

Myths and Realities about Swat Conflict: An Oral History

Jan Muhammad¹, Dr. Faizullah Jan² *Dr. Sajjad Ali³

1. PhD Scholar, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Peshawar, journalistjan81@gmail.com
2. Professor, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Peshawar, faiz.jan@gmail.com
3. *Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Malakand, sajjadjmc@uom.edu.pk, (Corresponding Author)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v4i1.1555>

Abstract

This study employs oral history methodology to explore the lived experiences and personal narratives of male residents affected by the Swat conflict (2007–2009) in Pakistan. Through in-depth interviews with 14 male victims from various tehsils of Swat, the research examines how the conflict was framed and perceived by those who suffered it. Using thematic analysis, the study identifies key narrative frames, including systemic deception, dual victimization, state failure, Taliban deceit, and media portrayal. Findings reveal that civilians perceived both the military and the Taliban as collaborators in a pre-planned conflict, leading to severe socio-economic, psychological, and infrastructural devastation. The research also analyzes the role of local, national, and international media, highlighting their biases, censorship, and failure to represent civilian suffering accurately. The study concludes that the Swat conflict was not merely a territorial struggle but a profound assault on the social effects of the region, with media acting as a tool of state propaganda rather than a voice for the victims.

Keywords: Swat Conflict, Oral History, Talibanization, Military Operations, Media Framing, Victim Narratives, Pakistan

Introduction

The Pakistan Army is fighting insurgency and militancy in different parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and conducts operations against militant time to time. These military operations, however, have also faced the local people with miseries when their homes were bombed, educational institutions and businesses were destroyed, and they became homeless. During the first military operation against the Taliban in Swat in 2007, around 2.5 million people had to flee their homes and relocate to other parts of Pakistan for safety. In addition to massive displacement, this period also witnessed severe fighting between the military and the Taliban and profound socio-political disruption. While extensive journalistic experiences exist, capturing the events from a media perspective, the personal narratives of those who lived through this violence still need to be explored and represented within the broader historical discourse. The stories of individuals and communities affected by militancy and military operations are significant to investigate and experience because they carry serious implications for public awareness, policy formulation, and social change. Militancy in Pakistan has been a prevailing and intricate phenomenon that has deeply impacted the social, political, and economic fabric of the country. Characterized by the activities of various armed groups pursuing ideological, religious, and political agendas through the use of violence, militancy has left an indelible mark on Pakistan's history. This phenomenon has not only tested the resilience of the people but has also created significant challenges to the governance, security, and relations of Pakistan with other countries, especially its neighbors. Over time, militancy has

manifested itself through a range of organizations, each with distinct objectives and tactics. Notably, groups such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), al-Qaeda, and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) have gained prominence and posed serious security challenges. The Pakistani government's response to militancy has been multifaceted, involving both military operations and diplomatic efforts. Numerous military operations, such as *Zarb-e-Azb* (2014) and *Radd-ul-Fasaad* (2017), were carried out to root out militant strongholds and restore stability to affected regions. Millions of people were uprooted from their homes and settled in ramshackle camps. Millions of others had to share homes and hearths with relatives outside the conflict zones (Irshad, & Qasim, 2025). Militancy in the Malakand Division represents a significant chapter in the region's history, marked by insurgency, conflict, and counterterrorism efforts. Nestled in the picturesque landscapes of northern Pakistan, the Malakand Division has been a focal point of militant activities that have reverberated throughout the country and beyond (Munir, 2021). A complex interplay of local dynamics, historical factors, and broader geopolitical considerations influences the evolution of militancy in this region (Shah, 2024). The systematic gathering and analysis of spoken personal narratives and stories of people about their experiences, memories, and opinions is known as oral history. It is frequently used to record the experiences and wisdom of those who have lived through specific moments, eras, or circumstances (Shopes, 2011). Oral history is significant for voices and viewpoints that might not be captured in writing or official records (Haynes, 2010; Shopes, 2011; Sommer & Quinlan, 2018). When studying the past individually and collectively, oral history draws on memory and testimony to provide more thorough or different knowledge (Thompson, 2000). It is a type of primary source material produced during an interview with a witness to or participant in a particular event or way of life to preserve the information and make it available to others (Erickson, 1982; Rock, 2020). This applies to both the interview process and the actual interview. This research seeks to bridge the gap between urban and rural victims' those affected by militarized violence in Swat. By employing oral history methods to collect personal narratives and critically analyzing personal experiences, this paper seeks to uncover the nuanced and multifaceted nature of the Swat conflict. In the context of Pakistan's history marked by periods of militancy and conflicts, a significant concern emerges regarding the representation and portrayal of victims of militancy in national press coverage. The intersection of oral history, encompassing personal narratives of those directly affected, and the media's role in shaping public perception, presents a complex challenge. This study aims to address the problem of the disjunction between the experiences of militancy victims as captured through oral histories and the portrayal of these experiences in the national press of Pakistan. Pakistan has faced a series of militant conflicts, impacting the lives of countless individuals and communities. Victims of these conflicts, including survivors and families of those affected, carry unique and often tragic stories that need to be understood and shared. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion, influencing policy decisions, and reflecting societal attitudes (Gulzar, 2023; Hussain & Ahmed, 2024). However, there exists a growing concern that the narratives of militancy victims, as expressed through oral histories, are not effectively represented or accurately reflected in the national press coverage (High, Little, & Duong, (Eds.). 2014; Bryson, 2016; Cherkaoui, 20212; Alkrood, 2019).

The primary issue at hand is the potential mismatch between the lived experiences of militancy victims as recounted through oral histories and their portrayal in the national press of Pakistan. This disconnect raises critical questions about the extent to which the media serves as a faithful conduit for relaying the personal narratives and socio-psychological impact of militancy. To what extent do the oral histories of militancy victims in Pakistan align with or diverge from their representation in the national press coverage, and how does this discrepancy impact public understanding, policy formulation, and the victims' own sense of agency and recognition?

The exploration of the oral histories of militancy victims and their relationship with national press coverage in Pakistan is of profound significance across various dimensions of society, from individual well-being to national discourse and policymaking. This study also holds

importance for multiple stakeholders, including media professionals, policymakers, civil society organizations, and academics. By identifying gaps between oral histories and press coverage, this paper can guide efforts to bridge the divide, ensuring more accurate, sensitive, and comprehensive reporting on militancy-related issues. Ultimately, addressing this problem has the potential to contribute to a more informed, empathetic, and inclusive national discourse around the impact of militancy on individuals and communities in Pakistan. In essence, the significance of studying the oral histories of militancy victims alongside national press coverage lies in their potential to transform public discourse, humanize conflicts, and create a more empathetic and informed society. It also offers an opportunity to strengthen the ethical responsibilities of media, bridge the gap between academic research and real-world impact, and ultimately contribute to the healing and well-being of those affected by militancy.

