

Resilience in Jammu and Kashmir Conflict: Women's Role and Socio-Political Engagement



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Abstract: *The prolonged conflict in Jammu and Kashmir has resulted in a complex humanitarian and economic crisis, characterized by severe human rights violations, including killings, detentions, mass rape cases, and suppression of dissent. The women of Kashmir are frequently represented through narratives of victimhood, widowhood, violence, psychological trauma, enforced disappearances, and displacement; their resilience, participation, and contribution to sustaining families and communities have received relatively less attention. The study examines the experiences, socio-political engagement, and sacrifices of Kashmiri women living in prolonged conflict, focusing on how they have navigated conflict-related crises while contributing to family survival and community resilience. The study draws on Social Capital Theory, mainly the concepts of bonding and bridging social capital, to examine the role of social connections, collective support, and community participation in women's responses to conflict. The study uses a qualitative approach based on human rights reports, institutional documents, and academic literature. The study explores both the plight of Kashmiri women and the form of participation and representation through which they respond to it. The findings show that the women of Kashmir have experienced significant psychological, physical, economic, and social crises, while simultaneously carrying vital responsibilities as family providers, caregivers, cultural preservers, and participants in socio-political life. The study argues that the experiences of the women in conflict cannot be solely understood through victimhood; their resilience and social participation are significant to understand how families, communities, and social connections are sustained under prolonged conflict.*

Keywords: Jammu and Kashmir Conflict, Kashmiri Women, Resilience, Sacrifices, Socio-Political Engagements

Introduction

The Jammu and Kashmir conflict has drastically transformed the social, political, economic, and legal structure of the region. Decades of violence, political uncertainty, militarization, and social disruptions have significantly affected the everyday lives of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Prolonged military presence, curfews, communication blackouts, killings, enforced disappearances, rape, and arbitrary detentions have created an environment characterized by constant fear, tension, insecurity, and uncertainty.

Within this prolonged conflict environment, the women of Kashmir have experienced significant complex and multi-dimensional consequences; they daily pen down the stories of resilience and strength. Kashmiri women have not only undergone the direct consequences of the conflict and violence but have also carried the familial and social responsibilities created by conflict.

Psychological trauma, displacement, the loss of family members, economic insecurity, and social uncertainty have regularly required women to adopt the responsibilities traditionally performed by the male members of the family. At the same time, Kashmiri women have continued to participate in socio-political activities and community life, showing determination and resilience regardless of the circumstances.

The history of Kashmir is evidence that Kashmiri women have played a significant role in shaping society. The women of Kashmir have contributed to the socio-political, cultural, and intellectual development of the society. Figures such as Lal Ded and Habba Khatoon represent longstanding women's intellectual and cultural participation. Later generations of Kashmiri women, including Begam Akbar Jahan, Zooni Gujari, Fazli

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Begam, and several others, have actively participated in socio-political and freedom movements. A series of brave Kashmiri women; their legacy reflects courage and strength (Wani, 2011).

The Jammu and Kashmir conflict, however, has imposed an extra weight on these roles. On the one hand, they contributed to the socio-political engagements, and on the other, they endured multiple forms of trauma, including physical, mental, and psychological. The emergence of the term “Half Widow” further illustrates the gendered impact of the conflict. The term refers to women whose husbands have disappeared, without official confirmation of death, and whose fate remains unknown, leaving them trapped between hope and uncertainty while confronting social, legal, and economic challenges.

In Kashmir, these practices are mainly significant because the women in Kashmir have simultaneously engaged in the positions of caregivers, survivors, family providers, and socio-political actors. The experiences of the Kashmiri women affected by the mass-rape case “Kunan Poshpora”, enforced disappearances, and other forms of conflict-related violence highlight both the severity of gendered suffering and the courage with which Kashmiri women have sought recognition and justice.

