

After-Effects of Inter-Caste Tension as a Form of Violence against Children – A Triangulation Study

U. Baskaran, University Research Scholar
Chinchu. C, Junior Research Fellow

J. Ganesh Kumar, M. Phil Research Scholar

R. Maharishi, M. Phil Research Scholar

Department of Psychology,
Periyar University, Salem-11

bbaskeey@gmail.com

Abstract: A large section of today's children are exposed to violence and abuse in every aspect of their life. Some sources and forms of violence and abuse have been well documented - such as abuse in family, school etc. Yet some not-so-obvious forms of violence and abuse are neither well documented, nor studied scientifically. Inter-caste violence is a form of Communal violence, which can have a detrimental impact on children, even when they are not necessarily affected by it directly. The objective of this research is to study the general well being and stress levels of the children belonging to Nayakkan kottai village of Dharumapuri district Tamil Nadu, which was affected by communal/caste conflict. For this purpose, 80 school students studying in 8th and 9th standards in Nayakkan kottai, which was the epicenter of communal violence in December 2012, and whose homes belong to its immediate peripheral areas of the incident, were selected by adopting incidental sampling technique. The study adopted a mix of both quantitative and qualitative methods simultaneously to collect and analyze data. Quantitative method was utilized to measure the stress and well-being levels of the students. Concurrently, the qualitative method of Critical Incident Technique was used to understand the source and intensity of stress among the students. Parametric statistics such as 't' test and ANOVA were used to analyse the quantitative data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted to validate and confirm the findings. The findings of the study revealed that inter-caste violence that happened in Nayakkan kottai village had a detrimental impact on school students of the village and that it has directly affected the well-being of school students. The study concluded that inter-caste violence is also manifested as a form of violence against school children, which can be construed as an infringement on their basic human-rights. The implications of the study have been discussed.

Keywords: Inter-caste Violence, Casteism, Naayakkan kottai, Stress, well-Being, Triangulation, Mixed Method research, School students, Resilience, CIT, Theme analysis

I. Introduction

A large section of today's children are exposed to violence and abuse in every aspect of their life. Some sources and forms of violence and abuse have been well documented - such as abuse in family, school etc. Yet some not-so-obvious forms of violence and abuse are neither well documented, nor studied scientifically. Inter-caste violence is a form of Communal violence, which can have a detrimental impact on children, even when they are not necessarily affected by it directly.

Castesim is practiced even in today's technologically and educationally developed 'modern' society. The evils of Castesim are not fully eradicated in Tamilnadu, even after the pioneering work of great social reformer 'Periyar' E.V.R and is still practiced in different levels and different forms, in different places. Inter-caste violence is a manifestation of casteism which has an impact on individual, social and political spheres. Government and Non-Governmental organizations have designed and implemented various interventions to prevent inter-caste violence

and to help people affected by inter-caste violence. Frequent reports about inter-caste violence in media has revealed that governments have repeatedly failed to curb the occurrences of inter-caste violence.

Inter-caste violence is a major threat to life and property and has the ability to bring about seemingly ever-lasting negative impacts on people's lives. The losses resulting from such violence may range from loss of home and livelihood, unpleasant and forced displacement, and also the ultimate loss of life. All these depend upon the nature and magnitude of violence that takes place. Apart from the physical impacts, there is no doubt that every individual of a community is affected psychologically from an occurrence of inter-caste violence. One section of the society that gets the least amount of notice amidst these circumstances is the community of school-going children.

Children who happen to study in the same school and class before and after an incident of inter-caste violence face a particular type of dilemma. They are given negative, prejudice-laden information from parents and elders regarding their own friends who belong to a different community and are sometimes forced to adopt new ways to approach those opposite community students after an inter-caste violence. This may lead to problems in the development of interpersonal relationships and also on their own personality in the long-term.

Nowadays parents, teachers and society as a whole may place unrealistic expectations on the students without any regard to their capabilities or tastes. Majority of the studies conducted on stress among students have focused on this kind of academic-related stress only. Apart from the academic related stress, social factors also affect the stress levels and general well-being of students. Inter-caste violence can be posited as a source of stress among school students with serious ramifications on the well-being of school students in the rural areas of Tamil Nadu. Majority of research studies on impacts of inter-caste violence have also avoided school students from the scope of study. Since inter-caste violence has not been eradicated to-date and realistic expectations of such a progressive achievement seem to be painfully remote, there is an urgent need to understand the effect of inter-caste violence on stress and general well-being of school students.

Research Questions

The research study has an aim to find answers to the following research questions.