Literature Review

When narratives are fluent, they have greater impact and persuasion, leading the audience to believe the story and act on it. When the fluency is strong and in line with the narrative, it is hard to identify the loops in the story. Fluency and an objective approach to the narrative make it stronger and believable (Shulman, H. C. & Huskey, 2021). Adding fact-related information to fictional narratives can transform the reader's perspective on them. The fact included makes the fiction more believable and closer to reality. Even when readers know they are reading fiction, they are persuaded to believe it and, in some cases, consider it reality, leading to a stronger belief (Appel & Mara, 2013). Building on the previous exploration of narratives, it is not surprising that narratives and oral histories about the Taliban have impacted people. Though these are multifaceted and reflect diverse perspectives and experiences, they remain believable because real-world facts are incorporated (Katz, 2009, Rajagopal, 2018). The narratives constructed by the Taliban themselves, backed by some real-time facts, have played a crucial role in their surprise takeover of Afghanistan in 2021. The Taliban effectively used storytelling to create an environment that led to the collapse of Afghan forces even before the U.S. evacuation was complete (Johnson, T. H., DuPee, M., & Shaaker, 2017; Kamal, 2021; Shahid, 2022). Oral history projects, like the Syrian Oral History Archive, demonstrate the potential of community-based, gender-sensitive storytelling. They show that storytelling from a specific perspective can empower marginalized groups and influence dominant narratives. If this approach works for the Syrian archive, it is suggested that a similar method could be beneficial in the Afghan context (Kahale, 2021). The Taliban's use of narratives is not just a local phenomenon; it is, in fact, part of a broader information dimension of the conflict. In the studies, this phenomenon has received less attention compared to its political, economic, and military aspects (Farrell, 2018). The use of narratives and the construction of counter-narratives make it possible to promote peace and challenge the Taliban's violent ideologies (Aggarwal, 2017).

The narratives and oral histories surrounding the Taliban in Swat, particularly during the military operations, are complex and multifaceted. These narratives reflect a blend of socio-political, cultural, and historical dimensions. The Taliban's rise in Swat was significantly influenced by the socio-political landscape post-1969. At that time, Swat's administrative structure was challenged, leading to a sense of deprivation and nostalgia for the past. The Taliban capitalized on this situation by advocating for a judicial system aligned with Islamic laws. Their narrative of bringing social and political balance based on religious grounds influenced the public. People, feeling deprived of basic necessities, believed the stories and empowered the Taliban in the region (Rome, 2011). The military operations in Swat have been a focal point of various narratives and oral histories, reflecting the complex socio-political dynamics of the region. The militancy in Swat is unique because it involved militants using religion to promote their agenda. By leveraging religion, they gained initial support by addressing the grievances of the poor. Furthermore, the militants utilized a socially constructed narrative disseminated via FM radio, which expedited its impact. However, this narrative

ultimately lost its appeal due to the militants' subsequent atrocities against the general populace (Shah et al., 2020).

Framing Theory: An Introduction

Framing theory originated from the work of the sociologist Erving Goffman. In his *Frame Analysis* (1974), Goffman explored how individuals make use of cognitive structures, which he termed "frames," to understand social realities. He referred to frames as "schemata of interpretation" and linked them to how people identify and perceive experiences and events. Robert Entman, who built on Goffman's foundations, further refined framing theory. Entman (1993) also incorporated the realm of political science, defining framing as the process of selecting certain aspects of perceived reality and making them more prominent than others do. These prominent aspects define a specific problem, interpret its causes, and provide solutions in a communication context. Entman (1993) suggests that this process is not neutral. Instead, it involves power dynamics in which some narratives are amplified and others silenced. According to Goffman (1974), frames enable people to omit certain elements of reality, guiding public perception, political discourse, and policymaking.

The Context of Swat Valley: Talibanization

Swat Valley is often called the "Switzerland of Pakistan" for its beautiful natural landscapes. This secluded valley gained the attention of the global media between 2007 and 2009 when Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) took control of the region. This era was marked by the imposition of what the group called Sharia Law, a ban on girls' education, and a challenge to state authority (Yousaf, 2014). Other accompanying factors during this era included socio-economic disparities, weak governance, and spillover effects from the US-led War on Terror in Afghanistan. This was followed by Operation Rah-e-Rast by the Pakistan military, which involved not only ground operations but also airstrikes (Shah, 2018). While the TTP network was dismantled in Swat, the military action also resulted in civilian displacement, human rights violations, and long-term social consequences (Fair, 2014). However, this was not just a military battle but also a discursive one in which several actors framed the conflict to advance their agendas. The Pakistani government portrayed this as a threat to the national security of the country and emphasized the danger to social stability posed by the TTP. The TTP was also depicted as a foreign-influenced entity seeking to destabilize the state. This aligned with the global narrative on counterterrorism (Javai, 2020). This security frame frequently appeared in official statements, media briefings, and policy documents, as the government portrayed the TTP as terrorists who posed a threat not only to Pakistan but to the international community.

Research Methodology

A qualitative methodology has been chosen as the appropriate approach to analyze the oral history of militancy victims of Swat. This methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perspectives of individuals affected by militancy, as well as an examination of how these events have been experienced and framed by local male residents. In-depth interviews were conducted with male victims who experienced the militarized violence in Swat to explore and evaluate the historical perspective of conflict in the area. The selection criteria focused on the period of intense conflict, specifically from 2007 to 2009, and significant events within this timeframe. In this research, the oral history method was employed to comprehensively explore the viewpoints and perceptions of individuals affected by militancy. By engaging participants through oral interviews and narratives, this approach seeks to uncover

their personal stories, emotions, and interpretations of their experiences with militancy. The use of oral history contributes to a holistic understanding of the human impact of these events within the specific regional context. Participants were selected using a two-stage sampling procedure, including cluster sampling and purposive sampling. This ensured a diverse representation of age, gender, socio-economic status, and geographical location within Swat. Interviews recorded, transcribed, and translated. Through purposive sampling, interviews were conducted with 14 male victims of Swat who have experienced the violence directly or indirectly. This research ensured diversity in age, gender, socio-economic status, and geographical location. Thematic analysis was employed to examine themes in male victims' interviews comprehensively. The researchers followed the thematic analysis process step-by-step for analyzing the interviews with males about the Swat conflict. At the first step, the researcher read the interviews of each interviewer's questions by question, and then re-read them to familiarize themselves with the data (interviews). In the second stage, initial codes were developed, and based on the codes, step third was followed, and themes were searched for. For clarification and confirmation, the fourth step was applied, and the themes were reviewed, while in step fifth the themes were defined to understand of the readers. At the last stage, the researchers write up the report and analysis of each theme.

