



Effect of Political Conflicts on Educational Outcomes in Bodoland Territorial Region of Assam

Abstract: This paper assessed the effect of conflicts on schooling outcomes in Kokrajhar district of Assam, India. Using household level cross sectional data collected from two villages-one conflict-affected and another unaffected, it examined the effect estimating differences in completion of mandatory schooling i.e. up to the grade eight between the treated cohort and the control cohort. The treated cohort includes conflict-exposed younger individuals from the conflict affected village, school-age during or after conflict. Contrary to it, the control group includes older individuals from the same village who had the opportunity to complete the grade prior to onset of the conflict and peers from the unaffected village. A difference-in-differences estimator was applied to measure the impact of conflict on schooling outcomes. We found that the damages to household dwellings and lose of livelihoods significantly reduced the likelihood of completing grade eight for the treated cohort. Additionally, probit regression analysis exhibits that the conflict significantly reduced school attendance in the affected village.

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Introduction

This paper examined the effect of ethno-political conflicts on educational attainments in Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) of Assam, India. Focusing on the Bodo-Muslim conflict erupted in 2012 in it and its surrounding districts; it investigated the effect for three reasons. First, the BTR of Assam has been a hotspot for violent political conflicts with involvement of multiple ethno-religious groups, besides insurrections by various insurgent groups. The conflict resulted in significant loss of properties and life along with widespread internally displacement (Motiram and Sarma 2014). Second, human development indicators, including education of this region were the lowest in Assam (Government of Assam, 2014). This low developmental attainment may be exacerbated by recurrent conflicts. Finally, despite being one of most ethno-religious-torn regions in the country, this region is under-researched. The demographic shifts, deep mistrust among stratified ethno-linguistic groups along with pervasive insecurity

could further escalate the instability and conflicts in this region (Matiram and Sarma 2014). While the existing literature addresses factors contributing to conflicts, there is still limited focus on their socio-economic consequences, particularly the impact on educational outcomes (Maio and Nandi, 2013). Many researchers such as Basumatary (2012), Misra (2012), Pathak (2012), Mahanta, (2013), and Mahanta, (2014) examined the factors contributing conflicts in Assam including the BTR. However, they did not focus on the effects of such conflicts on the socio-economic lives of the region.

Our study contributes to the growing economic literature on conflict by analysing effects of the 2012 Bodo-Muslim conflict on educational outcomes. Using cross-sectional household data from two villages in Kokrajhar district-one conflict-affected and another unaffected, the study captured differences in mandatory schooling completion i.e. up to grade eight across cohorts, locations, and households. A difference-in-differences estimator, commonly applied in conflict studies (Chamarbagwala and Moran, 2011; Maio and Nandi, 2013, and Utsumi, 2022) was used to examine the effects. Furthermore, using probit regression model we analysed how conflict affected school attendance. The next section of the paper describes relevant literature followed by the section providing brief background of conflicts in BTR. The preceded section discusses methodology of the study followed by the results and discussion.



Review of Literature

Conflict-related studies reveal that conflicts adversely affect children's educational and health outcomes through multiple channels, with long-term consequences on their future earnings and well-being. Relative socio-economic deprivation has, therefore, been a key attribute of recurrent conflict-affected regions. The World Bank (2011), in its report on 'Conflict, Security and Development' highlighted that intergenerational conflicts retard the developmental attainments in many developing nations. Ichino and Winter-Ebmer (2004) assessing the World War-II's effects on education noted significantly lower attainment among school-age cohorts during and immediate after the war in Austria and Germany compared to older cohorts. Conversely, such loss was not observed in Sweden and Switzerland. Shemyakina (2011) also found that the Tajik armed conflict severely reduced mandatory schooling completion rates for school-age cohort during the conflicts compared to older cohort and children similar to age of conflict-exposed cohort from unaffected regions. She identified the destruction of household dwellings and loss of necessary assets as key factors negatively affecting school enrolment. Chamarbagwala and Moran (2011) highlighted that Guatemala's 36-year long armed conflicts and its resultant widespread poverty and assets destruction, disproportionately affected the rural Mayan children, reducing their educational attainments. Likewise, Shemyakina (2011) and Maio and Nandi (2013) demonstrated that the conflicts led to parental wage loss, which in turn, pushing children into economic activities, increasing child labor, and reducing school attendance. Destruction of and reduced access to school infrastructures during conflicts were also exhibited as the key factors affecting educational quality and attainments in the studies by Akbuluk-Yuksel (2009), Merrouche (2011) and Chamarbagwala and Moran (2011). Samyakina (2011) also highlighted that a deep sense of insecurity, particularly for girls, while travelling during conflicts leads to school dropouts. Similarly, Utsumi (2022) exhibited that conflict resulted in fall in primary school enrolment, particularly for girls perpetuating gender gaps in Afghanistan.

