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Impact of Conflict on the Education, Mental Health and Employment Opportunities for Youth in Jammu and Kashmir: A Socio-psychological and Educational Analysis

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Abstract

Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has experienced decades of conflict, political instability, social discord and unrest, which have profoundly impacted the education system, youth, mental well-being and employment opportunities. Significant learning gaps have resulted from the combination of curfews, strikes and lockdowns that caused many school closures between 2016 and 2025 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The digital divide continues to develop, especially in rural and conflict-affected areas, making education more unequal. Because of this, there is reduced access to online learning opportunities and reduced comfort/familiarity with digital educational resources. Additionally, educators face increased stress, leading to a decline in teaching quality. The rise in PTSD, anxiety and depression among youth and adolescents remains largely unaddressed due to a lack of mental health infrastructure, especially in rural regions. Due to unstable conditions and inadequate exposure, these interconnected issues collectively affect employability, limiting access to skill development courses, internships and work opportunities. This paper thoroughly investigates the impact of conflict on education, mental health and the job market in Jammu and Kashmir, proposing a model of conflict-resilient pedagogy that includes community-based schooling, hybrid digital learning and trauma-informed approaches to address long-term developmental gaps. The study highlights an urgent need for context-specific policy measures, peace education and sustainable employment initiatives to support socio-economic recovery and empower the region's youth.

Keywords: Employment, Jammu and Kashmir, Mental Health, Socio-Psychological and Educational Analysis.

Introduction

Jammu and Kashmir is one of the oldest and most complicated political conflicts in the Asian region. Jammu and Kashmir's conflicts can be traced back to 1947, when the British Empire ended its rule in India. With the end of British colonial rule, each princely state had a choice to become a part of India or Pakistan. The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, decided at first to remain independent of both countries. However, on October 26, 1947, he signed an Instrument of Accession to India, as Pakistani tribal militias had invaded in October 1947 (1). Since then, a series of wars between India and Pakistan (1947-48, 1965, 1971 and the Kargil War in 1999) have occurred in the region, along with ceasefire violations, insurgency movements and increased militarisation. The armed insurgency in the Kashmir Valley, which began in 1989, created a severe internal security crisis. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (2), the ongoing violence related to terrorism has claimed the lives of more than 14,000 civilians and nearly 5,000 members of the security forces since 1990 (2-5). The revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution on August 5, 2019, was a major turning point. The state was further divided into the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. As a result of the incident, mass detentions, restrictions on movement, the closure of schools and colleges and a complete communication blockade occurred in the area (6). More than 4,000 people, including activists, politicians and youth, faced detention (7). In 2019, over 3,500 schools remained closed for an extended period, affecting more than 1.5 million pupils (8). The longest Internet blackout of any democratic country in Kashmir lasted more than 213 days (9).

Youth's access to education, knowledge and mental health was all negatively affected by these ongoing

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restrictions. The prolonged conflict has caused psychological trauma among a generation of Kashmiri youth, leading to increased disaffection among young people, fewer educational opportunities and damaged long-term socio-economic prospects (10, 11). The problem of disproportionate vulnerability of youth and youth of Jammu and Kashmir, one of the most conflict-affected regions of India, is caused by political unrest and the armed conflict that interrupts access to education, psychological well-being and future economic opportunities. Indeed, repeated schooling disruptions have been caused by frequent curfews, strikes, school closures and extended internet blackouts, particularly following large-scale incidents, including the 2016 outbreak of violence and the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, which have undermined not only academic outcomes but also social and emotional development, which remain major concerns due to the lack of a steady school year. Such circumstances, along with being exposed to violence and displacement, caused extreme psychological distress in youth, which results in anxiety, depression and PTSD prevalence (12-14). The digital divide and frequent interruptions have amplified the disparities in education, being most pronounced among disadvantaged populations, making them less employable and further isolating young people in a region where the unemployment rate is already more than 18 percent (15).

This paper attempts to dwell upon the multi-dimensional impact of conflict-induced education disruption on the career goals and the future job prospects of the youth in the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) region. It explores how tragedy and disrupted education affect the acquisition of necessary skills in young people, as well as their future academic performance and career prospects. The study additionally reviews the efficacy of current government and NGO initiatives aimed at increasing employment opportunities for youth living in areas experiencing armed conflict through integrated approaches that address the cumulative impacts of armed conflict, trauma and disruption of education upon the development of youth. The combined findings will provide a balanced understanding of the barriers encountered during the youth empowerment process and provide empirical evidence regarding the degree of effectiveness of the existing support systems in facilitating the development of resilience and employability during times of armed conflict.

Sources of Data and Review Framework

A systematic review of published official reports and secondary data sources examined the effects of conflict on education, mental health and employment of young adults and women in Jammu and Kashmir (JK). Documentation from the Government of India provides much of the source material, including: Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) documents; Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE+) data sets; national-level surveys, including the Annual State of Education Reports (ASERs) and National Family Health Surveys (NFHS-5). In addition to these sources, many published academic articles and reports by multiple national and international organizations have been reviewed in order to show the multiple effects of conflict upon JK. Some of those studies specifically investigated the existence of the digital gap, teacher worry and mental health issues among youth and barriers to employment.

Because this is a qualitative study that is based largely on secondary data, it uses purposive sampling and criterion-based sampling strategies to select data sources. The purpose of selecting sources was to find sources that were relevant for use in Conflict Affected Region(s), across time, maintained a good level of methodological rigor and had importance for influencing policy. All reports and datasets that specifically presented education, mental health or employment outcomes related to J&K (Jammu and Kashmir) or function in a similar manner, e.g., within other Conflict Affected Regions, were included in the analysis. To provide contextual depth to the analysis and study districts that represented the highest number of conflict-affected areas and/or rural areas that were affected by conflict, data from J&K were prioritized when available, based on disaggregation levels. Peer-reviewed research articles were selected based on pre-defined criteria for inclusion in this study, which were: a) published within the past 10 years, b) empirical or policy relevant within Conflict Affected Region(s) and c) focused on child and youth, teacher, or economically or socially vulnerable population(s). This approach allows a more extensive, thorough

and contextualized investigation of the long-term socio-educational and economic impact of Conflict on J&K and provides an opportunity for triangulation of data across multiple data sources and multiple points of view.

There has been a lot of research on the effects of COVID-19 on education and mental health, thanks to the available literature, but a comprehensive picture is still lacking, particularly on the Indian subcontinent. Stress, well-being, psychiatry, teachers, teenagers, online education and training are all subjects that must always be critically examined, according to the findings of the co-occurrence network method. However, the lack of research on conflict-affected regions, like Jammu and Kashmir, stands out as a notable omission. The epidemic and ongoing political unrest have led to particular sociopsychological and educational problems in these fields that have not yet been thoroughly and experimentally studied. Although concepts like youth, employment and school mental health are occasionally brought up, they usually play supporting roles and are rarely connected to conflict, exposure gaps, or disrupted career routes. In a similar vein, the qualities of trauma-informed education, resilience-building and mental health literacy are referenced in passing when addressing students and jobless youth in politically unstable areas. The study described in the article at hand aims to investigate the long-term effects of political conflict on education, mental health and employment opportunities, with a focus on Jammu and Kashmir. It also suggests conflict-resilient education models that correspond to such locally specific needs, which is a very remote intervention in the field's existing scholarship. The figure below demonstrates the studies that have been conducted related to mental health, education and employment. Overview of studies conducted related to the aim and scope of the paper. The picture below was produced with the help of the VOSviewer.

