



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

Social Impacts of the Current Wave of Militancy in the Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Sahib Ur Rehman

MPhil Scholar, Department of Pakistan Studies, Abbottabad University of Science and Technology, Abbottabad Email: Sahibrehman326@gmail.com

Dr. Muhammad Rizwan (Corresponding Author)

Associate Professor, Department of Pakistan studies, Abbottabad University of science and Technology, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Email: drmuhammadrizwan_hu@yahoo.com

Waleed

MPhil Scholar, Department of Pakistan Studies, Abbottabad University of Science and Technology, Abbottabad Email: Chwaleedahmed397@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The current wave of militancy in the Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has created renewed concerns regarding the social well-being and stability of local communities. This study examines the perceived social impacts of militancy on community life, education, livelihoods, displacement, family relations, social cohesion, women, youth, and local institutional responses. The study employed a quantitative survey design and collected responses from 100 participants through a structured questionnaire. The respondents included 60 males and 40 females. Data were analyzed through frequencies and percentages. The findings indicate that 60% of respondents perceived a negative impact of the current wave of militancy on the overall social life of local communities. However, the findings show comparatively lower levels of perceived impact in specific social domains. Forty-five percent of respondents reported negative effects on education, while 47% reported negative effects on employment and livelihoods. Only 38% associated the current wave of militancy with displacement and social disruption. Similarly, 30% perceived weakening of family relations and traditional support systems, while 37% reported reduced social cohesion and trust. The perceived impact on women and youth was also relatively low, with 20% and 15% of respondents, respectively, reporting significant negative effects. Moreover, 60% of respondents considered local institutions and community organizations adequately responsive to the social consequences of militancy. The study concludes that the current wave of militancy has affected the broader social environment of the Merged Districts, but its specific impacts are uneven and context-dependent. The findings highlight the resilience of family and community networks while emphasizing the need for continued institutional support, economic development, education, and community-based peacebuilding.

Keywords: Militancy, Social Impacts, Merged Districts, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Social Cohesion, Community Resilience, Education, Livelihoods

Introduction

The current wave of militancy has emerged as a major challenge to social stability, community development, and institutional consolidation in the Merged Districts of



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The region, formerly known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), has historically remained vulnerable to armed conflict, political instability, militancy, displacement, and weak institutional development. Due to its strategic geographical location along the Pakistan–Afghanistan border, the area has remained deeply influenced by regional conflicts and transnational security developments. Over the past several decades, local communities have experienced the consequences of militancy and counter-militancy operations, including insecurity, displacement, destruction of infrastructure, disruption of public services, and changes in traditional social and political structures. These historical experiences have significantly shaped the social conditions of the region and continue to influence the ways in which local communities respond to renewed insecurity.

The constitutional merger of the former FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018 represented a significant political and administrative transformation. The merger was intended to bring the region into the mainstream constitutional, legal, administrative, and developmental framework of Pakistan. It created expectations regarding improved governance, greater access to public services, enhanced political participation, economic development, and the strengthening of state institutions. The post-merger period, therefore, represented an important phase of transition for the people of the Merged Districts. However, the continuation and recurrence of militant activities have created new challenges for this process of integration. Renewed insecurity may affect public confidence, restrict economic activity, influence social interaction, and create difficulties for the effective implementation of development and governance initiatives. The social effects of militancy extend far beyond direct violence, casualties, and physical destruction. Militancy can influence the everyday lives of individuals and communities by creating fear, uncertainty, insecurity, and restrictions on movement. It may affect the ability of people to access education, employment, healthcare, markets, and other essential services. In addition, prolonged insecurity can influence family relations, community interaction, social trust, and collective participation. The consequences of militancy may also be particularly significant for vulnerable groups, including women, children, youth, displaced populations, and households dependent on fragile livelihoods. Therefore, the social impacts of militancy require analysis beyond conventional security indicators.

Education represents one of the important areas through which the social consequences of militancy can be examined. Educational institutions play a significant role in social development, human capital formation, and social mobility. Insecurity can disrupt educational activities by affecting attendance, mobility, institutional functioning, and the willingness of families to send children to educational institutions. Similarly, militancy may influence employment and livelihoods by disrupting markets, limiting mobility, discouraging investment, and reducing economic opportunities. In areas where communities already face socio-economic challenges, renewed insecurity may increase existing vulnerabilities and create additional pressures on households.

