Pakistan Journal of Positive Psychology

Print ISSN : 3078-6428 | Online ISSN : 3078-6436
Pakistan Journal of Positive Psychology

Original Article

BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD: EXPLORING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT THROUGH MORAL DISENGAGEMENT & MENTAL HEALTH PERSPECTIVES

Asif Khan [a], Muhammad Imtiaz Chaudhry [b], Ammar Ahmed [c], Khalida Khan [d], & Madeeha Awan [e]

[a,b] PhD Psychology, Psychology Research Wing, Rawalpindi, Pakistan
[c,d,e] MPhil Psychology, Psychology Research Wing, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Correspondence email: Dr. Asif Khan, PhD Psychology, Psychology Research Wing, Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Email: asifkhanswat212@gmail.com

KEYWORDS:
Moral Disengagement, Mental Distress, Conflict, Depression, Attitude towards War and Peace

CITE THIS ARTICLE:
Khan, A., Chaudhry, M. I., Ahmed, A., Khan, K., & Awan, M. (2026). Beyond the battlefield: Exploring the psychological dynamics of conflict through moral disengagement & mental health perspectives. Pakistan Journal of Positive Psychology, 3(10), 56-69.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the psychological dynamics of conflict through the lens of moral disengagement and mental health in individuals from operation, post-operation, and non-operation areas in Pakistan. The primary objective is to examine how depression, anxiety, and stress influence moral disengagement and attitudes towards war and peace. The hypothesis posits that moral disengagement mediates the relationship between psychosocial distress and attitudes towards war and peace. A cross-sectional and correlational design was employed, with 300 participants (150 males, 150 females) from three different geographical zones: active conflict areas (Waziristan), post-conflict areas (Swat, Buner, Dir), and non-conflict areas (Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera). Instruments used included the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21), the Moral Disengagement Scale, and the Attitude towards War and Peace Scale. Data analysis revealed significant correlations between mental distress and moral disengagement, with stress showing a strong negative relationship with peace attitudes. Gender differences were observed in depression, anxiety, and moral disengagement, but no significant differences were found in attitudes towards war and peace. Regional variations were significant, with participants from conflict zones showing higher levels of depression, anxiety, and moral disengagement, along with a more pronounced war attitude. The study highlights the complex interplay of mental health and moral disengagement in conflict-affected regions and emphasizes the need for psychological interventions to foster peace and resilience.

I. INTRODUCTION

Armed conflict in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan, has psychological consequences that can persist beyond immediate physical danger. Accounts of insecurity in northwestern Pakistan indicate that displacement, altered social relationships, and uncertainty can affect how civilians experience and interpret everyday life (Mielke et al., 2021; Yasmin et al., 2022). Research on conflict-affected communities links cumulative adversity with mental-health concerns, but also cautions that experiences differ between locations and individuals (Khan, 2023; Hassan et al., 2016). A recent synthesis of displaced populations documents substantial yet variable levels of depression and anxiety, showing why prevalence estimates should not be transferred uncritically from one conflict setting to another (Kip et al., 2026; Hassan et al., 2016). Accordingly, the present study investigates psychological symptoms in distinct KP settings without assuming uniform exposure or uniform responses. The psychological consequences

of conflict may vary according to a community's history of insecurity and recovery. This study classifies Waziristan as an operation area, Swat, Buner, and Dir as post-operation areas, and Peshawar, Charsadda, and Nowshera as non-operation comparison areas; the classification is geographical rather than an individual measure of violence exposure (Nawaz, 2022; Yasmin et al., 2022). Displacement and disruption of family or livelihood can continue after military activity declines, so a post-operation designation does not imply that all adversity has ended (Welton-Mitchell, 2013; Hijazi et al., 2019). Research concerning the consequences of conflict also highlights variation in adjustment and resilience, supporting the need to compare reported symptoms rather than infer them from residence alone (McNally, 2015; Mielke et al., 2021). These distinctions make regional comparison valuable while limiting any interpretation that location perfectly captures personal exposure.

