

Impacts of Terrorist Strike: A Study on Akshardham Temple Attack

Sai Krishna D*, Krupa Nishar and Pavithran Nambiar

*Gujarat Forensic Sciences University, Gujarat, India.

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism is a form of psychological warfare against a society. Terrorism focuses on propagating the feeling of fear among the public in the society. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the actual victims of terror attacks depending upon the intensity of exposure to the attack. This study is an attempt to investigate the effects of a terror attack, by approaching its actual individual victims. It focuses on analyzing the long-term impacts of victim survivors, victim dependents, victim dependents on handicapped survivors of Akshardham temple attack, September 25th, 2002. The study is designed to Answer-What is terrorism, what are its effects on actual victims, how did the victims cope up with attack and what is their view about terrorism? Data will be generated through observation, interview and questionnaire. The source of data will come from mainly actual victims and their direct blood relatives. For social and economic problems assessment, the 12 Item Social and Economic Conservatism Scale (Secs) was used. For psychological problems assessment, Impact of Events Scale -Revised (IES-R) was used. This research will provide a detailed picture on impacts of terrorism on society: psychological, social and economic which will serve as an important tool for governmental policy analysis.

Keywords: Terrorism, Akshardham Attack, Victims, Psychological effects

INTRODUCTION

Need for Study

The terrorist attacks can cause adverse effects not only on actual victims but also on society. This research will provide a detailed picture about impacts of terrorism on society by discussing psychological, economic and social impacts of terrorist attack on population, which will trigger the political impacts. In doing so, the research will be helping in comprehensive understanding of impacts of terrorism on victims and thereby the society. This study, therefore, focuses on analyzing the long-term impacts of victim survivors, victim dependents, victim dependents on handicapped survivors of Akshardham temple attack, September 25th, 2002, as a case study to illustrate various long-term impacts of terror strike.

LITERATURE REVIEW

From the etymological concept, the word terrorism comes from Latin and French words: *terrere*, and *terrorisme*, meaning “to frighten,” and “state rule by terror” respectively. There is no generally accepted *modus operandi* of terrorists; also, there exists no generally accepted definition among terrorism experts [1].

All criminal acts directed against a State and intended or calculated to create a state of terror in the minds of particular

persons or a group of persons or the general public (Ruperez).

In the area of providing remedies and reparation to victims, it is also worth noting the “Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law,” approved by the General Assembly in December 2005 ((A/RES/60/147)).

EFFECTS OF TERRORISM

Psychological effects

Terrorism is a form of psychological warfare against a society. The immediate effects of terrorism are psychological and their campaigns can be expected to psychologically affect a sizeable portion of the population of

Corresponding author: Sai Krishna D, Student, M.Sc. Homeland Security & Anti-terrorism, Gujarat Forensic Sciences University, Gujarat, India, Tel: +91-8790383409; E-mail: Krishna.said@outlook.com

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a targeted society, either directly, by harming a person or their family, or indirectly, through the extensive media coverage of terrorist attacks [2]. The greater the number of attacks and the more casualties of those attacks are, the more people that will be psychologically affected by them. Terrorism is designed to strike fear into the heart of the targeted society, and it generally succeeds in doing so. It does not, however, affect everyone to an equal degree but people tend to overestimate their chances of being a victim to terrorism and the fear of terrorism is widespread in a society.

The easiest psychological effect of terrorism is the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). One of the major symptoms of PTSD is avoiding people or situations that remind one of the traumatic experiences. The psychological effects of terrorism are not limited to PTSD. For example, those who witness terrorist attacks but are not directly harmed are generally the last to be evacuated from the scene of the attack, since emergence response teams and medical support teams are typically focus their attention on the search and rescue and casualties. There may be possibilities of these people typically replay the scenes of event endlessly in their heads, and many ends up with stress and anxiety disorders, hypertension, accelerated pulse, disassociation. Keeping in mind of these terrorist attacks, people can become incapable of concentrating on their typical daily tasks. Terrorism, therefore, has a significant impact on people's everyday lives, whether or not they are directly exposed to it [2].

