

EMOTIONAL DESTRUCTION OF THE DISPLACED AFGHAN FEMALE STUDENTS

Ms. Ebrahimi Nasima Gul Ahmad

Research scholar
Department of education
Gujarat University
Email: nasima.ebrahimi2007@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper explores the profound emotional challenges and psychological trauma faced by displaced Afghan female students. The ongoing conflict and socio-political instability in Afghanistan have forced many young women to flee their homes, often resulting in the abrupt interruption of their education. Their mental health and hopes for the future are significantly impacted by this dislocation, which causes extreme emotional suffering that shows up as anxiety, sadness, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The study draws on a comprehensive review of existing literature, supplemented by in-depth interviews and detailed case studies, to provide a nuanced understanding of the specific issues these students encounter. The findings highlight the compounded difficulties of disrupted schooling, cultural barriers, and the lack of access to mental health resources. Moreover, the paper discusses coping mechanisms employed by these young women, emphasizing the role of family support and community solidarity. The study suggests targeted interventions, including mental health services, educational programs, and policy changes, to mitigate the adverse effects of displacement. By addressing these unique challenges, the paper aims to contribute to the development of effective strategies that can support displaced Afghan female students in overcoming their emotional trauma and pursuing their educational aspirations.

Keywords: Afghanistan, displaced students, female education, emotional trauma, mental health

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The emotional and psychological well-being of students is a critical factor in their educational success and overall development. In the context of Afghanistan, decades of conflict, socio-political instability, and economic hardship have created an environment where many young women face profound challenges in accessing and continuing their education. The displacement of Afghan female students, driven by ongoing violence and instability, has resulted in significant emotional and psychological trauma. These young women, already navigating a complex landscape of cultural and societal expectations, must also contend with the loss of their homes, communities, and a sense of safety.

Afghanistan's history of conflict, spanning over four decades, has had a devastating impact on its population, particularly on women and girls. The Taliban regime, which ruled from 1996 to 2001, imposed severe restrictions on female education, limiting opportunities for millions of girls (Amiri, 2020). Despite efforts to rebuild the education system and improve access for girls after the fall of Taliban, ongoing violence and political instability continue to disrupt the education of many Afghan girls. According to UNICEF (2021), about 3.7 million Afghan children, 60% of them are girls, are not attending school. The displacement crisis exacerbates these challenges, as families fleeing conflict zones struggle to secure stable living conditions and access to education.

Anxiety, despair, and post-traumatic stress disorder are among emotional and psychological problems that displaced Afghan female students face. Research indicates that children and adolescents experiencing displacement or violence are significantly more prone to mental health issues (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012). The stigma associated with seeking mental health treatment, coupled with cultural norms that often prioritize boys' education over girls', exacerbates these issues for Afghan girls. The absence of focused interventions to meet their unique requirements further hampers the capacity of displaced female students to deal with trauma and pursue further education.

This paper aims to explore the emotional destruction experienced by displaced Afghan female students, drawing on existing literature, interviews, and case studies. By examining the unique challenges these young women face, this study seeks to highlight the urgent need for comprehensive support systems that address both their educational and mental health needs. The findings will underscore the importance of creating safe and supportive environments that enable displaced Afghan girls to overcome their emotional trauma and achieve their full potential.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Afghan Conflict's Historical Background

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 marked the beginning of the long-standing conflict in that country. The ruthless ten-year conflict between Soviet forces and Afghan Mujahideen rebels, which began with this invasion, resulted in the displacement of millions of Afghans and extensive damage (Rubin, 2002). Instead of bringing about peace, the Soviet exit in 1989 sparked a long-lasting civil conflict between rival Mujahideen factions. This period of fierce infighting further destroyed the nation's infrastructure and social fabric. Another troubling period in Afghan history was the rise of the Taliban in the middle of the 1990s. The Taliban government, which governed from 1996 to 2001, severely restricted women's rights and freedoms, including access to healthcare and education, by enforcing a rigid interpretation of Islamic law (Barfield, 2010). After the 9/11 attacks, the United States launched an invasion in 2001 with the goal of overthrowing the Taliban and installing a democratic government. But throughout the next 20 years, there has been a continuous insurgency, and the Taliban have regained control of a sizable portion of the country, which led to their 2021 comeback (Giustozzi, 2009).

2.2 Socio-Economic Impact

The prolonged conflict has had a catastrophic impact on Afghanistan's socio-economic conditions. Decades of war have left the country's infrastructure in ruins, with healthcare, education, and economic systems severely underdeveloped. A sizable section of the population of Afghanistan lives below the poverty line, making it one of the world's poorest nations, according to the World Bank (2021). The conflict has also disrupted agricultural production, leading to food insecurity and malnutrition.