Displacement is another important social consequence associated with conflict and militancy. The former FATA has experienced large-scale population displacement during earlier periods of conflict and military operations. Displacement can affect not only housing and economic conditions but also family structures, social networks, community relationships, and access to education and basic services. Although the nature and scale of the current wave of militancy may differ from earlier periods of intense conflict, the possibility of renewed displacement and social disruption remains an important concern. The experiences of communities that have already undergone displacement may also



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

influence their perceptions of current insecurity.

The relationship between militancy and social cohesion is equally significant. Social cohesion is based on trust, cooperation, mutual support, and a sense of collective belonging within communities. Persistent insecurity may weaken these relationships by creating fear, suspicion, and social fragmentation. Individuals may reduce their participation in social gatherings and community activities because of security concerns. However, communities may also demonstrate resilience by relying on family networks, traditional institutions, local leadership, and collective support mechanisms. In this context, militancy may produce both social disruption and forms of community solidarity. Understanding this relationship is particularly important in the Merged Districts, where traditional social structures have historically played an important role in community organization and conflict resolution. The social consequences of militancy also require attention to the experiences of women and youth. Women may face restrictions on mobility, education, employment, and participation in public life in situations of insecurity. They may also carry additional responsibilities within households affected by displacement, unemployment, or the loss of family members. Young people may face challenges related to education, employment, mobility, and participation in social activities. The absence of opportunities and the presence of insecurity may create frustration and social vulnerability among youth. At the same time, young people can also play a significant role in peace building, social development, and community resilience. Therefore, examining the experiences of women and youth is essential for developing a comprehensive understanding of the social impacts of militancy.

Although considerable research has examined militancy, terrorism, counterterrorism, security operations, governance, and political developments in the former FATA and the Merged Districts, relatively limited attention has been given to the perceived social impacts of the current wave of militancy. Much of the existing research has focused on the causes of militancy, the activities of militant organizations, security challenges, military operations, and counterterrorism policies. While these areas are important, a social perspective is necessary to understand how renewed insecurity is experienced by ordinary people and how it influences everyday community life. Furthermore, the current situation requires renewed empirical investigation because the Merged Districts are experiencing militancy within a different political and institutional context than previous periods. The 2018 merger introduced a new phase of constitutional and administrative integration, while renewed insecurity has created additional challenges for social development and institutional consolidation. The social impacts of militancy may therefore differ from those experienced during earlier periods of conflict. Examining current public perceptions is particularly important for understanding whether renewed militancy is producing significant changes in education, livelihoods, displacement, family relations, social cohesion, gender relations, youth opportunities, and institutional responses.

Statement of the Problem

The Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have experienced prolonged militancy, conflict, displacement, and major political and institutional transformation, particularly following the merger of the former FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018. Despite ongoing efforts toward regional integration and development, the resurgence of militancy has raised renewed concerns about the social stability of local communities. Although existing research has largely focused on the security, political, and counterterrorism



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

dimensions of militancy, limited empirical attention has been given to its contemporary social impacts in the post-merger context. In particular, insufficient research has examined its perceived effects on education, livelihoods, displacement, family relations, social cohesion, women, youth, and local institutions. Therefore, this study examines the perceived social impacts of the current wave of militancy in the Merged Districts and assesses its influence on different dimensions of social life and community resilience.

Literature Review

The social consequences of militancy in the Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have attracted increasing scholarly and policy attention because of the region's prolonged exposure to armed conflict, counter-militancy operations, displacement, institutional marginalization, and post-2018 political transformation. Although the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) have historically been examined primarily through the lenses of security, terrorism, governance, and counterterrorism, an expanding body of literature emphasizes that militancy also produces significant social, economic, psychological, and institutional consequences. The contemporary wave of militancy is particularly important because it has emerged within a transformed political and administrative environment following the merger of the former FATA with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018. Existing scholarship demonstrates that the effects of militancy are multidimensional, involving not only direct violence but also changes in social relationships, education, livelihoods, displacement, community cohesion, and institutional trust. Nevertheless, the existing literature remains fragmented, and relatively few studies have systematically examined the perceived social consequences of the current wave of militancy through contemporary primary data.

An important strand of the literature conceptualizes militancy as a multidimensional social problem rather than merely a security phenomenon. Naz et al. (2013) argue that militancy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is closely connected with broader socio-economic and cultural conditions, including poverty, social injustice, inadequate education, unemployment, and institutional weakness. Their analysis emphasizes that militancy generates personal, social, and psychological consequences that can undermine social development, integration, and stability. The authors further argue that the persistence of militancy cannot be addressed exclusively through coercive security measures; rather, strengthening state institutions, improving education, expanding employment opportunities, and addressing socio-economic deprivation are essential for reducing the social foundations of militancy. This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study because it establishes a direct conceptual relationship between militancy and the broader social structure of affected communities.

