



EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG THE MEITEI POPULATION IN MANIPUR

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of conflict on the quality of life among the Meitei population in Manipur, a region affected by prolonged socio-political unrest. Using correlation and regression analyses, the research explores the relationships between conflict and various domains of well-being: physical, social, psychological, and environmental. The findings reveal significant negative correlations, indicating that higher levels of conflict are associated with poorer physical health, reduced social interactions, increased psychological distress, and degraded environmental conditions. Regression analyses confirm these results, showing that conflict significantly predicts adverse outcomes in all quality of life domains. The physical domain is most affected, explaining 13.9% of the variance, followed by psychological, social, and environmental domains. The study highlights the interconnected effects of conflict on well-being and recommends holistic intervention strategies, including comprehensive support programs to improve health, foster social cohesion, provide psychological care, and enhance living environments in conflict-affected regions. This research contributes to understanding the nuanced effects of conflict on the quality of life of affected populations.

Keywords: *Conflict, Manipur, Meitei, Quality of Life, Impact*

INTRODUCTION:

Manipur, a state nestled in the northeastern region of India, is renowned for its natural beauty and rich cultural tapestry, comprising thirty-three scheduled tribes, seven scheduled castes, and a general caste population (Vibha et al., 2012). However, despite its beautiful landscapes and vibrant heritage, Manipur has long been plagued by conflicts stemming from issues of exclusivity, dominance, and integration among its diverse ethnic groups (B Oinam, 2003).

For generations, Manipur has grappled with a myriad of challenges, from political unrest to inter-community discord. These tensions frequently erupt into periods of turmoil, characterized by frequent curfews, strikes, and communal clashes. Previous conflicts, such as those between the Nagas and Kukis, followed by disputes between Kukis and Paites, underscore the complex identity issues prevalent in the region (B Oinam, 2003). Moreover, a conflict that commenced a year ago, precisely on 3rd May 2023, signifies the persistent nature of these conflicts, which often escalate into violence and disrupt the economy, impacting all residents irrespective of their communities.

During the British colonial era, the Meiteis, the predominant tribe in Manipur, were categorized as forest tribes. However, following India's independence, the Meiteis were reclassified as part of the general/unreserved category, unlike other tribes designated as Scheduled Tribes or Scheduled Castes. This classification has posed challenges for the Meitei tribe, as they are denied access to religious sites located in forests and atop mountains. Despite being one of the poorest tribes in India, the Meiteis have not yet been included in the Scheduled Tribe List, exacerbating their plight (Oinam Teresa & Oinam Ghanashyam, 2020). The ongoing conflict originated when the Meiteis began demanding for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe List. Their aim is to secure government protection, preserve their cultural heritage, and gain access to their sacred sites (Oinam Teresa & Oinam Ghanashyam, 2020).

The impact of this protracted conflict has been far-reaching, affecting individuals from all walks of life. From students unable to attend school due to the volatile security situation to daily wage earners struggling to make ends meet amidst frequent disruptions, the conflict has exacted a heavy toll on Manipur's populace. Homes have been lost to fires ignited by the flames of discord, while artists and artisans find themselves deprived of their livelihoods as cultural festivities and celebrations are put on hold indefinitely.

Compounding these challenges was the unprecedented internet ban imposed for nearly nine months, further isolating Manipur's residents from the outside world and exacerbating the sense of disconnection and hardship. In an age where connectivity is synonymous with progress and opportunity, the absence of internet access served as a stark reminder of the profound impact of conflict on the daily lives of Manipur's people.

As Manipur grapples with the enduring ramifications of this conflict, it is imperative to recognize the human cost of such unrest. Beyond the headlines and statistics lie stories of resilience, perseverance, and hope amidst adversity. It is within this context that efforts to foster dialogue, reconciliation, and sustainable peace must be pursued with utmost urgency and determination, ensuring that Manipur's future is characterized not by conflict, but by unity, prosperity, and shared opportunity.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

This study examines the essential issue of how conflict impacts the quality of life in Manipur. This is important because it explores the multifaceted challenges faced by individuals living in conflict-affected regions. The study highlights how conflict affects various domains of life, including physical health, psychological well-being, social relationships, and environmental conditions.

Additionally, this research contributes to the broader academic discourse on conflict studies and quality of life

research. By synthesizing existing knowledge and generating new insights into the relationship between conflict and quality of life, the study adds to the growing body of literature in these fields. It fosters interdisciplinary dialogue and informs future research endeavors, thereby advancing our understanding of the human toll of conflict.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The impact of conflict on quality of life has been extensively studied, revealing significant effects on physical, psychological, social, and environmental well-being, particularly in conflict-ridden regions like Manipur.