Attitudes toward war and peace are influenced by psychological experiences alongside social and political interpretations of conflict. Studies of the justification of military force show that individuals' moral evaluations are associated with their acceptance of violent responses (McAlister et al., 2006; Levy, 2024). Research on social conflict likewise stresses that group narratives and perceptions of threat help organize judgments about reconciliation (Bar-Tal, 2011; Fabbe et al., 2024). A Pakistan-based investigation has also considered moral disengagement in relation to war- and peace-oriented attitudes, providing a useful contextual comparison while testing different additional variables (Muhammad et al., 2025; Fabbe et al., 2024). Therefore, depression, anxiety, and stress are treated as potential correlates, not automatic causes, of attitudes toward violence and peace. Moral disengagement offers a way to understand how people may justify harmful actions while maintaining a favorable view of themselves. Bandura's formulation identifies mechanisms including moral justification, advantageous comparison, euphemistic labeling, displacement and diffusion of responsibility, minimization of consequences, blame, and dehumanization (Bandura, 1999; McAlister et al., 2006). Subsequent conceptual work shows how such justifications can lessen moral self-sanctions in circumstances where harm is portrayed as acceptable or necessary (Bandura, 2017; McAlister, 2001). Research synthesizing moral disengagement further indicates that its associations depend on the characteristics of the people and behaviors studied, rather than arising identically in every context (Luo & Bussey, 2023; Bandura, 1999). Moral disengagement is accordingly examined as an individual cognitive variable within the proposed explanatory model.

Psychological distress and moral disengagement may be related, although their association does not establish a single causal direction. Research outside armed-conflict settings links negative emotional experiences with moral disengagement and harmful behavior, illustrating a possible psychological pathway but not demonstrating it in the present population (Fida et al., 2018; Maftei et al., 2024). Work on emotional manipulation and psychological well-being likewise suggests that moral disengagement can operate within complex relationships among emotional and behavioral processes (Aftab & Malik, 2021; Fida et al., 2018). Evidence from a Pakistan-based study of marginalization, negative affect, and violent extremism further supports examining emotional and cognitive variables together while distinguishing its outcomes from war-attitude scores (Riaz et al., 2024; Muhammad et al., 2025). For that reason, the proposed mediation is evaluated as an association-based statistical model rather than proof that distress causes war support. An integrated model of distress, moral disengagement, and conflict-related attitudes addresses an important gap in the study of civilian experiences. Conflict scholarship identifies group identity and perceived threat as relevant influences on public responses to violence (Hamid, 2022; Shah et al., 2018). Research on peacebuilding emphasizes that beliefs and social relationships may change differently across settings, making it inappropriate to use psychological symptoms as a substitute for measuring attitudes (Soboleva, 2021; Raheem, 2025). The emerging literature on interventions also reports heterogeneous psychological outcomes, supporting the separate assessment of mental health and peace orientations (García Durán et al., 2026; Barceló, 2025). The present analysis therefore considers both sets of outcomes, the proposed mediator, and gender and geographical differences.

Repeated conflict-related disruptions may influence both emotional functioning and interpretations of social relationships. Reports from affected communities discuss enduring experiences of loss, mistrust, and uncertainty beyond the immediate period of hostilities (Tabares & Palacio, 2021; Ilyas, 2024). Theoretical discussion of moral judgment emphasizes that how events are framed can influence whether harmful actions are condemned or excused (Hoffman & Krosnick, 2014; Bar-Tal, 2011). Research on traumatic experience also distinguishes emotional recovery from wider changes in attitudes and relationships (Van der Kolk, 2014; Hassan et al., 2016). Together, these

perspectives justify examining psychological distress, moral judgment, and peace attitudes as related but separate dimensions. Recent research reinforces the need for context-sensitive assessment of people affected by conflict. A 2026 synthesis of displaced populations reported substantial variation in depression and anxiety estimates across samples, demonstrating the difficulty of applying one estimate to all communities (Kip et al., 2026; García Durán et al., 2026). A 2026 review of interventions during ongoing conflicts likewise identified differences in participant groups, methods, and psychological outcomes (Fréel et al., 2026). A further 2026 investigation of civilian trauma in a South Asian conflict setting illustrates the continuing relevance of evaluating symptoms in their specific local context (Sakeena et al., 2026; Kip et al., 2026). These findings favor direct measurement in the three groups studied here over assumptions based on geographical labels.