The historical and structural implications of militancy in the tribal belt have also been examined by Yousafzai, Jan, and Iqbal (2020). Their study demonstrates that prolonged militancy and armed conflict significantly affected the economic, social, cultural, and psychological dimensions of life in the former FATA. The authors argue that the region's exposure to conflict, particularly after the post-2001 regional security transformation, altered established patterns of social life and contributed to broader instability. Their analysis further identifies the 2018 merger as a significant institutional development with important implications for peace, stability, and governance. However, their study primarily examines the broader implications of militancy and the transformation of the tribal belt rather than empirically measuring contemporary public perceptions of specific social impacts. The present study extends this discussion by focusing specifically on the current wave of militancy and its perceived effects on various dimensions of community



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

life.

A substantial body of literature has examined the relationship between militancy and social capital in communities affected by prolonged conflict. Recent research on Darra Adam Khel demonstrates that militancy can produce significant transformations in traditional patterns of social organization and collective life. Bibi, Alam, and Aziz (2024) found that militancy contributed to changes in community collectivity, disruption of the traditional Hujra system, transformation of joint family structures, weakening of elder authority, and increasing social fragmentation. Their findings suggest that prolonged militancy may gradually transform the institutional and relational foundations of traditional society. This perspective is highly relevant to the present study because family relations, traditional community support systems, social trust, and social cohesion constitute important dimensions of the social impacts examined in the current research. At the same time, the findings of this study require further investigation in the context of the contemporary wave of militancy and the post-merger environment.

The relationship between militancy and social capital has also been examined through qualitative research on Darra Adam Khel, which identified changes in collective social life, the weakening of traditional communal institutions, the transformation of family structures, and reduced social control, by community elders. These findings indicate that the consequences of militancy may persist even after the reduction of large-scale armed conflict because prolonged insecurity can produce long-term changes in social relationships and community institutions. However, such findings may not necessarily be generalized to all Merged Districts. Differences in local history, tribal structure, geographic location, intensity of militancy, and institutional development may produce different social outcomes. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine whether respondents perceive similar effects within the broader context of the current wave of militancy.

Education represents another major area of concern within the existing literature. Research on the Merged Districts has identified significant structural challenges in educational development resulting from historical marginalization, poverty, cultural barriers, and the legacy of militancy and military operations. Khan and Ali (2021) argue that the educational sector in the former FATA has experienced long-term underdevelopment and structural inequality. Their analysis emphasizes that decades of conflict and militancy contributed to the weakness of educational infrastructure and restricted opportunities for human development, particularly for young people and girls. The authors further identify education as a central factor in the long-term development and prosperity of the region. While this literature establishes the broader vulnerability of education in the Merged Districts, the present study focuses specifically on whether local respondents perceive the current wave of militancy as having a continuing negative impact on educational activities.

The literature also highlights the relationship between militancy, economic vulnerability, and livelihoods. Militancy can disrupt economic activity by restricting movement, reducing market access, discouraging investment, damaging infrastructure, and creating uncertainty for businesses and households. Earlier research on militancy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has identified poverty, unemployment, and socio-economic deprivation as both structural conditions associated with militancy and consequences of insecurity. This relationship is particularly important in the Merged Districts, where communities have historically experienced limited economic opportunities and restricted access to development resources. The current wave of militancy may therefore have consequences for employment and livelihood opportunities, although the extent of such effects may



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

vary across communities and occupational groups. The present study addresses this issue by empirically examining respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of current militancy on employment and livelihoods.

Displacement represents one of the most significant social consequences of earlier periods of conflict in the former FATA. Armed conflict and military operations resulted in large-scale population movements and disrupted household structures, livelihoods, education, and community networks. The experience of displacement also created long-term challenges related to return, rehabilitation, and social reintegration. However, the contemporary security situation must be examined separately from earlier periods of large-scale military operations. The current wave of militancy may produce different patterns of insecurity and social disruption. Consequently, it is important to determine whether local communities currently perceive militancy as a significant cause of displacement. The present study contributes to this discussion by examining contemporary perceptions regarding the relationship between militancy, displacement, and social disruption.