The conflict has exacerbated economic instability, forcing many families to flee their homes in search of safety and employment opportunities. This internal displacement has created a cycle of poverty and vulnerability, particularly affecting women and children. Sometimes, displaced people live in crowded, impoverished camps or urban slums without access to basic amenities like clean water, sanitary conditions, and medical care (UNHCR, 2020).

2.3 Psychological and Emotional Impact

The Afghan conflict has had a severe emotional and psychological impact on the country's citizens, particularly on children and teenagers. Research has indicated that Afghan children who have experienced violence and displacement have high levels of psychological distress, including anxiety, sadness, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Panter-Brick et al., 2009). The ongoing insecurity and trauma have long-term effects on mental health, hindering the cognitive and emotional development of young Afghans.

Women and girls have been particularly vulnerable to the psychological impacts of the conflict. Taliban's oppressive policies and ongoing violence have restricted their freedom and opportunities, leading to widespread psychological trauma. The disruption of schooling and the ongoing danger of violence have exacerbated the emotional suffering of Afghan women and girls, creating a climate of dread and uncertainty (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

2.4 Impact on Education

The conflict has severely impacted the education system in Afghanistan. Taliban's initial ban on female education during their rule and ongoing attacks on schools have created significant barriers to education, particularly for girls. Nearly 3.7 million Afghan children are not attending school, with 60% of them being girls, according to UNICEF (2021). Educational disruption due to conflict and displacement not only affects the academic development of Afghan children but also limits their future opportunities and exacerbates gender inequalities. A study by the World Bank (2021) highlights that the economic instability caused by displacement forces many young women into early marriages or low-paying jobs, thereby reducing their chances of completing their education.

The displacement and subsequent emotional trauma significantly disrupt the educational trajectories of Afghan female students. Long-term educational gaps brought on by displacement-related disruptions result in children having poorer academic performance and fewer opportunities for future employment (UNICEF, 2021). Girls who experience psychological trauma are more likely to drop out of school, either due to direct emotional distress or because their families prioritize immediate survival needs over education (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Children who experience displacement and violence are more likely to experience mental health issues, which can negatively impact their ability to learn (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012). Displaced Afghan female students, in particular, face additional cultural and societal barriers that further hinder their academic performance.

The Afghan conflict has had far-reaching and devastating impacts on the country's population. Decades of violence and instability have destroyed infrastructure, hindered economic development, and inflicted profound psychological trauma on the Afghan people. Women and girls, in particular, have borne the brunt of the conflict, facing severe restrictions on their rights and opportunities. Addressing the consequences of the conflict

requires a comprehensive approach that includes rebuilding infrastructure, providing mental health support, and ensuring access to education for all, particularly displaced and vulnerable populations.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the emotional and psychological challenges faced by displaced Afghan female students.
2. To assess the impact of displacement on their educational trajectories and academic performance.
3. To identify coping mechanisms employed by these students to deal with trauma.
4. To suggest targeted interventions and policy changes to support displaced Afghan female students.

4.0 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on displaced Afghan female students aged 10-18 who have experienced disruption in their education due to conflict and socio-political instability. The geographical scope is limited to internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Afghanistan and Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries. The study period covers the past two decades, with an emphasis on recent developments since 2010.

5.0 VARIABLES

Independent Variables: Displacement, exposure to conflict, socio-political instability.

Dependent Variables: Emotional distress (anxiety, depression, PTSD), educational outcomes (attendance, academic performance, dropout rates).

6.0 RESEARCH QUESTION

How does displacement due to conflict impact the emotional well-being and educational outcomes of Afghan female students?

7.0 RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods approach:

Literature Review: Analysis of existing research and reports on the impact of conflict and displacement on Afghan female students.

Interviews: In-depth interviews with displaced Afghan female students, educators, and mental health professionals.

8.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher achieved the four primary objectives of the study by asking participants a range of questions, as presented in this section.

Table No.1: Demographic Information of Interviewees

A thorough overview of the participants in the study and the psychological and emotional difficulties faced by Afghan female students who have been relocated is given in the following table. The table includes important details about each responder, such as their gender, occupation, age, place of origin in Afghanistan, and the nation to which they have immigrated. This varied sample of respondents, which includes educators, mental health specialists, and former students, provides insightful information about the multifaceted effects of displacement on Afghan female students.