Data Analysis and Findings

This portion is based on interviews with different male residents from the affected area of Swat. The presents analysis based on interviews with common people, hailing from different tehsils of Swat.

Table 1. Narrative Framing the Swat Conflict (2007-2009)

Themes	Codes	Quotes
Systemic Deception	Military-Taliban Collaboration	<p>“The Taliban and the military were intertwined---during the day, they were Taliban, and by evening, they became military personnel. Both were collaborating.” (Bahrain Male 1)</p> <p>“This led many of us believe that the army and the Taliban were chips of the same block.” (Matta Male 2)</p>
	Pre-Planned Conspiracy	<p>“What was happening was pre-planned... we later realized this was all pre-planned. Their actions served their own purposes” (Bahrain Male 2)</p>
Victimhood	Trapped in the Crossfire	<p>“The most affected were ordinary people like us. We were caught in the middle---pressured by the Taliban... while the military warned against aiding the Taliban... People lived in constant fear.” (Charbagh Male 2)</p>
	Psychological Trauma & Social Collapse	<p>“We suffered psychologically... around 10 members are still dealing with anxiety and depression.” (Mingora Male 1)</p> <p>“Our festivals, like Eid, lost all their charm.” (Kabal Male 1)</p>

Themes	Codes	Quotes
	Economic Devastation	“Since Swat's economy primarily depends on tourism and agriculture, it is obvious that guns and tourism cannot coexist.” (Barikot Male 2)
Taliban as Deceivers	Exploitation of Religion	“The Taliban came, they said they were here to implement an Islamic system... But when things escalated to militancy and coercion began... people realized that no Islamic principles were being followed.” (Kabal Male 2)
	Brutality	“The people we encountered were nothing but thugs.” (Kabal Male 2)
State Failure	Military as an Occupying Force	“The fear of the army also grew significantly in people's hearts... sudden curfews would be imposed... trapping people.” (Kabal Male 1) “Both sides humiliated them terribly.” (Kabal Male 2)
	Collapse of Civil Order	“There were many police stations... but the police would not come out, which frightened people.” (Matta Male 2)

Table 1 demonstrates the male narrative about the swat conflict from 2007 to 2009. The researcher analyzed the respondents' answers with the help of thematic analysis which focuses repeated ideas and patterns. From the analysis, four themes with their codes were spotlighted to identify the framing and narrative of the residents of swat. Foregoing in perspective, the first theme identified was “systematic deception”. In view of many around, both the military and Taliban deceived people. They believed both had active and vibrant collaboration and translated pre-planned conspiracy. As the stated by a Bahrain tehsil resident “The Taliban and the military were intertwined---during the day, they were Taliban, and by evening, they became military personnel. Both were collaborating.”

The other respondent hailing from Bahrain also notes; “What was happening was pre-planned... we later realized this was all pre-planned. Their actions served their own purposes. Additionally, a respondent from Matta Tehsil also explores; “This led many of us to believe that the army and the Taliban were the same.” Regarding the second theme “Victimhood” with support of codes including trapped in the crossfire, psychological trauma & social collapse and economic devastation. The resident from Charbagh tehsil says, “The most affected were ordinary people like us. We were caught in the middle---pressured by the Taliban... while the military warned against aiding the Taliban... People lived in constant fear.” Another theme “Taliban as Deceivers” with the codes including exploitation of religion and brutality misusing the religion for their agenda and terrorize the masses by carrying out frequent brutalities. A respondent number 2 from Kabal Tehsil says about Taliban deceivers: “The Taliban came, they said they were here to implement an Islamic system... But when things escalated to militancy and coercion began... people realized that no Islamic principles were being followed.” While number 2 from Kabal Tehsil says about brutality of Taliban; The people we encountered were

nothing but thugs.” Another theme “State Failure” with codes “Military as an Occupying Force and Collapse of Civil Order, which claims that the military was a dominant force which could impose their decisions without any prior notice as respondent No. 1 from Kabal Tehsil mentioned that “The fear of the army also grew significantly in people's hearts... sudden curfews would be imposed... trapping people.” And respondent No. 2 from Kabal says, “Both sides humiliated them terribly. Similarly, the civil order was collapsed as there were no functional police force and other government institutions as stated by respondent No. 2 from matta. “There were many police stations... but the police would not come out, which frightened people.”

Table 2 Narrative Framing of the Sectorial Collapse in Swat

Themes	Codes	Quotes
Economic Eradication	Tourism & Trade Collapse	“Our economy largely depends on tourism... When Talibanization occurs, tourism is the first to suffer... This severely impacts the local population.” (Bahrain Male 2)
	Agricultural & Livelihood Ruin	“The wheat crop had fallen and spoiled in the fields... the peach crop had fallen and was ruined... This was a major loss from the operation.” (Kabal Male 1)
Targeted Sectorial Destruction	Education as a War Zone	“Their primary targets are girls---they prevent them from receiving education... They also oppose English education.” (Bahrain Male 2) “Some schools were taken over by the Taliban, while others were occupied by the army.” (Khwazakhela Male 2)
	Health System Failure	“The health sector also suffered greatly. Access to hospitals was impossible... The road closures often led to their death.” (Kabal Male 1, Khwazakhela Male 2)
	Infrastructure as Collateral Damage	“Infrastructure was mostly damaged by the army, which demolished many buildings. The Taliban, on the other hand, targeted roads and blew up bridges with bombs.” (Khwazakhela Male 2)
Societal & Political Decline	Destruction of Social structure	“Trust among people eroded... Social activities like celebrations and condolences were also severely affected. Participation in such events almost completely stopped.” (Kabal Male 2, Khwazakhela Male 1)
	Targeted Political Assassination	“Politicians were particularly targeted---killed or threatened... Political activities in Swat were practically zero.” (Kabal Male 2, Khwazakhela Male 1)

The Table 2 shows the male framing of the Sectorial Collapse in Swat, whereas the researcher identified three themes including Economic Eradication, Targeted Sectorial Destruction and Societal & Political Decline.

The first theme “Economic Eradication” with codes “Tourism & Trade Collapse and Agricultural & Livelihood Ruin” that there were severe repercussions was faced by economy and tourism as respondent 2 from Bahrain expresses: “Our economy largely depends on tourism... When Talibanization occurs, tourism is the first to suffer... This severely impacts the local population.”