The post-2018 merger provides an important institutional context for understanding the contemporary social consequences of militancy. The merger was intended to extend constitutional rights, formal governance institutions, public services, and development opportunities to the former tribal areas. However, the process of institutional integration has faced significant challenges. The World Bank has emphasized that the Newly Merged Districts continue to experience substantial governance, service-delivery, social inclusion, and security-related vulnerabilities. Communities that have experienced prolonged conflict and institutional exclusion may possess limited trust in formal state institutions, while delays in the effective implementation of integration may contribute to instability and social vulnerability. This institutional context is significant for the present study because the social effects of militancy cannot be separated from the changing relationship between local communities and state institutions.

The literature further suggests that local institutions and traditional mechanisms remain important sources of social stability in the Merged Districts. Traditional community structures, local leadership, and informal systems of social support have historically played important roles in dispute resolution, community organization, and collective action. However, the relationship between traditional institutions and formal state institutions has changed significantly following the merger. The effectiveness of local institutions in addressing the consequences of renewed militancy therefore remains an important empirical question. The present study examines this dimension by assessing respondents' perceptions regarding the role of local institutions and community organizations in addressing the social consequences of militancy.

Although the existing literature provides important insights into the historical, structural, educational, economic, institutional, and social consequences of militancy in the former FATA and the Merged Districts, an important research gap remains. Much of the existing scholarship focuses on the historical causes of militancy, military operations, counterterrorism, governance, and the long-term consequences of earlier conflict. Comparatively fewer studies have examined the perceived social impacts of the current wave of militancy within the post-2018 institutional and political context. Furthermore, the available literature often examines individual dimensions such as education, social capital, displacement, or governance separately rather than analyzing them within a broader framework of social impacts.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the contemporary social consequences of militancy through primary data collected from 100 respondents,



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

comprising 60 males and 40 females. It focuses on the perceived effects of the current wave of militancy on overall social life, education, employment and livelihoods, displacement, family relations, traditional community support systems, social cohesion, women, youth, and the role of local institutions. By bringing these dimensions together within a single empirical framework, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the current wave of militancy is perceived by local communities in the Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In doing so, it contributes to the growing literature on the social consequences of militancy and provides a contemporary empirical perspective on the relationship between insecurity, social resilience, and institutional transformation in the post-merger period.

Research Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative, cross sectional survey research design to examine the perceived social impacts of the current wave of militancy in the Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The population of the study comprised individuals possessing relevant knowledge, awareness, or experience of the prevailing social and security conditions in the region. A total of 100 respondents were selected through purposive sampling, including 60 males (60%) and 40 females (40%). Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the study required respondents capable of providing informed perceptions regarding the social consequences of militancy. Primary data were collected during July 2026 through a structured questionnaire developed in accordance with the objectives of the study. The questionnaire examined respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of militancy on overall social life, educational activities, employment and livelihood opportunities, displacement and social disruption, family relations, traditional community support systems, social cohesion and trust, women, youth, and the role of local institutions and community organizations. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements presented in the questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed through descriptive statistical techniques, particularly frequencies and percentages. Since the total sample consisted of 100 respondents, the frequency of each response directly corresponded to its percentage. The findings were organized into tables and graphical representations to facilitate the systematic interpretation and comparison of respondents' perceptions regarding the various social impacts of the current wave of militancy. Throughout the research process, ethical principles were observed by ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality of responses, and the use of collected information exclusively for academic purposes.

Results and Findings

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender Frequency Percentage

Male	60	60%
Female	40	40%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation: Table 1 presents the gender distribution of the respondents. The sample consisted of 60 male respondents, representing 60% of the total sample, and 40 female respondents, representing 40%. The inclusion of respondents from both genders provides a broader perspective on the perceived social impacts of the current wave of militancy. Although the sample contains a higher proportion of male respondents, the participation



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

of 40% female respondents ensures that women's perspectives are also represented in the study.

Table2. Perceived Impact of Militancy on Overall Social Life

Response Frequency Percentage

Agree	60	60%
Disagree	40	40%
Total	100	100%

Table 2 indicates that 60% of respondents agreed that the current wave of militancy has negatively affected the overall social life of local communities, whereas 40% disagreed. The findings indicate that a majority of respondents perceive militancy as a significant factor influencing the broader social environment of the Merged Districts. This result suggests that the effects of militancy extend beyond direct security concerns and may influence perceptions of social stability and everyday community life.

Table 3: Perceived Impact of Militancy on Educational Activities

Response Frequency Percentage

Agree	45	45%
Disagree	55	55%
Total	100	100%

Table 3 shows that 45% of respondents agreed that the current wave of militancy has negatively affected educational activities, while 55% disagreed. Although a considerable proportion of respondents perceived a negative impact on education, the majority did not identify a significant effect. This finding suggests that the perceived consequences of current militancy for educational activities may vary among communities and respondents.