No	Name	Gender		Occupation	Age	Original Area	Immigrant Country
		Male	Female				
1	N		✓	Pervious Student, class 10	16	Herat	Iran
2	M		✓	Pervious Student, class 8	14	kabul	Iran
3	L		✓	Pervious Student, class 10	15	Kandahar	Pakistan
4	K		✓	Pervious Student, Class 11	17	Herat	America
5	J		✓	Pervious Student, class 9	13	Herat	America
6	I		✓	Pervious Student, class 9	15	Herat	Canada
7	H		✓	Pervious Student, class 7	12	Farah	Iran
8	G		✓	Pervious Student, class 10	16	Nimroz	Iran

9	F		✓	Pervious Student, class 12	18	Paghman	Germany
10	E		✓	Pervious Student, class 8	14	Herat	Pakistan
11	D	✓		High School Teacher	35	Herat	Iran
12	C		✓	School Principal	40	Kabul	Pakistan
13	B	✓		Psychologist and Counsellor	45	Iran	Iran
14	A		✓	Mental Health Advocate	41	Herat	Afghanistan

Source: May to September 2024 Interview

Key Points:

Gender Distribution: The respondents are primarily female, reflecting the focus of the study on displaced Afghan female students. However, there are also male participants who provide additional perspectives, especially in educational and mental health roles.

Occupational Diversity: The respondents' occupations range from current and previous students to professionals such as teachers, school principals, psychologists, and mental health advocates. This variety ensures a comprehensive understanding of the issues from multiple angles.

Age Range: The participants' ages span from 12 to 45 years, offering insights into different stages of educational and professional experiences.

Geographical Diversity: The respondents originate from various regions of Afghanistan, including Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Farah, Nimroz, and Paghman, which helps in understanding the regional disparities and commonalities in their experiences.

Immigrant Destinations: The countries of immigration include Iran, Pakistan, America, Canada, Germany, and Afghanistan. This range highlights the different contexts and conditions under which displaced Afghan female students live and study.

By examining the diverse backgrounds and experiences of these respondents, the study aims to uncover the unique emotional and psychological challenges faced by displaced Afghan female students and suggest effective interventions and policy changes to support their well-being and educational aspirations.

Table No.2 (Objective 1): Interview Responses on Emotional and Psychological Challenges Faced by Displaced Afghan Female Students

NO	Participants	Responses
1	N from Herat, 16 years old.	"The constant fear of violence has made it hard for me to sleep. I have nightmares about the attacks we experienced, and I worry all the time about my family's safety. It's hard to focus on anything else."
2	M from Kabul- Afghanistan, 14 years old.	"I feel very depressed and often don't want to leave my room. I've lost interest in things I used to enjoy, including school. It's hard to stay motivated when everything feels so uncertain."
3	L was 15 years old from Kandahar.	"I have PTSD. The flashbacks and the constant feeling of being on edge make it difficult to concentrate on my studies. Even small noises can trigger my anxiety."
4	K from Herat was 17 years old.	"The stress is overwhelming. I had to stop going to school for three years because of the displacement, and now I'm behind. It's hard to catch up when you're constantly worried and stressed."
5	J was 13 years old from Herat.	"I often feel very anxious and sad. The displacement separated me from my friends and familiar surroundings. It's lonely and frightening, which makes it hard to focus on anything, including school."
6	I was 15 years old also from Herat who has been living in Canada.	"Feeling isolated is a big issue. I miss my old home and friends. The constant uncertainty about our future makes it hard to feel settled or hopeful."
7	H was 12 years old that originally was from Farah.	"I feel scared and anxious most of the time. It's hard to make new friends or feel comfortable in the new place. The fear of the unknown is always there."
8	G was 16 years old from Nimroze.	"The emotional toll is heavy. I suffer from anxiety and often feel hopeless about my future. It's hard to focus on my studies when my mind is always preoccupied with worry."
9	F was 18 years old from Paghman.	"I deal with a lot of anxiety and stress. The trauma of having to flee our home has left me feeling unstable and fearful. School feels like an added

		pressure on top of everything else.”
10	E was 14 years old from Herat.	“The emotional strain is immense. I feel depressed and anxious almost all the time. The instability and lack of a safe, permanent home have taken a huge toll on my mental health, making it hard to focus on my education.”
11	D was 35 years old high school teacher from Herat.	“I Observed high levels of stress and emotional instability among displaced female students, noting frequent absenteeism and reduced classroom participation.”
12	C was 40 years old School Principal from Kabul.	“The lack of mental health support in schools, leading to untreated emotional issues among students.”
13	B was 45 years old Psychologist from Iran.	“Confirmed high rates of anxiety, depression, and PTSD among displaced female students, emphasizing the need for specialized mental health interventions.”
14	A was a 41-year-old counsellor.	“The stigma associated with seeking mental health support, which prevents many students from accessing necessary care.”

