EFFECTS OF SOCIAL CONFLICT AND UNREST AMONG THE STUDENTS IN MANIPUR, INDIA

[1]Dr. Beishamayum Deben Singh, [2]Dr. Moirangthem Kennedy Singh, [3]Dr. Khundongbam Gyanabati Devi

[1] PDF, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, India;

[2]Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, India;

[3]Research Associate, CWDS, Gole market, Delhi, India.

Abstract: Student is a stage of life, where one cultured themselves what they see, read and experience in life. Their understandings and knowledge reflect the true scenario of the present situation of society. So, exploring student's viewpoints and knowledge on social issues is very important to understand the existing situation of particular society. The present research attempts to highlight the knowledge of students in the milieu of contemporary social conflict and its related consequences on society and students academic life. Information presented in the paper has been furnish from data collected through ethnographic study by using interview schedules from 645 students studying between class 11th to master level. The informants were selected through convenience sampling. The study revealed that Manipur is passing through various types of social conflict and unrest. These social conflicts have badly impacts on education, socio-economic, political and health status of the state. Public transports are ceased to finding and institutions are also closed during those public curfews. Such situation makes student unwillingly absent in school and college. In addition, the respondents are suffering mental disturbance from their exposure in such situation and more focus on social issues and less interest on study may affects their academic career.

Keywords: Student, effects, conflict, unrest, general strike, Manipur

I. Introduction:

North-Eastern region of India has been afflicted with various forms of conflicts and unrest for the past many decades. Specifically, Manipur is an immense example of how the trust deficit has polarised the state created a situation of social unrest and economic turmoil (Narendra Kumar, 2012). Since India's independence, it has been witnessing long episodes of social unrest, violence, instabilities and conflicts due to various social issues. Manipur is a state of a diverse multicultural ethnic society. The state is home to the Meiteis, Nagas, Kukis and Manipuri Pangals (Muslim) ethnic communities etc. Thus, the state has been experiencing inconsistencies and instabilities resulting from various social unrests and chaos. Ethnic issues, terrorists' activities, conflicts between insurgent groups and police forces, disagreement between government and people, land and boundary issues, immigration, political crisis and educational issues were some of the majors caused for social conflicts and unrest in Manipur. People of state have been saddened by such social conflicts and unrests which were continuing to rise of state conflict which result in form of violence and non-violent activities, unrest, frequent general strike, economic blockade, curfew etc.

Concept of consequences of Social conflict

Each social conflict has certain level of consequences to society, sometimes it reached to some extent; and it touched to its peak level of implication either in terms of development or towards the degradation or backward. Certain conflicts ultimately may have its implications on social beings either advantageous or disadvantageous on society. Such consequences of social conflicts in society are termed by functionalists as "functions of social conflicts". These consequences or functions of social conflict are broadly divided into two, i.e. positive or advantageous and negative or disadvantageous to the society (Abraham, 2004, Pp.135-136). Positive or advantageous consequences of social conflict are those that are result in terms of promoting group solidarity to arise and innovate to new set of parameters for social life, and re-examining the existing policies of society or to bring a new change in society. While negative consequences of social conflict are those result of destroying public properties, loss of unity, fear and loss of lives etc.

It is also witnessed that conflicts have different implications and outcomes according to the type of structures of society or magnitude and nature of conflict. Social conflict also gives negative, disadvantageous or harmful consequences to society. According to Coser (1968), "those social conflicts in which opponent parties do not maintain any similarities where legitimacy of the social system rests are dysfunctional or harmful for the social system" (L. A. Coser, 1968. Pp.233).

II. Objectives of study: The study focuses on the following objectives.
1. The present study attempts to highlight the understandings and perception of students in the milieu of contemporary social issues and its related conflicts and unrests in Manipur.
2. The study also tried to analyse student knowledge on who played an active role in social conflict and its responsive factors.
3. The study also examine how conflict and unrest affects various socio-economic condition and academic life of the students.

III. Materials and Methods

The present study employed triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods. In addition, data were analysed through exploratory and descriptive processes. Some of the data were also quantified wherever required to make the result more reliable and analytical. Primary data are collected from the students from many schools, colleges and University in Manipur. During the fieldwork, Interview schedule was the main technique for present research and primary data collected from 645 students of class 11th standard to Master level, as they are more witnessed involving in social conflicts and unrest in the state.

IV. Results and Discussion:

IV.1. Consequences of Social Conflict in Manipur

Manipur is plagued with different forms of social conflict and unrests. During such incidences, all schools, colleges, universities and institutions were remained close and regular classes were boycotted. Thus, normal routine of academic life was adversely affected. Many people were injured and some lost their life, disturbed law and order, increased insurgencies, delayed in development activities, increasing poverty etc. are some of the additional consequences of unstable situations in the state.

The study is primarily focuses on negative consequences rather than positive, due to lack of positive responses from the students. The impacts of social conflicts are classified into two viz. impacts on society, which includes education, socio-economic, political status of the state. Another impact is on academic life of respondents.