1. Does the stress level of school students in Nayakkan Kottai village significantly differ on the basis of their age, gender, class of study and area of living?
2. Does Inter-caste violence that happened in Nayakkan kottai act as a prime source of stress among school students of the area?
3. Is there any significant difference in stress levels between students of the major communities of Nayakkan kottai village?
4. Does the inter-caste violence that happened in Nayakkan kottai village have an influence on the general well-being of school students?

(A brief description about Naayakkan Kottai Inter-caste violence given in appendix B)

II. Research Method

Sample

The sample of this study consisted of 80 boys and girls studying in 8th and 9th standards from Nayakkan kottai village in Dharmapuri district. The sample has been selected by using incidental sampling technique.

Measures:

(i) *Singh personal stress source inventory* by Arun Kumar Singh was used to measure stress level of school students and *PGI General well-being scale* by Verma and Verma (1989) was used to measure general well-being of school students. Both the scale have established levels of reliability and validity.

Research Methodology

The study adopted mixed method - both qualitative and quantitative methods were simultaneous used to collect and analyse data. Quantitative methods were used to measure general well-being and stress level of school students. Qualitative method of critical incident technique (Flanagan, J. C. 1954) was used to understand the nature and source of stress of the school students. Semi structured interviews were also used for triangulation in order to confirm the reliability of the data.

Rationale for using triangulation in this study

This study adopted Mixed methods and used triangulation for the following reasons:

- The objective measurement of general well-being among 8th and 9th standard school students is very difficult because of their limited comprehension abilities. Because of a tendency of students to over-estimate their own abilities, combined with a class-room setting where one is expected to give 'correct answers' in a test- leading to marking socially acceptable responses-, one may get a statistically high general well-being level than what actually exists. The construct of stress to some extents, is opposed to general well-being. So the two scales serve as reliability check for each other.
- Personal stress source inventory is able to indicate the level of stress but cannot reveal the source of stress. The objective of the study is to find out the impact of inter-caste violence on stress. In order to know whether inter-caste violence is a major source of stress among school students of Nayakkan kottai village, CIT was used and thematic analysis was used to find out how many of the students who participated in the study described about the inter-caste violence in their description of important life events in the past months.
- Semi-structured interviews were used as a triangulation tool to confirm the results and to get insights as to how school and other social institutions fare in helping maintain their well-being after the incident.

III. Result and Discussion

Rationale for Research question 1. Reviews related to stress research reveal that stress does significantly differ with regard to demographic variables. There is a widespread belief that people from higher socio economic status, males and highly educated people have high problem solving abilities and it reflects in their stress-tolerance capacity. Inter- caste violence may be seen as a common incident to all the students of Nayakkan kottai village. But the impact may differ on the basis of these students' socio economic status. So the research question, *does the stress level of school students in Nayakkan Kottai village significantly differ on the basis of their age, gender, class of study and area of living?*

Table: 1 Stress level of school students on the basis of Demographic Variables

Demographic Variables		Mean	S D	N	't' Value
Gender	Boys	53.76	7.302	45	.077 ^{NS}
	Girls	53.60	10.686	35	
Age	13 years	52.14	5.801	35	1.380 ^{NS}
	14 years	54.89	10.592	45	
Class	8 th standard	52.43	5.527	35	1.120 ^{NS}
	9 th standard	54.67	10.758	45	
Locality	Rural	53.86	9.0004	77	.864 ^{NS}
	Urban	49.33	2.082	3	

* Significant at 0.05 level NS: Not significant

From Table -1, it can be observed that the 't' values are not significant for any of the demographic variables and hence the hypothesis is not accepted. It is concluded that the school students of Nayakkan kottai village do not significantly differ in their stress level on the basis of various demographic variables. It is noticed from the table that

the school students of Nayakkan kottai village have high scores in stress level. This result is at odds to the common thinking that males may have higher levels of stress than females. It clearly answers the first research question. Inter-caste violence that happened in Nayakkan kottai have an impact on school students irrespective of their age, gender, class of study and area of living.

Rationale for Research question 2. Stress has become a part of our everyday life. All individuals experience stress in one form or the other. In order to confirm whether the levels and sources of stress for students of Nayakkan kottai village is an impact of inter-caste violence, the second research question that ***Does Inter-caste violence that happened in Nayakkan kottai act as a prime source of stress among school students of the area?*** Was raised.

Table 1 clearly shows that school students of Nayakkan kottai have scored higher on stress levels irrespective of their demographic variables. In order to find out the source of stress among school students, a qualitative method-critical incident technique was used. School students were requested to write a story/description about an important incident in their life that made them sad (*a negative event*) within the previous five months (at the time of data collection, 4 months had passed since the inter-caste violence). The collected stories were analyzed by thematic analysis and classified as 'Theme related to inter-caste violence', 'theme related to parental alcoholism', 'Theme Related to Poverty', 'theme related to quarrel between parents' and 'rejected' (stories without clear description) based on the content of the stories/description. The themes and their frequency is presented in the Table 2.