Ethno-political conflicts in BTR

Assam is home for diverse groups, all have strong aspirations for improving and preserving their own identities, languages and cultures. Their endeavour for preserving them often led to competition for resources and eventually violent conflicts (Mahanta, 2013 and Motiram and Sarma, 2014). The BTR in western Assam is prone to such conflicts. Recurrent ethno-political conflicts, such as the Bodo-Muslim and Bodo-Santhal clashes including various insurrections by insurgent groups like National Democratic Front Bodoland (NDFB) and Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), have caused a large-scale deaths, displacement, and property destruction since the 1990s in the region (Boro, 2024). The 2012 Bodo-Muslim conflict, the region's largest and deadliest, surpassed the devastation of the 2002 Gujarat riots in terms of fatalities and displacement (Motiram and Sarma, 2014). Retaliatory attacks against northeastern migrants in cities like Pune, Bangalore, and Mumbai exhibited far-reaching impacts of the conflict. The Bodoland secessionist movement alone claimed over 1,600 lives in Assam between 1987 and 2003, with more than 80% of victims from the BTR (BTC, 2013). The recurring ethno-political conflicts in BTR underscore the region's deep-rooted ethno-linguistic and religious divisions, perpetuating instability and conflict. Studies on conflicts in BTR, including works by Xaxa (2008), Basumatary (2012), Pathak (2012), and Mahanta (2014) identified several factors contributing to these conflicts. However, these studies have largely overlooked the socio-economic consequences of such conflicts in the region. This paper aimed to bridge that gap by examining the effects of these conflicts on educational attainment.

Methodology

Using household level cross sectional data, this study aimed to evaluate the impact of conflicts in BTR on the educational attainment of its residents. Kokrajhar district of BTR experienced all major conflicts except for the one in 2008 (Boro and Bedamatta, 2017), thus it was purposively chosen for the study. Within the district, two villages composed of four ethno-religious groups, including Bodo community and Muslim religious group, were selected. One of them is affected by conflict and the other is unaffected. Villages under Kochugaon



Development Block in Kokrajhar have seen repeated major violent conflicts such as the Adivasi-Bodo clashes in 1996 and 1998, and the Bodo-Muslim conflict in 2012. To identify one conflict affected village and another unaffected for this study, we consulted with government officials from the Kochugaon, Titaguri, and Gossaigaon Development Blocks of the district as well as representatives of different local organizations. Revenue village Hasrawbari-II was identified as a conflict-affected village, whereas Molandubi as an unaffected one. Hasrawbari-II was severely affected during the conflicts of 1996 and 2012. The 2012 conflict caused extensive destruction in Hasrawbari-II, claiming two lives and severely damaging property and dwellings. Villagers were displaced to relief camps for several months. The Muslims returned to the village after six months, initially living together in the village's government primary school as their homes and furniture had been destroyed, and insecurity persisted. After rebuilding their homes, they moved back. Classes during that time were conducted under chaotic conditions. In contrast, the Bodo came back to their village after a year. Molandubi, the unaffected village, is located in the Parbatijhora sub-division of the district. Notwithstanding the similar ethno-religious composition, the village avoided the conflicts.

Selection of Sample Households

In December 2015, a census enumeration was conducted in both the villages using a house-listing schedule. The schedule was used to gather information on socio-economic characteristics of households, land ownership, household composition, educational attainment, and school attendance of respondents. Our census enumerated 390 households in Hasrawbari-II and 177 households in Molandubi. They were classified into four ethno-religious groups based on self-identification by respondents. In Hasrawbari-II, they were Bodo, Bengali Hindu (H), Rajbongshi and Muslim. However, in Molandubi, there were no Bengali Housholds (H), but it had Rabha community. Thus, the unaffected village is composed of the Bodo, Rabha, Rajbongshi and Muslim. From each group, 30% of households were selected, resulting in 117 sample households in Hasrawbari-II and 53 in Molandubi. Data on educational attainment,

such as the years of schooling, school attendance status in 2015, and schooling disruptions during conflicts were collected by administering a detailed household questionnaire. Furthermore, information on the destruction of dwellings, loss of property, and other assets were collected.