Civilians exposed to violence and displacement may experience depression, anxiety, traumatic stress, and persistent emotional strain. Research on conflict-related psychological effects identifies loss and insecurity as significant sources of distress, although the severity and duration of symptoms vary (Hassan et al., 2016; Hijazi et al., 2019). Studies of displaced and conflict-affected populations also draw attention to social disruption and the availability of support when interpreting mental-health outcomes (Tabares & Palacio, 2021; Welton-Mitchell, 2013). More recent work emphasizes that circumstances of recovery and ongoing adversity can lead to different responses across communities (Rengifo, 2025; Kip et al., 2026). Thus, the study compares observed scores without assuming that all residents of an operation area have more severe symptoms than every resident elsewhere. Social and economic disruption can intensify the psychological burden associated with armed conflict. Insecurity may interfere with education and employment and can weaken the social structures on which families rely for stability (Ilyas, 2024; Mielke et al., 2021). Research on conflict exposure and civic engagement also indicates that social responses to adversity vary with institutions and community circumstances (Soboleva, 2021; Yasmin et al., 2022). Findings concerning emotion and moral disengagement from other settings offer a possible analogy, but their different populations and outcomes restrict direct generalization (Fida et al., 2018; Barceló, 2025). Consequently, broader circumstances should be considered when interpreting the individual psychological and attitudinal measures in this sample.

Pakistan-based evidence provides a particularly relevant starting point for examining moral disengagement and attitudes toward conflict. Muhammad et al. (2025) studied moral disengagement and peace/war attitudes alongside suicidal ideation, establishing thematic relevance to the present question. Their inclusion of suicidal ideation differs from this study's three DASS-21 constructs, which means that the studies cannot be treated as exact replications (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995; McAlister et al., 2006). Research into emotional and cognitive correlates of violent extremism in Pakistan further indicates the importance of selecting precisely defined constructs for analysis (Riaz et al., 2024; Fida et al., 2018). The present study extends this conversation by assessing depression, anxiety, and stress separately in three geographical groups. Moral disengagement is especially relevant to beliefs about conflict because it concerns the acceptability of harmful behavior. Bandura's account explains how justification, diffusion of responsibility, blame, and dehumanization may reduce self-sanctions against actions otherwise judged objectionable (Bandura, 1999; Bandura, 2017). Research on the endorsement of military force illustrates how moral-disengagement mechanisms are associated with support for retaliatory action (McAlister et al., 2006; Bandura, 1999). Other synthesis work cautions that individual variation and setting matter when interpreting these mechanisms (Luo & Bussey, 2023; McAlister et al., 2006). Moral disengagement should therefore be measured rather than attributed automatically to everyone exposed to conflict.

Depression, anxiety, and stress cannot by themselves explain why an individual supports or rejects violence. Research on perceived threat and group loyalty indicates that the same experience of insecurity can be interpreted through competing political and social narratives (Fabbe et al., 2024; Bar-Tal, 2011). Studies of moral reasoning further indicate that justification of harm involves cognitive processes that are distinguishable from emotional symptoms (Levy, 2024; McAlister, 2001). Findings on psychological and moral processes in other environments supply comparisons but do not determine a causal pathway for adults in KP (Aftab & Malik, 2021; Bar-Tal, 2011). Accordingly, the current model treats psychological distress and moral disengagement as associated but conceptually distinct variables. Support for peace may depend on the interaction of emotional experience with perceived safety and social trust. Research on the political legacies of violence finds that attitudinal effects can differ substantially across outcomes and settings (Barceló, 2025; Bar-Tal, 2011). Work on displaced populations indicates

that perceived threats and loyalties may shape peace preferences in ways that cannot be inferred from depression or anxiety alone (Fabbe et al., 2024; Barceló, 2025). Studies of peacebuilding have likewise emphasized the role of social relationships and broader context in responses to reconciliation (Raheem, 2025; Fabbe et al., 2024). This supports separate measurement of peace orientation instead of assuming that it is simply the inverse of psychological distress.