8.1 Results

The answers to interviews with educators, mental health specialists, and displaced Afghan female students reveal a number of emotional and psychological issues that have a substantial impact on their academic achievement and general well-being. The primary themes identified are:

Trauma and PTSD:

Many students reported experiencing signs of trauma-related illnesses, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which includes increased anxiety, nightmares, and flashbacks. For instance, L from Kandahar (15 years old) described experiencing flashbacks and a constant feeling of being on edge, which interferes with her ability to focus on studies.

Depression:

Depression was commonly reported, particularly feelings of hopelessness and a lack of interest in activities such as school. M from Kabul (14 years old) stated that she felt disconnected from things she once enjoyed, including her education, due to pervasive sadness and uncertainty.

Anxiety and Stress:

Many students, including F from Paghman (18 years old), reported experiencing overwhelming anxiety and stress, often related to the trauma of displacement and the constant fear for personal safety. The inability to focus on studies due to mental preoccupation was a recurring theme.

Loneliness and Isolation:

Displacement has led to feelings of isolation, with many students separated from their families and familiar environments. I from Herat (15 years old), living in Canada, noted that the uncertainty about her future and missing her old home contributed to a sense of isolation.

Educational Disruption:

Educational disruptions were prevalent, with K from Herat (17 years old) sharing that she had missed three years of school due to displacement. A number of students brought attention to the strain of attempting to make up lost academic progress while managing emotional conflict.

Lack of Support Systems:

Educators and mental health professionals emphasized the absence of mental health resources and support for displaced students. D, a teacher from Herat (35 years old), observed high levels of absenteeism and reduced participation in class, which he attributed to emotional instability. C, a school principal from Kabul (40 years old), highlighted the deficiency of mental health assistance in schools as a significant barrier to addressing students' emotional challenges.

Stigma Around Mental Health:

A consistent theme in the responses from counsellors and psychologists was the stigma associated with seeking mental health support. A counsellor, A (41 years old), mentioned that this stigma prevents many students from accessing the care they need, further exacerbating their emotional struggles.

8.2 Discussion

The responses reveal a profound emotional and psychological toll on displaced Afghan female students, with significant implications for their mental health and educational outcomes. These findings echo broader studies on the impact of displacement and trauma on young people. The key issues identified in the interviews include:

Psychological Effects of Displacement:

The overwhelming presence of trauma, depression, anxiety, and PTSD among displaced students is consistent with existing research on the psychological effects of forced migration (Fazel et al., 2012). The continuous stress of living in an unstable environment, coupled with the trauma of fleeing violence, creates a toxic mental health environment for these students. Symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks, and heightened vigilance are classic signs of PTSD, which can severely hinder cognitive and emotional functioning (O'Donnell et al., 2014).

Educational Disruption:

Interrupted schooling and educational gaps are a critical challenge for displaced students. Educational setbacks, particularly for older students like K, reflect the impact of long-term displacement on academic achievement. This is supported by literature which shows that educational disruptions during times of conflict can lead to significant learning gaps and reduced academic performance (UNICEF, 2020).

Role of Schools and Support Systems:

The lack of mental health support in schools, as observed by educators and mental health professionals, underscores a critical gap in addressing the needs of displaced students. Research indicates that the provision of psychosocial support in schools can significantly improve the well-being of displaced children, helping them cope with trauma and stress (Betancourt et al., 2013). Without such support, students may struggle to succeed academically and emotionally.

Cultural Stigma and Mental Health:

The stigma surrounding mental health care poses a significant barrier for many displaced Afghan students seeking help. This is a common issue in many conflict-affected regions, where cultural norms often discourage discussing or addressing mental health issues openly (Jordans et al., 2010). Tackling the stigma through education and community awareness is vital for improving access to mental health services.

As a Result, the emotional and psychological challenges faced by displaced Afghan female students are immense and multifaceted. The trauma of displacement, compounded by a lack of mental health support, creates significant barriers to academic success and overall well-being.