Similarly, the agriculture and livelihood of people faced extreme devastation during that period as respondent No. 1 from Kabal says, “The wheat crop had fallen and spoiled in the fields... the peach crop had fallen and was ruined... This was a major loss from the operation.”

Another theme “Targeted Sectorial Destruction” with sub-themes including “Education as a War Zone, Health System Failure and Infrastructure as Collateral Damage” tells about the destruction of schools by Taliban and also about occupying of some school by the military as respondent No. 2 from Bahrain says, “*Their primary targets are girls---they prevent them from receiving education... They also oppose English education.*”

Similarly, respondent 2 from Khwazakhela stated that “*some schools were taken over by the Taliban, while others were occupied by the army.*”

Another code was about the failure of health systems as a result of long curfews, inaccessibility, etc., and people were deprived of medical relief as respondent No. 2 from Khwazakhela stated that “*The health sector also suffered greatly. Access to hospitals was impossible... The road closures often led to their death.*”

One of the codes is about the damage caused to infrastructure, which was carried out by both the Taliban and the military, as respondent No. 2 from Khwazakhela says, “*Infrastructure was mostly damaged by the army, which demolished many buildings. The Taliban, on the other hand, targeted roads and blew up bridges with bombs.*”

Another theme, “Societal & Political Decline,” with codes “Destruction of Social structure” and “Targeted Political Assassination,” explores that collapse of trust among people, destruction of community gatherings and societal hierarchy led to psychological traumas as respondent No. 2 from Kabal and respondent No. 1 from Khwazakhela states; “*Trust among people eroded... Social activities like celebrations and condolences were also severely affected. Participation in such events almost completely stopped.*”

Additionally, the deliberate assassination and silencing of political figures lead to a leadership vacuum and fear, as stated by respondent No. 2 from Kabal and respondent No. 1 from Khwazakhela; “*Politicians were particularly targeted---killed or threatened... Political activities in Swat were practically zero.*”

Table 3: Narrative framing of Responsibility for the Destruction of Swat

Themes	Codes	Quotes
Victimization	“Sandwiched” or “Caught in the Middle”	“Lay man was a kind of sandwich between the Taliban and army tried to win the heart of the people rather pushed them to the corner.” (Bahrain Male 1) “They both pressurized us to say in favor of them.” (Kabal Male 1)

Themes	Codes	Quotes
	Equal Responsibility for Destruction	“Both sides caused considerable harm.” (Barikot Male 1) “I think both the military and Taliban had equal share in destroying the society.” (Mingora Male 1)
State Brutality & Failure	Military Atrocities and Oppression	“The atrocities committed by our military brothers are indescribable... the oppression, the raids on homes... the disrespect shown to women, the injustices---cannot be put into words.” (Bahrain Male 2)
	Collateral Damage & Flawed Strategy	“The military's planning was flawed... they launched sudden attacks with mortars, destroying homes and causing civilian casualties.” (Charbagh Male 2)
Taliban as Deceptive & Criminal	Exploitation and Betrayal of Islam	“They used Islam as a cover to settle personal vendettas... The idea of implementing Islam was lost.” (Kabal Male 2)
	Imposition of a Culture of Fear	“They banned movies... We couldn't wear clothes of our choice... Shaving was banned... Wedding ceremonies... were completely halted.” (Char Bagh Male 1, Khwazakhela Male 1)
planned Conflict	“Pre-Planned Drama” or “Game”	“We had already sensed that this was all a drama... It was all a pre-planned drama.” (Bahrain Male 2)

The Table 3 demonstrates the male narrative and framing about the responsibility for the Destruction of Swat”. The researcher analyses the answers of the respondents by thematic analysis identifying four themes with their codes. The first theme was “Victimization” with codes including “Sandwiched” or “Caught in the Middle” and “Equal Responsibility for Destruction” stating that the ordinary people were trapped between two equally oppressive forces with no protection as respondent No. 1 from Bahrain says; *“Lay man was a kind of sandwich between the Taliban and army tried to win the heart of the people rather pushed them to the corner.”* and respondent No.1 from Kabal mentioned as follow; *“They both pressurized us to say in favor of them.”*

The second code was “Equal Responsibility for Destruction,” where it was claimed by the respondents that both the Taliban and the military were equally responsible for the damage caused to society, as respondent No. 1 from Barikot stated, *“Both sides caused considerable harm.”*

And respondent No.1 from Mingora stated that *“I think both the military and Taliban had equal share in destroying the society.”*

The second theme was “State Brutality & Failure” with codes “Military Atrocities and Oppression” and “Collateral Damage & Flawed Strategy” tells that the military was harassing the civilians rather than carrying out precise actions against the Taliban as respondent No. 2 from Bahrain says *“The atrocities committed by our military brothers are indescribable... the oppression, the raids on homes... the disrespect shown to women, the injustices---cannot be put into words.”*

Another code, “Collateral Damage & Flawed Strategy” about unplanned attacks and flawed strategy by the military, which says that they could carry out sudden attacks causing civilian casualties, as stated by respondent No. 2 from Charbagh; *“The military's planning was flawed... they launched sudden attacks with mortars, destroying homes and causing civilian casualties.”*

The third theme identified was “Taliban as Deceptive & Criminal” with codes “Exploitation and Betrayal of Islam” and “Imposition of a Culture of Fear”. According to this, the Taliban betrayed the people in the name of Islam for their personal agendas, as mentioned by respondent No. 2 from Kabal; *“They used Islam as a cover to settle personal vendettas... The idea of implementing Islam was lost.”*

Moreover, the Taliban controls the society by spreading constant fear among the population, as respondent No.1 from Charbagh and respondent No.1 from Khwazakhela say, *“They banned movies... We couldn't wear clothes of our choice... Shaving was banned... Wedding ceremonies... were completely halted.”*

One of the themes identified was “planned Conflict” with code “Pre-Planned Drama” or “Game” where it was analyzed that it was not a real-time conflict but was a fabricated one as respondent No. 2 from Bahrain stated, *“We had already sensed that this was all a drama... It was all a pre-planned drama.”*

