legal age of majority (*Oxford Dictionary*) Or, "Biologically, a **child** is a human being between the stages of birth and puberty The legal definition of *child* generally refers to a minor, otherwise known as a person younger than the age of majority.https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child - cite_note-Child-1

On the word of Sigmon Froid a child at his age of 8 years, he has already entered the adulthood. As stated by social scientists, psychologists the childhood is the most important phase of life. Therefore it is significant that the child in the said age deserves for a free living environment, protection of parents/adults and with the facility to grow up in an atmosphere that enables balanced, lp [mentality.

Nevertheless, during the civil war which was prolonged exceeding 3 decades implanted negative influence on the community irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, and religion not only in the regions of North and East but also in the South.
However, the communities lived in the war affected regions became direct target group of the war. In this scenario, children were affected badly due to the instability of mentality which was a direct influence of the fear and threat created by the war.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A main cause that affects children and youth in conflict situations is the mental suppression and stress. Especially when the children happened to be experienced conflict related incidences it is unavoidable that such feelings are continuing in the adolescence as well. "One *of the many issues persistent among African youth in post- conflict areas is the trauma of war. War causes a great psychological suffering to those who experience it. According to research conducted by Wijewardhana (2015), a variety of factors, including age, gender, and cultural beliefs, as well as proximity and the degree of violence observed, may affect 9 the extent and nature of the reactions of youth."* Also   " Children, the most vulnerable group of survivors, have been affected in many ways including maiming, sexual assault, abduction, forced military recruitment, psychological trauma and the denial of humanitarian aid (Wijewardhana, 2017). " In 2006, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict reported that more than 250,000 children were exploited as soldiers globally (United Nations, 2013). "Importance of Youth Participation Rebuilding a state is an inclusive process. The role of adolescents in Africa has been limited in the past, but has greatly increased with the recognition that young voices are important (Wijewardhana, 2015). One could say this realization took a while due to cultural bias. Angela McIntyre revealed that in Africa, historically the role of youth has always been subordinate. Resisting authority is seen as deviant, especially in the political sphere. However, the introduction of Western ideology has changed the role of youth in Africa. Although these principles have 7 liberated youth in many countries, the unrest prevalent in certain parts of Africa have led to the marginalization of youth (McIntyre, 2004).

In view of the fact that, majority of those living in the North and East are minorities, the Government has desire and need to act in a justifiable manner without prejudice. The reason is   that the 3 decades long war was occurred due to a crisis arose on the basis of an   injustice caused on the minority.   To control   this situation all the needs and privileges made available for people in the South be presented to the people in the North as well. In particular, one key element is the protection of child rights. Children in the North is a segment of citizens whose rights were subjected for challenge, hence, it is a prerequisite that all the said rights affected by challenges are re-established.   The most concern factor is the lost childhood of these children. It is also obvious that majority of these children were subjected to the harassments of the war resulting;   the loss of avenues for schooling, unprotected family setting, loss of parents /close relatives, feeling on the fear of death, weakened physical health, and mental problems etc., In consequence of the above status, an analytical overview is included in this research paper ; on whether children those had faced the impact of war could converse to their childhood within the post-war situation ? and to which degree their rights were secured?

3. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

What were the influences of experience gained during the war by children in their persistence and activities during the post war period? and, To which degree the children could deviate from dreadful war mentality after 8 years since the end of the war and how far they have transformed and attributed with fashionable life styles. ? and whether a supportive environment is available for children: ? is the research problem.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

(a) The main objective of this research is to study whether the lives of youth are adjusted to the required degree during the post war period. Also, to study how far the war mentality of children was influenced the youth
(b) To study the possible influences of the war against children and how far the said influences would affect their future lives.
(c) To identify more active processes which may describe the ways on how to bring-forth improvement of children to live without fear of the war.

5. METHODOLOGY

Area of Study and examining the sample
The location selected for the research is comprised of 10 GN divisions in Thelippalai Police division within Jaffna district (An area directly affected by the war), in the Northern region of Sri Lanka.

Sample
The selected sample is consisted of 132 children from 18 to 24 years of age exemplified by 58 girls and 74 boys living within 10 GN divisions in Thelippalai.

6. DATA COLLECTION

Data gathering was accomplished in 3 stages.

Stage 1: Series of discussions attended with parents or adults to determine relevant families with children between 18 to 24 in age.

Stage 2: Proceeded with a collection of data from children in ages from 18 – 24 by using questionnaires, individual / Group discussions and through case story revelations.

Stage 3: In the process of data collection the team proceeded with informal discussions too, with Field staff headed by Grama Niladharies, Activist from Non-Governmental agencies as well as the concerned staff of Government, Religious leaders, and School teachers.

7. DATA ANALYSIS

Assessment and revelation of data were attended via SPSS computeriased software and using analytical data processing methods.