Das (2023) explores the Kuki–Meitei conflict in Manipur, highlighting the historical, socio-political, and religious dynamics that exacerbate communal tensions and violence due to colonial-era administrative measures (Pushpita Das, 2023).

Conflict-related trauma, such as PTSD, severely impacts quality of life. Studies on veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan wars indicate that PTSD impairs psychosocial and occupational functioning, leading to poorer life satisfaction (Paula P. Schnurr et al., 2009). Specific PTSD symptoms predict changes in quality of life domains, such as relationships and surroundings, showing the complex interplay between PTSD and well-being (Corale A. Lunney et al., 2007). Neuropsychological functioning, including executive control and verbal recall, also correlates with quality of life, emphasizing the importance of coping strategies (Martindale et al., 2016).

Long-term effects of childhood trauma, as seen in Kuwaiti children exposed to the Gulf War, predict adult health issues and psychological distress, indicating lasting impacts (Llabre et al., 2009). Similarly, Israeli university students exposed to multiple traumatic events show increased psychological distress, especially among women and those with physical injuries (Marianne Amir et al., 2001).

In post-war contexts, such as Croatia and Gaza, conflict significantly lowers health-related quality of life, affecting physical functioning, general health, and mental health (Andreja Babić-Banaszak et al., 2002; Abu-El-Noor et al., 2016; Hammoudeh. W et al., 2013). Meta-analyses reveal high prevalence rates of depression and PTSD among civilian war survivors, underscoring the need for large-scale mental health programs (Morina, N. et al., 2018).

Other psychological disorders, like social anxiety disorder and major depressive disorder, are prevalent among war survivors. For instance, Albanian survivors of the Kosovo War with these disorders show greater psychological distress and lower quality of life (Kashdan, T. B. et al., 2009). Similarly, British

Armed Forces personnel with PTSD experience significant functional impairment, particularly due to avoidance behaviors (Rona, R. J. et al., 2009).

Longitudinal studies on middle-to-older-aged men exposed to combat show increased physical health issues and marital instability, while higher social support reduces chronic pain (Sheffler, J. L. et al., 2015). PTSD affects family dynamics, with avoidance behaviors linked to poor family functioning and anger mediating the effects of arousal symptoms (Evans, L. et al., 2003).

Posttraumatic growth (PTG) can positively influence mental health in post-conflict settings. For instance, short-term displacement in Sri Lanka's IDP camps improves well-being, although long-term displacement has negative effects (Jayasuriya, D., 2013). Strengthening personal resilience and family support networks can mitigate PTSD's adverse effects, as seen in Persian Gulf War troops (Sutker, P. B. et al., 1995).

Quality of life in conflict zones shows significant declines across various domains, emphasizing the need for comprehensive interventions (Amir, M. et al., 2001; Andreja Babić-Banaszak et al., 2002; Abu-El-Noor et al., 2016; Hammoudeh, W et al., 2013). High prevalence rates of depression and PTSD among civilian war survivors highlight the need for tailored mental health programs (Morina, N. et al., 2018).

Israeli combat veterans' posttraumatic symptoms predict lower family cohesion, highlighting the mutual influence of PTSD and family dynamics (Zerach, G et al., 2013). Social support plays a critical role in enhancing coping self-efficacy and reducing distress among veterans (Smith, A. J. et al., 2013). Strong group identification and positive war appraisal can reduce depressive mood and anxiety (Kellezi, B. et al., 2009). PTSD in Vietnam veterans is closely linked to social anxiety and depression, necessitating interventions targeting mood disturbances (Hofmann, S. G. et al., 2003).

Posttraumatic growth predictors include trauma symptoms and positive worldview changes, with sustained PTG linked to decreased trauma symptoms and increased acceptance (LD Butler et al., 2005). Displacement significantly impacts mental health, as seen in Sri Lanka's IDPs and Vietnamese refugees, with trauma exposure being a key determinant of mental health outcomes (Husain, F. et al., 2011; Z Steel et al., 2002).

Integrating trauma-focused and psychosocial approaches is crucial for addressing mental health in conflict settings, with daily stressors mediating the relationship between war exposure and mental health (KE Miller et al., 2010). Norway's long-term commitment to refugee issues underscores the importance of comprehensive assistance (L Eitinger, 1959).