Table 54: Framing of Survival under Military Presence

Themes	Codes	Quotes
Strategic Withdrawal & Confinement	Confinement & Restricted Movement	“We tried to reach home before the sun set... Our strategy was to stay indoors as much as possible.” (Char Bagh Male 1, Khwazakhela Male 2)
	Routine of Precaution	“People adopted the strategy of opening their businesses late... and closing their shops as soon as dusk fell.” (Khwazakhela Male 1)
Neutrality	“Praise No One, Criticize No One”	“The best strategy was to stay neutral---praise no one, criticize no one.” (Kabal Male 2) “My strategy was not to speak ill of either... My policy was not to get involved with either.” (Kabal Male 1)
	Performance of Faithfulness	“[I showed] the Taliban that I was a devout Muslim.” (Kabal Male 1)

Themes	Codes	Quotes
Military as a Risk Factor	Military as a Source of Danger	<p>“We avoided interacting with anyone. We moved around quietly... We remained silent.” (Mingora Male 1)</p> <p>“Trusting the army was hard, but we had no choice for survival.” (Matta Male 1)</p>
	Sense of Betrayal & Surveillance	<p>“They both had a strong spaying [sic] system.” (Char Bagh Male 1)</p>

Table 4 exemplifies the male perception regarding survival under military presence, where three themes with their codes were identified by the researcher. The first theme, “Strategic Withdrawal & Confinement,” has codes “Confinement & Restricted Movement” and “Routine of Precaution. The analysis shows that people restricted their movement and confined themselves in their houses, particularly after sunset, as respondent No.1 from Charbagh and respondent No. 2 from Khwazakhela say, *“We tried to reach home before the sun set... Our strategy was to stay indoors as much as possible.”*

On the other hand, people also adopted precautionary measures and changed their routine, focusing on carrying out their jobs in broad daylight as mentioned by respondent No. 1 from Khwazakhela; *“People adopted the strategy of opening their businesses late... and closing their shops as soon as dusk fell.”*

The second theme identified was “Neutrality” with codes “Praise No One, Criticize No One” and “Performance of Faithfulness”. The people tried to be neutral by not taking the side of the Taliban neither that of the military, nor opposing any party as said by respondent No. 2 from Kabal: *“The best strategy was to stay neutral---praise no one, criticize no one.”* And respondent No. 1 from Kabal; *“My strategy was not to speak ill of either... My policy was not to get involved with either.”*

People also use tactics like “being religious and participating in religious ceremonies” so that they may be safe from the Taliban, as respondent No. 1 from Kabal says, *“[I showed] the Taliban that I was a devout Muslim.”*

The third theme identified was military as a “Military as a Risk Factor” with the codes “Military as a Source of Danger” and “Sense of Betrayal & Surveillance”. It was analyzed that making connections with the military or meeting up with them was extremely dangerous, as respondent No. 1 from Mingora stated that, *“We avoided interacting with anyone. We moved around quietly... We remained silent.”* And respondent No. 1 from Matta expresses, *“Trusting the army was hard, but we had no choice for survival.”*

Similarly, there was a trust issue. People were afraid that they were being betrayed and under surveillance by both sides, as respondent No. 1 from Charbagh says, *“They both had a strong spying [sic] system.”*

Table 5: Framing of Survival under Taliban Rule

Themes	Codes	Quotes
Authoritarian Control & Fear	Enforced Silence & Self-Censorship	“Our strategy was very simple to remain silent... Their spying network was strong that even our private conversation was leaked to them.” (Bahrain Male 1)
	Psychological Paralysis	“What would I say about the strategy...? One thing was there and it was fear, uncertainty and trauma. We were unable to think normally.” (Charbagh Male 2)
	Forced Obedience & Submission	“We had to obey Sharia and remained loyal to the Taliban otherwise we would have been killed.” (Barikot Male 2)
Social & Personal Removal	Confinement & Social Death	“We lived in constant fear---men grew beards, women stayed indoors... Schools shut down, and music/TV were banned.” (Matta Male 1)
	Performance of Piety	“[My strategy was] to show the Taliban that I was a devout Muslim.” (Kabal Male 1)
Resistance & Adaptation	Displacement as Escape	“Everyone tried to leave Swat. When the army and the Taliban faced off, about 70% of Swat's population became IDPs.” (Matta Male 2)
	Armed Self-Defense	“To defend ourselves, we kept weapons ready at all times. Fearing Taliban attacks, we even trained the women in our homes to handle weapons.” (Khwazakhela Male 2)
Taliban Illegitimacy	Taliban as Un-Islamic & Barbaric	“Taliban were comparatively more barbaric as they were not accountable to anyone... they never followed the true spirit of sharia by themselves.” (Bahrain Male 1)

Table 5 demonstrates the male opinion about the survival under Taliban rule. Four themes with codes were identified. The first theme was “Authoritarian Control & Fear” with the codes including “Enforced Silence & Self-Censorship, Psychological Paralysis and Forced Obedience & Submission.” According to the responses, even private conversations were disclosed to the Taliban by their strong spying network, as respondent No. 1 from Bahrain says, *“Our strategy was very simple to remain silent... Their spying network was so strong that even our private conversation was leaked to them.”*

Another code, “Psychological Paralysis,” discloses that people were mentally and psychologically stressed, which makes normal life tough, as stated by respondent No. 2 from

Charbagh; *“What would I say about the strategy...? One thing was there, and it was fear, uncertainty, and trauma. We were unable to think normally.”*

Another code is “Forced Obedience & Submission.” It was analyzed that compliance with the Taliban’s instructions was mandatory for survival, as articulated by respondent No. 2 from Barikot: *“We had to obey Sharia and remained loyal to the Taliban; otherwise, we would have been killed.”*

Another theme was “Social & Personal Removal” with codes “Confinement & Social Death and Performance of Piety”. The analysis says that social life was drastically affected and gatherings were ended as verbalized by respondent No. 1 from Matta; *“We lived in constant fear---men grew beards, women stayed indoors... Schools shut down, and music/TV were banned.”*

Similarly, people adopted the strategy of publicly performing religious activities to show the Taliban that they are true Muslims, as told by respondent No. 1 from Kabal: *“[My strategy was] to show the Taliban that I was a devout Muslim.”*

Another theme identified was “Resistance & Adaptation” with the codes “Displacement as Escape” and “Armed Self-Defense”. According to this, when the conditions became worse, the ultimate strategy for survival was becoming IDPs as stated by respondent No. 2 from Matta: *“Everyone tried to leave Swat. When the army and the Taliban faced off, about 70% of Swat's population became IDPs.”*

Moreover, a rare self-defense strategy against the Taliban was being prepared and training members of the people for using weapons, as stated by respondent No. 2 from Khwazakhela; *“To defend ourselves, we kept weapons ready at all times. Fearing Taliban attacks, we even trained the women in our homes to handle weapons.”*