Table 4: Impact on Employment and Livelihoods

Response Frequency Percentage

Agree	47	47%
Disagree	53	53%
Total	100	100%

The findings show a relatively divided perception regarding employment and livelihoods. While 47% agreed that militancy had negatively affected employment and livelihood opportunities, 53% disagreed.

Table 5: Displacement and Social Disruption

Response Frequency Percentage

Agree	38	38%
Disagree	62	62%
Total	100	100%

Table 5 indicates that 38% of respondents agreed that the current wave of militancy has contributed to displacement and social disruption, whereas 62% disagreed. The majority perception suggests that the current wave of militancy has not, at the time of the survey,



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

produced displacement and social disruption on a scale comparable to previous periods of large-scale conflict in the former FATA. Nevertheless, the responses of 38% of participants indicate that displacement and social disruption remain relevant concerns for a considerable proportion of the surveyed population.

Table 6: Family Relations and Traditional Support Systems

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	30	30%
Disagree	70	70%
Total	100	100%

The findings indicate that 70% of respondents did not perceive a significant weakening of family relations and traditional community support systems. Only 30% agreed that militancy had weakened these relationships.

Table 7: Social Cohesion and Community Trust

Response Frequency Percentage

Agree	37	37%
Disagree	63	63%
Total	100	100%

The results show that 37% of respondents agreed that militancy had reduced social trust and cohesion, whereas 63% disagreed. This suggests that existing social bonds may remain relatively strong despite the security challenges.

Table 8: Impact on Women

Response Frequency Percentage

Agree	20	20%
Disagree	80	80%
Total	100	100%

Table 8. Perceived Impact of Militancy on Women

Response Frequency Percentage

Agree	20	20%
Disagree	80	80%
Total	100	100%

Table 8 indicates that 20% of respondents agreed that the current wave of militancy has created significant restrictions on women's mobility, education, and social participation, while 80% disagreed. The majority of respondents therefore did not perceive severe direct effects on women in relation to the dimensions examined. However, this finding



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

reflects the perceptions of the surveyed respondents and should not be interpreted as evidence that women experience no challenges. More focused gender-sensitive research may provide a deeper understanding of the specific experiences of women in the Merged Districts.

Table 9: Impact on Youth

Response Frequency Percentage

Agree	15	15%
Disagree	85	85%
Total	100	100%

The findings show that only 15% of respondents agreed that youth have experienced serious challenges in education, employment, and social participation because of militancy, while 85% disagreed.

Table 10: Role of Local Institutions

Response Frequency Percentage

Agree	60	60%
Disagree	40	40%
Total	100	100%

Table 10 indicates that 60% of respondents agreed that local institutions and community organizations are adequately addressing the social consequences of militancy, while 40% disagreed. The majority perception suggests that local institutions and community organizations may be contributing to social stability and helping communities respond to the challenges associated with militancy. However, the 40% disagreement represents a considerable proportion of respondents and indicates that institutional performance is not perceived uniformly. This finding highlights the need for continued efforts to strengthen institutional capacity, improve service delivery, and enhance coordination between local institutions and affected communities.

Results and Findings

This section presents the empirical findings of the study based on data collected from 100 respondents regarding the perceived social impacts of the current wave of militancy in the Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, particularly frequencies and percentages, to identify patterns in respondents' perceptions. The analysis focuses on several important dimensions of social life, including the overall social environment, educational activities, employment and livelihood opportunities, displacement and social disruption, family relations and traditional community support systems, social cohesion and community trust, the situation of women and youth, and the role of local institutions and community organizations. Since the total sample consisted of 100 respondents, the frequency of each response directly corresponds to its percentage. The findings are presented systematically through tables, followed by academic interpretations of the responses, in order to assess the extent to which the current wave of militancy has affected different aspects of social life and to determine whether local communities and institutions continue to demonstrate resilience in the face of prevailing security challenges.



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

Discussion

The findings of this study provide important insights into the social impacts of the current wave of militancy in the Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Overall, the results indicate that militancy continues to influence the broader social environment of local communities, although its effects vary considerably across different social dimensions. The finding that 60% of respondents perceived a negative impact on overall social life suggests that the current wave of militancy remains a significant source of social concern. This finding demonstrates that the consequences of militancy extend beyond direct violence and physical insecurity and may influence the broader social environment in which individuals and communities live and interact. However, the fact that 40% of respondents did not perceive a negative impact on overall social life also indicates that the experience of militancy is not uniform across the surveyed population. Differences in geographical location, personal experience, exposure to insecurity, and social background may contribute to variations in how communities perceive the consequences of militancy.