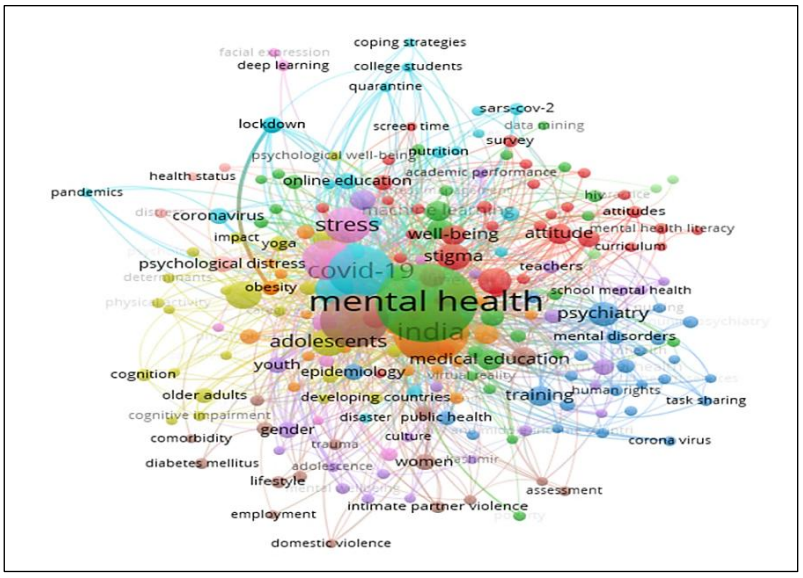

Figure 1: Research Conducted in the Area

Figure 1 presents a bibliometric network visualisation (VOSviewer) illustrating thematic linkages in research on mental health. The dense clustering around "mental health," "stress," "well-being," and "COVID-19" indicates their centrality in contemporary scholarship. The psychological effects of disruptions in learning environments are highlighted by strong connections with education-related terms (online education, academic performance, teachers and adolescents). Clusters on stigma, mental health literacy, psychiatry and public health show how awareness and service access are becoming increasingly important, especially in developing nations. Overall, the network supports the paper's integrative analytical approach by showcasing an interdisciplinary convergence of mental health research across education, health, social vulnerability and crisis contexts.

Contextualizing the Research Problem

Long-term conflict has a significant and multifaceted impact on education in Jammu and

Kashmir, influencing participation, access and educational results for a range of social groups. The functioning of educational institutions has been repeatedly disrupted by persistent unrest characterized by violent episodes, military operations and cross-border shelling, leading to frequent school closures and a notable decrease in instructional days (16). Recurrent security threats negatively impact children's learning trajectories in border districts like Poonch. These threats not only disrupt schooling but also cause psychological distress, anxiety and fear, which compromise students' academic continuity and cognitive engagement (17). Girls are disproportionately at a disadvantage in school as a result of these disruptions. Studies already conducted show that girls in Jammu and Kashmir's conflict-affected areas complete significantly fewer years of schooling, up to 3.5 years less than their peers in comparatively stable areas, reflecting the combined effects of household risk aversion during times of unrest, sociocultural constraints and insecurity. Conflict has therefore hurt girls' primary school enrollment, retention and completion rates, perpetuating long-standing gender disparities in educational attainment (18). Furthermore, because of their seasonal mobility, nomadic pastoral communities like the Gujjars and Bakkarwals face unique educational challenges that are made worse by the conflict environment (19). Despite the introduction of programs like Mobile Primary Schools to overcome these obstacles, many nomadic children remain on the periphery of formal education due to their limited reach and efficacy (19). The persistence of structural injustices highlights the critical need for comprehensive, conflict-sensitive educational reforms and policy frameworks catered to the unique socio-political realities of Jammu and Kashmir, even as recent interventions, such as peace education programs, aim to foster resilience and restore a sense of normalcy among learners in conflict-affected regions (20).

Long-term conflict has a significant and well-documented negative impact on the mental health of young people in Jammu and Kashmir. Empirical studies have consistently shown that young people, especially those living in border and high-conflict areas, have higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression and other psychological disorders. Youths' psychological well-being has been demonstrated to be severely compromised by exposure to recurrent violence, insecurity and life-threatening situations; this frequently leads to chronic emotional distress and psychiatric vulnerabilities. In this context, social support becomes a crucial protective factor because research shows a strong positive correlation between youth in conflict-affected areas' perceived social support, resilience and general well-being; higher levels of support are linked to lower rates of anxiety and depression (21). However, despite the increasing burden of mental illness, access to psychological support is still hampered by widespread stigma, particularly among young people involved in legal or correctional settings, where seeking mental health services is frequently viewed negatively and linked to fear of labeling, privacy violations, or potential consequences (22). These obstacles worsen pre-existing mental health issues in addition to discouraging people from seeking assistance. Unquestionably, the conflict environment has increased the prevalence of psychological disorders in young people, but it has also helped some people develop resilient coping mechanisms. This highlights the intricate relationship between social support networks, adversity and mental health outcomes in societies affected by conflict.

Youth employment has been significantly and permanently impacted by the protracted conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, which has exacerbated pre-existing socioeconomic vulnerabilities and limited opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. The local labor market has been weakened and young people's employment opportunities have been limited due to the disruption of educational trajectories, physical infrastructure damage and social network erosion caused by ongoing violence and political instability (23). In this situation, youth encounter exacerbated obstacles to employability because extended exposure to conflict not only limits the acquisition of skills and work experience but also creates psychological stress and financial instability that impair their ability to engage in the workforce. These difficulties are made worse by displacement, which has pushed many families into makeshift settlements or camps where kids and teenagers are frequently forced to work at the expense of their education, leading to poor health outcomes, interrupted education and fewer opportunities for

long-term employment (24). These environments' instability and lack of resources greatly limit access to the institutional support, mentorship and training required to land a steady job. In conflict-affected areas, education thus becomes a crucial mediating factor in addressing youth unemployment; however, Jammu and Kashmir's restricted access to high-quality education and vocational training continues to impede youth empowerment and economic mobility. By giving young people the adaptive skills to rebuild their livelihoods, focused educational and skill-development programs can improve employability, promote resilience and support larger peacebuilding and development processes, according to emerging data (25). In order to promote inclusive and sustainable development, addressing youth unemployment in Jammu and Kashmir necessitates an integrated policy approach that concurrently addresses educational disruption, displacement and labor market exclusion brought on by conflict.

Impact on Education

School Closures Due to Curfews, Strikes, Lockdowns

Recurrent curfews, militancy, civil unrest and government-induced lockdowns (over the past 20 years) resulted in disruptive and recurring school closures in Jammu and Kashmir. The Annual Status of Education Report and the Jammu and Kashmir education department data show that more than 60 to 100 days per annum, on average, precipitated by curfews, armed conflicts and hartals (strikes), have closed schools in the Kashmir Valley since 2008. After months of the post-July 2016 assassination of terrorist chief Burhan Wani, the situation worsened significantly. Exams were cancelled or delayed with those educational schedules being interrupted and some schools stayed shut longer than five months in the second half of that year alone (26-29). This trend did not stop when Article 370 was abrogated in 2019, with Jammu and Kashmir having witnessed one of the longest security lockdowns and communication disruptions in any democratic country. The data of the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+, 2019-2020) and Save the Youth (Save the Youth, 2020) show that over 3,500 schools were closed in several months because of the August 5, 2019 ruling and around 1.5 million pupils were affected. Upon the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, 213 days of internet restrictions in the Kashmir region hindered the use of online learning, creating a so-called double lockdown effect. Together with CHINAR International (2018), revealed that Kashmiri students lost over 1,142 days of learning due to school closures between 2010 and 2017; such a trend is mostly dominated by days of school closures stemming from conflicts. Based on empirical data, such disruptions had negative educational consequences, as teachers who were left in school achieved worse academic results, more students dropped out of studies and the psychological stress experienced by students was genuine and long-term (30-32).