Another theme identified was “Taliban Illegitimacy” with the code “Taliban as Un-Islamic & Barbaric”. The Taliban were hypocritical. They did not follow the true spirit of Islam and were brutal and barbaric, as said by respondent No. 1 from Bahrain; *“Taliban were comparatively more barbaric as they were not accountable to anyone... they never followed the true spirit of sharia by themselves.”*

Table 6 Male Framing of Media Portrayal in the Swat Conflict

Themes	Codes	Quotes
Media as a State Mouthpiece	Pro-Military Bias & Censorship	<p>“The media was more in favor of the army... Media portrayed army as heroic and defender of the soil.” (Kabul Male 1, Matta Male 2)</p> <p>“What they broadcast is controlled---our military and institutions capture, censor, and dictate what can and cannot be shown.” (Bahrain Male 2)</p>
	Eradication of Civilian Narrative	<p>“The newspapers usually report about military and Taliban, but layman has no space in their coverage.” (Mingora Male 1)</p> <p>“News about us were not there.” (Charbagh Male 2)</p>

Themes	Codes	Quotes
Media Operational Constraints	Journalists Under Pressure	“Journalists were also terrorized and were not in a position to report accurately.” (Kabal Male 2) “Local journalists were in the grip of army and Taliban.” (Char Bagh Male 1)
	Information Blackout	“The entire Swat region was left without electricity or mobile connectivity. We were completely cut off from the media.” (Khwazakhela Male 2)
Divergent of Media	International Media as an Alternative	“When we listened to DEWA radio and BBC, they would completely be showing another version of the situation, completely different from what we read in newspaper.” (Mingora Male 1)
	Local Media's Struggling Advocacy	“Local media often highlighted civilian suffering... Local journalists were not that prepared to work in such a situation.” (Matta Male 1, Char Bagh Male 1)
Sensationalism & Simplification	Exaggeration & Lack of Nuance	“The media exaggerated the narratives of both sides... International media... sometimes exaggerated the chaos. Not all reporting matched our reality.” (Barikot Male 1, Matta M1)

The Table 6 shows the male narrative about the media portrayal of the Swat Conflict. The first theme “Media as a State Mouthpiece,” with the codes “Pro-Military Bias & Censorship” and “Eradication of Civilian Narrative,” says that the media worked as a propaganda machine for the military and government, Government as told by respondent No. 1 from Kabal and respondent No. 2 from Matta; “*The media was more in favor of the army... The media portrayed the army as heroic and the defender of the soil.*”

Similarly, respondent No. 2 from Bahrain says, “*What they broadcast is controlled---our military and institutions capture, censor, and dictate what can and cannot be shown.*”

The common people have no space in the media coverage, and their narrative was not included, as mentioned by respondent No. 1 from Mingora: “*The newspapers usually report about the military and the Taliban, but the layman has no space in their coverage.*”

And respondent No. 2 from Charbagh, “*News about us was not there.*” Another theme was “Media Operational Constraints” with the codes “Journalists Under Pressure” and “Information Blackout”. According to this, the local journalists were under pressure from both the Taliban and the military, as stated by respondent No. 2 from Kabal: “*Journalists were also terrorized and were not in a position to report accurately.*”

And respondent No. 1 from Charbagh, “*Local journalists were in the grip of the army and the Taliban.*” In addition to this, the destruction of communication and transmission lines in Swat

has created a total media blackout, as stated by respondent No. 2 from Khwazakhela, *“The entire Swat region was left without electricity or mobile connectivity. We were completely cut off from the media.”*

Another theme identified was “Divergent of Media” with the codes “International Media as an Alternative” and “Local Media's Struggling Advocacy”. According to this, the version of international media was different and often more balanced as respondent No. 1 from Mingora says, *“When we listened to DEWA radio and BBC, they would completely be showing another version of the situation, completely different from what we read in the newspaper.”*

The local media was also trying to highlight the situation, but local journalists were not in a position to do so during that situation, as highlighted by respondent No. 1 from Matta and respondent No. 1 from Charbagh; *“Local media often highlighted civilian suffering... Local journalists were not that prepared to work in such a situation.”*

Another theme identified was “Sensationalism & Simplification” with the code “Exaggeration & Lack of Nuance”. According to this, the media exaggerated the narratives of both parties, and their coverage lacks impartiality, avoiding complex ground realities as mentioned by respondent No. 1 from Matta and respondent No. 1 from Barikot; *“The media exaggerated the narratives of both sides... International media... sometimes exaggerated the chaos. Not all reporting matched our reality.”*

Table 7 Male Framing of Media Representation of Local Problems

Themes	Codes	Quotes
Negligence	Deliberate Omission of Civilian Suffering	“Local people were never the priority... Media never talked about the pregnant women difficulties; our sheep and goats were slaughtered but they never get reported.” (Kabal Male 2) “The media never spoke for the common people.” (Barikot Male 1)
	“Mouthpiece of the Government/Military”	“Everybody knew that the local media was the mouthpiece of the government... They used to report the version of army.” (Bahrain Male 1, Char Bagh Male 1)
	Distortion of Reality	“A shepherd... was shelled... The next day... the media said that... 60-70 Taliban were killed... there was no resemblance between our ground realities and media reports.” (Kabal Male 1)
Media Under Pressure	Journalists as victim	“Journalists were caught between these two, like grains crushed between millstones... it is impossible to perform professional duties.” (Barikot Male 2)

Themes	Codes	Quotes
	Operational Collapse	“The local media had completely collapsed due to the chaos. Many journalists were also martyred.” (Khwazakhela Male 2)
Divergent Source Trust	International Media as a Trusted Alternative	“BBC and DEWA radio were comparatively more trusted sources of our information.” (Bahrain Male 1) “I personally never trusted our newspapers... on the other hand BBC was very useful.” (Bahrain Male 2)
	Local Pashto Channels as Partial Advocates	“Local Pashto channels showed our struggles better, but national media reduced us to either 'victims' or 'collaborators.'“ (Matta Male 1)

Table 7 illustrates the male framing regarding media representation of Local Problems. Three themes with their codes were identified. The first code was “Negligence” with codes including “Deliberate Omission of Civilian Suffering, Mouthpiece of the Government/Military, and Distortion of Reality.” It is analyzed that the media ignored the local people’s problems, as stated by respondent No. 2 from Kabal: *“Local people were never the priority... The media never talked about the pregnant women's difficulties, our sheep and goats were slaughtered, but they never got reported.”* And respondent No. 1 from Barikot, *“The media never spoke for the common people.”*

According to the responses, the media was a propaganda tool for the state and the military as narrated by respondent No. 1 from Bahrain and respondent No. 1 Charbagh; *“Everybody knew that the local media was the mouthpiece of the government... They used to report the version of the army.”*

According to the responses, the media was distorting the reality and providing a narrative that was not aligned with truth and reality, as stated by respondent No. 1 from Kabal: *“A shepherd... was shelled... The next day... the media said that... 60-70 Taliban were killed... There was no resemblance between our ground realities and media reports.”*

Another theme that was identified was “Media Under Pressure” with codes “Journalists as victim” and “Operational Collapse.”