Despite these valuable contributions, the women of Kashmir are frequently presented as vulnerable victims of the conflict. This gives comparatively less attention to resilience and socio-political engagement. The women of Kashmir are often represented as vulnerable victims of conflict, survivors of sexual violence, grieving mothers and wives, and half-widows. Such representations are vital for documenting sufferings and human rights concerns, but they do not fully represent how the women of Kashmir have sustained families, supported communities, maintained social relationships, participated in socio-political life, and preserved culture and heritage (Bukhari, 2025).

The current study therefore examines Kashmiri women through a broader analytical angle that identifies both suffering and their participation as active agents. It focuses on three interconnected aspects: the contribution of Kashmiri women to their family and community, sacrifices, and their historical and contemporary socio-political engagement through the analytical framework of Social Capital Theory. The theoretical framework provides an interpretation of these relationships and collective practices, mainly by discussing how the women of Kashmir living in prolonged conflict transform these relationships, collective support, and community networks into resources for resilience and survival.

The objective of this study is to recognize Kashmiri women as active agents in conflict transformation, and as key producers, survivors, and sustainers of strengthening communities, making important contributions to resilience, peacebuilding, and community stability rather than viewing them solely as recipients of suffering and violence.

Research Questions

1. During the prolonged conflict of Jammu and Kashmir, what kind of sufferings, sacrifices, and socio-political engagement did the women of Kashmir experience?
2. How have the women of Kashmir contributed to family and community resilience through collective support, social relationships, and socio-political participation?

Methodology

The study uses a qualitative research design centered on academic literature and documentary sources. The research draws upon secondary and primary sources relevant to armed conflict, women in conflict zones, resilience, and prolonged conflict in Jammu and Kashmir.

Primary documentary sources include reports published by international and national human rights organizations and institutional documents, as well as documented interviews and testimonies of women affected by conflict. Secondary sources include books, journal articles, and literature regarding women in conflict.

The study uses thematic analysis to identify recurring themes within the available literature and documentary material. Particular attention is given to women's socio-political engagement, family responsibilities, sacrifices, resilience, experiences of violence, psychological consequences, half-widowhood, reproductive health, cultural participation, and community support.

Social Capital Theory is used as a conceptual lens for interpreting the findings, particularly in relation to interpersonal relationships, family networks, community solidarity, collective support, and broader forms of social and political participation.

Theoretical Framework

Social Capital Theory developed as an influential framework for understanding how social connections function as valued resources within society. Pierre Bourdieu abstracted social capital as a resource rooted within social networks (Bourdieu, 1986), while James Coleman highlighted its role in assisting cooperation and collective action (Coleman, 1988). Robert Putnam further explained the theory by emphasizing social participation, trust, and civic engagement as essential mechanisms of social capital.

According to Putnam, social capital consists of networks, trust, and norms that support or facilitate individuals to work together to achieve common objectives (Putnam, 1993). In regions or societies undergoing conflict, social capital becomes mainly significant because the support system of the institutions is often weakened and under-controlled. Consequently, communities increasingly depend upon interpersonal relationships, connections, collective solidarity, and formal or informal support mechanisms to overcome the crises. Within the Social capital theory, two significant dimensions are particularly relevant.

Bonding Social Capital

Bonding social capital refers to strong relationships and connections among families and close communities that provide emotional, social, and economic support during times of crisis. The women in Kashmir have strengthened these networks by caring for affected family members, preserving family structure, and maintaining community solidarity despite hardships and trauma. The women in Kashmir, despite being victims of atrocities such as rape, violence, losing dear ones, and facing economic burden, always stand with others as healers and motivational speakers, thereby reinforcing the resilience of their communities (Bourdieu, 1986).

Bridging Social Capital

Bridging social capital refers to connections that extend beyond social groups and enable broader cooperation through community organizations, peacebuilding efforts, and civil society initiatives. Kashmiri women have also significantly contributed to this dimension by participating in humanitarian networks, educational initiatives, and organizations established to support the survivors of the conflict. These services of the Kashmiri women enabled cooperation across communities while strengthening broader networks that contribute to resilience and conflict transformation.