After the catastrophic militant attacks in Rajouri in January 2023, the districts of Doda, Kishtwar and Poonch in North East Chenab Valley went under a complete shutdown, or bandh and several schools were closed and the education process in the region had to be stopped. Closures of schools in the Jammu region of five districts (Jammu, Samba, Kathua, Rajouri and Poonch) and the vulnerable areas of Baramulla and Kupwara in Kashmir resumed in May 2025, during the high-profile cross-border military operation, Operation Sindoor. The action aimed to safeguard students amidst heightened violence and the anticipated retaliatory attacks by militants. Schools were officially open, but few attended, as fear was rife, people could not travel as it was restricted and there was a temporary halt on transport (33).

Loss of Learning Days

Students of Jammu and Kashmir had faced one of the worst disengagements in their educational careers in India and this resulted in an increase in absenteeism and a decline in the number of people learning. The greatest unrest was in July 2016, when the Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani was killed. To retaliate, the government has declared curfews, cut internet connections and, conversely, allowed mass protests across the Kashmir Valley. As indicated in a 2018 report titled Lost Childhood: The Human Cost of Building a New Kashmir, which has been issued by both CHINAR International and the Directorate of School Education Kashmir (2018), 1.2 million students were impacted by 174 straight days of closure between July and December 2016. These schooling deficits continued in the form of intermittent strikes, political agitations and violence, which still

disrupted teaching even after schools reopened. Dislocations of instructions were especially serious in the districts of South Kashmir, where schools were closed up to 100 days in the year 2017 alone. Complex evaluations reflected in the report of 2018 thus harkened back to 450 days of wasted instruction between 2016 and 2018 (34).

The conflicts resumed once more in 2019 when the Indian government abolished Article 370, which triggered a series of extended security curfews, significant communications shutdowns and general fear among the population. Formal schooling has since reopened in the middle of October 2019; however, the actual attendance is still low due to the persistent fears and transportation issues. The shutdown was already a complex situation to cope with and yet, in March 2020, shortly after reopening, the COVID-19 pandemic erupted, leading to another lockdown that took place until the end of the year. Other factors that inhibited a substantive switch to online or hybrid education in Kashmir were also the enduring limits of high-speed internet to 2G service until February 2021, compared to nationwide efforts of that sort in other states of India (35).

According to the data provided by UNESCO (2021), Kashmir recorded the highest negative impact on instructional days in the entire country over the last 5 years, with estimated losses anywhere between 750 and 850 days of instruction between 2016 and 2020. As a result of this, the long-term prospects, mental health and academic achievement of youth and youth in the area have been affected significantly (35).

Data on Closures of Schools

The data given in the figure below is discussed in the above paragraph under the headings 'School Closures Due to Curfews, Strikes, Lockdowns. Reference is also given at the respective places.

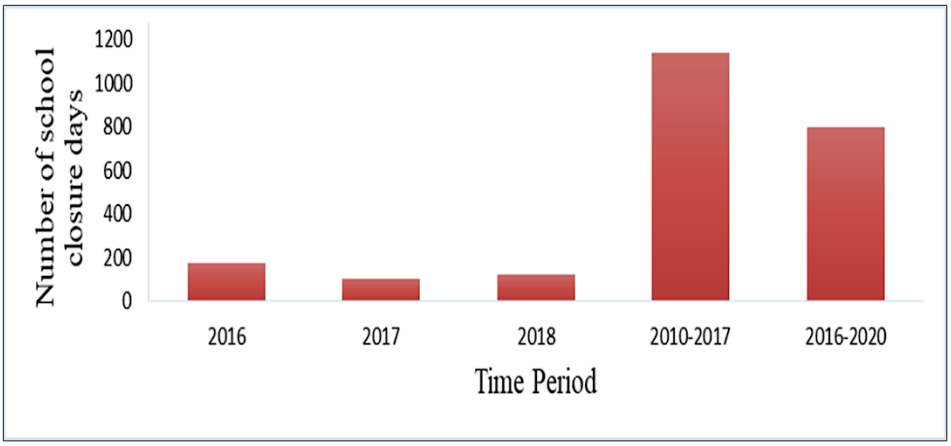

Figure 2: Closures of Schools

In Figure 2, the X-axis (horizontal axis**)** represents the time periods / years during which school closures occurred in Jammu and Kashmir (e.g., specific years such as 2016–2018 and cumulative periods such as 2010–2017 and 2016–2020). The Y-axis (vertical axis) indicates the number of school closure days, reflecting the total days of educational disruption experienced by students during each period. Together, the two axes illustrate both the annual magnitude and the long-term cumulative impact of school closures on the education system in the region. Figure illustrates the extent of school closures in Jammu and Kashmir, highlighting both annual and cumulative learning disruptions. While individual years such as 2016–2018 show significant closure days, the cumulative figures reveal a far more severe impact, with over 1,100 days lost between 2010–2017 and nearly 800 days between 2016–2020. This demonstrates prolonged and recurring educational disruption rather than isolated interruptions.

Due to security-related disruptions, there were significantly fewer teaching days in 2023–2025. Due to the G20 tourism convention, schools in Srinagar's allegedly vulnerable areas had to temporarily close in May 2023. Additionally, 71 schools in the Rajouri district were closed as a result of cross-border shelling. Teachers and other community leaders noted that persistent problems with structural access, along with school closures brought on by shelling, curfews and decision-making under duress, greatly increased absenteeism, missed exams and school dismissals,

all of which resulted in a crucial loss of 30 to 50 days of instruction annually.

Digital Divide and Limited Access to Online Education

The digital divide in Jammu and Kashmir has made the education gap even bigger, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. After Article 370 was repealed in August 2019, students in Jammu and Kashmir had a lot of trouble because they didn't have access to high-speed internet. These things happened even though the rest of India switched to online school in early 2020. In early 2020, 2G internet came back. Until February 2021, the area had the longest recorded internet outage in a democracy, lasting more than 213 days (36). This interruption made it much harder to provide digital education, especially in rural areas where violence is more likely to happen. The Annual Status of Education Report says that only 26.7% of young people in rural Jammu and Kashmir had smartphones that they could use for online school. This number is lower than the national average of 67.6%. According to a CHINAR International poll from 2021, 80% of government school students in the Kashmir Valley couldn't learn online during the pandemic because they didn't have enough energy, internet access, or tech skills at home (37, 38). Numerous educators lacked access to dependable technology and the requisite understanding for online instruction, complicating the transition to virtual teaching. The situation was dire for girls, youth from low-income families and those residing in isolated mountainous regions, where inadequate network coverage and power outages exacerbated the challenges. Despite the government's efforts to facilitate education through radio and television instruction, the distribution of these resources was insufficient to cover the entire curriculum. The digital divide exacerbated educational inequity, increased the likelihood of school dropout and diminished student engagement and motivation to learn. Youth in Jammu and Kashmir face significant long-term disadvantages in academic performance, skill acquisition and employment preparedness due to prolonged lack of access to technology during a critical period of global transition to digital education.

