

Barriers and Bridges: Access to Education for Displaced Children

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Abstract

As per United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) at the end of 2021, nearly 36.5 million children had been displaced as an outcome of violence and conflict. The ramifications of this conflict-related displacement on education are tremendous. The study focuses on challenges for educational opportunities in displaced settings, including constraints to access, the prolonged nature of displacement, less social integration, and the desire to achieve the goal of excellence. The imperative information for the study has been conducted with the help of primary as well as secondary sources. Health issues in terms of both physical and psychological are adding further problems among children which later became the hurdle in continuing their education. The sample for the study has been collected from the temporarily displaced people, who are getting displaced at the time of firing and shelling in border regions. The purely qualitative approach was followed to get the accurate results of the study. The central theme of the study is based on two prospects; i) how displacement is impacting the education system and ii) how it can include displaced children in the current educational system and strengthen it.

Keywords: Border, Children, Conflict, Displacement, Education

1. Introduction

Displacement is a significant consequence of the characteristics of modern conflict. Wars within the international boundary are detrimental to residents because of death, damage to infrastructure and occupation, and the necessity to flee one's country. In addition to the number of victims and the longevity of a conflict, the extent of homelessness is one of the indicators of its violence. Large-scale displacement is not standard. There are three main ways in wherein conflict-induced displacement cause families to flee from their place of origin. First, inhabitants can be caught accidentally between armed forces and therefore must either evacuate after the conflict affects their region or evacuate in advance of the conflict. Second, armed forces undertake war approaches with the clear intention of causing massive displacement or the relocation of individuals and organizations. Thirdly, displacement is caused by the breakdown of society's economic and social activities resulting from the conflict (Ferris & Winthrop, 2010).

Recent findings on displacement in developing countries show that educational attainment has a substantial role in migration.

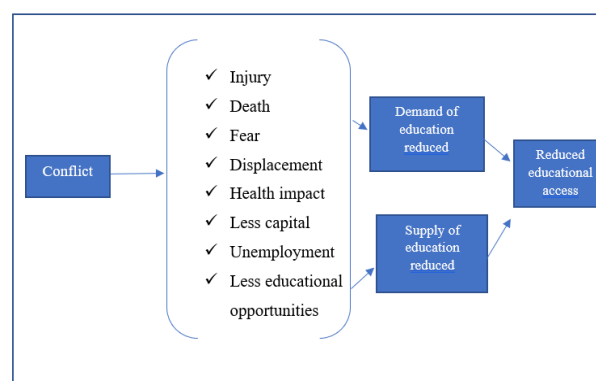


Figure:1

Source: Prepared by the researchers

As a common fact conflict has no boundary. It is everywhere, whether in terms of social or political and also border disputes are not going on in any particular country but it is all around the world. Undoubtedly developing nations are always in need of resources in terms of food supply, education, economy, employment, development in terms of communication as well as transportation, roads as well as bridges, water resources, market places and so on. The same is what the above Figure:1, depicts the result of every conflict is always; injury, death, fear, displacement, health impact, less capital, less education, opportunities and so on. But it did not ends-up there only but also reduce the demand for education and the supply of education which later

reduces access to education.

Impact of displacement on health and education among children

Children often make up at least half of the population in a conflict area and are particularly susceptible to the consequences of war. Every element of their existence is disrupted, and they experience anxiety and insecurity. Children who have been uprooted are more likely to experience sexual and physical abuse, illness, starvation, and separation from their families. They may go through extreme poverty, abuse, exploitation, and psychosocial anguish as displaced people or refugees. Evidence points to a connection between displacement and behaviour and academic performance. Several Hurricane Katrina studies have looked at how relocation affects academic achievement. In one research, nearly one-third of children from households that had been moved or significantly affected by the disaster were at least one year older than their grade level, which was twice the pre-Katrina average for that area (Abramson et al, 2010). The conduct of the students may also be influenced. For instance, the majority of principals who responded to a survey after Hurricane Katrina noted that the attendance and social behaviour of the displaced students were similar to those of the student body before the disaster, though a smaller proportion of principals reported increased discipline difficulties (Pane et al, 2006). In a study of Mississippi schools, attendance issues were shown to be more severe in displaced children than in non-displaced students following Hurricane Katrina, albeit the effect was less noticeable two years after the catastrophe (Ward et al, 2008). Both before and after the crisis, the academic achievement of displaced students was lower, and their rates of non-promotion were greater. The number of suspended and expelled pupils also increased; although these issues were there before the accident, they seemed to be becoming worse.