IV.2. Impacts of Social Conflict on Society

The widespread outbursts of sudden social conflicts have affected normal life in Manipur. This section of the paper attempted to analyse students' opinion on impact of frequent outburst of society conflicts in Manipur. The continuing eruption of state conflicts and unrests in the form of social violence, frequent imposed of general strike, economic blockade, curfew, disruption in transportation and insurgency etc. has adversely affected the state.

Table 1. Impacts of Social Conflicts on Society

List of Sectors (N=645)	Strongly Affected	Affected	Not Affected
Education	461 (71.5%)	147 (22.8%)	37 (5.7%)
Socio-Economic	292 (45.3%)	265 (41.1%)	88 (13.6%)
Political	131 (20.3%)	309 (47.9%)	205 (31.8%)
Health	156 (24.2%)	212 (32.9%)	277 (42.9%)

* Multiple Responses

N= Total Number of respondents

The table 1 shows the sectors which are affected by social conflicts as mentioned by the students. The analysis shows that education sector, socio-economic condition of the state, political situation and health care facilities are widely affected by such frequent un-stabilities in the state. Thangjam, (2005), Machel, (2001) and Singha, K. (2013) in their studies have also observed that such scenario of frequent outburst of social conflicts have sadden the normalcy of the state, as well as it hamper students in accessing good academic life, and indefinite closure of educational institutions and other such situations affect one's personal growth and development of the state. Similarly, it is also observed that academic environment was found to be mostly disturbed due to such social conflicts in the state. Out of 645 students, 461 (71.5%) students opined education sector is strongly affected and 147 (22.8%) agreed education sector is affected by frequent occurrence of social conflicts in the state, though only 37 (5.7%) students have opined that education is not affected by frequent conflict situation in the state.

The socio-economic condition of the state is also hampered by such frequent outbreak of social conflict in the state. It also reflected that out of 645 students, 292 (45.3%) students opined socio-economic condition is strongly affected, and 265 (41.1%) students have mentioned the socio-economic condition of the state is affected by the present scenario of social conflicts, while only 88 (13.6%) students suggested the socio-economic condition of Manipur is not affected by such social conflict situation.

Community organisations, student organisation and insurgent groups are trying to assert their grievance, often imposed economic blockades on National Highways NH-39 and NH-53, which are regarded as the lifelines of the state. The flow of the essential commodities from Guwahati to Imphal via Nagaland, is badly hampered which result in suddenly increases of prices for basic necessary commodities in Manipur. Further students have mentioned that daily wage labourer and street vendor have been strongly affected by such unstable situations, and remain the most vulnerable section in the society. It is clear that conflicts have a negative impact on many societies in Manipur. Thus students have noted such frequent and sudden occurrence of social conflicts in the state have adversely affected socio-economic condition of the state as whole.

Following socio-economic condition, political sector was found to be affected by frequent unstable situations in the state as per the opinion of the students. The higher numbers of 309 (47.9%) students agreed that political stability are affected by such frequent social conflicts situation of the state and lesser numbers 131 (20.3%) students' opined political sectors are strongly affected by the conflict situations. Political enhancements in the state have been far off, and any kinds of development and planning policies have defunct badly.

As a continuation, 212 (32.9%) of students have agreed and 156 (24.2%) have strongly agreed health sector are also influenced badly in the state. Though 277 (42.9%) students have opined health sector is not affected by such social conflicts. Students have elaborated that, frequent imposed of strikes, curfews and blockades lead to frequent absenteeism of health-care personnel from health centres due to frequent transportation issues for

their local commutation. It is also mentioned that, due to such inter-and intra-community conflicts and ethnic conflicts, health-care practitioners felt reluctant to take posting in different areas other than their home town.

IV.3. Impact on academic life of respondents

Education is the keystone of socio-economic and cultural development of a society/ nation (Singha, K. 2013). It appeared as the most significant resource in promoting human resource development, achieving rapid economic and technological development, creating a social order, based on the virtues of freedom, equal opportunities and social justice (Gill, et al., 2018). Thus, educational sector plays an important role in the present world, for not only elevating the standard of living but also as a mechanism to thwart conflict situations prevailed in society.

On the other side, children and education sectors are found to be the most vulnerable sections of society affected by conflict and violence, especially in developing countries (UNESCO, 2010; Boyden, et al. 2002). Conflict and violence avert student's chances of receiving good-quality education in many diverse ways. The contemporary society of Manipur, despite the lingering conflicts in the State, the education has been growing at a faster rate than that of national level (Singha, K. 2010). However, such conflicts and unrests have affected the attendance of students in academic year. Schools, colleges and other academic institutions were remained closed or boycotted regular classes for many days, even if they remained open, students are unable to attend their classes due to transport issues or their fear, etc.

The present study shows that out the total sample 645 students, only 211 (32.7%) students attend academic institutes during occurrence of social conflicts, while majority of the students 434 (67.3%) did not attend their academic institutions.