Table 1: Access to Online Education

Impact on online Education	Reference
The region experienced the longest documented internet outage in a democracy, exceeding 213 days, till February 2021	(9)
Merely 26.7% of youth in rural Jammu and Kashmir had access to smartphones for online education	(15)
About 80% of government school youth in the Kashmir Valley were unable to engage in online learning during the pandemic due to a lack of energy, internet connectivity, or technological proficiency at home	(32)

Table 1 highlights severe digital exclusion in Jammu and Kashmir, where prolonged internet shutdowns, limited smartphone access and infrastructural constraints significantly hindered online education. With over 213 days of internet disruption, low device availability and nearly 80% of government school students unable to participate in online learning, digital education remained largely inaccessible during the pandemic. The digital gap between young people in Jammu and Kashmir has grown worse from 2024 to 2025. This is because the area is still far behind the national average in digital education. There were 75 government-run higher secondary and high schools in the Bandipora district, but only 48 of them had working computer labs as of April 2025. This made it much harder for students to learn basic digital skills, which made them less competitive in both higher education and the job market.

In general, young people are stuck with old textbooks instead of using more complete educational materials that are available elsewhere. Digital library services are only available at 373 schools, which is 1.5% of the region's 24,300 schools. Access to smartphones, which are essential for online learning, is also inequitable across the board. According to ASER 2021, 72% of households owned smartphones; however, only 40% of students were able to adequately utilize them for their academic studies. The infrastructure required for proper connectivity is still lacking (39). According to a 2023-2024 study, only 22% - 30% of all recognized private and government-run schools had an internet connection that was able to be accessed from home. Thus, most of these schools are unprepared for the possibility of implementing online learning. A field study conducted by Buzz Bytes in 2024 revealed that over 70% of urban teenagers had smartphones; conversely, many children living in rural areas lacked the stability of internet connections and devices to participate in online learning. Lastly, teachers are frequently ill-equipped to integrate

digital technology into their teaching method; in fact, the majority (65%) of teachers who responded to the survey indicated that they were unprepared to deliver digital content through a platform such as Zoom (40).

Decrease in Quality of Teaching Due to Stress on Teachers

Constant violence, political instability and disrupted school schedules in Jammu and Kashmir have had adverse impacts on students and educators, compromising the quality of the teaching and learning process. The high levels of stress, anxiety and burnout, which are compounded by significant insecurity, negatively impact the ability of teachers in conflict areas to deliver high-quality education and remain professionally motivated. According to empirical results presented by Margoob and Ahmad (2006), a study of teachers in Kashmir found that elevated psychological pressure from uncertainties caused by conflicts, experiences of violence and working under uncertain conditions has led to burnout, anxiety and symptoms of post-traumatic stress among these teachers (41, 42). These observations are further supported by a more recent report from CHINAR International (2018), according to which teachers felt isolated and demotivated and were not ready enough to accompany students, both academically and emotionally, when their classes resumed after long shutdown periods in 2016 (43). These challenges were further exacerbated by the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and switching to online learning, during which schools were heavily dependent on 2G connectivity (mainly, government facilities) and educators who lacked the necessary gadgets, strong digital infrastructure, or training could no longer ensure the continuity of learning. In Jammu and Kashmir, only 32 percent of teachers in the government sector in rural areas reported having the necessary tools or skills to maintain online courses. This pressure to take care of their mental health while trying to teach effectively in difficult situations often leads to a cold and distant teaching style that restricts student-centred learning, creative teaching and lively discussions (44).

Impact on Mental Health

The mental health crisis has been triggered by long-term exposure to political unrest, violence and displacement in Jammu and Kashmir, which has the most severe impact on young people as well as youth. In such a hotbed, a persistent state of fear and trauma is created and local people are constantly exposed to gunfire, demonstrations, curfews, police raids on homes and forced disappearances, as well as the death of loved ones. In the ground-breaking research by Médecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) and the Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (IMHANS) (2015), it was determined that around 45% of adults in Kashmir had displayed signs of significant distress and 19% met the basic criteria of having a probable post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (45, 46). Unbelievably, over 26% of the adults interviewed were eyewitnesses to the killing and 12% were forcefully displaced by the fighting, many of whom were youths and adolescents. This trauma normally starts during childhood and extends up to adulthood, especially when treatment is not received (47).

Further statistics available through the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB, 2022) show that there was a drastic increase in the number of suicides linked to mental illness in the Jammu and Kashmir state. In the report, 562 suicides were reported and many of them are due to causes such as family issues and mental illness, the broad terms of which are proxy measures of underlying psychological maladies that get inflamed under the conditions of structural strife and displacement (47). The youngsters in conflict zones like Pulwama, Shopian, Baramulla and Kupwara are also at a high risk of developing psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks and sleeping disorders (48).

Although the prevalence rates of mental disorders in Jammu and Kashmir are high, mental health resources in the region are quite low, particularly in the rural and remote areas. According to the National Mental Health Survey of India (2016), the number of psychiatrists in J&K is 0.5 per 100,000 of the population, compared to the recommended 3 psychiatrists per 100,000 as established by the World Health Organization (49). As such, the majority of mental health services can only be accessed in the two cities of Srinagar and Jammu and the District Mental Health Programs (DMHPs) across the Union Territory are either underfunded or not well implemented, states J&K National Health Mission (2020) (49).

A thorough study conducted by the Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (IMHANS) in

2016, published in 2023, showed that 13.7 percent of all teenagers aged 13–19 in Kashmir may have conditions contributing to the development of major depressive disorders due to academic stress and 64.7 percent show moderate to high levels of academic stress. In chronic conflict exposure areas like the Poonch and Rajouri border region, a cross-sectional study conducted in 2024 showed that 94 percent of young people experience high levels of perceived stress; 34.5 percent of people are also anxious and 31 percent feel depressed, especially those living near the Line of Control (LOC) (50).

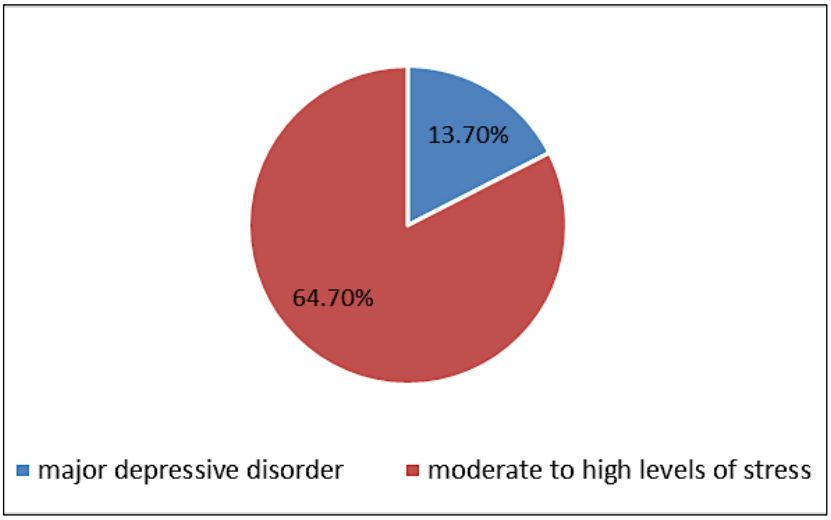

Figure 3: Academic Stress Level among Teens (46)

According to Figure 3, many adolescents endure academic stress and therefore, 64.7% experience moderate or high amounts of stress, while 13.7% have significant depression. This distribution is an indicator of the high levels of psychological distress among adolescents, identifying the urgent need for academic support systems and the provision of mental health services in schools.