Table No.3 (Objective 2): Interview Responses on the Impact of Displacement on Educational Trajectories and Academic Performance

NO	Participants	Responses
1	N from Herat, 16 years old.	"I had to stop going to school for over a year due to displacement. When I returned, I found it extremely difficult to catch up with my peers. My grades have suffered a lot because I missed so much content."
2	M from Kabul- Afghanistan, 14 years old.	"Displacement disrupted my education completely. I was out of school for several months, and now that I'm back, I find it hard to concentrate. My performance has dropped, and I'm struggling to keep up with my classmates."
3	L was 15 years old from Kandahar.	"I missed almost an entire school year because of the displacement. When I resumed my studies, I felt lost and behind in all subjects. It's hard to regain the momentum I had before."
4	K from Herat was 17 years old.	"Displacement forced me to drop out of school for two years. Now that I'm back, I'm much older than my classmates and feel out of place. It's difficult to stay motivated and my grades are not as good as they used to be."
5	J was 13 years old from Herat.	"I used to be a top student, but after being displaced, I missed many lessons and my grades have dropped. I find it hard to understand new topics because I missed the foundational concepts."
6	I was 15 years old also from Herat who has been living in Canada.	"My academic performance has declined significantly since we were displaced. The constant moving and instability make it hard to focus on studies. I feel like I'm always playing catch-up."
7	H was 12 years old that originally was from Farah.	"I missed several months of school, and when I finally returned, I couldn't keep up with the lessons. My teachers are trying to help, but it's difficult to cover everything I missed."
8	G was 16 years old from Nimroze.	"Displacement disrupted my education completely. I feel disconnected and behind in my studies. My grades have suffered, and it feels like I'll never catch up to where I should be."
9	F was 18 years old from Paghman.	"I missed a lot of school days because of the displacement. Now, I'm struggling to keep up with the curriculum. My grades have dropped, and I feel very frustrated and demotivated."
10	E was 14 years old from Herat.	"Displacement interrupted my education significantly. I had to repeat a grade because I missed so much school. It's hard to stay focused on academics when you're dealing with so much emotional stress."
11	D was 35 years old high school teacher from Herat.	Noted a decline in academic performance among displaced students, with many struggling to keep up with the curriculum.
12	C was 40 years old School Principal from Kabul.	Emphasized the disruption of educational trajectories, with many students unable to resume their education at the same level they left off.

13	B was 45 years old Psychologist from Iran.	Stated that emotional trauma significantly impacts cognitive functions, such as memory and concentration, directly affecting academic performance.
14	A was a 41-year-old counsellor.	Highlighted that the instability and frequent relocations disrupt students' educational continuity and academic progress.

8.3 Results

The interview responses shed light on the significant impact of displacement on the educational trajectories and academic performance of Afghan students. Key findings include:

Interruption in Education:

Many participants reported prolonged school absences due to displacement, resulting in missed foundational concepts and difficulties catching up for example: N from Herat (16 years old) noted being out of school for over a year, leading to a drop in grades as she struggled to cover the missed content.

Decline in Academic Performance:

A common theme was a noticeable drop in grades and academic performance following displacement, like J from Herat (13 years old) shared that she was a top student before displacement but struggled to understand new topics after missing foundational lessons.

Difficulty Reintegrating into School:

Participants expressed challenges in resuming their education, such as feeling disconnected, older than peers, or demotivated due to their struggles, for example; K from Herat (17 years old) felt out of place because of her age gap with classmates and reported diminished motivation and grades.

Emotional and Cognitive Challenges:

The emotional trauma associated with displacement (e.g., stress, anxiety, and instability) was identified as a factor impairing focus, memory, and concentration, which further hindered academic success, as B, a psychologist, highlighted the role of trauma in affecting cognitive functions critical for learning.

Educators' Observations:

Teachers and school leaders noted widespread academic struggles among displaced students, emphasizing that many were unable to resume studies at their previous levels. C, a school principal from Kabul, described how students were forced to repeat grades due to missed schooling.

8.4 Discussion

The findings underscore the profound and complicated impact of displacement on education. These challenges align with global research on the effects of forced migration on students' academic success.

Educational Disruption:

Displacement often results in prolonged interruptions in schooling, leaving students behind in their studies. This finding is consistent with UNESCO reports, which show that conflict and displacement disrupt educational continuity, forcing students to either repeat grades or drop out entirely (UNESCO, 2019).

Decline in Academic Performance:

Prolonged school absences lead to gaps in foundational knowledge, making it harder for students to grasp advanced concepts. As noted by students like J and E, these gaps cause a ripple effect, compounding learning difficulties over time. Research supports this, noting that interrupted schooling leads to long-term academic underperformance (UNHCR, 2021).