Critical assessments of PTSD concepts in psycho-social projects reveal limitations of Western therapies in conflict zones, advocating for broader social development projects (Stubbs, P. & Soroya, B., 1996; D Summerfield, 1999). Kosovar Albanians and Cambodian survivors demonstrate the enduring impact of cumulative trauma, validating culturally sensitive diagnostic criteria (Cardozo, B.L., 2000; RF Mollica et al., 1998). Global perspectives on violent conflicts emphasize the pervasive effects on societal structures and individual well-being (D Summerfield, 2000).

Research on Southeast Asian refugees in the U.S. shows that premigration trauma significantly predicts psychological distress, necessitating tailored interventions for different refugee groups (RCY Chung & M Kagawa-Singer, 1993). The literature underscores the need for comprehensive, culturally sensitive approaches

to address the complex mental health needs of conflict-affected populations.

METHODS OF THE STUDY:

Aim

To assess how the conflict has affected different domains of the quality of life for the Meitei populace in Manipur

Objective

To evaluate the significant relationship between the impact of conflict and different domains of quality of life.
To assess the significant impact of specific events on different domains of quality of life.

Hypotheses

H1: There is significant relationship on the impact of conflict and different domains of quality of life. H2: There will be significant impact of event on different domains of quality of life.

Sample description

The research involves a cohort of 104 participants drawn from the Meitei population. This cohort consists of 41 females and 63 males who are above the age of 18. Participants were recruited through online methods i.e. Google Forms

Inclusive Criteria:

Individuals of the Meitei community residing in Manipur amidst the conflict.

Exclusion Criteria:

Individuals who do not belong to the Meitei tribe's population. Individuals of the Meitei tribe residing outside Manipur.

This study utilized a convenient sampling method through Google Forms to collect responses from Meitei population across various districts in Manipur. This sample consists of 41 females and 63 males who are above the age of 18. The survey included two instruments: The Impact of Event Scale (IES) to measure the amount of distress that people associate with a specific event, which in this context is the conflict and the WHOQOL-BREF quality of life scale. Data Analysis involves correlation and regression techniques to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables.

RESULTS:

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations and Correlation between impact of event and different domains of Quality of life

Variables	N	S E	Im pac t of	Ph ysi cal do ma in	So ci al do m ai n	Psy cho lo gica l	Enviro nmen tal domai n

			Co nfli ct			do mai n		
Impact of Event	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
	9	5						
	.	.						
	3	9						
Physical domain	2	4						
	9	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
	5	7	.37					
	.	.	3*					
Social domain	0	5	*					
	8	3						
	7	1	-	.56	-	-	-	-
	7	6	.23	5*				
Psychologic al domain	.	.	6*	*				
	6	9						
	2	1						
	3	1	-	.69	.5	-	-	-
Environmen tal domain	9	0	.40	7*	70			
	.	.	4*	*	**			
	9	0	*					
	6	5						
Environmen tal domain	1	2	-	.59	.5	.68	-	-
	0	1	.21	2*	23	3**		
	0	.	2.*	*	**			
	.	3						
Environmen tal domain	9	6						
	6	7						

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 presents the correlations between the impact of conflict and various domains of quality of life among the sample population (n = 104). The data reveals significant negative correlations between the Impact of Conflict (M = 39.32, SD = 15.94) and the Physical Domain of quality of life (M = 95.08, SD = 17.53), with a weak but significant correlation of $r = -0.373$, $p < 0.01$. Similarly, the Social Domain (M = 77.62, SD = 16.91) shows a weak negative correlation with the Impact of Conflict, $r = -0.236$, $p < 0.05$. The Psychological Domain (M = 39.96, SD = 10.05) also has a significant negative correlation with the Impact of Conflict, $r = -0.404$, $p < 0.01$. Additionally, the Environmental Domain (M = 100.96, SD = 21.367) exhibits a weak negative correlation with the Impact of Conflict, $r = -0.212$, $p < 0.05$.

Furthermore, significant positive correlations are observed among the different quality of life domains. The Physical Domain is positively correlated with the Social Domain, $r = 0.565$, $p < 0.01$, the Psychological Domain, $r = 0.697$, $p < 0.01$, and the Environmental Domain, $r = 0.592$, $p < 0.01$. The Social Domain shows positive correlations with the Psychological Domain, $r = 0.570$, $p < 0.01$, and the Environmental Domain, $r = 0.570$, $p < 0.01$.

= 0.523, $p < 0.01$. Moreover, the Psychological Domain is positively correlated with the Environmental Domain, $r = 0.683$, $p < 0.01$.

