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Paper: Equity

Socio economic and psychological issues faced by families with loss or disappearance due to the civil conflict in Sri Lanka

The internal civil conflict in Sri Lanka, which prevailed for about three decades has significantly impacted psycho-socioeconomic devastation of the country. Among the reasons which created the psycho-socioeconomic devastation during the conflicting period were: anxiety of sudden death, extreme suspicion of others, brutal killings in and out of the battlefield, destruction and deprivation of property, displacement, disappearances, and restriction of access to social facilities.

Those matters have led to the emergence of war-widows, female-headed families, trauma and psychological impairments. This research was conducted to study socioeconomic and psychological issues faced by the families that faced loss or disappearance of family members. The study was focused to investigate issues face by the families of government military forces.

The research used random sampling method following which Eheliyagoda divisional secretariat area in Rathnapura district was selected as the sample; 25 families were selected randomly from the secondary data available at the divisional secretariat office and those families were interviewed using a semi structured questionnaire. 06 individual case studies were also conducted to understand the issues more deeply. The quantitative dada was analysed using SPSS package and qualitative data was analysed in narrative form.

According to the results of the research, especially the widows and children have been suffering from social insecurity, marginalization and harassment in society in contrast to the high social image of war heroes. Delay of due compensation grants was identified as a key factor to shatter their economic stability. In some instances, widows have been used to engage in prostitution when their psycho-socioeconomic carrying capacities were exacerbated. Symptoms of the effects on children include being inclined to violence and stubbornness as well as being excluded from social norms and traditions. Sometimes parents of military combatants too, showed traumatic behaviour. All these effects are regarded here as structural violence, and hence threats to the social structure.

Keywords: Civil conflict, Psycho-Socioeconomic problems, Structural threats