Mental-health interventions and peacebuilding activities should not be assumed to produce identical outcomes. A systematic review of peace and conflict-resolution interventions reported varied psychological effects across types of initiatives, including interventions with benefits and others with more troubling outcomes (García Durán et al., 2026; Fréel et al., 2026). A review of psychosocial interventions in ongoing conflicts similarly described heterogeneous evidence and implementation conditions (Fréel et al., 2026). Work on the needs of displaced populations reinforces the importance of understanding local vulnerability before generalizing intervention findings (Kip et al., 2026; Hassan et al., 2016). These findings call for careful assessment rather than claims that any single intervention will necessarily promote both mental health and peace. Moral judgments may also affect how people evaluate reconciliation initiatives. Research on disengagement and support for military action associates the normalization or justification of harm with more permissive judgments about violence (McAlister et al., 2006; Bandura, 1999). Social-psychological accounts of intractable conflict emphasize that collective narratives and group boundaries can complicate reconciliation (Bar-Tal, 2011; Fabbe et al., 2024). Yet evidence of varied responses to conflict cautions against portraying an entire region as uniformly disengaged or hostile to peace (Barceló, 2025; Bar-Tal, 2011). The present work therefore focuses on measured individual differences rather than assigning moral characteristics to districts.

Responses to conflict-related distress should consider both psychological well-being and the social interpretation of violence. Research on the emotional dimensions of moral disengagement suggests that empathy and related capacities may be relevant to how individuals process harmful behavior, although findings from educational samples cannot be transferred directly to war-affected adults (Maftei et al., 2024; Tabares & Palacio, 2021). Evidence about mental-health support in conflict conditions also stresses the need to adapt interventions to the experiences and safety needs of particular groups (Fréel et al., 2026). Wider work on conflict resolution indicates that promising practices still require evaluation for unintended psychological effects (García Durán et al., 2026; Hassan et al., 2016). These qualifications favor culturally sensitive and empirically evaluated approaches rather than a one-size-fits-all program. Recovery from conflict may involve clinical support, opportunities for dialogue, and the restoration of trust and practical security. Research on the social consequences of displacement points to the importance of family connections, livelihoods, and community relationships during adjustment (Mielke et al., 2021; Yasmin et al., 2022). Work on community and psychological recovery also cautions that responses depend on individual circumstances and the resources available (McNally, 2015; Tabares & Palacio, 2021). The mixed findings from peacebuilding research indicate that reconciliation activities should be evaluated rather than presumed uniformly therapeutic (García Durán et al., 2026; Hassan et al., 2016). A combined approach to mental health and community recovery is therefore worth investigating, without treating it as a result established by this cross-sectional study.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provides the most coherent explanation for the relationship among psychological distress, moral disengagement, and attitudes toward war and peace examined in this study. The theory views human functioning as an interaction among personal processes, behavior, and social environments. People interpret what they witness through learned expectations, beliefs, and self-regulatory standards, while experiences of insecurity and social messages can shape the way potentially harmful actions are evaluated. This perspective is relevant to the study's comparison of residents of operation, post-operation, and non-operation areas, whose experiences of conflict and perceived safety may vary. Moral disengagement is the central social-cognitive mechanism in the proposed model. Bandura (1999) explains how moral self-regulation may be selectively disengaged through moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, displacement and diffusion of responsibility, minimizing harmful consequences, attribution of blame, and dehumanization. In conflict-related situations, such processes may allow individuals to judge aggression as necessary, defensive, or acceptable without fully confronting its human costs. Moral justification and dehumanization are especially relevant because they concern the perceived legitimacy of harmful action and the moral standing of affected people.

Applied to the present research, depression, anxiety, and stress represent the psychological distress variables; moral disengagement is the proposed mediator; and attitudes toward war and peace are the two outcomes. The framework proposes that distress may be associated with shifts in how individuals process threats and evaluate violence, and that moral disengagement may statistically account for part of those associations. This is a testable explanatory proposition, not an assumption that distress inevitably produces support for conflict. The cross-sectional design can examine associations and indirect statistical effects, but it cannot establish temporal or causal mediation. Differences among the three area groups and between genders are examined as contextual patterns within the same framework.