The application of the social capital theory shows that the participation of the women of Kashmir extends beyond individual survival. It extends not only to endurance but also to resilience, community stability, and conflict transformation.

Through their everyday practices for family and community, they have strengthened family and community stability and promoted resilience in a prolonged conflict region. Rather than viewing Kashmiri women solely as victims of the prolonged conflict, the Social Capital theory recognizes them as active agents who contribute essential social resources that sustain communities during crisis. The women of Kashmir contributed to both forms of social capital.

The conflict in Jammu and Kashmir provides a compelling perspective for applying Social Capital Theory. Decades of violence and socio-political instability have disrupted the economic and socio-political fabric and

have created unlimited challenges for the local communities. In response to these circumstances, the Kashmiri women have become the central actors of survival for families and communities. The women in Kashmir maintain the responsibility of caregiving, emotional support, economic contributions, standing in society as victims of rape, healing other victims, and other socio-political engagements; the Kashmiri women consistently generate and sustain social capital.

Kashmiri Women: from Historical Participation to Contemporary Engagement

The history of Kashmir shows that women have consistently played significant socio-political and cultural roles despite living under conditions of prolonged conflict. Their contributions provide a vital context for understanding contemporary engagement of women with conflict and society. Their contributions, resilience, and sacrifices to family and society have been documented by several historians, including renowned Kashmiri author Prem Nath Bazaz.

One of his remarkable books, “Daughters of Vitasta” (A History of Kashmiri Women from Early Times to the Present Day, 1959), provides the historical accounts of the contributions and the role of Kashmiri women. His work presents the mythical golden age in which Kashmiri women achieved remarkable social status and recognition. The book presents numerous examples of Kashmiri women in community life, politics, literature, peacemaking, and social transformation (Misri, 2002).

Lal Ded (Lalla Arifa), the mystic and Sufi poet of the fourteenth century in Kashmir, whose spiritual and literary legacy continues to influence Kashmiri society. Through her literary contributions, she challenged stifled social norms and values, questioned patriarchal traditions, and highlighted the issues of injustice and domestic violence. Born into an ordinary family and married into a conservative household, she transformed personal sufferings into social and spiritual expression.

She used her poetry to resist societal norms and social taboos, eventually becoming one of the first female poets of Kashmir. Long before the emergence of modern socio-political movements, her life and literary services show how women used cultural and intellectual resources to challenge injustices. Her poetry remains unmatched and a symbol of unparalleled resistance (Dar, 2025).

The tradition of courageous women continued through later generations, and the fertile land of Jammu and Kashmir produced numerous women who stood strong and contributed to the well-being of family and society. Similarly, Habba Khatoon was another remarkable poet of Kashmir. Another brave woman (Hoorā Bibi), the mother of the most powerful kings of the Muslim Shahmiri dynasty, Sultan Sikandar, was renowned for her role in state affairs and political decision-making during the period of significant political change (Dar, 2025).

The participation of Kashmiri women in the socio-political movements became increasingly visible in the twentieth century. The political participation of women became more visible during the 20th century; around 1931, a marked period of public mobilization in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The women of Kashmir participated alongside men in political activities and protests against the brutal policies of the Dogra rule, mainly for Muslims. The most prominent figures were Jan Begam, Fazli Begam and Sajida Bano (Bhat, 2023a).

During the Quit Kashmir Movement of 1946, Kashmiri women's participation continued. Influential figures included Begum Mehmuda Ali Shah, Begum Akbar Jahan (wife of Sheikh Abdullah), Fatima Bibi, and Zooni Gujari. Their participation shows that women's political participation extended beyond domestic responsibilities.

The role of Kashmiri women was also visible during the war of 1947. The courageous participation of Hussain Bibi, who joined the freedom movement as a freedom fighter, embraced Shahadat and became an iconic star. Her struggle mirrors the long-standing tradition of women in movements of socio-political transformation (Bhat, 2023b).

