

‘The Guilt Complex’: Assessing the Guilt of Youth Returning From Terrorist Groups in the Narratives of Justice Presentation on the Methodological Opportunities and Concerns in Operational Research

Authors : Arpita Mitra

Abstract : The research explores the concept of ‘guilt’ as understood in relation to children and young individuals associated with terrorist groups who are exiting these groups and returning to civilian lives (‘young returnees’). The study explores young returnees’ guilt – in its psychological, legal, and sociological manifestations and how it contributes to experiences of reintegration and justice administration. Streamlining it further, the research question on assessing guilt engages with young adults – between 18 and 30 years – who were part of a terrorist organization during their formative years and have returned to civilian life. Overall, the findings of the said research are intended to contribute first-hand operational research to criminological literature as well as transitional justice mechanisms with regard to narratives on truth, justice, reparations and institutional reform/guarantees of non-recurrence. Particularly for this paper, the focus of the paper shall be on one aspect of this research, that is, on the added value of conducting operational research and the methodological challenges encountered during this process with regard to informed consent, data protection, mental health and security considerations for the respondents and researcher.

Keywords : terrorism, reintegration, young returnees, criminology

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