Rationale

Various studies have explored the psychosocial impacts of prolonged conflict on civilian populations, highlighting elevated levels of depression, anxiety, stress, and trauma-related symptoms in conflict-affected regions worldwide (Hassan et al., 2016; Hijazi et al., 2019). Research has also examined how exposure to violence influences cognitive and moral reasoning processes, including moral disengagement, which can mediate individuals' responses to trauma and their attitudes toward conflict and peace (Levy, 2024; Riaz et al., 2024). However, most existing studies primarily focus on combatants, refugees, or specific displaced groups, often overlooking the broader civilian populations living in zones with varying degrees of conflict exposure (Bar-Tal, 2011; Fabbe & Hazlett, 2024). Furthermore, few empirical investigations have examined the mediating role of moral disengagement in the relationship between mental health outcomes and attitudes toward war and peace in civilian settings, especially in complex conflict contexts like Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) region (Raheem, 2025). This study seeks to fill this critical gap by comparing populations from active operation, post-operation, and non-operation areas within KP, elucidating how differential conflict exposure impacts mental health and cognitive coping mechanisms. The findings will inform tailored mental health interventions and peacebuilding efforts that address the unique psychological and moral dimensions shaping societal attitudes toward conflict resolution in these communities.

Figure I: Conceptual Framework



Objectives

1. To examine the relationship among depression, anxiety, and stress, moral disengagement and attitude towards conflict and peace among populations from active operation (Waziristan), post-operation (Swat, Buner, Dir), and non-operation areas (Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera). To examined the importance of psychological wellbeing for peace and progress.
2. To determine whether moral disengagement mediates the relationship between psychosocial factors and mental health outcomes, as well as attitudes towards war and peace, in these populations. To present the psychological view on conflict resolutions.
3. To analyze the demographic effects on study variables, and contributing in peace building scientifically.

Hypotheses

H1: Depression, anxiety, stress, and moral disengagement are positively correlated with war-oriented attitudes and negatively with peace-oriented attitudes.

H2: Moral disengagement mediates the relationship between psychosocial distress and attitudes towards war and peace.

H3: There are gender differences in depression, anxiety, stress, moral disengagement, and attitudes towards war and peace.

H4: Populations from active, post-operation, and non-operation areas differ in levels of psychological distress, moral disengagement, & war/peace attitudes.

II. METHOD

Participants

In this study, a cross-sectional and correlational research design was used. According to G*Power, for a model with four predictors, an effect size of.015, a power of 0.95, and an alpha of.05, a total of 100 participants from each group will be needed. The population of the study was a total number of participants was (N=300), consisting of 3 groups with 100 participants from each group having equal male and female participants, i.e., active operation areas (Waziristan), post-operation areas (Swat, Buner, Dir), & non-operation areas (Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera). Individuals of age group 18 -50 years, belonged to mentioned areas with Urdu language understanding were included. While, individuals below age 18 years or above 50 years were excluded.

Measures

[I] A 21-item Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) developed by Lovibond and Lovibond was used. It is a self-report questionnaire designed to assess symptoms of sadness and anxiety. The items were created on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (no experience) to 3 (often or most of the time) (Gomez et al., 2014). Vignola and Tucci (2014) found that the subscales of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress had Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 92,.90, and 86. **[II]** The Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement Scale (MDS) has 0.97 reliability (developed by Bandura, 1999). It is a self-reporting tool with 32 items (4 for each mechanism). The MDS assesses eight mechanisms of moral disengagement: moral justification, euphemistic language, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, distorting consequences, attribution of blame, and dehumanization. **[III]** Attitude towards war and peace Scale developed by Bizumic et al. and had 16 items with responses measured on a nine-point Likert-type scale. The reported Cronbach's alpha by the author is.83 for the peace subscale and.90 for the war subscale. The two subscales consist of 8 items each. A high score on the subscale shows a higher orientation towards the respective attitude in that subscale.

Procedure

Participants from three groups (active operation, post-operation, and non-operation areas) was recruited with equal gender representation (N=300). After informed consent, they completed self-report questionnaires: DASS-21, selected Moral Disengagement subscales (Dehumanization and Moral Justification), and the Attitude towards War and Peace Scale. Data was be collected through questioners (Urdu Translated of respective Scales) along with supervised sessions in local style and anonymized for analysis. Informed consent will be obtained, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. Participants can withdraw anytime without penalty. Psychological support will be available if needed. The study will follow ethical guidelines and receive institutional review board approval. Data will be analyzed using correlational analyses to explore relationships among variables. Mediation analysis will test whether moral disengagement mediates the link between psychosocial distress and peace and conflict attitudes. ANOVA or MANOVA will assess group differences across conflict zones and gender effects.