The findings further demonstrate that the perceived impact of militancy varies across specific social sectors. Although a majority of respondents identified a negative impact on overall social life, most respondents did not perceive significant negative effects on education, employment and livelihoods, displacement, family relations, social cohesion, women, or youth. This pattern suggests that the current wave of militancy may be influencing the broader social atmosphere without necessarily causing the complete breakdown of specific social institutions. The findings therefore challenge the assumption that militancy produces uniform social disruption across all dimensions of community life. Instead, they indicate that local communities may continue to maintain important social relationships and institutional structures despite the presence of renewed insecurity.

The relatively divided responses concerning education and employment are particularly significant. Forty-five percent of respondents agreed that militancy had negatively affected educational activities, whereas 55% disagreed. Similarly, 47% perceived negative effects on employment and livelihoods, compared with 53% who disagreed. These findings suggest that the consequences of militancy in these areas are neither entirely absent nor uniformly experienced. The close distribution of responses may reflect differences in local security conditions, occupational backgrounds, access to educational institutions, and individual exposure to militancy. In some communities, insecurity may create restrictions on movement, interrupt educational activities, or reduce economic opportunities, while other communities may continue to experience relatively stable educational and livelihood conditions. The results therefore indicate that the social and economic consequences of the current wave of militancy are likely to be context-dependent.

The findings concerning displacement and social disruption are also important in light of the historical experience of the former FATA. The Merged Districts have previously experienced extensive displacement and social disruption as a result of armed conflict and military operations. However, 62% of respondents disagreed that the current wave of militancy had significantly contributed to displacement and social disruption, while 38% agreed. This finding may indicate that the current wave of militancy has not, at the time of the survey, generated displacement on a scale comparable to earlier periods of large-scale conflict. It may also reflect differences in the intensity and geographical spread of contemporary militant activities. Nevertheless, the fact that more than one-third of respondents perceived displacement and social disruption as a consequence of current



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

militancy demonstrates that these issues remain relevant. The findings should therefore be interpreted as indicating a comparatively limited perceived impact rather than the complete absence of displacement-related consequences.

One of the most important findings of the study concerns the continued strength of family relations and traditional community support systems. Seventy percent of respondents disagreed that militancy had weakened family relations and traditional community support systems, while only 30% agreed. This finding suggests that traditional social structures continue to provide an important foundation of stability within local communities. Family and kinship networks have historically played a central role in the social organization of the Merged Districts, and their continued strength may enable communities to manage the social pressures associated with insecurity. These networks may provide emotional support, mutual assistance, social protection, and collective coping mechanisms during periods of uncertainty. The findings therefore suggest that the social consequences of militancy should be examined not only in terms of social disruption but also through the lens of community resilience.

The findings related to social cohesion and community trust further reinforce this interpretation. While 37% of respondents agreed that militancy had reduced social cohesion and community trust, 63% disagreed. The majority response suggests that existing social bonds have remained relatively strong despite the security challenges associated with the current wave of militancy. This finding may indicate that local communities continue to rely on established social relationships and collective networks to maintain cooperation and mutual support. However, the 37% who perceived a decline in social cohesion represent a considerable proportion of the respondents and should not be ignored. This suggests that the effects of militancy may vary across communities and those certain areas or groups may be experiencing greater social fragmentation than others.

The findings regarding women and youth present a comparatively less negative perception of the social consequences of militancy. Only 20% of respondents agreed that women had experienced significant restrictions in mobility, education, and social participation, while 80% disagreed. Similarly, only 15% agreed that youth had experienced serious challenges in education, employment, and social participation, whereas 85% disagreed. These results indicate that the majority of respondents did not perceive severe direct impacts on women and youth. However, these findings require careful interpretation. The results reflect the perceptions of the respondents surveyed and should not be understood as evidence that women and youth face no challenges. The experiences of these groups may differ according to gender, age, location, social status, and personal exposure to insecurity. Furthermore, some effects may be indirect or gradual and may not be fully captured through a simple agree/disagree questionnaire. Further gender- and age-specific research would therefore be useful for developing a more comprehensive understanding of the social consequences of militancy for women and youth.