Identification and specification of econometric model

Conflict in revenue village Hasrawbari-II caused insecurity, reduced access to school infrastructure, and strained financial resources, potentially affecting educational attainments. The hypothesis was that conflict-exposed younger cohorts attained lower levels of education compared to older cohorts who had completed a specific level of education before occurrence of the conflict. Such disparity was expected to be more pronounced in the conflict-affected village than that in the unaffected village. To analyse this educational impact of the conflict, a difference-in-differences (DDI) estimator was applied. The DID estimator systematically captures differences in educational attainment across cohorts and places of residence (Merrouche, 2011). This method had widely been applied in many studies on conflict impacts (e.g. Chamarbagwala and Moran, 2011; Merrouche, 2011; Shemyakina, 2011; and Maio and Nandi, 2013).

Model Assumptions

The DID estimator assumes that in non-occurrence of conflict, the completion rate of a specific schooling grade for younger cohort is either equal to or higher than that for the older cohort. It systematically captures the impact of conflict on educational attainment controlling cohort-specific and village-specific factors. We analysed the impacts by comparing the grade eight completion rates for the treated cohort with that for the control cohort. The treated cohort includes conflict-exposed younger individuals from the affected village, all school-age during the conflict. They would have completed the grade if they continued schooling after the conflict. In contrast, the control cohort includes two sub-groups. The first sub-group includes older children from the conflict affected village, who got a chance to complete the grade prior to onset of the conflict. The second sub-group includes those similar to the age of the treated

cohort from the unaffected village. The following is the DID model

$$SC_{ijk} = \alpha_1j + \beta_1k + (p_{jki})y_1 + \varepsilon_{ijk} \quad (1)$$

Here, the dependent variable SC_{ijk} is binary according to 1 to individuals who completed grade eight and 0 to those who uncompleted. Subscripts of the SC refer to person i^{th} of age k^{th} from j^{th} Village. k_i is dummy referring individual i^{th} either belongs to the treated group or control group. Individuals belonging to the treated cohort were accorded 1, whereas those belonging to the control cohort were accorded 0. P_j is the intensity of conflicts in villages as measured by the damages to household dwellings, loss of assets, and displacement. While α_{1j} stands for fixed effect i.e. person's residence during schooling, β_{1k} is fixed effect for birth of cohort and ε_{ijk} stands for error terms. The inclusion of these variables controls unobserved factors like school infrastructure, respondents' household conditions and so on.

In Assam, a student typically starts his or her schooling at 6 years of age and ends the grade eight by 14 years old. Similarly, in both the villages chosen for this study, all children aged 14 to 19 years were observed to have begun schooling at or before 6 years. It is to mention here that as per the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Mission guideline, no student can be retained in the same class up to the grade eight, although s/he fails to obtain qualifying marks. This policy, implemented in 2001 across the districts of Assam, mandates schools to promote all students to higher classes, including the students unqualified for promotion after providing remedial classes within three months from the result declaration. As a result, overage enrollment or class repetition up to that grade was largely absent in both the villages, with children expected to complete this grade by the age of 14. The treated cohort includes younger individuals, who were supposed to continue their schooling during or after conflict days. They were 14 to 16 years old at the time of the survey. For instance, 14 year old individuals were supposed to have completed the grade eight by the 2014 academic year, if they continued schooling after the conflict. Similarly, people aged 16 would have completed the same grade by the 2013 academic year before the conflict. As already said, the control group includes two sub-groups;

the first one consists of older individuals aged 17 to 19 years, who could have completed the grade prior to interruption of the conflict. The second sub-group comprises those ages 14 to 16 from the village unaffected by the conflict.