Economic effects

The economic effects of terrorism can be broken down into its direct costs, associated with the destruction caused by an act of terrorism, and its indirect costs, which affect nearly every aspect of a targeted state's economy [3]. The most direct economic effect of a terrorist attack is the damage caused to life and property at the site of the attack. As an example, a suicide attack in a supermarket would cause direct economic damage in four different ways. First, it would damage the infrastructure of the building and destroy products. While the costs of rebuilding or repairing the building and restocking goods might be significant to the store in question, they do not have any effect on the economy at large. Second, the supermarket would probably have to shut down, at least temporarily. With no income generated by the store, national economic output would fall. This would also have no major impact upon the national economy. Third, if the terrorist attack killed people, one must also take into account the lost lifetime earnings of each individual killed. Since the numbers of people killed in individual terrorist attacks are relatively few (compared with the amount of deaths in civil wars or inter-state conflicts) this is also an insignificant cost for the national economy. Fourth, if the terrorist attack results in many casualties, then the wounded both lose earnings and need to pay for medical

procedures (the cost to an economy does not change if the cost of medical procedures is borne by the wounded themselves or by their government), but this too has no real impact on the national economy. Thus, the direct economic impact of a terrorist attack is minimal [4].

Social effects

The social effects of terrorism can be pronounced and far-reaching, influencing many different aspects of a society. The starting point for the impact of terrorism on a society is the effect that terrorist attacks have upon people's beliefs and attitudes. Since the terrorist attacks are events of a highly negative nature, they can lead to changes in people's beliefs and attitudes. One such belief concerns how people view other societies, especially the society which the terrorists belong to [5].

METHOD

This study is an attempt to investigate the effects of a terror attack, by approaching its actual individual victims. It has important aims like to conceptualize the term terrorism, in the Indian context, to evaluate the effects of terrorism on lives of its victims, to study the long-term permanent changes in the lives of victims after this terror strike and to give suggestions and recommendations on how victims can better cope with terrorism.

Participants

The data related to victims of Akshardham temple attack was collected from sector-21, police station, Gandhinagar. According to the First Information Report (FIR), victims of that attack were 35 deaths including two terrorists and 85 injured.

Out of which two victim families were located and interviewed. On mutual concern from both the families, interviewing process was documented.

Tools

The study focused on the traumatic effects in victims of terrorism. For this, we employed the method of case study on the 2 individuals. The case study had questions borrowed from the "The Social and Economic conservatism scale" [SECS]. It is 12 item scale to measure the relationship between political ideology (particularly conservatism) and cognition, affect, behavior. Reliability analyses confirmed internal consistency, with a good overall Cronbach's alpha of .88 for the complete 12-item scale, an alpha of .70 for the 5-item economic conservatism subscale, and an alpha of .87 for the 7-item social conservatism subscale [6]. Thus, Social and Economic impacts on the victims of terrorism have been analyzed based on the open-ended interview, consisting of 11 questions which aim to elicit the social and economic difficulties faced by the victims for prolonged period of time after the terrorist strike. Questions like 'what do you think is the reason of terrorism? Do you still believe in patriotism?

Are you happy with the help from the government?’ were asked.

Psychological impacts on the victims of terrorism were assessed by adopting Impacts of Events Scale-Revised (IES-R) [7]. The Impact of Event Scale-Revised [7] is a 22-item scale which is rated on a 0 (not at all) to 4 (extremely) scale with respect to how distressing each item has been during the past week. Scale scores are formed for the three subscales, which reflect intrusion (8 items), avoidance (8 items), and hyperarousal (6 items), and show a high degree of intercorrelation ($r_s = 0.52$ to 0.87). High levels of internal consistency have been previously reported (Intrusion: Cronbach’s alpha = $0.87-0.94$, Avoidance: Cronbach’s alpha = $0.84-0.87$, Hyperarousal: Cronbach’s alpha = $0.79-0.91$) [7]. Test-retest reliability, collected across a 6-month interval, ranged from 0.89 to 0.94 [7]. Similar internal consistency and test-retest values have been reported with a Japanese translation of the IES-R [8].