Results and Findings

Table – 1: Composition of the sample.

Male / Female	Number
Female	58
Male	74
Total	132

Table 02:

Age categories	Number		Percentage	
	Female	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**
Bet : 18 to 20	32	41	55'17	55'40
Bet : 21 to 24	26	33	44'82	44'59
Religion				
Hindus	43	55	74'13	74'32
Islam	14	19	24'13	25'67
Buddhists	01	00	1'72	00
Educational level	**Number**		**Percentage**	
	Female	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**
Unattended schooling	06	13	10'34	17'56
Upto 1 - 5	18	18	31'03	24'32
Upto 6 - 19	04	09	6'89	12'16
Succeeded O' level	16	11	27'58	14'86
Upto A' level	10	11	17'24	14'86
Succeded A' level	03	06	5'17	8'10
Univer: entrance	00	02	00	2'70
Other	01	04	1'72	5'40
Total	58	74		
Current composition	**Female**	**Male**	**Percentage**	
			Female	**Male**
Un-employed	27	35	46.55	(47.29)
Employed	31	39	53.44	52.70
Nature of the job	**Female**	**Male**	**Percentage**	
			Female	**Male**
Garment Factory	07	06	22.58	15.38
Hiring Taxi	00	11	00	28.20
Woodwork	00	04	00	10.25

Garage	00	05	00	12.82
Self employed	08	01	25.80	2.56
Sales	07	07	25.58	17.94
Labour	08	01	25.80	2.56
Hotel/Restaurant	01	04	3.22	10.25
Total	31	39		

Total employed   (Both Male and Female)= 70

Level of Income N = 70	Number	Percentage
Upto 750	52	74.28
From 5001 - 10,000	15	21.42
From 10,001 - 15,000	02	2.85
15,000 <	01	1.42

8.   DISCUSSION

The selected sample of this research is entailed 132 respondents between the age ranges from 18 to 24, yet it is a noticeable fact that all these were in their childhood during the period of war. Even though, the selected sample is currently represented by the ages of youth their present behavior has a strong link to the past. Also disclosed through above data that those 2 youth (5-40) who could enter the University while a large majority have lost the opportunities turn into higher education.

Analysis on how the   influence of war had affected the childhood of youth at present in the area focused on the research: (n=132)

How the impact of war affected the childhood	Number	percentage
Loss of Mother	06	(4.54)
Loss of Father	09	(6.81)
Loss of both mother and father	03	(2.27)
Loss of a relative/close associate in the family	21	(15.90)
Closer relative (including Mother/Father) became disabled	19	(14.39)
Feeling of the loss of time for schooling	79	(59.84)
Loss of ownership of Houses and oproperty	62	(46.96)
Feeling of the fear	132	(100)
Constant feeling of a self determination that there is a weakness (physical or mental)	31	(23.48)

1. **"*We lost the opportunity to endure schooling hence could not continue education. We still remember that at the time of conflict we had to finish cooking and eating pretty early every day and to move into the jungle to spend the night". (Uttered by a youth at the age of 21).*

2. **"*Let's forget about the lost privileges to attend schools, yet, it is a merit and reward that we could be alive. In how many occasions we had to suffer due to starvation."*??** (female youth - 22 years old)

3. **"*Though we loved to continue education we failed to do it. It was a common feature that no teachers were available in schools. Schools were found closed in most cases. At least we didn't receive the books"* (Youth in age 20)**
    Above utterings affirm that the prevailed situation was so problematic and how the children lost their rights for education.