Empirical strategy for Current attendance

Furthermore, we estimated the effect of conflict on attending educational institutions in the study villages. The category "currently not attending" excluded individuals who were temporarily not attending school at the time of survey due to the reasons unrelated to conflicts like illness, waiting result for next classes and so on. This category, therefore, refers to especially those who were school dropouts. Conflict intensity was assessed based on the extent of damage to household dwellings and loss assets in this case as well. We assumed the damages to household dwellings and loss of properties are exogenous variables to school attendance. The primary parameter of interest was, therefore, the effect of damage to household dwellings and/or loss of asset on likelihood of school attendance. According to Chamrabaigwala and Moran (2011), one can apply either the logit or probit regression to estimate the effects of conflict on schooling outcomes. Both the models yield similar results, with little justification for preference one over another (Green, 2003 and Gujarati and Sangeetha, 2007). Following Maio and Nandi (2011), who studied the effects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts on schooling and health outcomes, we adopted the probit model for this study. We investigated if the 2012 conflict impacts school attendance of the respondents between 6 and 21 years old. The model is specified as follows:

$$SC_{ijk} = \alpha_1j + \beta_1k Z_{1jt} + X_{ijt}\phi_1k + \text{village} + \text{year} + \varepsilon_{ijk} \quad (2)$$

Here, outcome variable SC_{ijk} is binary, equal to 1 for attending schools and 0 for not attending. Subscripts i, j and k stand for i^{th} person of k^{th} age from j^{th} village. Z_{1jt} is the treatment variables indicating damages to dwellings and loss of properties. X_{ijt} is a vector of control variables like parental education, operational land holding, land ownership, children's age and gender, distance to educational institution from home, ethnic group, and occupation. α_i is constant while ε_{ijk} is an error term.

Results

Effects on mandatory grade completion

The results, summarized in Table 1, indicate the statistically significant negative impact of the conflict on educational outcomes. The value for HDMG (-0.202) reveals that the damage to household dwellings and assets loss reduced the likelihood of grade eight completion by the conflict-exposed cohort at the p-value less than 5%. In Hasrawbari-II, the likelihood of completing grade eight by the conflict-exposed cohort was 29% lower compared to the older cohort from the same village and 67% lower compared to the cohort from the unaffected village, who were similar to the age of the conflict-exposed cohort. These results were statistically significant at the 1% level. Therefore, educational attainment among the treated cohort from Hasrawbari-II was significantly lower compared to both their older counterparts in the same village and peers from Molandubi. This underscores the severe and long-term impact of conflict on educational attainments in the BTR region.

It needs to mention here that the households belong to other groups- Rajbongshi and Bengali Hindu (H), from Hasrawbari-II did not experience dwelling damage, although some reported loss of essential assets including livestock. This indicates that these groups were less affected by the conflict compared to the Bodo and Muslim groups from that village. Hence, we estimated separately the impact of the 2012 conflict on educational attainment for severely affected groups- the Bodo and Muslim and compared it with those of the less affected groups within the village (refer table-2). The interaction between the HDMG and mandatory grade completion suggests that the conflict adversely affected the probability of eight grade completion among the cohorts from the most affected groups-Bodo and Muslim. This is revealed by the 30% of treated cohort in Hasrawbari-II was less likely to complete grade eight than older counterparts. Similarly, the probability of completing this grade among the treated cohort from the less affected groups 20% was less in comparison to the control cohort, although the result was statistically insignificant. This suggests that the conflict negatively affected across the groups in Hasrawbari-II, but its effect was disproportionately severe on the most conflict impacted group-Bodo and

Muslims. As a result, their educational attainments were the lowest in the village.

Table 1 Probability of completing grade eight in the study villages

	Control ₁	Control ₂
HDDG	-0.203** (0.096)	
Treated cohort	-0.29*** (0.092)	-0.67*** (0.104)
_cons	0.77*** (0.095)	1.00*** (1.960)
No. observations	105	70
R-squared	0.13	0.42
Prob>F	0.000	0.000

Columns represent OLS coefficient. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Inference *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$

Table2 Probability of completing grade eight in Hasrawbari-II

	Bodo and Muslim	Others
HDDMG	-0.195* (0.105)	
Treated cohort	-0.30*** (0.095)	-0.20 (0.316)
_cons	0.77*** (0.106)	0.60* (0.244)
No. of observations	95	10
R ²	0.153	0.047
Prob>F	0.0002	0.545

Columns represent OLS coefficient. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Inference *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$