The area is also characterised by a strong surge in drug abuse and self-destruction as ways of coping. A parliamentary committee report of 2025 informs that 1.68 lakh minors in Jammu and Kashmir are found to be undergoing drugs and specifically, the cases of opioid and heroine injections have increased tremendously to cover almost the whole of 1,500 percent (51, 52). At the same time, the self-medication rates have significantly increased, with young people growing more likely than ever to use sedatives and antidepressants without a medical prescription to deal with their panic attacks, insomnia and emotional numbness. Recently, the Kashmir Valley has discussed significant increases in mental health infrastructure, particularly in the growth of a psychiatric clinic from 2015 to 2024. However, the developments have not alleviated the pre-existing limits and the available services are deeply overstretched and under-resourced (53).

Remarkably, 12.4 percent of the national total calls were made to the national tele-MANAS helpline by J&K, which is significantly higher than the national average of 3.5 percent, indicating a high mental health burden in the population aged 18–45 (54).

Impact on Employment Prospects

The major challenges of repeated political upheavals, frequent curfews, frequent internet blockages and an overall atmosphere of instability have been problems in the way of skills-enhancement facilities in Jammu and Kashmir. Such institutions have been severely hit by operational disturbances, especially in those areas that have been hard hit by conflict, such as the Pulwama, Anantnag and Baramulla districts. They are mandated with the task of reducing the gap between labor-market readiness and formal education. As of 2019, 95 centres within the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) were registered with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

However, within the subsequent year, centres within nearly 70 percent of these districts had to stop running due to the lockdowns that were imposed following the abrogation of Article 370 (August 2019) and the proliferation of the COVID-19 pandemic (June 2020). During these times, the area saw a decrease of over 50 percent in the number of training completions. The report by

CHINAR International (2020) went further to state that most centres lacked proper digital infrastructure, reliable electricity, or high-speed internet. The restricted availability of second-generation 2G, which persisted until the first months of 2021, exacerbated these shortcomings by rendering productive online or hybrid trainings virtually unachievable (55).

An analysis of the Jammu and Kashmir Skill Development Mission (JKSDM) Annual Report (2020) shows that of 28,000 youth who joined the skills program in each region throughout 2018–19, only 40 received training without any mention regarding their training process and only 25 percent received any sort of placement assistance (56). These amounts reflect not only flaws in operations but also insufficient industry connection, even in a labour market that has been considerably bent to the demands of long-term conflict. Therefore, a significant proportion of youth are under-equipped in terms of job opportunities, hence vulnerable to the increased danger of being unemployed, dissatisfied and disengaged, which are factors that are unfavourable to the CEOs of skill centres that focus on developing a workforce that can satisfy the demands of the labour market.

As an example, with the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, local companies were still reluctant to take interns due to safety issues and imminent lockdowns, with more than 75% of professional training schemes being halted (57). This has led to J&K's private sector being underdeveloped and offering mostly low-paid and unskilled jobs that cannot help a graduate, including engineers and MBA graduates, who are not satisfied with it, as there is no system of internships or apprenticeships to liaise with the education to work (58).

Link between Education, Mental Health and Employment

This interconnection between education, mental health and employment has been widely covered in the modern texts on global development and psychology; however, its value is elevated in situations where there is a high prevalence of violence, as is the case with Jammu and Kashmir. Education acts as an instrument of social mobility, resilience of individuals and peacebuilding at levels beyond the attainment of knowledge and technical skill. However, in environments marked by persistent violence and conflict, frequent interruptions of schooling, a decline of mental health services and inhibited professional attainment are part of a vicious cycle concerning human progress.

According to empirical evidence, youth and youth who have experienced stressors related to the conflict and responded to acute violence, displacement, or the death of their relatives, or other similar traumatic experiences, experience an increased risk of behavioural disorders, PTSD, anxiety and depression (59). These loads cause the onset of deficiency in cognitive performance, attentional control, emotional self-moderation and social relationships capabilities, without which academic success cannot flow and without which the academic path cannot be sustainable. In line with this, discontinuity in learning introduces higher instances of dropout and low skills, which decrease employability.

The World Bank (2018) claims that the learning quality and the psychological preparedness of students towards enterprising in the economy are determining factors of education return over the quantity of years in school (60). The erosion of the education quality in Kashmir is due to the frequent school shutdowns, the lack of internet availability and the inadequacy of the psychosocial interventions, which adversely impact young people in low-income families and at-risk ones. In Jammu and Kashmir, due to a lack of mental health infrastructure, especially at a rural level, trauma is undertreated regularly, which exacerbates long-term socioeconomic impacts in this region (60, 61).

According to a UNICEF analysis of 2019, mental health and education are reinforcing spheres: healthy students are more likely than their peers with poor mental health to receive and maintain education and the effect is reciprocal, as mentally fit students are likely to be supported by a positive school environment (62). This synergy is also vital in the case of Jammu and Kashmir, where youth unemployment is quite high (more than 20 percent in recent years, according to (63). Most of this unemployment is caused by a lack of skills that fit the market, a lack of exposure to the labour market and also the mental burden of living in an area of conflict. Employers in the labour market, especially in the private sector, require workers with not only technological skills but also with emotional intelligence, flexibility and communication; all of

which are influenced by mental well-being and other qualities of education.

The interconnectedness of the three areas can also be seen: a young individual who has abandoned school due to the effects of trauma or one who has suffered a psychological crisis will find stable employment opportunities a lot more difficult. Equally, a student who has been schooled in an underprivileged, troubled environment might have no self-confidence and social capital that provide the grounds to face the competitive labor pools. According to development theorists, this trap has been referred to as a capability trap because it denies youths exposed to conflict a chance to convert the knowledge gained into aspiring points in the economy (64).

Employment-driven programs and skills training interventions are significant components of unemployment elimination in Jammu and Kashmir; nevertheless, they are not enough in themselves. Such strategies should also prioritise the delivery of mental health services in schools, the combination of trauma- and culturally responsive learning strategies and the productive combination of career counselling and psychosocial supports.