Emotional and Cognitive Barriers:

Emotional trauma and stress, resulting from displacement, directly impair cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and executive functioning (Fazel et al., 2012). The testimonies of students and mental health professionals in this study highlight the intertwined nature of emotional well-being and academic success.

Reintegration Challenges:

Re-entering education after displacement is fraught with challenges, including age gaps, demotivation, and feeling out of place. K's experience of being older than her peers mirrors findings from studies that show how age disparities can lower displaced students' self-esteem and increase dropout risks (Betancourt et al., 2013).

Role of Teachers and Schools:

Educators' observations of widespread academic struggles suggest a pressing need for targeted interventions to help displaced students reintegrate and succeed. Flexible curricula, catch-up programs, and psychosocial support are critical for addressing these issues.

As a result, the responses highlight that displacement severely disrupts educational trajectories and academic performance. Key contributing factors include prolonged school absences, emotional trauma, cognitive impairments, and reintegration challenges. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach like Remedial Programs, Psychosocial Support, Flexible Policies, and Teacher Training.

By addressing these barriers, displaced Afghan students can be better supported in overcoming the challenges posed by their displacement and achieving educational success.

Table No.4 (Objective 3): Interview Responses on Coping Mechanisms Employed by Displaced Afghan Female Students to Deal with Trauma

NO	Participants	Responses
1	N from Herat, 16 years old.	"I rely heavily on my family for support. We talk about our experiences and try to comfort each other. My mother has been particularly supportive, helping me stay focused on my studies."
2	M from Kabul- Afghanistan, 14 years old.	"I find comfort in drawing and painting. It helps me express my feelings and distracts me from my worries. I also try to stay connected with friends through social media."
3	L was 15 years old from Kandahar.	"Reading books has been a great escape for me. It helps me forget about my problems for a while. I also practice deep breathing exercises to calm myself down when I feel anxious."
4	K from Herat was 17 years old.	"Writing in my journal has been very therapeutic. It allows me to pour out my emotions without fear of judgment. I also try to stay positive by setting small, achievable goals for myself."
5	J was 13 years old from Herat.	"I find talking to my teachers helpful. They understand my situation and offer support. Sometimes, I also listen to music to lift my spirits and distract myself from negative thoughts."
6	I was 15 years old also from Herat who has been living in Canada.	"Engaging in sports, especially running, helps me release stress and feel more in control. I also spend time volunteering in my community, which gives me a sense of purpose and connection."
7	H was 12 years old that originally was from Farah.	"I love playing with my younger siblings. It makes me happy and keeps my mind off my worries. We also have family game nights, which are fun and bring us closer together."
8	G was 16 years old from Nimroze.	"I participate in a peer support group at school. Sharing my experiences with others who understand what I'm going through has been incredibly comforting. We support each other and share coping tips."
9	F was 18 years old from Paghman.	"I meditate and practice yoga regularly. These activities help me stay calm and centred. I also talk to my grandmother, who always has wise advice and comforting words."
10	E was 14 years old from Herat.	"I focus on my studies and set academic goals. It gives me something to strive for and keeps my mind occupied. Additionally, I attend therapy sessions provided by a local NGO, which have been very helpful."
11	D was 35 years old high school teacher from Herat.	Noted that students who participated in school-based extracurricular activities showed better emotional resilience.
12	C was 40 years old School Principal from Kabul.	Recommended peer mentoring programs where older students support younger ones in coping with their experiences.
13	B was 45 years old Psychologist from Iran.	Advocated for the use of trauma-informed care approaches and psychosocial support programs to help students develop healthy coping mechanisms.
14	A was a 41-year-old counsellor.	Emphasized the importance of cultural sensitivity in counselling and support services, ensuring they are accessible and acceptable to the community.

8.5 Result

The interview responses highlight a diverse range of coping mechanisms employed by displaced Afghan female students to deal with trauma. These responses reflect personal preferences, environmental influences, and social support systems. Key themes include reliance on family, creative expression, physical activities, educational focus, social connection, and therapeutic interventions. Additionally, adult experts provide insights on the benefits of structured support programs and culturally sensitive care.