Effects of Conflict on School Attendance

With the objective of examining the factors influencing school attendance, probit regression analysis was conducted separately for both the villages. Table 3 presents the regression results for Hasrawbari-II. It indicates the damage to household dwelling or loss of assets had statistically significant negative impact on current school attendance status as well. Results of probit regression indicate the coefficient for the treatment variable turned out to be -0.672 with 1% significant level. This suggests that destruction of each unit of household dwellings led to a fall in the odds of school attendance by 0.672 points. It needs to be mentioned here that in probit regression, in contradistinction to linear regression, one can't interpret the coefficient value as the proportionate change in output variable in response to change in explanatory variables. This is because; the scale of measurement of dependent variable is unknown in the probit regression (Aldrich and Cnudde, 1975). Hence, marginal effects are commonly applied to explain the effects of the explanatory variables on the outcomes. The marginal effect refers to the approximation of the extent of outcome

variable, expected to change in response to the change of explanatory variable (Buis, 2016). In this case, the marginal effect was estimated at 0.209, indicating a fall in the likelihood of school attendance by 2% for each additional unit of destruction of household dwelling and property, assuming all other variables constant.

Table 3 Effect on school attendance by age 6 to 21, Hasrawbari-II, 2015

Currently attending	Coef.	Std. Err.	dy/dx	Std. Err.
HDMG	-0.672***	0.179	-0.209	0.049
Age	-0.135***	0.020	-0.043	0.005
_cons	2.812***	0.325		
Log likelihood	-140.08			
LR $\chi^2(2)$	66.31***			
Pseudo R ²	0.19			
Count R ²	0.82			
Cragg & Uhler's				
R ²	0.29			
No. of observation	281			

***, ** and * refers to significant at 1%, 5% & 10% levels respectively

In order to test the robustness of the results, we included additional control variables such as parents' educational attainments, distance to the institution, gender, ethnicity, occupation of household's head, extent of operational landholding, and land ownership (Table 4). The table reveals that the conflict had an adverse effect on schooling in the village, as evidenced by the negative and statistically significant coefficient (-0.589) for the treatment variable, ever after incorporating control variables into the estimation. The estimation yielded statistically significant coefficient for the age and occupation-1 (salaried household) among the incorporated variables. The coefficient for the age was negative, which implies that the likelihood of school attendance decreased with an increase in the age of children. The estimated partial probability for the age (0.039) implies that the dropout increases by 3 to 4% with each additional year of age, other variables remaining constant. Conversely, the coefficient for the occupation1 (salaried households) was positive, suggesting children from the salaried households were more likely to be retained in school compared to those from the reference households (i.e., those from cultivating households).

Table 4 Effect of conflicts on school attendance by age 6 to 21, Hasrawbari-II, 2015

Currently attending	Coef.	Std. Err.	dx/dy	Std. Err.
HDMG	-0.589***	0.216	-0.175	0.059
Age	-0.132***	0.030	-0.039	0.008
Gen	-0.155	0.185	-0.032	0.049
FYRS	0.018	0.034	0.006	0.009
MYRS	0.018	0.038	0.004	0.010
DIFR	-0.024	0.044	-0.008	0.013
Ethnic1	-0.063	0.691	-0.016	0.187
Ethnic2	-0.190	0.355	-0.100	0.098
Ethnic3	0.401	0.587	0.082	0.154
OLH	0.099	0.076	0.029	0.019
LWN	0.179	0.122	0.028	0.024
Occupation1	0.936**	0.456	0.151	0.093
Occupation2	0.188	0.311	0.038	0.084
Occupation3	0.172	0.502	-0.009	0.139
Occupation4	-0.012	0.301	-0.019	0.082
Occupation5	0.023	0.304	-0.020	0.083
_cons	2.600	0.538		
Log likelihood	172.24			
LR $\chi^2(9)$	86.93***			
McFadden's Adj R ²	0.154			
Pseudo R ²	0.252			
Cragg & Uhler's R ²	0.377			
Adj Count R ²	0.400			
No. of observations	281			

Note: Probit model regression results. ***, ** and * stand for significant at 1%, 5% and 10% level respectively

Salaried-1, Business-2, Driver-3, Agricultural labour-4 other labor-5, ethnic1-Bodo, ethnic2-Muslim-2, and ethnic 3-Bengali

Furthermore, the coefficients for variables-distance, gender, Ethnic 1 and Ethnic 2 were found to be negative, while that for Ethnic 3 was positive. Negative coefficient for distance indicates the positive relationship between the distance to the education institution and the likelihood of dropout. Gender's negative coefficient implies the higher likelihood of dropout for male students than female counterparts, while those for Ethnic 1 & Ethnic 2 indicate the lower rate of school attendance for the Bodo and Muslims compared to Rajbangsi. Contrary to it, the positive coefficient for Ethnic 3 (Bengali) suggests the higher current attendance rate for Bengali than all other groups in the village. However, the positive coefficients for other control variables like parental education; OHL and LWN indicate their positive impact on school attendance.