The impact of displacement on children's education can be both positive and adverse. For instance, whenever families are physically displaced, which might last for a longer or shorter period of time, they are deprived of access to educational opportunities. Before relocating to a new destination, children often see themselves in a condition in which they may lack access to educational institutions. Also, the family could live in a remote rural area devoid of schools. In addition, displaced children are frequently more vulnerable to catching a variety of diseases, experiencing food insecurity, and rules and regulations of society such as child marriages, each of which may have a devastating impact on the schooling of the displaced children. Furthermore, transnational displacement may be associated with greater property and financial loss during the conflict, as well as the necessity for children to engage in income-generating tasks. The Ramifications of displacement are enormous and

usually long-lasting affecting many aspects of an individual's life. Access to educational opportunities is one of those key aspects that can be negatively affected by being forced to relocate.

The government's failure to provide educational opportunities for displaced children has often been filled by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with the ability to deliver learning opportunities in such settings.

2. Literature Review

Education can be defined as a socially constructed process that aims to increase an individual's capacity for contributing to the growth and improvement of society through the acquisition of new information, values, attitudes, and abilities (Idris et al., 2012). Education administrators all over the world continue to worry about educational inequalities. If you want to know what factors predict educational gaps, poverty is the most important one to look at (Alcott, 2017). There is a huge discrepancy in the provision of education across and within India's many districts (Chatterjee, 2019). Many difficulties and peculiarities are more common in border regions. Inaccessible places are more challenging and expensive to provide basic services (Gogoi et al., 2009).

A growing amount of emphasis is being paid to the disorienting experiences of displacement in the well-developed literature on children's reactions to disasters. This study's findings show how children and adolescents' educational adjustments have affected both their academic performance and behaviour at school. It also provides an overview of the emotional and behavioural effects of displacement on children and adolescents. The functioning of children is influenced by the family system in which they are entrenched, as shown by a summary of family influences. Children and their families may experience a wide range of social losses, which are reflected in the psychosocial effects of displacement. The design and delivery of support and intervention services for children and families in the wake of disasters may be influenced by the information from this overview of recent studies on the consequences of displacement (Pfefferbaum et al, 2016)

Undoubtedly one of the most important aspects of human capital is education. Individuals' lives are enhanced, as well as the population experiences the positive effects of social, demographic, cultural, and economic shifts that are all interconnected (Chatterjee, 2019). Global Education Monitoring Report (GEN) 2020, found that the Indian education system graduates the most students gradually. While Indian education is hampered by wide gaps in opportunity, the research also noted the influence of factors such as socioeconomic status, language, gender, race, and region of birth on a person's educational status (Khatun & Dar, 2019). According to Indian Census data, gender disparities in education and literacy rate remained relatively unchanged over the course of several decades

(Kingdon, 2007). It makes more sense from a military point of view to have border regions that are sparsely populated and have the weak infrastructure in order to operate as a barrier against external enemies coming from governments that are located across the boundaries (Kamel, 2004). For this reason, borders have been viewed as “institutions that are used to mark the operational boundary between nations, to exert more control over the movements of individuals and management of cross-border trade or to signify the developing gateway to enabling connection and interaction (Katiyar, 2016). The utmost layer of a country’s surface is its border. Because of the constant pushing and pressing it experiences from its neighbours, this area has been given the label “Zone of Friction” (Norris, 1980).

As Prescott writes in his work “Political Frontiers and Boundaries” a “Boundary” is the line of physical interaction between nations that gives opportunities for collaboration and disagreement between government and state (Prescott, 1987).

By coming to the decision that there is substantial regional and state-level variation in India’s performance in lowering educational opportunity disparity post-liberalization (Asadullah & Yalonetzky, 2010).

Impact on Schooling and Learning

There are three main categories whose education is affected by the displacement-internally displaced persons, who are living within the conflict-affected area; refugees who have been moved beyond international boundaries; mostly in adjacent countries; and in host counties where refugees and internally displaced people are settled.

More than 50% of the children who are refugees are not enrolled in any kind of educational programme (UNHCR, 2020). According to the recently available data, the intermediate gross enrolment rate for refugee children was 31 % as compared to 76% overall, while the higher education student enrolment for refugees was 3% as compared to 38% overall (UNHCR, 2020).