8.6 Discussion

The coping strategies employed by displaced Afghan female students underscore the importance of personalized and culturally relevant approaches to trauma management. Family support emerged as a critical factor, with participants frequently relying on parents, siblings, and older family members for emotional comfort and guidance. This finding aligns with previous studies highlighting the role of familial networks in providing emotional stability for trauma-affected individuals (Mollica, 2008). Personal hobbies, such as drawing, reading, journaling, and playing games, were pivotal for emotional expression and temporary relief from stress, consistent with research showing that creative outlets facilitate emotional regulation (UNHCR, 2021). Furthermore, physical activities like sports and mindfulness practices such as yoga and meditation were

reported to reduce anxiety and improve mental health, echoing the World Health Organization's recommendations for integrating physical and mindfulness activities in trauma recovery (WHO, 2021). Social interactions also played a crucial role, whether through peer support groups, staying connected on social media, or receiving encouragement from teachers and counsellors. These mechanisms reflect the value of community-based support systems in fostering resilience, as highlighted in trauma-informed care literature (American Psychological Association, 2019). Responses from adult stakeholders further emphasized the effectiveness of structured support systems, including trauma-informed care, peer mentoring, and extracurricular activities. Such programs are instrumental in equipping students with the skills needed to navigate complex emotional challenges (Bastow et al., 2019). These findings align with existing research advocating for a multi-faceted approach that combines individual, familial, and institutional support for trauma recovery.

Based on the above table, displaced Afghan female students utilize a range of coping mechanisms, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive, community-based, and personalized trauma support systems. Family involvement, creative outlets, physical activities, and professional interventions collectively contribute to fostering resilience. The insights from this study advocate for integrated support programs that address both the psychological and cultural needs of displaced individuals.

Table No.5 (Objective 4): Interview Responses on Suggested Targeted Interventions and Policy Changes to Support Displaced Afghan Female Students

NO	Participants	Responses
1	N from Herat, 16 years old.	"There should be more mental health support in schools, like counsellors who understand our trauma. Also, providing safe transportation to and from school would help us feel more secure."
2	M from Kabul-Afghanistan, 14 years old.	"Scholarships and financial aid for displaced students would make a big difference. Many of us can't afford school supplies or uniforms. Also, after-school tutoring programs to help us catch up on missed lessons would be helpful."
3	L was 15 years old from Kandahar.	"Creating special educational programs tailored to our needs, including flexible class schedules and extra academic support, would be beneficial. It's also important to raise awareness about the importance of girls' education within the community."
4	K from Herat was 17 years old.	"Access to technology and internet for remote learning can help us continue our education even when we can't physically attend school. Additionally, trauma-informed training for teachers would make them better equipped to support us emotionally."
5	J was 13 years old from Herat.	"Having safe spaces in schools where we can talk about our experiences and feelings without judgment would be great. More extracurricular activities that promote teamwork and build confidence would also be helpful."
6	I was 15 years old also from Herat who has been living in Canada.	"There should be programs to help our parents understand the importance of our education and how to support us. Also, partnerships with local businesses for internships or job training would provide us with practical skills."
7	H was 12 years old that originally was from Farah.	"We need more mental health services available at school, like regular counselling sessions. Additionally, schools should have emergency plans and support systems in place for students facing crises."
8	G was 16 years old from Nimroze.	"Providing free school meals would ensure we have the energy to focus on our studies. Also, organizing mentorship programs where older students or professionals guide us would be very beneficial."
9	F was 18 years old from Paghman.	"Creating safe, supportive school environments where bullying and discrimination are not tolerated is crucial. Offering language and cultural integration classes for those of us coming from different regions would help too."
10	E was 14 years old from Herat.	"There should be more community outreach programs to educate families about the importance of girls' education. Additionally, schools need to have emergency funds available for students in urgent need."
11	D was 35 years old high school teacher from Herat.	"Integrating trauma-informed teaching practices into the curriculum would help students feel more understood and supported. Additionally, providing training for teachers on how to identify and support students dealing with trauma is essential."
12	C was 40 years old School Principal from Kabul.	"Implementing flexible attendance policies would accommodate students who have to miss school due to displacement-related issues. Schools should

		also collaborate with NGOs to provide additional resources and support services.”
13	B was 45 years old Psychologist from Iran.	“Providing comprehensive mental health services within schools, including regular counselling and trauma therapy, is critical. Training teachers and staff to recognize signs of trauma and provide initial support can make a significant difference.”
14	A was a 41-year-old counsellor.	“Offering vocational training alongside academic education would give students practical skills that can help them in the job market. Schools should also provide career counselling to guide students in their future paths.”

8.7 Result

The interview responses highlight a range of targeted interventions and policy changes suggested by displaced Afghan female students and professionals to address their unique challenges. Key themes include the need for enhanced mental health services, financial and academic support, safe school environments, community outreach, and vocational training. Practical recommendations involve improving access to technology, offering flexible schedules, and integrating trauma-informed practices. Insights from educators and mental health professionals further emphasize the importance of comprehensive and collaborative approaches to create inclusive and supportive educational systems.