Table 5 Probit regression for school attendance by age 6 to 21, Molandubi, 2015

Currently attending	Coef.	Std. Err.	dy/dx	Std. Err.
Age	-0.933**	0.407	-0.017	0.010
Sex	1.591	2.043	0.050	0.059
FYRS	0.604	0.421	0.018	0.011
MYRS	0.429	0.286	0.018	0.011
DIFR	-0.288**	0.283	-0.021	0.006
Ethnic1	0.960	4.330	0.960	0.117
Ethnic2	2.014	2.740	0.028	0.763
Ethnic4	2.149	3.222	0.001	0.801
OLH	-5.258	3.629	-0.072	0.043
LWND	3.164	2.768	0.034	0.033
Occupation1	3.591	6.540	0.037	0.126
Occupation2	2.835	3.500	0.010	0.099
Occupation4	-1.674	2.262	-0.060	0.107
_cons	23.923**	11.630		
Log likelihood	-48.196			
LR chi2(8)	84.87***			
Pseudo R2	0.880			
McFadden's Adj R2:	0.591			
Cragg & Uhler's R2:	0.925			
Adj Count R2:	0.89			
No. of observations	98			

***, ** and * stand for significant at 1%, 5% and 10% level respectively

The regression results for unaffected village-Molandubi, presented in table 5 exhibits negative and statistically significant coefficients for two explanatory variables. They are age and distance of the educational institution from the village. The negative and statistically significant coefficient for age indicates a fall in likelihood of school attendance with an increase in age of children. The partial probability was estimated at 0.017%, suggesting that the school attendance rates fall by 1.7% with each additional one year of age. Again, the estimated marginal effect for distance to educational institutions from home was -0.021, meaning that the probability of dropout increases by 2.1% for every additional one kilometer in the distance between educational institutions and the village.

Similar to the results for Hasrawbari-II, the regression yield positive coefficients for parental education, land ownership and households with salaried and business occupations. However, unlike the results of Hasrawbari-II, the coefficient for sex was found to be positive and that for operational land holding negative in Molandubi. The negative coefficient for operational land holding suggests that children in households with larger cultivated land were less likely to attend school. The respondents of the village reported that cultivating households either have not their own land or smaller size of land holding. They lease in land from salaried and business households. Thus, the cultivating households were found to face more economic

difficulties compared to salaried and business households. Many cultivating households were unable to afford the cost of education for their older children who need to travel for 25 kms. Therefore, such households were forced to pull out of schooling and engage their older children in income earning activities including agriculture. The positive coefficient for gender suggests that the male students were more advantages compared to their female counterparts regarding the school attendance.

Table 6 Effect of conflicts on school attendance of children age 6 to 21 years, study villages, 2015

Currently attending	Coef.	Std. Err.	dy/dx	Std. Err.
HDMG	-0.615***	0.213	-0.181	0.052
Age	-0.114***	0.025	-0.030	0.006
Sex	-0.051	0.170	0.005	0.039
FYRS	0.030	0.031	0.007	0.007
MYRS	0.053	0.034	0.010	0.008
DIFR	-0.078***	0.023	-0.018	0.005
Ethnic1	0.309	0.448	0.014	0.097
Ethnic2	-0.083	0.288	-0.066	0.065
Ethnic3	0.035	0.671	-0.009	0.165
Ethnic4	0.550	0.659	0.028	0.101
OHL	0.096	0.074	0.027	0.017
LWN	0.076	0.096	0.008	0.018
Occupation1	0.670*	0.406	0.098	0.077
Occupation2	0.001	0.274	0.026	0.062
Occupation3	0.032	0.493	-0.059	0.122
Occupation4	-0.108	0.290	-0.021	0.069
Occupation5	-0.069	0.287	-0.035	0.070
Village	-0.340	0.363	0.026	0.076
_cons	2.857	0.546		
Log likelihood	-219.72			
LR chi2(18)	142.39***			
McFadden's Adj R2:	0.232			
Pseudo R2	0.324			
Cragg & Uhler's R2:	0.456			
Adj Count R2:	0.376			
No. of observation	379			

We also conducted regression for pool data of both the villages, which yielded the negative coefficient for the treatment variable with 1% significant level, confirming the negative effects of the conflict on educational attainments. Likewise, the results of estimations conducted separately for both the villages, the coefficients for the age and distance were found negative and statistically significant, indicating the older children in the study villages were more like to discontinue their education on account of the far distance to educational institutions from the villages. Moreover, the estimated positive and statistically significant coefficient for households with salaried occupation indicates that a significantly higher proportion of their children attended school compared to other households. The negative coefficient for the



village dummy indicates that school attendance rates among children from the conflict-affected village were significantly lower than those from the unaffected village, Molandubi.