Among those 434 respondents (67.3%) did not attend schools, colleges or university during those social unrests and conflicts days. The study attempted to understand the reasons behind why they did not attend schools, colleges or university during such unstable days.

Table No. 2 Reasons for Not Attending Schools/colleges during Social Conflicts

Reasons (N=434)	Frequency (X)	Percentage (X/N*100)
No transportation or Road remained block	319	73.5
School close/ No class	283	65.2
Due to fear	186	42.9
To joint conflict	116	26.7
Student not for conflict	45	10.4
No specific reasons were provided	33	7.6

*Multiple responses
N= Total Number of respondents who doesn't attend institution during conflict

Elaborating the analysis, table 2 shows the reasons for not attending the academic institutions during occurrence of social unrests and conflicts in the society. Enumerating those 434 responses, maximum number of students 319 (73.5%) opined they did not attend academic institutions due to lack of transportation as roads were blocked, and buses and public vehicles didn't provide services during conflict days. 283 (65.2%) students expressed that school, college, university and other academic institutions were remained close and regular classes were boycotted. On other hand, 186 (42.9%) students opined that they felt fear with these social conflicts and unrests so they did not attend school, college or university during the outbreak of social instability in the society.

Following 116 (26.7%) respondents have opined that they want to joint those public demonstration, so they stayed home not attending the school, college and university. While in divergent with the above reasons, 45 (10.4%) students added that they stayed back at home or hostel as they believed that students are not for social conflicts as they believed that such conflicts destroy their aims and carrier, so they preferred to stay back and study. The other 33 (7.6%) students did not provide any specific reasons for the point.

IV.4. State of Emotion at academic institutions during Social Conflict

The analysis on students' emotional status on their stay at academic institutions during outbreak of social conflicts and unrest. Gill, M.J. and Burrow, R. (2017) have concluded individuals' fears are not solely dependent on their nature, but such emotional states are also shaped by their social relations and culture, guide their understanding of when fear to feel. Majority of 325 (50.3%) students have suffered with sense of fear and 288 (44.7%) have responded that they did not feel any fear at their academic institutions during social conflicts.

Multiple reasons for feeling insecurity at their academic institutions during the episode of social conflicts are elaborately explained below with some of their comments noted at the time of interview.

Due to strong influenced by protestors either from civil organizations or students' union or coalition groups students to join their protest in between classes and many students felt fear or insecure to stay at their respective institutions during unrest. These protestors un-predictably visit school and colleges, and asked to join/ support their protest. Otherwise, they will shut down schools, destroy infrastructures etc. They ask to join suddenly in the midst of the classes.

> A student from Imphal College said that, "Some protestors called us out to the gate and asked us to join the rally. It makes us feel uncomfortable at college during such conflict days."

> Another student from TG Higher Secondary School said that, "Destroying school properties and shut down of school during social unrest make me unsafe and fear at school."

Students felt insecure during conflict situation because of casualties that happened during the rallies and clashed with police personnel.

> Class XII pursuing student from TG Higher Secondary School, said that, "Some of my class mate have physically injured during social unrest."

> Class XII pursuing student from Ananda Academy Higher Secondary School opined that, "Robinhood was death due to participation of student in protest in school uniform, so it is unsafe to attend school during conflict."

On the other hand, some students opined that, academic institutions, school, colleges are targeted first for any kind of social conflicts. Thus, they felt insecurity during such unstable state.

> Class XII pursuing student from Johnstone Higher Secondary School discoursed that, "*In every issues, Johnstone Higher Secondary School is the first target for any social issues to joint in any kind of protest or strike.*"

> A Post graduate pursuing student from Manipur University alleged that, "C*ivil organisation always target students and institution to involve in any agitation.*"

Last but not least, students explained that they felt insecure and lack of protection during their stay at schools/colleges/ universities as they live far away from their institution, so due to sudden occurrences of conflict and violence leading to impose of road blocks and curfew. During, such situation they found difficulties in managing to reach home.

V. Conclusion

Students have acknowledged that such unpredictable and unstable occurrences have affected on the four major sectors of the society namely, education, socio-economic, political and health care institutions. Among these four sectors, students have expressed that education sectors have been mostly affected. Unfortunately, conflict and violence avert student's chances of receiving good-quality education in different ways. Such conflicts and unrests in the contemporary society of Manipur, have affected the attendance of students in one academic year. Schools, colleges and other academic institutions were remained closed or boycotted for many days, even if they remained open, students are unable to attend their classes due to transport issues or their fear, etc.

The paper also concluded that such frequent occurrences of social conflicts in the state have affected the emotional state of the students. Almost half of the students revealed that they sense the feeling of fear during such unstable days while staying at schools and colleges because of multiple reasons like suddenly appearance of protestors without any prior information, asked them to joint strike or rally; unpredicted block of roads and imposed of curfew. Students specially those who are from far off places, found difficulties in managing to

reach home or to hold night in their respective hostels or private accomodations.in order to bring a positive environment inn such conflict areas, the government should control the law and order situation to bring a peaceful and normal life.

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