Since the emergence of the insurgency of 1989, the responsibilities of the Kashmiri women have acquired new and painful dimensions. In addition to experiencing the devastating consequences of the prolonged conflict, including enforced disappearances, sexual violence, half-widowhood, widowhood, displacement, and loss of family members, they have to take the responsibilities of supporting their household, sustaining livelihoods, raising children, and providing emotional support to family and community (Sharma & Rana, 2015).

Their contributions show that women have simultaneously endured conflict and acted as agents of survival, resilience, and community leadership. The emergence of conflict in society further shaped and nourished the character of Kashmiri women as symbols of resistance, leading them to take the lead on several occasions (Malik, 2018).

This historic continuity shows that the socio-political engagement of Kashmiri women is not a current development. Rather, the resilience of the contemporary women is linked to a longer history of political activism, cultural participation, family responsibilities and community engagement (Malik, 2009).

Sacrifices and Gendered Consequences of the Conflict

The prolonged conflict of Jammu and Kashmir has imposed multi-dimensional roles and sacrifices on women. These sacrifices extend to direct physical violence and include psychological sufferings, family disruptions, reproductive health issues, living in constant fear, economic insecurity, social inequality, and the long-term consequences of disappearances and loss (Malik, 2020). The women of Kashmir have experienced the consequences of the conflict both directly and indirectly. These experiences transform the structure of their families and increase the responsibilities of the women within the household.

Despite these hardships, the women of Kashmir have to continue to stand and support their family and society. This signifies remarkable resilience living under prolonged conflict. From awakening in the morning to the end of the day, the women of Kashmir daily pen the new chapter of history (Butalia, 2014).

Living in Constant Fear and Trauma

Living under prolonged conflict has created an environment of constant fear and insecurity. Constant stress regarding the safety of themselves and their families, frequent family loss, socio-political instability, and movement restrictions have become part of their everyday life. For the women of Kashmir, this uncertainty remains even when their family members leave home for study, work, or other activities. The constant thought of waiting for their loved ones' safe return adds another aspect to the psychological burden of conflict (Sarvesh, 2024).

For the women of Kashmir, this uncertainty remains even when their family members leave home for study, work, or other activities. The consequences of the prolonged fear extend beyond psychological health. Endless fear and insecurity impact family connections and social interactions. Yet the brave Kashmiri women continue to execute their family and community responsibilities.

Half Widows and the Burden of Disappearances

The term "Half Widow" refers to women whose husbands have disappeared, but whose deaths have never been officially confirmed. These women spend their lives in doubt about whether their husband is alive or not. These women face continued uncertainty regarding the socio-economic and legal status of their spouses while at the same time taking responsibility for managing domestic issues and raising children.

The absence of legal recognition prevents them from retrieving inheritance rights, social protection, financial assistance, and taking steps to marry again. Despite these issues and hardships, these Kashmiri women, as half-widows, bravely continue to support their family emotionally and financially.

Reproductive Health and Infertility

Conflict affects every aspect of life, causing issues in physical, mental, and reproductive health. The condition of the reproductive health of Kashmiri women presents a worse picture than any other conflict zone, with a higher mortality rate and a significant impact on fertility. According to data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2019-2021, a sharp decline in the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir has been seen. The fertility rate dropped from 2 to 1.4, lower than India's overall rate. Not only has the fertility rate fallen, but infertility has also increased to 17.5% (Peer, 2026).

Among the main causes of the low fertility rate, stress is one of the most significant causes: the women of Kashmir have to live in a constant fear of losing their loved ones. These changes raised serious and alarming concerns within the broader context of social stress and conflict. Constant fear, disrupted healthcare access, psychological distress, and economic pressure affect the reproductive health of the women. Reproductive health issues show another aspect of the human cost of the prolonged conflict in Jammu and Kashmir.

Mental Health

The psychological consequences of the protracted conflict in Jammu and Kashmir create one of the most important yet overlooked dimensions of women's suffering in Jammu and Kashmir. Living in constant fear of what would happen next to their family and to them, enforced disappearances of their loved ones, and trauma after losing loved ones cause depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and other types of psychological distress. According to the Kashmir Mental Health Survey, 50 percent of Kashmiri women are suffering from probable depression, 36 percent from anxiety disorder, and 22 percent with post-traumatic disorder (Mir & Venkatesh, 2020).