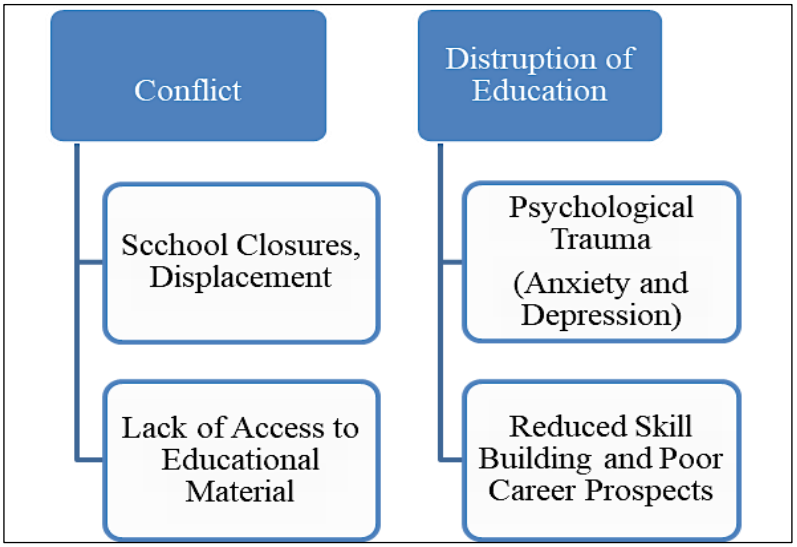

Figure 4: Chain of Causality

Figure 4 presents the cascading effects of the conflict on the growth and development of educational, psychological and labor market pathways of youth, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, which are graphically represented. The diagram emphasizes the issue of prolonged conflict being at the centre, sparking the chain reaction of negative outcomes, starting with the disruption of education and forced displacement. These impacts are noticeable with the closure of the institutions and restricted or no access to learning materials. These kinds of interruptions create mental trauma, especially a high degree of disturbances of anxiety and depressive manifestations among students under constant exposure to violence, hostility and ambivalence. The interruption of schooling and the emotional distress significantly slow the development of skills; the learners have problems concentrating, memorizing, or partaking in the learning process and, therefore, limit cognitively and practically relevant growth. The ensuing corrosion of academic and vocational skills reduces the competitive attractiveness dramatically: young people turn out ill-equipped in technical skills and emotional strength and thus inappropriate to labor market needs. As a result, young people face high unemployment and underemployment rates, which are contributing to increased psychological stress and feelings of hopelessness. It is through the continued fall of minimal job prospects that these negative effects are further augmented, creating a socio-economic and long-term developmental crisis in the area.

Conflict-resilient Education Model for Jammu and Kashmir

Heavy ongoing spells of violence in Jammu and Kashmir have significantly impacted the region's educational system by triggering riots, disrupting communications, shutting down schools, imposing regular curfews and creating deep-seated psychological trauma for both teachers and

students. More traditional, structured pedagogical approaches have not worked well in such an environment of volatility and uncertainty. It thus becomes imperative to implement a conflict-resilient educational model, one that is flexible and can respond to the highly local contexts. Community-based learning hubs, hybrid digital configurations of delivery and trauma-informed mental health services should thus be part of such a framework to protect sustained learning, institutionalize psychological security and support the future employability of young people in the region.

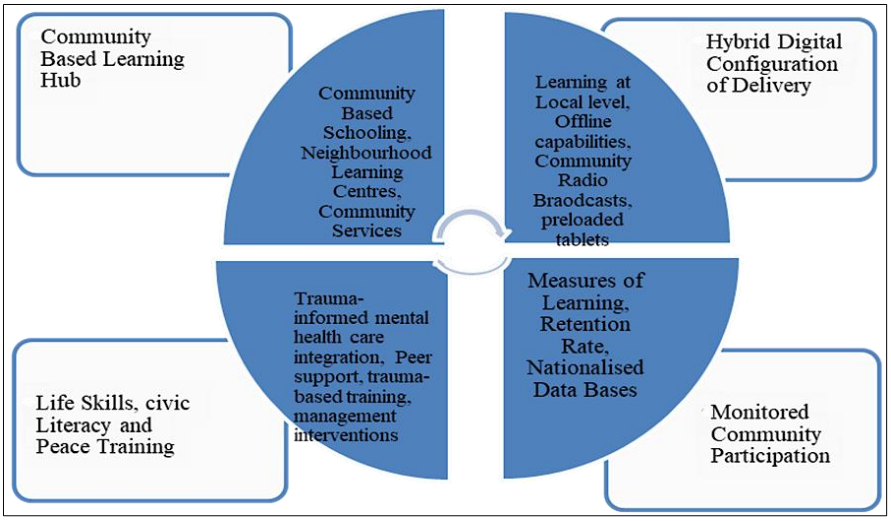

Figure 5: CRE Model for J&K

Figure 5 presents the CRE Model for Jammu and Kashmir. The fourth element of this paradigmatic shift is the idea of community-based schooling that will decentralise education and will leave educational services nearer to the place of students. Learning centres at a neighbourhood level, which can be in the form of a mosque, temple, community building, or even in a home environment, would become alternative or supplementary learning centres during unpredictable times when travelling is dangerous or authorised schools are scarce. We would achieve cultural relevance and community outreach by enlisting the services of para-educators, retired people and specially trained local youth volunteers. The introduction of additional participation and retention might be anticipated with the implementation of using local languages, a flexible timetable, a multigrade teaching system and content that reflects local cultural norms. Having been successfully applied in low-resource, high-disruption environments as part of the UNICEF school-in-a-box program and community-schooling initiatives in India in tribal areas, this model finds its application today.

The second pillar of the proposed educational model will incorporate hybrid digital learning with offline capabilities, acknowledging that Kashmir occasionally experiences internet connectivity issues. Such a process favours offline, asynchronous and low-bandwidth formats over real-time online. Other methods that would allow the students to keep learning even with no network connectivity would include the following: locally installed learning management systems (LMSs), community radio broadcasts and preloaded tablets and SD cards with instructional films. Dissemination of such resources would be done at the Anganwadi centres, panchayats, or schools. To maintain the activity, digital learning material must be bilingual, JKBOSE-compliant and constantly updated. Tools like the Kolibri platform, an offline education tool that has already been used in refugee camps, might be adjusted to Kashmir. Incorporation of mental health literacy as curricular practice is another effective methodology that could be adopted to enhance mental well-being among youth in schools. NGOs, namely MSF, IMHANS and The MINDS Foundation, should assist in the mobile counselling vans and telecounseling provision, including Tele-MANAS services to both rural and urban communities. Careful approaches to hiring and teacher resilience are also aspects required in the model. Psychological stress is usually severe among educational personnel in conflict zones, thus

reducing instructional ability. Peer support interventions, trauma-based training and stress-management interventions are invaluable to minimize this effect.

Youth clubs and Village Education Committees (VECs) are platforms that may be used to increase accountability, attendance and emotional support for their students by monitoring as well as offering logistical support during various learning events. To develop a truly comprehensive and participatory learning environment, the stakeholders of the communities should be engaged in the planning, observation of and support of curricular activities. At the same time, the curricular framework and evaluation activities need to change. Competency-based, modular curriculum structures with an emphasis on life skills, civic literacy and peace training should replace strict curricula and high-stakes testing. It is possible to implement these models in India in phases. The frameworks will first be evaluated in the high-conflict areas (Pulwama, Baramulla and Shopian) with the help of the local non-government organisations under the education department. We will then expand the effective results at these pilot sites nationally, in line with prevailing central programs such as Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. To analyse the success of the model, the following indicators should be monitored: community participation, indicators of trauma effects, measures of learning and the rate of student retention. Nationalised databases such as UDISE+, NAS and NCRB reports can emerge as an important tool of longitudinal assessment**.**

Future Research Combining AI/Data Modeling with Social Interventions

AI-Based Early Warning Systems for Educational Disruption

One of the most practical and urgent applications of AI in conflict-prone areas such as Jammu and Kashmir is the development of early warning systems predicting potential future school closures or interruptions in the teaching process. Improving predictions about when and where schools might be closed can be done by using machine learning models that analyze various types of information, like news alerts, social media feelings, past protest and curfew data, mobile network shutdowns and satellite images. Using these predictive methods, the government and non-profit organizations will be able to preemptively deploy mobile schools, pre-stage offline teaching materials, or move to a digital option. Such models may thus be quite useful in high-risk areas such as Pulwama, Baramulla or Shopian, where continuous political unrest often disrupts the educational process.