III. RESULTS

The present aimed to examine the psychosocial factors influencing attitudes toward war and peace among participants from operation, pre-operation and post operation areas. The results were given below:

Table I: Descriptive Statistics of Study Participants (n=300)

Variables	Categories	f	%
Age	18–24	32	5.3
	25–31	68	11.3
	32–39	75	12.5
	40–50	52	8.7
Gender	Male	150	50
	Female	150	50
Area	North Waziristan	100	33.3
	Swat, Bunir, Dir	100	33.3
	Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera	100	33.3
Family System	Nuclear	68	22.7
	Joint	232	77.3
Marital Status	Unmarried	107	35.7
	Married	193	64.3

Table 1 shows 300 participants, with a relatively balanced gender distribution of 50% males and 50% females. Age-wise, the participants were spread across different categories, with the majority being between 32 and 39 years (12.5%). Geographically, participants were equally distributed from three areas: North Waziristan, Swat/Bunir/Dir, and Peshawar/Charsadda/Nowshera, each contributing 33.3%. Regarding family structure, most participants lived in joint families (77.3%), while 22.7% belonged to nuclear families. In terms of marital status, the majority were married (64.3%), while 35.7% were unmarried.

Table II: Correlations among Study Variables (n=300)

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
Depression	5.14	3.16	-					
Anxiety	4.50	2.55	.675**	-				
Stress	6.76	3.96	.708**	.635**	-			
Moral Disengagement	22.26	5.57	.397**	.450**	.464**	-		
Peace Attitude	46.65	6.87	-.051	-.219**	-.145*	-.221**	-	
War Attitude	40.92	10.24	.109	.236**	.285**	.338**	-.251**	-

***p*< .01

The table 2 presents the correlations among various study variables. Depression showed moderate to strong positive correlations with anxiety (r =.675) and stress (r =.708). Anxiety and stress were also positively correlated with each other (r =.635). Moral disengagement exhibited moderate positive correlations with depression (r =.397), anxiety (r =.450), and stress (r =.464). Peace attitude was negatively correlated with anxiety (r = -.219) and war attitude (r = -.251), indicating that higher peace attitudes were associated with lower levels of anxiety and war attitude. War attitude showed positive correlations with depression, anxiety, stress, and moral disengagement, with the strongest being with stress (r =.338).

Table III: Regression Analysis for Mediation of Moral Disengagement among Mental Distress and Attitude towards War and Peace (N=300)

Variables	Direct Effect (B)	95% CI	Standard Error (SE B)	β (Standardized Beta)	R^2	ΔR^2
Step 1:					0.236	0.236***
Depression	-0.04	[-0.262, 0.183]	0.113	-0.025		
Anxiety	0.395	[0.198, 0.592]	0.1	0.226		
Stress	-0.648	[-0.862, -0.433]	0.109	-0.41		
Step 2:					0.332	0.096***
War Attitude	-0.13	[-2.48, 2.18]	2.394	-0.13		
Peace Attitude	0.582	[0.451, 0.712]	0.066	0.472		
Moral Disengagement	-0.223	[-0.270, -0.175]	0.024	-0.345		

Note. CI = Confidence Interval
***P<.001.

The regression analysis explores the mediation of moral disengagement between mental distress (depression, anxiety, and stress) and attitudes towards war and peace. In Step 1, mental distress variables (depression, anxiety, and stress) were found to have varying effects, with anxiety showing a significant positive relationship with distress (B = 0.395, β = 0.226), while stress negatively impacted the model (B = -0.648, β = -0.41). Step 2 revealed that moral disengagement significantly mediated the relationship, with a negative impact on attitudes towards war and peace (B = -0.223, β = -0.345). Attitudes towards peace showed a positive significant effect (B = 0.582, β = 0.472), while war attitude was not significantly influenced (B = -0.13, β = -0.13). The mediation model explained 33.2% of the variance, with a significant change in R^2 (ΔR^2 = 0.096).