Table 2: Sources of Stress among school students and their frequency

Demographic Variables		Sources of stress											
		Theme related to Inter-caste violence		Theme Related to Parental alcoholism		Theme Related to Poverty		Theme related to Quarrel between Parents		Others(inadequate description)		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Gender	Boys	11	24	6	13	10**	22	9*	20	9	20	45	57
	Girls	8	22	4	11	8	22	10	28	5	14	35	43
Age	13 years	7	20	5	14	6	17	12**	34	5	14	35	43
	14 years	12	26	5	11	12*	26	7	15	9	20	45	57
Class	8 th	7	20	5	14	6	17	12**	34	5	14	35	43
	9 th	12	26	5	14	12*	26	7	15	9	20	45	57
Locality	Rural	19	24	9	12	17	23	18	24	14	14	77	97
	Urban	-	-	1	33	1	33	1	33	-	-	3	3

*- specific Theme, **- Combination of two themes

From Table -2, it is observed that the thematic analysis of students' critical incident stories revealed that among 80 stories, 24% (19 numbers) of stories had a theme related to inter-caste violence, 12% (10 numbers) of stories had theme related to parental alcoholism, 23% (18 numbers) of stories had theme related to poverty, 24% (19 numbers) of stories had theme related to quarrel between parents and remaining 17% (14 numbers) Others (inadequate description for analysis). Content analysis of the critical incident technique clearly indicates that *Inter-caste violence happened in Nayakkan kottai has increased the stress level among school student* and also findings of this qualitative analysis support the results of the quantitative analysis that *Inter-caste violence that happened in Nayakkan kottai have an impact among school students irrespective of their age, gender, class of study and area of living.*

Rationale for Research question 3. Generally we think that in inter-caste violence, those people who are subjected to the violence are affected more than others. This may not hold true for students, who may not comprehend the depth and breadth of caste and community-based identities. Hence the research question, ***Is there any significant difference in stress levels between students of the major communities of Nayakkan kottai village?*** was raised.

Table: 3. Stress level of school students on the basis of community

	Community			F Value	significant
	M.B.C(1) (N = 46)	Others(2) (N = 14)	SC(3) (N= 20)		
Stress level of School students	54.09	52.71	53.45	.135 ^{NS}	.874

NS Not significant

In order to find out significant differences in stress levels between students of different communities, parametric test of one-way ANOVA was used. Results revealed that there is no significant difference in stress level among different communities. It is concluded from the analysis of school students belonging to MBC, Others and SC communities have scored high in stress levels after the inter-caste violence.

In order to confirm the findings of quantitative analysis as well as to understand the impact and intensity of inter-caste violence on community, qualitative analysis was employed. Theme related to inter – caste violence and its frequency on the basis of community are presented in Table 4.

Table: 4. Theme related to inter-caste violence and its frequency on the basis of community

	Community							
	M.B.C(46)		Others(14)		SC(20)		Total(80)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Theme related to inter-caste violence	10	22	1	7	8	40	19	24

From Table -4, it is observed that among the 80 school students, a total of 24% (19 numbers) of students have expressed theme related to inter- caste violence, 22% of students from M.B.C category (10 students), 7% of students from Others category (1 student), and remaining 40% of students belonging to SC category (8 students) revealed the theme related to inter-caste violence in their stories.(a copy of randomly selected critical incident story from each community given in Appendix A) The inter- caste violence had taken place between people belonging to SC community and people belonging to MBC community . Media reports and major survey reports have revealed that a section of people belonging to MBC category were the perpetrators of the attacks on people belonging to SC category and significant loss of property was suffered by some people belonging to SC category. So it is generally expected that people belonging to SC community may be experiencing more levels of stress when compared to others. But the findings of this qualitative as well as quantitative study revealed that inter-caste violence has an even impact on school students irrespective of their community. It is concluded that *There is no significant difference in stress levels between students belonging to major communities of Nayakkan kottai village.*

Rationale for research question 4. Stress and general well-being are two opposite constructs. Even though general well- being is achieved by emotional maturity, stress may have an influence on general well-being. Inter-caste violence may increase the stress level among school students and its may have an impact on their general well-being as well. Hence the fourth research question, *does the inter-caste violence that happened in Nayakkan kottai village have an influence on the general well- being of school students?* was raised in this study.

In order to find out the significant difference in general well-being of school students on the basis of demographic variables, Student’s ‘t’ test was employed. Results revealed that there is no significant difference in school students’ general well-being on the basis of their age, gender, area of living, class of study and birth order. As expected that General well-being is opposite to stress, school students scored low mean score in general well –being irrespective of their demographic variables. And it was concluded that the inter- caste violence that happened in Nayakkan kottai village had a negative influence on the general well-being of school students.