These serious psychological issues often remain invisible because the women continue to perform their responsibilities despite their own sufferings and pain. They have to contribute to maintaining family stability, providing emotional and financial support within families and communities.

Survivors of Sexual Violence

Sexual violence represents one of the worst forms of gendered violence associated with conflict. Many international and national reports regarding Jammu and Kashmir have documented cases of sexual violence against Kashmiri women. Several cases of rape and mass rape have been documented in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, including the Chhanpora mass rape case, Pazipora mass rape case, Doad mass rape case, and Kunan Poshpora. Among these, the Kunan Pora case remains one of the most horrifying instances of sexual violence, in which hundreds of Kashmiri women were subjected to rape by Indian armed forces (Batool et al., 2016).

In the Jammu and Kashmir conflict, sexual violence has been used not only against women but also as a form of torture and an instrument of power against men. Such violence functions as a weapon of oppression, inflicting fear and suffering on individuals and communities while challenging state denials and institutional failures. However, the brave women of Kashmir have not allowed any violence to define their identity or silence their voices. Instead, the Kashmiri women have shown great courage and resilience by raising their voices and standing against such violence and demanding justice and accountability.

Role of Kashmiri Women in Conflict and Community Life

The sufferings and experiences discussed above show that the women of Kashmir have engaged in multiple roles living in a conflict zone. Their sacrifices and contributions cannot be summarized to a single category because their tasks have developed simultaneously within the domestic, cultural sphere, community, and socio-political environment.

Socio-Political Engagements

Kashmiri women, despite living in a conflict-affected society, are performing remarkable socio-political activities. They are converting their story of plight into courage by encouraging others. There are several women who are engaged in social activities; the most prominent name is Parveena Ahangar, whose son was disappeared. She transformed her personal grief into sustained public activism. She established the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), bringing together families of disappeared persons and advocating for justice, truth, and accountability.

Similarly, Essar Batool has contributed to human rights advocacy and Documentation in IAJK, as one of the petitioners in the mass rape case of Kunan Poshpora and co-author of the book "Do You Remember Kunan Poshpora"? She helped document the experiences of sexual violence and the continuing struggle for accountability and justice. Another woman, Ather Zia, has contributed to documenting and analyzing the activism of Kashmiri women, mainly the participation of women with APDP. Her work, particularly *Resisting Disappearances: Military Occupation and Women's Activism in Kashmir*, has contributed to bringing Kashmiri women's activism into wider academic discussions.

Asiya Andrabi, an activist and leader in the separatist movement in Kashmir, is renowned for supporting the rights of Muslims in the region. Advocating for the implementation of self-determination for the people of Kashmir.

Musrat Zahra and Nadiya Shafi, photojournalist and video journalist, have used visual journalism to document the lives and experiences of women in conflict. They are contributing to women's empowerment through reporting and journalism.

Historically, Kashmiri women have participated in socio-political movements and public mobilization. Their representation during the political movements of the twentieth century shows that women have long entered the public sphere during times of political transformation. In the contemporary conflict environment, Kashmiri women have continued to participate in social activism, advocacy, humanitarian activities, and efforts to seek recognition and justice. There are a number of examples of Kashmiri women politicians, including Mehbooba Mufti, who served as the first woman chief minister of IAJ&K.

Shamima Firdous is another prominent contemporary woman politician and has been active in electoral politics several times. Sakeena Itoo represents another vital example of Kashmiri women's participation, the only woman minister in the current government of IAJ&K. Shagun Parihar, Ilthaj Mufti and many others also represent a younger generation of women politicians in IAJK; their participation shows the emergence of younger women in the contemporary political system living in the prolonged conflict. Kashmiri women's political participation extends beyond symbolic representation.