Table IV: Mean scores, Standard Deviation, and t-values of Male and Female on Depression, Stress, and Anxiety, Moral Disengagement and Attitude towards War and Peace (N=300)

	Male (n=150)		Female (n=450)				95% CI	
Variables	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*(298)	*p*	*LL*	*UL*
Depression	5.34	2.82	4.93	3.47	1.11	.011	-.31	1.13
Anxiety	4.71	2.28	4.29	2.79	1.45	.031	-.15	1.00
Stress	7.10	4.00	6.42	3.91	1.49	.541	-.22	1.58
Moral Disengagement	22.71	4.65	21.82	6.35	1.38	.000	-.38	2.15
Peace Attitude	47.65	7.03	45.65	6.58	2.54	.722	.45	3.55
War Attitude	40.85	10.44	41.00	10.07	-0.13	.800	-2.48	2.18

The table 4 compares male and female participants on various psychological and attitudinal measures. Males reported slightly higher levels of depression and anxiety, with significant differences observed in both, while no significant difference was found in stress scores. Males also scored higher on moral disengagement, showing a notable effect. However, there were no significant differences between genders in attitudes towards peace and war, with males and females scoring similarly on both. The results suggest that while some gender differences exist in depression, anxiety, and moral disengagement, peace and war attitudes remain largely similar across genders.

Table V: Mean, Standard Deviation and One-Way Analysis of Variance on Psychosocial Variables across Areas (N=300)

Variables	North Waziristan (100)		Swat, Bunir, Dir (100)		Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera (100)		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*(3, 596)
Depression	7.76	2.87	4.31	2.48	3.34	2.23	83.83***
Anxiety	5.83	2.81	3.97	2.20	3.70	2.04	23.86***
Stress	10.58	2.94	5.41	3.02	4.29	2.63	136.74***
Moral Disengagement	10.58	2.94	5.41	3.02	4.29	2.63	45.10***
Peace Attitude	25.94	3.51	19.60	4.94	21.25	5.93	6.89***
War Attitude	45.42	5.45	35.80	10.80	41.55	11.10	26.08***

The table 5 reveals means, standard deviations, and one-way ANOVA results for psychosocial variables across different areas. Significant differences were observed across the areas for all variables ($p < 0.001$), as indicated by the high F-values and the presence of three asterisks. Depression was highest in North Waziristan (M = 7.76) and lowest in Peshawar/Charsadda/Nowshera (M = 3.34). Similarly, anxiety and stress followed the same trend, with North Waziristan reporting the highest scores. Moral disengagement was highest in North Waziristan (M = 25.94) and lowest in Swat/Bunir/Dir (M = 19.60). Peace attitude was highest in Peshawar/Charsadda/Nowshera (M = 48.69) and lowest in Swat/Bunir/Dir (M = 45.77), while war attitude was highest in North Waziristan (M = 45.42). All variables showed significant group differences, indicating regional variations in psychosocial factors.

IV.DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationships among psychological distress, moral disengagement, and attitudes toward war and peace across operation, post-operation, and non-operation areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The findings highlighted significant associations among depression, anxiety, stress, and moral disengagement, alongside variations in psychological and attitudinal responses across geographical groups. This discussion interprets the findings in relation to the proposed hypotheses, compares them with supporting and contradictory empirical evidence, and considers their implications for mental health and peacebuilding. The first hypothesis predicted that depression, anxiety, stress, and moral disengagement would correlate positively with war-oriented attitudes and negatively with peace-oriented attitudes. Consistent with part of this prediction, war attitudes were related to anxiety (r = .236), stress (r = .285), and moral disengagement (r = .338), while the depression association (r = .109) was not marked significant. Peace attitudes correlated negatively with anxiety (r = −.219), stress (r = −.145), and moral disengagement (r = −.221), whereas the depression association (r = −.051) was not marked significant. Studies linking moral disengagement with military-force endorsement and conflict attitudes provide a relevant explanation for the moral-cognition finding (McAlister et al., 2006; Muhammad et al., 2025). Thus, the first hypothesis receives partial rather than comprehensive support.