Table: 5. General well-being of school students on the basis of community

	Community			F Value	Post hoc Duncan
	M.B.C(1) (N = 46)	Others(2) (N = 14)	SC(3) (N= 20)		
General well-being of school students	15.80	15.14	13.30	5.984*	3 VS 2, 1

* Significant at 0.05 level

In order to find out significant difference in general well-being of school students on the basis of community, parametric statistics test one-way ANOVA was used. Results revealed that there is a significant difference in general well-being of school students among different communities. It is interesting to note down from the table that students belonging to SC community significantly differ with students belonging to MBC and others in terms of general well-being. Students belonging to SC community scored low mean score in general well-being. It's an alarming signal for the policy makers which points to an urgent need to design and implement proper interventions aimed at promoting the well-being of the students on a war-footing before it leaves a permanent scar on the social fabric of the area.

Semi-structured interview

If we take a close look on the above findings, we can find some consistency and also controversy between the findings. The first finding that there is no significant difference in stress levels among school students has not confronted with the second finding that there is no significant difference in general well-being of school students. This means that inter-caste violence has an impact on both stress and well-being of school students irrespective of their demographic variables. But the third findings that there is no significance difference in stress level between communities is diagonally opposed to the fourth findings that there is a significance difference in general well-being of school students across communities. Students belonging to SC category and students belonging to MBC category do not differ in their stress levels but students belonging to SC category have low levels of general well-being. In order to find out the factor which constitute the differences in general well-being between SC and MBC, 6 (2 students from each community) students were randomly selected to conduct semi structured interview.(Audio format of Semi structured interview will be send on request)

Findings from semi-structured interview revealed that resilience factors, economic independence, high achievement orientation, purpose of life and social support have served as protective factors for students belonging to both MBC as well as Others category to maintain their general well-being, but students belonging to SC community in Nayakkan kottai village are unable to identify the individual and social resources that may help promote and maintain their general well-being.

Implications

Child abuse and violence against children have become serious issues in recent times. Many studies have explored different forms of violence against children such as family abuse and abuse in schools etc. Children are indirectly abused in society in different forms and such happenings are invisible in nature. The findings of this study revealed that the school students well-being is directly affected by inter-caste violence that happened in their village. This study reveals a requirement of the policy makers' attention to be cast on inter-caste violence as an indirect form of child abuse. Inter-caste violence affects the general well-being of school students and also increases their stress levels. These findings are hoped to help the policy makers and also NGOs working for community development to design intervention programmes for social development and prevention of child abuse. The social development organizations are hence urged to consider this student-related variable while developing models for social development after incidences of inter-caste violence. Students from inter-caste violence affected community may develop depression, anxiety and other forms of serious psychosomatic disorders. It is also hoped that these findings will direct the attention of educationalists also to the latent factors that may cause poor academic performance. The finding of the study have revealed that inter-caste violence has a definite detrimental impact on school students and in this regard it is appealed to the government to provide mobile counseling facilities to such areas to identify vulnerable school students, so as to prevent drop-outs and suicide attempts resulting from stress, by providing

appropriate intervention. The academic performance level of students can also be enhanced, thus nurturing good, responsible citizens. It is a prime duty of educationalists, especially teachers with the most intimate access and most warm relationship to the students, to monitor the students who comes from inter- caste violence affected areas just like the way a medical team monitors a specific geographic area to prevent outbreak of new diseases. The present study has also revealed that the individual psychological resilience may help students to maintain their general well-being. The present study suggested that further extensive and intensive studies may be conduct to find out the resilience among school students in this village by using different methods

IV. REFERENCE

1. Drever, E. (1997). Using Semi-structured interviews in small-scale research. Edinburgh: The Scottish Council for Research in Education.
2. Flanagan, J. C. (1954, July) .The critical Incident Technique, *Psychological Bulletin*, 5(4), 327- 358.
3. Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE
4. Lisa M.Given (2008) *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Sage Publications, Inc.
5. Patton, M.Q. (2002), *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, PP. 40-41, Sage Publications, Inc.
6. Punch, K.F. (2001). *Introduction to social research*. London: SAGE
7. Ritchie, J. & J. Lewis (2003). *Qualitative research practice : a guide for social science students and researchers*. London: SAGE
8. Sherri L. Jackson (2006). *Research Methods and Statistics: A Critical Thinking Approach*. Thomson wardsworth, USA
9. Singh, A. K., & Singh, A. (2004). *Personal Stress Inventory*. Agra, India: National Psychological Corporation
9. Verma, S.K, & Verma A. *PGI General Wellbeing Measure*. Lucknow: Ankur Psychological Agency; 1989.