These significant correlations lead to the acceptance of Hypothesis 1, demonstrating that the impact of conflict is negatively associated with various domains of quality of life, while the quality of life domains are positively correlated with each other.

This indicates that there is a significant relationship between the impact of the conflict and the various quality of life domains among the Meitei population in Manipur.

Table 2: Simple Linear regression: Impact of conflict and different domains of Quality of Life

Predictor Variable	I	R Square	df	F	Beta (Standardized Coefficient)	Sign.
Physical domain	.139	.139	16	16.486	-.373	<.001
Social domain	.056	.056	6.004	6.004	-.236	0.16
Psychological domain	.163	.163	19.07	19.07	-.404	<.001
Environmental domain	.045	.045	4.809	4.809	-.212	.031

Table 2 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis conducted to examine the impact of the conflict on different quality of life domains among the Meitei population in Manipur. The predictor variable was the Impact of Conflict, and the dependent variables were the Physical, Social, Psychological, and Environmental domains of quality of life.

The regression model for the Physical Domain was significant, with an R value of .373, an R² value of .139, $F(1, 102) = 16.486$, $p < 0.01$, and a standardized beta coefficient of -.373. This indicates that the impact of the conflict significantly predicts the physical domain of quality of life, explaining 13.9% of the variance.

For the Social Domain, the regression model was also significant, with an R value of .236, an R² value of .056, $F = 6.004$, $p < 0.05$, and a standardized beta coefficient of -.236. This suggests a significant relationship between the impact of the conflict and the social domain, accounting for 5.6% of the variance.

The Psychological Domain showed a significant regression model, with an R value of .404, an R² value of .163, $F = 19.907$, $p < 0.01$, and a standardized beta coefficient of -.404. This result indicates that the impact of the conflict significantly affects the psychological domain, explaining 16.3% of the variance.

Lastly, the Environmental Domain regression model was significant, with an R value of .212, an R² value of .045, $F = 4.809$, $p < 0.05$, and a standardized beta coefficient of -.212. This demonstrates that the impact of the conflict significantly predicts the environmental domain of quality of life, accounting for 4.5% of the variance.

The results indicate that the impact of the conflict has a significant negative relationship with the physical, social, psychological, and environmental domains of quality of life among the Meitei population in Manipur.

DISCUSSION:

The present study investigated the impact of conflict on various domains of quality of life among the Meitei population in Manipur, revealing significant negative effects on physical, social, psychological, and environmental well-being. These findings are consistent with existing literature highlighting similar patterns in conflict-affected populations.

Physical Well-Being

The significant negative correlation between conflict and physical well-being ($r = -0.373$, $p < 0.01$) is supported by research showing a decline in physical health in conflict zones. For example, post-war Kosovar Albanians experienced a decline in physical functioning due to conflict-related trauma (Cardozo, 2000). This underscores the need for health interventions in conflict zones to address physical health issues.

Social Well-Being
Conflict negatively impacted social interactions ($r = -0.236$, $p < 0.05$), reflecting broader disruptions to social cohesion. Studies in Bosnia and Rwanda critique Western psychological models that neglect social recovery (Stubbs & Soroya, 1996; Summerfield, 1999). Integrating social support mechanisms in mental health interventions is crucial for rebuilding social networks.

Psychological Well-Being

The negative effect of conflict on psychological well-being ($r = -0.404$, $p < 0.01$) aligns with evidence from other conflict regions, where high levels of PTSD and psychiatric conditions persist (Cardozo, 2000; Mollica et al., 1998). Long-term mental health services are essential to address both immediate and residual

psychological distress.

Environmental Well-Being

The negative correlation between conflict and environmental well-being ($r = -0.212$, $p < 0.05$) highlights the broader environmental degradation caused by conflict (Summerfield, 2000). Addressing environmental factors is crucial for improving quality of life in conflict zones.

Interrelations Among Quality of Life Domains

Positive correlations among different quality of life domains suggest that improvements in one area can positively influence others. This interconnectedness supports a holistic approach to interventions, integrating daily stressors into mental health models (Miller & Rasmussen, 2010).

CONCLUSION

This study provides evidence of the detrimental impact of conflict on multiple domains of quality of life among the Meitei population in Manipur. The findings align with existing literature, emphasizing the need for holistic, culturally sensitive, and contextually relevant intervention strategies. Addressing physical, social, psychological, and environmental well-being in an integrated manner is essential for improving quality of life and fostering resilience in conflict-affected populations. Future research should continue exploring these interconnected domains and develop tailored interventions for different conflict-affected communities.

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