Inclusive education practices analysed from the literature review

First, the long-term harmful effects of violence on internally displaced people can be mitigated by providing effective service to the recovery and rebuilding of the education system. The effects of war and forced displacement vary for males and females, and it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of these processes when developing gender- a responsive approach. Education for IDPs typically receives less attention than education for refugees; therefore, development partners must provide stronger support for the participation of IDPs

in schools in areas where they have been displaced. In addition, an inclusive system of education can benefit both the children of the host community and refugees. When education assistance is offered in addition to national systems, children from the host country may end up disadvantaged compared to refugees. Social compensation strategies that focus on high refugee concentration regions can help to strengthen the already existing inclusive school system. Therefore, it is apparent that, when the growth of national systems makes a double shift necessary, more should be done to make sure that the second shift is filled with high levels of education that will help both host societies and refugees. These investment opportunities in refugee education are even more important because refugees have clearly changed their priorities, moving away from materialistic things and more towards investing in education and social capital that can be passed on from generation to generation (Becker et al. 2020).

Inclusive Education system

A nationwide inclusive educational system is increasingly acknowledged as a possible, protracted approach to the refugee education problem, representing a significant movement away from the provision of education through parallel processing. Government must encourage the rehabilitation of returnee children into quality education by acknowledging skills and documents acquired in their displacement location and by providing safe, appropriate educational options. Recent research has shown that sending children back to school after a long time led to disrupting their learning, and it is crucial for the government to provide educational opportunities.

Governments should eliminate the legal and administrative restrictions that keep internally displaced children out of the formal system of education. For instance, they should implement a welcoming adaptable enrolment process that enables learners to enrol in classes although if they don’t have the necessary documentation. Administer yearly back-to-school programmes to motivate all the forcibly displaced children living in the most disadvantaged group.

To ensure that monitoring on SDG41 in regard to forcibly displaced population is of the utmost quality and as uniform as possible, The UNESCO2 and United Nations Secretary-General3 should organize a consultative approach.

Legal Framework: A Brief Overview

Everyone, especially those who have been displaced from their homes, should have the opportunity to get their education. Displaced people have the right to get primary education under the terms of the 1951 Convention4. Article 22 of this convention states that

1 Sustainable Development Goal-4, Ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4> retrieved on 03.02.2023

2 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization. <https://www.unesco.org/en/brief> retrieved on 03.02.2023.

33 UNSG. <https://www.un.org/sg/en> Retrieved on 03.02.2023

4 The Refugee Convention, 1952

<https://www.unhcr.org/4ca34be29.pdf> retrieved on 23.01.2023

"the contracting states shall accord to refugee's treatment as favourable as possible, and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education and, in particular, as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the remission of fees and charges and the award of scholarships". In accordance with the 'Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement from 1998, national authorities are responsible for internally displaced persons. Nevertheless, the global community has an obligation to make sure that educational right is widely implemented within the context of Convention on the Children's Rights. Safeguarding refugees is one of the UN High Commission for Refugees' (UNHCR) primary responsibilities, and this includes making sure they have access to quality education. The right to have education is an "enabling right" because it paves the way for the realization of other constitutional and political freedoms by providing the opportunity to obtain an education that is accessible acceptable, and flexible (Dryden-Peterson, 2017).

Area of Study

The newly formed Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is in the north direction of India. It shares its boundary with China from the east, Pakistan from the west, Afghanistan from the northwest and Himachal and Punjab from the southeast and west. The UT has evolved into a source of disagreement between India and Pakistan, as both countries dispute their rightful hold on the territory and transform it into a zone of permanent conflict. Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory lies on the Line of Control (LOC)⁵ from its west side.

According to 2011 Census, the total population of Rajouri district was 642,415, density of population was 240/km², literacy rate was 68.17%, and the sex ratio was 8606. On February 27, 2019, the Air Force of Pakistan breached the Line of Control and commenced airstrikes against multiple sites of Rajouri district⁷. On January 01, 2023, terrorists entered houses in the village of Dangri in the district Rajouri and started firing on inhabitants, resulting the deaths of four and the injuries of many others and on the 2nd day of the same incident, an IED exploded near to the same attack site, resulting the death of a child and injury of five others⁸. Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory is a border district and is facing number of issues accompanying with international border. With regard to the overall underdevelopment of the region, this study attempted to examine the existing state of educational progress in the Rajouri district.