4. *"Due to half-baked education we were not eligible to apply for a sophisticated job.   Currently, I am working as a bus conductor. Wages earned daily is a soupcon.*
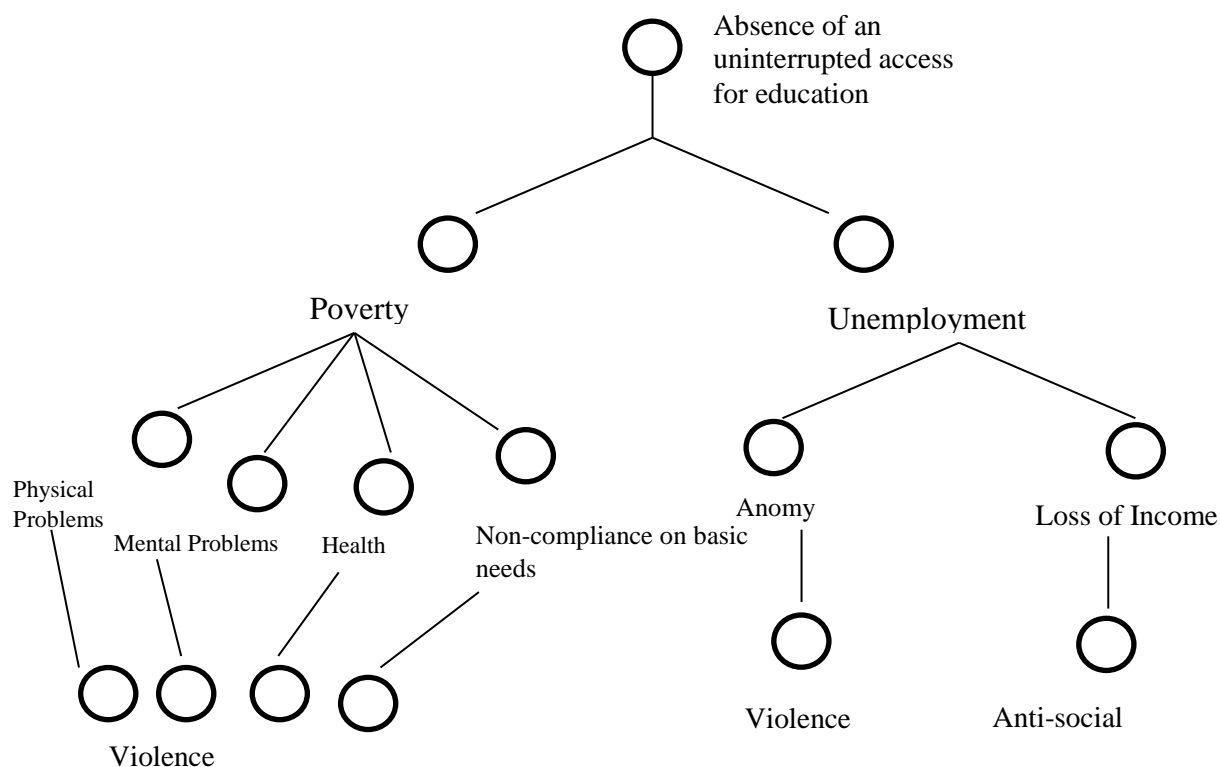
We like to re-commence education if Govt. takes initiative to bring us again to the path of education without imposing age limits. In such a measure, re-arranged missed exams, too, would be ideal" (Female youth –age 22).

Data analysis revealed that monthly salary earned by 74.28% of employed youth was less than Rs. 5,000/=.

Out of the sample of 132 respondents (between 18-24 years of age), it was disclosed that 61 had entered into married life affirming the regaining of life. Also revealed that 29 had commenced married life before reaching the age of 18. Premature disconnection from education, the inadequacy of protection, a confined living pattern into a limited geography, poverty, immaturity were found to be visible reasons for early marriages while also expediting to be parents.

Analyzed outcomes of data divulged that 15.9 % of the sample had lost either parents or blood relatives at the time of their childhood, whereas, 59.84% had lost the occurrence of schooling. Nevertheless, the balance respondents had found some avenues to attend schooling yet, the atmosphere prevailed for education was not conducive due to various lapses.

As a whole, the respondents of the research sample admitted the fact that they are going through their adolescence in affiliation to the post war setting. It was also apparent that the female youth viewed the risk of losing their adolescence as well, in similarity to the loss of childhood.

While responding with shared views one youth aged 23, commented "when *things are moving on unclear pathways we tend to feel that we are treated differently hence, the option is to fall in again against such moves.*
The above statement clarifies exactly how the anomic feelings lead to violent behavior. It further assert s that such situation arises when the youth feel that the services they are accessible even after reaching their adolescence and with enormous distressful experience during their childhood, are unsatisfactory. While asserting uncertainty of services made available through the intervention of Govt. or Political parties the respondents mentioned that if any development project is implemented in a people centered manner such activities were launched merely by non-governmental organizations.

9. CONCLUSIONS

It is determinable that youth who suffered due to the conflict during their childhood continuing unstable living pattern even after reaching adolescence. Another concluding factor is the absence of long term plans with needed follow up for the betterment of affected youth, whereas, several non Govt. organizations are implementing tasks with an appreciation of the public.

In reference to the desired improvements, besides infra structural development higher emphasis was to be given to human resource development too, which has not happened. Apparently, the youth had closer linkage with police and military groups along with Eg: 'Community police' concept. In such dealings, it was noticeable that those participated youth showed increased attachment

physically, mentally and socially in comparison to Southern youth (Youth participated in this research were in ages from 23-24, studying in 3rd. year in the University.) Could be concluded that a wider lag is visible on physically, mentally and socially as well.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- To commence long term programmes in focus of adolescents who had faced the war during childhood.
- To initiate actions to enable youth to earn fixed income by way of implementing supportive projects on self-employment.
- To commence Vocational training, Education on language studies and also to re-commence educational programmes for those willing to continue from where they stopped.
- To launch continues assessment of above programmes based on frequent follows up.
- Can also propose the need for expedient action to enforce the operation of legal institutions.

11. SPECIAL THANKS

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