Method of data collection

The source of data to be used in the study is basically primary. As a first step, name and address of the victims of Akshardham temple attack were collected from police station of sector-21, Gandhinagar and the session’s court, this enabled the researchers to locate the victims. The attacks had happened one and a half decades back. During this time period a few were available at the address that we have collected, but a majority had relocated to new places. In total we were able to locate two number of victims’ families and were personally visited by the researchers, interviewed and collected information on various factors of the victimization. Data will be generated through observation, interviewing and questionnaire. The source of data will come from mainly actual victims and their direct blood relatives.

Thus, quantitative and qualitative research method was adopted for this case study. The use of questionnaire and open-ended interview was employed; one questionnaire for each respondent. While in-depth interview was conducted on to the informant close to the respondent. The interview schedule consists of open and close ended questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We had interviewed two informants close to the victim in each family using a case study method and a questionnaire method. One victim had lost a son and the second victim had lost the father. On analyzing the answers given by both the victim families towards the long term Social and Economic impacts of Akshardham terror strike, one victim family feels that the terror strike is due to the religion factor whereas second victim family says political situation of the state is the reason for the attack. These were their own beliefs supported by the media. Both the families have expressed that they had to make hard efforts to get compensation aids from the government after the attack. The attack has affected the education of the children in one of the victim’s families

in the form of financial crisis, as the head of the family has lost his life in the attack. The most emotional and effective question was about their belief in the nation (patriotism) their belief in the religion. Both were unshakeable after the attack. Both the victim families feel that these kind of terrorist attacks affect the human ethical values like kindness, unity, they also expressed that they got the immediate necessary aid from the family and relatives’ unit and they stood together at that time to overcome the loss due to the terror attack. When questioned whether there was a feeling of patriotism was changed towards the country, both has answered that it has rather increased and said they always love the nation without the regard of such kind of terrorist attacks. When they were questioned about increasing security in crowded places, they both agreed and said that the government should take steps in increasing security through technology.

With regard to economic impacts, both the families have received the compensation at the right time but the aid is insufficient from the government. Even though economic activities of both the victim families were disturbed due to this attack, they had fulfilled the economic responsibilities by adopting other business methods and acquired the economic stability in the over a period of time.

Both the victim families were provided with the Impacts of Events Scale-Revised (IES-R) and asked to answer, one victim family has scored 77 and the second victim family has scored 75 on the scoring range of 0 to 88, 0 being the lowest or no psychological effects and 88 being the highest with critical trauma. The scores were high on the subscales of hyperarousal, followed by avoidance and intrusion subscales. By this highest score of IES-R, we can say that even after 15 years down the terrorist attack, the victim families still suffer psychologically.

CONCLUSION

Governments has to focus on providing psychological aid to intervene for the psychological welfare of the victims of terrorist strike rather than focusing more on the economic aids and schemes. Because as we understood from the result of psychological assessment that victim families do suffer from psychological disorders like Post traumatic stress disorder and stress and anxiety disorder, which interfere in their daily lives too.

Psychological interventions like Cognitive Behavior therapy-CBT, Counselling and family-based interventions can be effective [9]. Periodic checks over the mental health will help the victim families far more in overcoming the trauma from its roots.

To look forward, this research concludes by stressing on establishment of trauma centers or psychological intervention centers especially for the victims of terrorism.

Thus, the study will serve as an important tool for policy analysis for the interventions needed for victims of terrorism. Furthermore, the study will also increase public awareness against terrorism and contribute to the assistance of victims of terrorism at all levels and in all forms.

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