Predictive Analytics for Youth Mental Health

In places where trauma has transpired, especially AI and data modeling can go a long way in identifying young people prone to mental health problems. It is possible to build predictive models for PTSD, depression, or anxiety in an impoverished community by utilizing multiple types of survey/structured (such as PHQ-9 and GAD-7 for depression and anxiety) as well as unstructured data (such as School Attendance, Socioeconomic Status, Conflict Exposure and Digital Engagement). These predictive models can allow for immediate access to online/tele-counseling resources and provide ethical and legal safeguards against misuse of individuals' data through de-identification and other forms of anonymization. Ultimately, these predictive frameworks will provide the opportunity to see mental health as a basic component of community development, thus increasing access for vulnerable populations to mental health services.

Adaptive and Personalized Learning through AI

AI-powered personalized learning systems offer a viable alternative to traditional schooling due to consistent disruptions occurring within the formal education system in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere. With the aid of AI technology, these systems use methods such as reinforcement learning and Bayesian knowledge tracing to assess each student's current level of knowledge, supply accurate content matched to that level and adapt each individual's learning path in real-time according to their individual needs. Even remote areas can use offline-first solutions, such as Kolibri or a learning management system based on Raspberry Pi, to continue instruction when internet access is lost. Such technologies would empower students to progress through the learning process at their own pace and ensure that individual learning differences are effectively bridged despite political or infrastructural constraints.

Forecasting Employment Trends in Conflict-Affected Regions

In addition, AI could facilitate the emergence of labour market forecasting models that could be useful in forecasting the labour trends based on the local industry dynamics, migration data, skills and education level. Artificial intelligence experts can advance job market-specific job policies with bias minimization, time-series forecasting, spatial analysis, or natural processing of job postings and business trends. By way of example, demand forecasting can be useful to drive focused skill-building campaigns in tourism potential or IT/related business regions. Moreover, based on these models along with the characteristics of mental health, it becomes possible to identify the psychological impediments to working and this is a guarantee that the programs on job-readiness will not only be trauma-sensitive but also comprehensive.

AI-powered Virtual Counsellors and Mental Health Chatbots

Another promising area of research is the development of AI-powered chatbots and virtual counsellors in mental health capable of chatting with the young population in their native languages (e.g., Hindi, Urdu, or Kashmiri) and available to provide immediate emotional support. You can use these chatbots to screen common symptoms, provide mental health education and refer to a specialist when necessary. There are already excellent examples like Woebot, Wysa, or Talk2Me that have shown their effectiveness in low-resource settings.

GIS and AI for Mapping Education and Health Inequities

Geospatial analysis using artificial intelligence could be used to expose historical inequality in employment opportunities, mental health services and education opportunities across conflict regions. GIS techniques and machine teaching offer analysts the opportunity to draw links among severity levels of conflict, dropout rates and the level of access to skill training and accessibility of telehealth. The results can be used in making specific decisions, like spending funding towards mobile learning units in underserved communities or holding counselors in regions of high unemployment and trauma.

NLP-based Analysis of Youth Perceptions and Aspirations

By utilizing Natural Language Processing (NLP), researchers will be able to conduct an in-depth analysis of adolescent discussions surrounding their problems, including school, mental health, conflict and employment opportunities. Through NLP, researchers may discover hidden information (e.g., feelings, intentions, complaints, culture) in a significant amount of qualitative data, such as interviews with youth or school essays performed by them or social media posts made by them. Sentiment analysis and topic modeling enable governments and NGOs to identify the trends of public opinion, which helps them to design their activities more accurately. When taking job promotion services, counter-radicalization programs and peace education into account, this is significant for J&K because it addresses the daily lives of young people and their worldview.

AI Evaluation of Peace Education and Social Cohesion Initiatives

Also, artificial intelligence (AI) can be part of the evaluation of long-term outcomes of psychological interventions and peace courses. The longitudinal data that can be analyzed by the AI models include student reflections, creative writing, video uploads and classroom interactions that can be used to identify the change in perceptions of violence, empathy and civic engagement. In addition to a typical quantitative survey, one may look at subtle means of conducting a survey, such as sentiment tracking, detecting emotions in speech or text and behavior tracking. These evaluation systems could significantly enhance peace education programs and make community healing more quantifiable in a comprehensive and scalable manner.

Using social interventions that intersect with AI/data modeling within the framework of conflict-sensitive areas provides an exceptional opportunity to develop inclusive-responsive-resilient systems in conflict-sensitive areas like Jammu and Kashmir, as the speed, precision and flexibility of AI will enhance human activity (forecasting learning loss, determining trauma and developing personalized learning, preparing individuals for entry into the workforce). Future research will need to continue to be based on the realities of local communities while utilizing global technological advancements to ensure that no one

is left behind on the road to achieving peaceful, prosperous and developed societies.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this research indicate a number of significant implications for educators, mental health providers, policy makers and various community stakeholders who are working in conflict-affected areas of the world, like Jammu and Kashmir (26, 48). The continuing interruption to educational services, as well as the loss of days of instruction, indicate that education must shift from a traditional model of calendar-driven planning to a more flexible, responsive model with multiple opportunities to create community learning hubs and utilize multi-grade classrooms and local education centres during curfews, violence, or restrictions on movement so that students can continue their studies even if they cannot access formal educational institutions (19). Figure 1 highlights "mental health," "stress," and "well-being" as central themes, reflecting their prominence in contemporary research. Strong linkages with education-related terms indicate the significant psychological impact of disruptions in learning environments, particularly among adolescents and teachers. The presence of clusters on stigma, mental health literacy and public health underscores the growing importance of awareness and access to mental health services, especially in developing contexts. Overall, the network demonstrates an interdisciplinary convergence, supporting an integrative approach to understanding mental health across education, health and crisis-related settings.

Additionally, the presence of a digital divide points to the need for offline and low-bandwidth educational resources rather than relying solely on web-based platforms for educational opportunities (36). Utilizing devices that are already loaded with materials, broadcast of classes through local community radio stations, television teaching and offline systems for managing students are all examples of solutions that have the potential to significantly improve the impact of a long-term absence of the Internet on Education (23). Another important factor shown by this study is that helping teachers develop greater knowledge and skills with these tools is equally important due to high levels of stress experienced by many educators and their inability to prepare digitally, negatively impacting their capacity to deliver quality instruction (22, 55).

Table 1 shows that Jammu and Kashmir are severely digitally excluded, with long periods of internet blockages, limited access to devices and poor infrastructure, limiting online education. Almost 80 percent of the students in government schools could not engage in online learning because of more than 213 days of internet unavailability and low availability of smartphones. The digital divide continued to increase during 2024-2025 and the region was below the national averages. Only 48 government schools out of the 75 in the Bandipora district had functional computer labs, which restricted the growth of digital skills in students. Figure 5 of the paper shows Jammu and Kashmir CRE Model, where community-based schooling is the focus of the decentralised model to take education nearer to the learners in times of disruption. The model suggests neighbourhood learning centres at places like homes, community buildings and religious institutions assisted by para-educators, retired people and trained local youth to make them more accessible and culturally relevant. Based on the positive experiences of other implementations in low resource and high disruption settings, the strategy will enhance participation, retention and continuity of education by using flexible and locally adapted ways of teaching. Strong interconnections exist between disrupted education, poor mental health and weak employment outcomes. For employability interventions to be successful, they will need to go beyond just technical skill training. Practical livelihood programs should also include a psychosocial support system for affected individuals, Career Counselling to help them make informed choices regarding their careers (based on their current situation) and confidence-building activities to address the emotional and cognitive consequences that have resulted from exposure to conflict over a prolonged period of time. Integrated approaches such as these are necessary for skill development programmes to achieve their full potential and provide meaningful placement outcomes for participants.