Education and Intellectual Contributions

Despite living in a prolonged conflict zone marked by repeated disruptions to everyday life, political instability, and insecurity, Kashmiri women have continued to pursue education and have made vital contributions to intellectual life, academia, research, and professional fields. Women, including Hafsa Kanjwal, have contributed to history, state formation, political subjectivities, and oral histories. Seema Sekhawat has contributed to important research on women, conflict, peacebuilding, and the political participation of women.

Similarly, Natasha Kaul has also made significant scholarly contributions to the study of Kashmir through gendered analysis of politics, democracy, coloniality, and nationalism. Ather Zia mainly contributed to women's activism, memory, ethnography, disappearances, and resistance. Several women writers and researchers have further contributed to knowledge production by documenting Kashmir through poetry, oral histories, critical scholarship, and literature (Kaul & Zia, 2020).

Nadeem Shafi has contributed to the preservation and development of Kashmiri literary expression, while contemporary women writers and scholars have explored the question of gender, identity, memory, conflict, and cultural change (Zeeshan & Aliefendioğlu, 2024). Zamurda Habib, chairperson of the Muslim Khawateen Markaz in Kashmir and an activist, penned her experiences of the pain of imprisonment into words, documenting her five-year incarceration and the physical and psychological trauma she endured in Tihar Jail in her book *Prisoner No. 100*, the story of an ordeal in an Indian prison (Habib, 2011).

These contributions show that the intellectual contributions of Kashmiri women constitute a significant dimension of their participation in the broader socio-political life of the region.

Family Survival and Caregivers, and Community Support

One of the most significant contributions of the women of Kashmir is their role in sustaining families. They have to contribute in every circumstance involving disappearance, death, economic security, and displacement; they regularly take additional tasks and responsibilities for their children, siblings, parents, and other family members as well. Caregiving is almost invisible in conventional accounts of the conflict; the reason is that it does not take place in the political institutions and battlefields.

However, managing economic security and household under circumstances of uncertainty is a vital component of societal survival. Consequently, Kashmiri women contribute to resilience through everyday routine activities that preserve family connection and provide material and emotional support.

Cultural and Literary Preservation

In conflict-affected regions such as Jammu and Kashmir, literature and cultural heritage are closely connected to collective identity and cultural memory. The women of Kashmir have also played a significant role in preserving literature, language, oral traditions, music, and cultural heritage of the region. Syed Areej represents a contemporary example of this cultural preservation. She became the first female Ladishah performer in IAJK; Ladishah is a traditional form of Kashmiri folk storytelling and satirical poetry. She connected this 150-year-old traditional expression with the younger generation (Khan, 2021).

Another great contribution made by Naseem Shafai through her poetry is that she conveyed her concern about the decline of the Kashmiri language among younger generations and emphasized the importance of preserving it.

Similarly, Seerat Hafiz represents a younger generation engaged in digital preservation of Kashmiri literature and language. In 2023, she established Yikvot, a platform to preserve Kashmiri culture and language to reconnect younger generations. This platform includes resources for learning Kashmiri, reading sessions, and a digital library of Kashmiri literature (Debnath, 2026).

Irfana and Rehana Yousaf are both young sisters who are the first female santoor players in the region, preserving centuries-old musical tradition. Onaiza Drabu is co-founder of Daak (a platform archiving South Asian literature). She has worked to revive and document Kashmiri folklore (Drabu, 2019).

Beyond these examples, many Kashmiri women are engaged in digital and community-based initiatives to preserve the language, folklore, cultural heritage, and traditions of the region and transmit them to the younger generations.

Beyond these examples, numerous Kashmiri women are engaged in digital and community-based initiatives to preserve the region's language, folklore, traditions, and cultural heritage and to transmit them to younger generations. Their contributions have helped sustain Kashmiri cultural heritage and language memory across generations and through changing political and social circumstances.