Discussion

The study found that the conflict adversely affected educational outcomes in Hasrawbari-II. In this village, destruction of household dwellings and loss of property significantly reduced the probability of grade eight completions among the conflict-exposed cohort. As a result, educational attainment for this cohort from the affected village was significantly lower compared to both their older counterpart from the same village and peers from unaffected village. It was reported that Rajbongshi and Bengali (H) did not experience dwelling damage, suggesting they were comparatively less affected by the violent-conflict. Notwithstanding, the mandatory schooling completion rate for the treated group was still lower than their older counterparts. While all the ethno-religious groups in the village experienced educational loss due to conflict, the impact was disproportionately severe on the Bodo and Muslims. This indicates that the conflict had pervasive but unequally effects across ethnic groups.

The conflict intensity was also found that it had significantly decreased school attendance. Conflict through destruction of household dwellings and property led to significant drop of school attendance rate in the affected village. The regression analysis, even after incorporating control variables, yielded negative and significance coefficient. This confirms the adverse impact of the conflict on educational outcomes. The probability of dropping from school was notably higher among the adversely affected groups-Bodo and Muslim compared to less affected Rajbongshi and Bengali (H) in Hasrawbari-II. Families with small land holding size and unskilled labourers were more likely to withdraw from their older children and engaged in economic activities. Conversely, salaried households were more likely to retain their children in school, indicating a protective role of stable income in mitigating educational loss due to conflicts. These emphasise that the conflict ridden poverty forced the economically vulnerable families to pull out of schooling their older children and employ them to earn income.

The regression analysis for Molandubi highlighted two key factors contributing to the higher dropout rate. They were the age of children and the distance to educational institution from village. These suggest that older children face higher dropout rates, typically beyond secondary level, due to absence of nearby higher educational institutions and dearth of transport facilities. Students were required to travel daily more than 25 kilometers to access higher education. These became barriers for children belonging to disadvantaged households like cultivators and casual laborers. Therefore, impotent households were more likely to withdraw their older children from school, forcing them into economic activities to support the household. Furthermore, the regression analysis for pool data from both the study villages reinforced the robust negative effect of the conflict on school attendance. Severe poverty caused by the destruction of private property and loss of livelihoods in the conflict-affected village led to a significantly high dropout rate. Thus, school attendance rates for conflict-affected villages, Hasrawbari-II, was found to be markedly lower compared to unaffected village Molandubi, underscoring the devastating educational consequences of the conflict-induced economic deprivation

Conclusion

The study revealed the permeating impact of conflict on schooling outcomes, leading to lower levels of educational attainment and decreased school attendance among the cohorts exposed to the conflict. Consequently, educational attainment among the conflict-exposed cohort was significantly lower than both the older counterparts from the same village and the peers from the unaffected village. These losses were disproportionately higher for the most affected groups-the Bodos and Muslims, highlighting pervasive but unequal effect of the conflict. Conflict ridden poverty, driven by the destruction of household dwellings and loss of livelihoods, forced many older children to abandon pursuing education and take up income-generating activities. Dropout rates were typically pronounced for economically disadvantaged families. To address educational disparities and bridge the gap between conflict exposed and unexposed cohorts, comprehensive policies are imperative. Financial aid and subsidized credit



for rebuilding livelihoods are pivotal. Additionally, employment and skill development programs focusing on unskilled laborers and economically vulnerable households in conflict affected areas are critical interventions. Besides, fostering cultural understanding and mutual cooperation among diverse groups is vital for achieving and sustaining peace. Establishing educational institutions in remote areas, such as Molandubi village, is a topmost priority to ensure accessibility to education for all students. Additionally, development of affordable and efficient transport facilities is prompt requirement for backward regions of BTR like Molandubi.

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