8.8 Discussion

The responses underscore the multifaceted barriers faced by displaced Afghan female students and the necessity for targeted interventions. Participants consistently stressed the critical need for mental health services, including school-based counselling and trauma therapy, aligning with the literature that highlights mental health as a cornerstone of effective support for trauma-affected populations (Mollica, 2008; APA, 2019). Suggestions for safe spaces and extracurricular activities reflect the importance of fostering emotional resilience and social integration within schools (Bastow et al., 2019).

Financial and academic support, such as scholarships, free school meals, and tailored educational programs, were prominent themes. These align with findings that financial stability and resource availability are crucial for the educational continuity of displaced students (UNHCR, 2021). Additionally, the call for flexible schedules and remote learning opportunities reflects the dynamic needs of displaced populations, as supported by global education policies (WHO, 2021).

Participants also emphasized community involvement through outreach programs and parental education about the value of girls' education. Such initiatives are vital in addressing cultural and social barriers, a recommendation strongly endorsed by educators and mental health experts in the study. The inclusion of career-focused interventions, such as vocational training and internships, was another forward-thinking suggestion, highlighting the need to equip students with practical skills for future self-reliance.

The perspectives of professionals, such as teachers and psychologists, reinforce the importance of trauma-informed teaching practices and collaboration with NGOs to enhance resource availability. These findings align with international best practices advocating for an integrated, collaborative, and culturally sensitive approach to education for displaced students (WHO, 2021; UNHCR, 2021).

So, the responses highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions and systemic policy changes to support displaced Afghan female students. Addressing mental health, financial barriers, community engagement, and school infrastructure can create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. A collaborative approach involving schools, families, and NGOs is essential to ensure that these students can thrive despite their circumstances.

The findings emphasize the profound challenges faced by displaced Afghan female students, particularly the psychological and emotional impacts of displacement that disrupt their education and well-being. Despite these adversities, students demonstrate remarkable resilience through diverse coping strategies, including family support, creative outlets, and community-based resources. To effectively address these challenges, a multifaceted approach is essential. This includes implementing culturally sensitive psychosocial support, remedial programs, and teacher training to equip educators with trauma-informed practices. Flexible school policies, financial assistance, and infrastructure improvements, such as access to technology and safe transportation, are also critical for reducing barriers to education. Furthermore, the role of community engagement and NGO collaboration cannot be overstated. By integrating mental health services, mentorship opportunities, and parental education programs, stakeholders can create an inclusive and supportive environment that promotes both academic success and emotional resilience. Ultimately, targeted interventions and systemic policy changes that address both the immediate and long-term needs of these students are imperative. Through collaborative efforts, schools and communities can empower displaced Afghan female students to overcome the challenges of displacement and achieve their full potential.

9.0 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Sample Size: The study's findings are based on a limited number of interviews and case studies, which may not be representative of all displaced Afghan female students.

Geographical Scope: The focus on specific regions may not capture the full diversity of experiences across Afghanistan and its diaspora.

Cultural Sensitivity: The sensitive nature of the topic may have influenced the willingness of participants to share their experiences fully.

10.0 CONCLUSION

The study highlights the profound emotional and psychological challenges faced by displaced Afghan female students and their significant impact on educational outcomes. The trauma of displacement, compounded by the lack of mental health and psychosocial support, creates substantial barriers to their academic success and overall well-being. These challenges are further exacerbated by prolonged absences from school, cognitive impairments caused by stress, and difficulties in reintegrating into educational settings.

The results underscore the pressing need for comprehensive support networks to attend to these teenagers' scholastic and mental health requirements. Effective interventions should provide school-based mental health treatments such as counselling and trauma therapy in culturally appropriate ways. Equally important are educational programs tailored to the needs of displaced students, including remedial classes, flexible schedules, and mentorship initiatives. Policy reforms, such as scholarships, financial aid, and improved infrastructure like safe transportation and access to technology, are critical in reducing barriers to education.

The study also emphasizes the importance of community engagement in fostering resilience. Initiatives such as parental education, peer support groups, and collaboration with NGOs can build a supportive environment that addresses both the psychological and cultural needs of displaced individuals. By implementing integrated support programs, stakeholders can create inclusive educational spaces that enable these students to overcome their trauma, regain their confidence, and achieve their academic aspirations.

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