Policy Recommendations

The empirical evidence from this study provides several recommendations for the development of a conflict-resilient education and youth development framework in Jammu and Kashmir at

the policy level. At a minimum, education policies must formally acknowledge that conflict is one of the structural determinants of learning outcomes. To that end, the planning for education must include conflict-sensitive planning as an integral part of the flagship programme, for example, Samagra Shiksha, that includes the establishment of contingency protocols for school closures and provisions for alternative delivery methods, as well as rapid restoration of academic progress after a long disruption of educational delivery.

In addition, the bridging of the digital divide should be treated as a public infrastructure issue rather than an ancillary issue. To ensure that all children have equitable access to electricity and devices (computers, tablets, etc.) as well as reliable internet connectivity in rural and border areas, policies must provide for significant investments in offline digital ecosystems that can continue to function in the absence of internet. Finally, it is critical to have dedicated funding for maintaining digital infrastructure, training teachers and providing for ongoing localized content development to eradicate further widening of the educational gap.

The shortage of mental health professionals in the region presents a unique opportunity for urgent policy action. The District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) must be improved via increased funding, greater decentralization, formalization of School Based Counseling Units and Mobile Coverage of Mental Health Services. Additionally, Mental Health Literacy and Stigma Reduction should be incorporated into the School Curriculum and Community Outreach Programmes to encourage young people to seek help when they need it.

In addition, the employment and skills development policies must be Trauma-Informed and closely linked to local labor market demands, as well as incorporating opportunities for Apprenticeship and Internship training. While supporting the development of Skills Mission such as PMKVY and JKSDM in order to better align Training Programmes with Local Labor Market Demand and by providing sustained support after the completion of training, ensures that Youth will have access to ongoing employment opportunities. Incentivizing Private Sector Engagement through Risk Sharing Models and Employment Guarantees to youth in conflict-affected districts will facilitate the enhancement of Youth Employability and Economic Reintegration.

Conclusion

The impact that long-term conflicts and disruption of political processes have on education, mental health and job opportunities for youth in the Jammu and Kashmir region has been addressed in this article. It utilized secondary data obtained through review of literature and overall policy documentation, as well as through empirical evidence gathered through several data points to show that as a result of prolonged internet shut-downs, repeated school closings and general instability, there has been persistence of educational interruption, which has had a greater negative impact than was anticipated on young people, having resulted in the distribution of learning loss, widened digital disparity and reduced quality of education; Furthermore, the combination of educational interruptions and prevalent psychological distress among young people and educators is reflected in the heightened rate of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress and substance abuse and increased level of academic stress experienced by the young people and educators, thereby restricting young people's skills acquisition and reducing their ability to achieve meaningful employment.

The main finding of this article is that it provides a holistic framework for examining how education, mental health and employment exclusion all interact in a cyclical and mutually reinforcing manner, in the context of armed conflict and political instability. The CRE model is designed to gather data and document information from multiple areas: educational systems, psychosocial health and labor markets. Through this cross-sector analysis of the data, there are many commonalities between these sectors that can be used to build an education system (e.g. CRE) that can meet these needs while incorporating culturally relevant elements. Community-based schooling, hybrid technology-enabled education and trauma-informed teaching practices are examples of elements included in the CRE model. In addition, the CRE model allows for community engagement in developing a system of education that is relevant to the needs of the people in conflict and unstable regions. Therefore, the CRE model

provides a more locally relevant alternative to the Western-style "one-size-fits-all" education system. The findings of the article will have significant long-term effects on both human capital development and economic growth of Jammu and Kashmir. The ongoing lack of education and poor mental health of children and young adults have significantly hindered their cognitive abilities, emotional regulation and employability, which makes them more likely to be unemployed, disconnected and socially excluded as adults. Additionally, without mental health resources to support the workforce and skills-development efforts being made in Jammu and Kashmir, these efforts will be of little value. Therefore, this study has important policy recommendations that highlight the importance of incorporating conflict-sensitive governance, inter-sectoral integration and long-term investments in building resilient systems of tertiary education and mental health in Jammu and Kashmir. While this study includes a significant amount of data, it does not capture the personal experiences and feelings of the citizens of Jammu and Kashmir and/or other variations across the districts in this state that could affect the overall outcome of this research. The qualitative nature of this study means that while it provides context, it does not allow for the establishment of a cause-and-effect relationship or comparison between what has happened and how people feel about those events. Additionally, the lack of data on recent mental health and employment statistics for remote and border areas limits the usefulness of the results across all districts; however, these gaps in the literature illustrate the need for additional primary and mixed methods of research.

Building on this work, Future Studies should include primary field studies such as interviews, ethnography and longitudinal survey studies to better understand the youth perspective and community-level dynamics. In addition to these methods, future research also provides opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration between educational studies, psychology, development economics and conflict studies. New research to evaluate the effectiveness of programs that develop youth resilience in conflict and to evaluate the efficacy of trauma-informed employment programs should also include longitudinal assessments to determine the long-term impact and scalability of both the programs and their success.

Abbreviations

J&K: Jammu and Kashmir, MHRD: Ministry of Human Resource Development, UDISE: Unified District Information System for Education, ASER: Annual Survey of Education Report, UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, LOC: Line of Control, PMKVY: Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, MSDE: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, JKSDM: Jammu and Kashmir Skill Development Mission, NCRB: National Crime Records Bureau.

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Author Contributions

Raj Kumar: research objectives, review of the literature concerning conflicts, educational and youth development, data synthesis, interpretation of research findings, Dinesh Chahal: analytical framework development, reviewed pertinent policy documents and secondary data sets, assisted with the organization, interpretation of evidence regarding mental health and employment-related outcomes, writing the manuscript, revision process, Rahul Yadav: collection and review of secondary data sources, government reports and survey documents, thematic analyses, table and figure preparation, refinement of discussion and conclusion sections, Renu Balla: conceptual clarity, integration of interdisciplinary perspectives, critical review of its intellectual content, coherence and academic rigour, review. All authors read and approved the final manuscript and contributed equally to the overall development of the study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

This study is based entirely on secondary data obtained from publicly available sources, including government reports, research articles and institutional databases related to Jammu and Kashmir. No primary data were collected and all

sources have been appropriately cited within the study.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistance

GROK and Perplexity are used for the formatting of the language

Ethics Approval

This review relies solely on secondary data from available public reports, national studies, policy papers and peer-reviewed studies. Consequently, no formal approval or consent from a Research Ethics Committee was necessary for this study. Data were analysed in accordance with ethical research protocols to ensure accurate representation and citation of sources of particular and clearly identified items. All data presented in this project were obtained and processed according to the accepted principles of Academic Integrity, Transparency and Responsibility in Scholarship; with due regard to the intellectual property rights of authors involved in the studies used for review.

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