
NAVIGATING THE STORM: COPING WITH CONFLICT AND POLITICAL CHANGE FOR MENTAL HEALTH RESILIENCE

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The severe impact of conflicts-which often occur in chaotic and unstable environments-has on mental health, both for people and communities. South-East Asia incurs a disproportionately significant invisible cost to mental health due to persistent political instability, global conflicts, and terrorism.¹ These events may induce anxiety and stress, which may culminate in an array of mental health issues, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and generalized anxiety disorders. These circumstances are rendered more catastrophic by the continuous threat of violence, displacement, and loss, which makes it challenging for people to retain their resilience in terms of mental health. For example, the prolonged conflict in Kashmir has had a significant impact on people's mental health in the region.² Several psychological wounds are the result of sustained violence and uncertainty. Similarly, millions of people in the region have experienced suffering and grief because of terrorism and political unrest.² Communities impacted by these crises in these areas have a cumulative strain on their mental health.³ The general well-being of these communities is declining due to various factors, including increased stress levels, restricted access to healthcare, and an atmosphere of uncertainty.⁴ The visible psychological impact on people and their neighbours underscores the importance of acknowledging the broader implications of these crises on mental health.

To develop and maintain mental health resilience amid these challenges, people must learn coping mechanisms.⁵ Recognizing the seriousness of this issue is crucial, but so is offering those impacted resources and assistance. Numerous therapies and coping mechanisms may be helpful. Teaching individuals about the psychological consequences of political unrest and violence is one of academia's most essential roles. Academic institutions may reduce stigma, increase awareness, and encourage people to seek assistance by conducting research and implementing educational programmes.⁶ To assist people and communities in overcoming trauma and developing resilience, mental health practitioners can provide psychosocial interventions like counselling and therapy.⁷ For those impacted, establishing support systems within communities may be a beneficial resource. These networks may allow people access to mental health experts and a safe atmosphere to discuss their feelings and experiences. Mental health professionals can conduct workshops on resilience building, and these sessions can offer valuable strategies and skills to improve psychological resilience in the face of hardship.⁸ Access to Services for Mental Health is imperative for governments and non-governmental organizations to guarantee that mental health treatments are easily accessible to individuals who require them.⁹ This involves encouraging the education and placement of mental health specialists in conflict-affected regions. Understanding and resolving the mental health issues brought on by political unrest and violence are critical tasks for academia. Research in this area is crucial to clarify the intricate relationship between political instability and mental health. Scholars can make the following contributions: Research and Data Analysis: Academic institutions might research to understand better the psychological impacts of political unrest and violence in Pakistan and South-east Asia.¹⁰ We can determine patterns and risk factors by gathering information and examining the mental health conditions of impacted groups. Policy Recommendations: Based on their research, academia might advocate policies to facilitate better access to mental health care in places affected by violence.¹¹ When tackling the mental health problem, countries and international organizations can follow these guidelines. Public Awareness Initiatives: To de-stigmatize mental health concerns and motivate people to seek therapy, academia may initiate public awareness initiatives. Advertisements might also inform the public about the distinct symptoms and signs of diseases linked to trauma. Training and Capacity Building: Educational establishments have the potential to provide instruction to mental health professionals who can work in areas of conflict. The training may concentrate on culturally aware methods and the difficulties brought on by trauma associated with conflicts.⁹

There cannot be denying the relationship between political unrest, global conflicts, and terrorism and the impact they have on mental health. These situations have a profound impact on people and communities, frequently resulting in severe mental health problems. In addition to academia's active participation, coping methods and

treatments can assist in lessening these difficulties and support individuals who require it. Prioritizing mental health as the foundation of resilience is crucial as we address the ongoing conflicts in these areas. To address this critical issue and ensure that people and communities can manage the storm of political transition with their mental health, academic research, community support, and government policy must collaborate.

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