The role of local institutions and community organizations represents another important dimension of the findings. Sixty percent of respondents agreed that local institutions and community organizations were adequately addressing the social consequences of militancy, while 40% disagreed. The majority perception indicates that local institutions may be contributing to social stability and assisting communities in managing the challenges associated with insecurity. This finding is particularly significant in the context of the post-merger transformation of the former FATA, where institutional capacity and effective governance remain central to long-term social stability. However,



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

the 40% disagreement also indicates that institutional performance is not perceived uniformly. This finding suggests that while local institutions may be contributing positively in some contexts, further efforts are required to strengthen institutional capacity, improve public service delivery, and enhance coordination between state institutions and local communities.

Taken together, the findings reveal a complex and uneven pattern of social impacts. The strongest perceived impact was identified in relation to overall social life, where 60% of respondents reported a negative effect. However, the majority of respondents did not perceive severe negative effects on specific social sectors, including family relations, social cohesion, women, youth, displacement, and education. This apparent contrast suggests that militancy may create a broader atmosphere of insecurity and social concern without necessarily resulting in the complete disruption of specific social institutions. The findings therefore highlight the importance of distinguishing between the general social environment and the functioning of individual social structures.

The findings also demonstrate the importance of community resilience in understanding the contemporary social consequences of militancy in the Merged Districts. The continued strength of family relations, traditional support systems, and social cohesion suggests that local communities possess important social resources for coping with insecurity. However, community resilience should not be interpreted as an alternative to effective governance or institutional intervention. Prolonged insecurity may gradually place pressure on social relationships, economic opportunities, educational activities, and institutional capacity. Therefore, the resilience identified in the present study requires sustained support through effective public institutions, improved services, economic opportunities, and community-based interventions.

Overall, the study demonstrates that the current wave of militancy has generated broader concerns regarding social life in the Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but its effects are not uniform across all dimensions of social structure. The findings indicate that while the broader social environment is perceived negatively by a majority of respondents, important social institutions and community relationships continue to demonstrate considerable resilience. The social impacts of militancy are therefore multidimensional and context-dependent, shaped by the interaction between insecurity, community structures, institutional responses, and local experiences. The findings emphasize that responses to militancy should extend beyond security-oriented measures and should also address the social conditions that influence community stability. Strengthening education, livelihoods, local governance, community institutions, and social cohesion is essential for reducing the long-term social consequences of militancy and supporting sustainable stability in the Merged Districts.

Conclusion

This study examined the perceived social impacts of the current wave of militancy in the Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Drawing on primary data collected from 100 respondents, the findings demonstrate that the contemporary wave of militancy continues to influence the broader social environment of local communities. A majority of respondents perceived a negative impact on overall social life, indicating that renewed insecurity remains an important concern for community stability and social well-being. However, the findings did not indicate majority agreement regarding severe negative effects on educational activities, employment and livelihoods, displacement, family relations, social cohesion, women, or youth. This pattern demonstrates that the social consequences of current militancy are complex, uneven, and multidimensional rather



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

than uniform across all areas of social life. An important conclusion emerging from the study is that local communities continue to demonstrate considerable social resilience. Family relations, traditional community support systems, and social cohesion were not perceived by the majority of respondents to have experienced severe deterioration. These findings suggest that established social networks and community relationships continue to provide important mechanisms of support and stability in the face of insecurity. Similarly, the positive perception of local institutions and community organizations among the majority of respondents indicates that these institutions may play an important role in addressing social challenges and supporting community resilience. Nevertheless, the significant proportion of respondents who expressed negative perceptions in several areas demonstrates that the social consequences of militancy should not be underestimated.

The study concludes that addressing the current wave of militancy in the Merged Districts requires a comprehensive and multidimensional approach. Security measures remain essential for reducing violence and maintaining public safety; however, security interventions alone cannot ensure sustainable peace and long-term stability. Effective policy responses must also focus on strengthening local institutions, improving educational and livelihood opportunities, supporting vulnerable communities, enhancing public service delivery, and reinforcing community-based mechanisms of social cohesion and peace building. Particular attention should be given to the continued strengthening of family and community networks, which represent important sources of resilience in the region. Ultimately, sustainable peace in the Merged Districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa requires more than the reduction of militant violence. It requires the development of resilient social structures, effective institutions, inclusive governance, economic opportunities, and meaningful community participation. The findings of this study demonstrate that despite the continuing challenges associated with militancy, local communities retain important capacities for resilience and social adaptation. Strengthening these existing capacities through coordinated security, governance, development, and community-based interventions can contribute significantly to long-term peace, social stability, and sustainable development in the Merged Districts.