According to the responses, the journalist was caught between the demands of the Taliban and the military, as mentioned by respondent No. 2 from Barikot: *“Journalists were caught between these two, like grains crushed between millstones... it is impossible to perform professional duties.”*

Additionally, the local media operational rhythm collapsed due to anarchy and martyrdom of journalists, as added by respondent No. 2 from Khwazakhela; *“The local media had completely collapsed due to the chaos. Many journalists were also martyred.”*

The third theme was “Divergent Source Trust” with codes “International Media as a Trusted Alternative” and “Local Pashto Channels as Partial Advocates.” According to the responses, Dewa News and BBC were trusted sources for information, as stated by respondent No. 1 from Bahrain: *“BBC and DEWA radio were comparatively more trusted sources of our*

information.” And respondent No. 2 from Bahrain expresses, “I personally never trusted our newspapers... on the other hand, BBC was beneficial.”

Moreover, the local Pashto media platforms were better at giving voice to the local people as compared to national media, as mentioned by respondent No. 1 from Matta: “Local Pashto channels showed our struggles better, but national media reduced us to either ‘victims’ or ‘collaborators.’”

Table 8 Framing by Multi-Level Media Analysis

Themes	Codes	Quotes
Proximity Frame	Community & Everyday Life	“Local media mostly focused on everyday issues like road conditions, electricity problems, or community events, using a familiar tone that felt relevant and relatable to local people.” (Bahrain Male 1)
	Ground Realities & Civilian Suffering	“Local media focused on ground realities displacement, trauma.” (Matta Male 1) “Local media, often more connected to the community, focused on immediate impacts highlighting civilian hardships, displacement, and daily struggles, while sometimes avoiding direct criticism of armed groups due to fear or pressure.” (Kabul Male 1)
The National Security Frame	Conflict & Counter-terrorism	“National media, on the other hand, tended to highlight broader concerns like terrorism, military operations, and government policies, often portraying Swat as a conflict zone while overlooking daily life realities.” (Bahrain Male 1)
	Patriotism & Military Glorification	“National media pushed a patriotic narrative, glorifying the military.” (Matta Male 1) “The media prominently featured the army's actions...” (Mingora Male 2)
	Neglect & Omission	“If a dog dies in Punjab, it makes the news, but if a high-ranking official from our area dies, it doesn't get reported.” (Barikot Male 1)
The Global Geopolitical Frame	Sensationalism & Stereotyping	“International media went even further, often framing the region through dramatic stories about extremism, girls' education, or human rights, which sometimes felt exaggerated or disconnected from how people actually lived.” (Bahrain Male 1)
	Human Rights & Global Terrorism	“International media called it 'war on terror'.” (Matta Male 1) “International media took a broader view, often

Themes	Codes	Quotes
		linking Swat's situation to global terrorism, human rights violations, and geopolitical stakes..." (Kabal Male 1)

Table 8 is about the framing of conflict of multi-level media analysis. Three themes, each with its own code, were identified. The first theme was "Proximity Frame" with codes "Community & Everyday Life" and "Ground Realities & Civilian Suffering." It was analyzed that local media focuses on everyday problems, as stated by respondent No. 1 from Bahrain: "*Local media mostly focused on everyday issues like road conditions, electricity problems, or community events, using a familiar tone that felt relevant and relatable to local people.*"

In addition, local media highlighted the realities of migration trauma and personal stories in a fearful environment, as narrated by respondent No. 1 from Matta: "*Local media focused on ground realities, displacement, trauma.*" And respondent No. 2 from Kabal, "*Local media, often more connected to the community, focused on immediate impacts, highlighting civilian hardships, displacement, and daily struggles, while sometimes avoiding direct criticism of armed groups due to fear or pressure.*"

The second theme was "The National Security Frame," with the following codes: "Conflict & Counterterrorism, Patriotism & Military Glorification, and Neglect & Omission." National media overlooked local problems and reported as if portraying Swat as a conflict zone in the "war on terror," as respondent No. 1 from Bahrain says, "*National media, on the other hand, tended to highlight broader concerns like terrorism, military operations, and government policies, often portraying Swat as a conflict zone while overlooking daily life realities.*"

Moreover, national media developed a narrative of patriotism, glorifying the military as mentioned by respondent No. 1 from Matta: "*National media pushed a patriotic narrative, glorifying the military.*" And respondent No. 2 from Mingora, "*The media prominently featured the army's actions...*"

The responses also explored that national media deliberately ignore local people's problems, as mentioned by respondent No. 1 from Barikot; "*If a dog dies in Punjab, it makes the news, but if a high-ranking official from our area dies, it doesn't get reported.*"

The third theme was "The Global Geopolitical Frame," with the following codes: "Sensationalism & Stereotyping and Human Rights & Global Terrorism." The international media sensationalize the situation by dramatic and one-sided stories, as stated by respondent No. 1 from Bahrain; "*International media went even further, often framing the region through dramatic stories about extremism, girls' education, or human rights, which sometimes felt exaggerated or disconnected from how people actually lived.*"

Similarly, international media look at the scenario in a broader context and link it to human rights and the "war on terror," as stated by respondent No. 1 from Matta: "*International media called it 'war on terror'.*" And respondent No. 1 from Kabal, "*International media took a broader view, often linking Swat's situation to global terrorism, human rights violations, and geopolitical stakes...*"

Conclusions

The collective narratives of people in Swat converge to reveal a profoundly multifaceted conflict that defies simplistic explanations in conventional analyses of asymmetric warfare. The evidence, drawn from a range of experiential perspectives, as a whole, portrays an

everyday reality of dual victimization, where civilians became victims of the brutality of the Taliban and the state's counter-insurrectionary operations.

Instead of being a territorial struggle between state and non-state actors, the Swat conflict was an attack on the identity, livelihood, and the very social fabric of the valley, where local people developed different mechanisms of survival, including a critical perspective on the role of the media of.

This analysis provides important insights into the tension between institutional and grass-roots systems of meaning-making. National media acted as a "propaganda tool" replicating the securitization frame of the state and marginalizing the civilian suffering. In contrast, civilians built counter frames; one of which, the "dual responsibility frame," attributed liability to all the fighters, while the other two, the "survival frame" and the "proximity frame," supported the community-dominated narratives at the expense of the dominating national security discourse dominant at the time.