Discussions

The findings of this research show that the experiences of the women of Jammu and Kashmir cannot be understood solely in terms of victimhood. Their suffering, plight, and resilience exist simultaneously. Women have undergone intense collective and personal losses, while on the other hand continuing to maintain family connections, participate in community life, provide economic and emotional support, and engage in socio-political activities.

The first perspective, bonding social capital, is clearly seen within families and communities. Kashmiri women regularly take on the duty to support and maintain the structures following the burden of hardships. Their responsibilities, including emotional support, domestic duties, and caregiving, help to sustain relationships that might be disturbed by conflict.

The second dimension, bridging capital, is observed when the responsibilities and activities of the conflict-affected women extend beyond family. Their participation in social activism, humanitarian initiatives, advocacy, and other broader political engagement links individuals and families with their wider networks.

The experiences of the Kashmiri women who publicly raise concerns of sexual violence, injustice, and disappearance show how personal experiences can become collective concerns. Through documenting, organizing, speaking, and participating in public life, women are connecting individual suffering to broader networks of advocacy and solidarity.

This difference between bonding and bridging social capital also helps to explain why the contribution of women to resilience should not be limited to household survival. Emotional and economic care represents an important sort of social resilience, but community participation expands the importance of women's agency beyond the private sphere.

The record of the historical contributions shows that the participation of women in the state and society of Kashmir has long involved socio-political and cultural networks. From spiritual and literary figures to women participating in twentieth-century socio-political movements have frequently crossed the boundary between public and private life.

The findings of this study consequently advocate that the resilience of Kashmiri women is collective and relational. Women draw strength from families and communities while simultaneously contributing to their strength. Their contributions create the reciprocal connection in which support is both provided and received.

The capability of women to sustain families and communities under the prolonged conflict does not eliminate the plight they experience. Nor should the resilience of women be interpreted as an expectation that women must constantly absorb the consequences of the conflict. Rather, resilience should be understood as evidence of women's agency within the circumstances they did not choose.

The application of social capital theory therefore shifts analytical focus from asking only how conflict victimizes women to also asking how women sustain social life despite conflict. This perspective reveals that the women of Kashmir function as community actors, cultural preservers, advocates, caregivers, emotional and economic supporters, and socio-political participants. Their contributions constitute vital social resources for families and communities experiencing prolonged instability.

Conclusion

The prolonged conflict of Jammu and Kashmir imposed a dual role and burden on the women of Kashmir. As caregivers, daughters, mothers, sisters, wives, and community members, women bear a disproportionate share of the humanitarian consequences of armed conflict.

The prolonged Jammu and Kashmir conflict has imposed multidimensional and profound costs upon women. Their experiences include enforced disappearance of family members, physical and sexual violence, widow and half-widowhood, economic insecurity, socio-political uncertainty, reproductive health issues, and psychological trauma. These consequences show the deep gendered nature of the prolonged conflict.

Yet the experiences of the women of Kashmir cannot be adequately represented through suffering alone. Throughout the history of Kashmir, women have participated in intellectual, social, cultural, and political life. Throughout the time of socio-political unrest, women continued to take on their responsibilities that sustain communities and families.

The research has examined these practices and experiences through the theoretical framework of social capital theory. The analysis demonstrates that the resilience of Kashmiri women is deeply connected to social connections and mutual networks. Within families and societies, women contribute to bonding capital by supporting family and providing financial and emotional care. Further than family networks, Kashmiri women participate in humanitarian activities and socio-political engagements that contribute to bridging forms of social capital that connect communities with wider networks.

The significance of these contributions extends beyond individual survival; the routine activities of Kashmiri women constitute a vital but unnoticed dimension of resilience. A complete understanding of the Jammu and Kashmir conflict therefore requires enlisting Kashmiri women at the center of analysis, not only as victims of conflict but also as contributors and preservers of socio-political and cultural continuity.

The study concludes that recognizing Kashmiri women as active participants of resilience, socio-political preservers, and community survival contributes to a more equal understanding of the conflict. It can also reinforce approaches to justice, conflict management, and peacebuilding that take lived contributions and experiences of women in conflict-affected societies.

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