References

- Ali, Gulzar, Waqar Ahmad, and S. Naeem Badshah. "Empiricising 'Islamic' Militancy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan: A Historical Perspective." *Al-Azhār* 6, no. 2 (2020): 13–25.
- Azam, Maryam. "Provincial Mapping of Militancy in Pakistan." *Journal of Political Studies* 29 (2022): 79.
- Bibi, Fariha, Humera Jamal, and Bushra Hassan Jan. "Investigating Factors Causing Sectarian Militancy and Its Association with Rural Women Sufferings." *CARC Research in Social Sciences* 3, no. 3 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.58329/criss.v3i3.170>.
- Feroz, Sumayya, Manzoor Ahmad, and Farhad Ullah. "Rebuilding after Conflict: How Effective Governance Shaped Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Recovery (2008–2022)." *TPM—Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology* 32, no. 1 (2025): 206–213.
- Hasnat, Farooq, and Shehzadi Zamurrad Awan. "Voices of Tribal Residents on the Merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan." *Geopolitics Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (2025): 276–305.
- Human Rights Watch. "Dreams Turned into Nightmares": Attacks on Students,



Vol. 4 No. 3 (Mar) (2026)

- Teachers, and Schools in Pakistan. New York: Human Rights Watch, 2017.
- International Crisis Group. Pakistan: Countering Militancy in FATA. Asia Report no. 178. Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2009.
- Irshad, Muhammad Kashif, and Muhammad Qasim. "Dynamics of Subversion and Counter-Subversion in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Historical Patterns, Strategies, and Implications for Regional Stability." *International Journal of Social Sciences Bulletin* 3, no. 10 (2025): 642–657.
- Khan, Bakhtiar, Sajad Ali, and Arif Khan. "A Historical Overview of Reforms in the Erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Pakistan." *Journal of Humanities, Social and Management Sciences* 4, no. 1 (2023): 15–27.
- Khan, Ehsan Ahmed, and Safia Mansoor. "Perennial Threat of Terrorism in Pakistan Post-2021: Case Study of Newly Merged Districts (NMDs)." *Malaysian Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 1 (2025): 24–46.
- Khan, Naushad, and Muhammad Adnan. "Critical Review of Past Literature on the Impact of Militancy on Educational Institutions in the World." *Critical Review* 44 (2018): 1–10.
- Khan, Yaqoob, Muzafar Khan, Zafar Khan, Salman Ahmad, and Zahid Umar. "The Impact of Forced Displacement on Social Life of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): A Case Study of District Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa." *Journal of Social Sciences Research & Policy* 3, no. 4 (2025): 639–651.
- Mehboob, S. R. Governance and Militancy in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011.
- Muhammad, Amal Atta, and Najeel Ullah Khan. "Consequences of Merging of FATA in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: A Critical Analysis." *Pakistan Journal of Criminal Justice* 2, no. 1 (2022): 26–35.
- Nawab, Sher, Sami Ullah, Usman Farooq, Muhammad Shafi Malik, and Irshad Ghafoor. "The Effect of Militancy on Education and Its Socio-Economic Consequences: A Case Study of Tehsil Shakir, Ullah, Ali Abbas, and Usman Khan. "Religion as a Political Instrument: Comparing State Assimilationist Strategies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan." *Religions* 16, no. 7 (2025): 864.
- Safi and Halimzai of Mohmand Agency." *Journal of Education Culture and Society* 12, no. 2 (2021): 613–630.
- Tahir, Saif, and Amira Jadoon. "Leaders, Fighters, and Suicide Attackers: Insights on TTP Militant Mobility through Commemorative Records, 2006–2025." *CTC Sentinel* 18, no. 5 (2025): 25–33.
- Ullah, Aman. "Faith and Fire: Analyzing the Nexus between Religion, Sectarian Violence, and Militant Organizations in Kurram Agency, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa-Pakistan." *Qlantic Journal of Social Sciences* 6, no. 3 (2025): 217–222.
- Ullah, Anayat, Karim Khan, and Hamid Mahmood. "Understanding the Nexus between Conflict, Displacement, and Schooling: A Case Study of IDPs in Pakistan." *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding* 5, no. 1 (2017): 155–168.
- United Nations Development Programme. Merged Areas Governance Programme. Islamabad: UNDP Pakistan, 2026.
- Yaqubi, Himayatullah. "New Trends in the Politics of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Issues and Outcomes." *Pakistan Vision* 25, no. 1 (2024): 29.