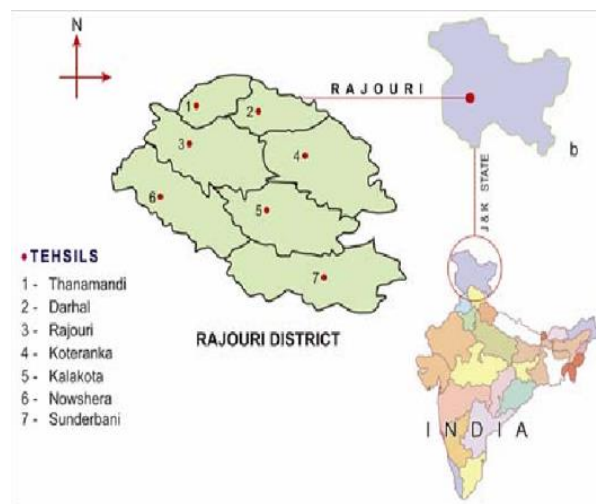


Figure 1: Area of Study
Source: Shah, Ahmad & Sharma, 2017

The above map is clearly depicting the area under study including the additional information about the Tehsils under Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir territory.

3. Methodology

An explorative method of research was used to identify the problems under study. The present study is based on the primary sources of data gathered by the researcher. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select the sample size of the study. A qualitative approach was used to conduct the study. The interview scheduled was prepared and verified by the experts to be conducted with the focused group method. The majority of rural households were covered to explore the impact of conflict-induced displacement on education. All the data was gathered through audio and video recordings. For analysis, all the recordings were transcribed by the researcher, and themes were generated based on the collected information.

4. Discussion

Every individual has the right to an education. The country still has a long way to go before achieving gender equity in access to education. The conflict-prone residents are feeling the effects of conflict. The residents are not only denied of basic facilities, but they also have no guarantee of their lives. The majority of residents revealed that their educational opportunities are impacted due to the conflict between the two bordering nations. People from border areas are forced to flee their homes and temporarily stay at government-run camps when there is heavy shelling and firing in these areas. The educational institutions were transformed into displaced camps, with displacement repeatedly impacting the education of the entire community.

5 The Line of Control is a military control line between the Indian and Pakistani controlled parts of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir – a line which does not constitute a legally recognized international boundary, but it serves as the de facto border.

6 District Rajouri; <https://rajouri.nic.in/>

7 <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2019/02/27/pakistan-jets-violate-indian-air-space-kashmir-nowshera-drop-bombs.html>

8 <https://thewire.in/security/rajouri-jammu-toll-security>

Figure: 2

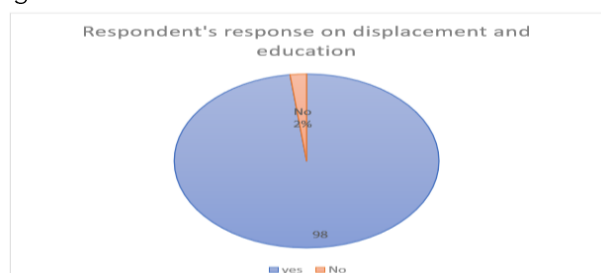


Figure 1: Respondent's response on displacement and Education

Source: Chart Developed by the researcher.

The above figure 2, is clearly indicating that 98% of people are considering displacement the main issue responsible for the disturbance in education among children while 2% are considering other reasons for the same other than displacement. And other reasons may be poverty, less interest, shortage of facilities in education, drop-outs, gender discrimination, child labour and so on.

5. Conclusion

When a child is displaced, that does not undermine his or her right to an education. Education has a crucial role in the situation of distress as a base for rehabilitation, adaptability, and long-term progress. Displaced children must have access to approved non-formal education when formal education is unavailable due to conflict induced displacement.

To ensure that all the displaced children are involved in national educational system, the international community should assist nations in overcoming political and administrative barriers so they can adopt changes in policy and allocate the resources. The adherence to Sustainable Development Goal 4 ought to be a primary factor of progress to guarantee that all the children are entitled to quality of educational opportunities. National governments and democratic institutions may better establish inclusive SDG 4 plan and guarantee that underprivileged children are not left behind by include the needs of the forcibly displaced children and measures to satisfy those needs in the monitoring and evaluation process related with SDG. An explorative method of research was used to identify the problems under study. The present study is based on the primary sources of data gathered by the researcher. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select the sample size of the study. A qualitative approach was used to conduct the study. The study focuses on challenges for educational opportunities in displaced settings, including constraints to access, prolonged nature of displacement, less social integration, and the desire to achieve the goal of excellence.

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