The analyses delivered by the interviewers' groups composed of local people have converged on a sophisticated critique of the media's performance, revealing that media literacy is deeply rooted at the grassroots, or from below, level.

They made a systematic distinction between:

Local/Community Media, valued because of its proximity and community concern, is also subject to external pressures.

National Media, which is rejected as politicized and sensationalized, is the mouthpiece of the Military and the Taliban.

International Media, which is trusted as a witness but criticized for being decontextualized and for stereotyping of local populations.

The narrative phenomenon, where the media forces impose specific story structures, is a form of manifestation. This creates symbolic violence, which adds to the physical violence of war because civilians not only have to survive the conflict, but they also have to combat the misrepresentation of the war.

References

- Aggarwal, N. K. (2017). Using culture and psychology to counter the Taliban's violent narratives. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 29(4), 313-319.
- Alkrood, M. A. (2019). *Victims or Hysterics? Armed Rebels, or Violent Extremists? Translation and the Different Narratives of the Syrian Uprising* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Leeds).
- Appel, M., & Mara, M. (2013). The persuasive influence of a fictional character's trustworthiness. *Journal of Communication*, 63(5), 912-932.
- Bryson, A. (2016). Victims, violence, and voice: Transitional justice, oral history, and dealing with the past. *Hastings Int'l & Comp. L. Rev.*, 39, 299.
- Bullock, O. M., Shulman, H. C., & Huskey, R. (2021). Narratives are persuasive because they are easier to understand: examining processing fluency as a mechanism of narrative persuasion. *Frontiers in Communication*, 6, 719615.
- Cherkaoui, M. D. (2012). In the shadow of soldiers: Faceless victims in public media narrative. In *Civilians and Modern War* (pp. 165-198). Routledge.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). "Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm." *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51-58.
- Erickson, F. (1982). Audiovisual records as a primary data source. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 11(2), 213-232.

- Fair, C. C. (2014). *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War*. Oxford University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harvard University Press.
- Golubev, K. A. (2019). *Constructing Narratives about the Taliban by Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. <https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/SPBU06.2019.208>
- Gulzar, S. (2023). The Role of Media in Shaping Public Opinion and Social Discourse. *Contemporary Journal of Social Science Review*, 1(1), 30-40.
- Haynes, K. (2010). Other lives in accounting: Critical reflections on oral history methodology in action. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 21(3), 221-231.
- High, S., Little, E., & Duong, T. R. (Eds.). (2014). *Remembering Mass Violence: Oral History, New Media and Performance*. University of Toronto Press.
- Hussain, A., & Ahmed, S. (2024). Media Influence on Public Opinion and Political Decision-Making: A Critical Examination. *Al-Anfal*, 2(1), 34-41.
- Irshad, M. K., & Qasim, M. (2025). Dynamics of Subversion and Countersubversion in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Historical Patterns, Strategies, and Implications for Regional Stability. *International Journal of Social Sciences Bulletin*, 3(10), 642-657.
- Javai, P. (2020). Operation Zarb-e-Azb: A successful initiative to curtail terrorism. *South Asian Studies*, 30(2).
- Johnson, T. H., DuPee, M., & Shaaker, W. (2017). *Taliban narratives: The use and power of stories in the Afghanistan conflict*. Oxford University Press.
- Kahale, S. (2021). *Oral history as a method of promoting inclusive and gender-sensitive justice*. <https://doi.org/10.5871/JBA/009S3.051>
- Kamal, O. (2021). *After the collapse of the Taliban: A study of the US state building failure*. Webster University.
- Katz, J. T. (2009). *The Presidency as pedagogy: A cultural studies analysis of violence, media and the construction of presidential masculinities*. University of California, Los Angeles.
- Munir, M. (2021). *Everyday Images and Practices of the State in Rural Pakistan*. Doctoral Thesis. University of Milan. Retrieved online from: <https://air.unimi.it/simple-search?query=Everyday+Images+and+Practices+of+the+State+in+Rural+Pakistan>
- Rajagopal, S. (2018). *Primary prevention of violent extremism: A qualitative analysis of current practices, future directions, and the role of community psychology*. The Wright Institute.
- Rock, F. (2020). Witnesses and suspects in interviews: Collecting oral evidence: The police, the public and the written word. In *The Routledge handbook of forensic linguistics* (pp. 112-126). Routledge.
- Rome, S. (2011). Crises and Reconciliation in Swat. *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan studies* Vol. 3, No 1, 53-79.
- Samarqandi, M. (2022). Afghanistan, the Taliban and the liberation narrative: Why it is so vital to be telling our own stories. *Pacific Journalism Review*. <https://doi.org/10.24135/pjr.v28i1and2.1238>
- Sarhan, N. (2022). 'Because I am a Girl': Identity and Positioning in Afghan Women's Narratives. *Cairo Studies in English*. <https://doi.org/10.21608/cse.2022.130478.1113>
- Shah, A. (2018). Talibanization and military operation Rah-e-Rast; the final knockback in Swat. *Pakistan Journal of Society, Education and Language (PJSEL)*, 4(2), 142-154.

- Shah, M. A. (2024). Terrorism and Insurgency in the Tribal Areas: Investigating the Historical Roots and Dynamics of Terrorism and Insurgency in Pakistan's Tribal Regions. *Journal of Social Sciences Review*, 4(1), 37-45.
- Shah, Q. A., Nawab, B., Nyborg, I. L. P., & Elahi, N. (2020). The Narrative of Militancy: A Case Study of Swat, Pakistan. *Journal of Human Security*. <https://doi.org/10.12924/JOHS2020.16020055>
- Shahid, R. W. (2022). How Narratives Helped the Taliban's Surprise Takeover of Afghanistan in 2021. *Global Foreign Policies Review*. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gfpr.2022\(v-ii\).06](https://doi.org/10.31703/gfpr.2022(v-ii).06)
- Shahid, R. W. (2022). How Narratives Helped the Taliban's Surprise Takeover of Afghanistan in 2021. *Global Foreign Policies Review*, 2, 52-65.
- Shopes, L. (2011). Oral history. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*, 451-465.
- Sommer, B. W., & Quinlan, M. K. (2018). *The oral history manual*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Thompson, P. (2000). *The Voice of the Past* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press (1st ed. 1978).
- Yusuf, M. (Ed.). (2014). *Pakistan's Counterterrorism Challenge*. Georgetown University Press.