The association between moral disengagement and war attitudes is consistent with research into the cognitive justification of violence. McAlister et al. (2006), alongside Bandura (1999), reported that greater moral disengagement was related to stronger support for military retaliation in a national sample. Similarly, Muhammad et al. (2025), in a study thematically related to McAlister et al. (2006), examined moral disengagement alongside peace and war attitudes in Pakistan, although their additional focus on suicidal ideation differed from the constructs in this study. Conversely, research on threat perceptions and loyalty among refugees suggests that peace preferences can reflect social allegiances and security concerns not captured by a single psychological variable (Fabbe et al., 2024; Bandura, 1999). The present findings therefore support the relevance of moral cognition without establishing that it alone determines war attitudes. The first hypothesis also assumed that psychological distress would be consistently related to lower support for peace, but the results were not uniform. Specifically, depression had weak, unmarked associations with both attitudinal outcomes, whereas anxiety and stress showed clearer negative relationships with peace attitudes in the correlation table. Evidence on conflict-related threat and group loyalties suggests that insecurity may prompt different political responses depending on interpretation and setting (Fabbe et al., 2024; Bar-Tal, 2011). A meta-analysis of wartime violence likewise found heterogeneous attitudinal

legacies, contradicting any expectation of a universal emotional response (Barceló, 2025; Fabbe et al., 2024). These distinctions indicate that the study supports selective associations rather than a broad claim that distress inevitably promotes war.

The second hypothesis proposed that moral disengagement mediates relationships between depression, anxiety, and stress and attitudes toward war and peace. The reported correlations are compatible with parts of that model: moral disengagement correlated with depression (r = .397), anxiety (r = .450), stress (r = .464), peace attitudes (r = −.221), and war attitudes (r = .338). Research into the justification of coercive action offers a theoretical basis for including moral disengagement between psychological experience and moral judgments (McAlister, 2001; Bandura, 1999). Nevertheless, the displayed regression table does not provide separate predictor-to-mediator paths and bootstrapped indirect-effect confidence intervals for the two attitudinal outcomes. The hypothesis is therefore theoretically plausible but not statistically confirmed by the supplied table. Existing research offers a rationale for testing an indirect path through moral disengagement, although it does not demonstrate that path in this dataset. Experimental work has shown that changing messages about military action can affect expressed moral disengagement and related judgments (McAlister, 2001; Bandura, 1999). Outside conflict settings, Fida et al. (2018), building on work discussed by Aftab and Malik (2021), examined the interplay of negative emotion, disengagement, and aggressive behavior, indicating potential connections among these constructs. In contrast, research on group-based threat emphasizes political loyalties and interpretations that could influence peace attitudes without being mediated by individual disengagement (Fabbe et al., 2024; Aftab & Malik, 2021). The model requires explicit indirect-effect estimates before any claim about mediation can be made.

Alternative explanations limit how strongly the second hypothesis can be interpreted. The reported coefficients do not rule out reciprocal associations between moral disengagement and war attitudes, nor do they establish whether emotional symptoms preceded either construct. Studies of intractable conflict emphasize group narratives and identity, offering a broader explanation that may operate alongside individual cognition (Bar-Tal, 2011; Fabbe et al., 2024). Evidence concerning the variable consequences of violence similarly cautions against treating one psychological pathway as universally explanatory (Barceló, 2025; Kubota, 2025). Accordingly, a correctly specified mediation analysis and preferably longitudinal evidence are needed to distinguish the proposed mechanism from alternatives. The third hypothesis anticipated gender differences in depression, anxiety, stress, moral disengagement, and attitudes toward war and peace. The reported male means were somewhat higher for depression (5.34 vs. 4.93), anxiety (4.71 vs. 4.29), stress (7.10 vs. 6.42), moral disengagement (22.71 vs. 21.82), and peace attitudes (47.65 vs. 45.65), while war attitudes were similar (40.85 vs. 41.00). However, the displayed p values conflict with some t statistics and confidence intervals, and the female group is mistakenly labeled n = 450; these problems prevent secure conclusions about statistical significance. Research on gender-related variation in depression and moral disengagement supports examining the question but cannot correct these inconsistencies (Kuehner, 2017; Georgiou et al., 2022). The hypothesis remains unresolved until the test statistics are reconciled with the original analysis.

The descriptive gender pattern is not fully consistent with commonly reported patterns in other populations. Kuehner (2017), with the broader context of gender variation discussed by Wang and Hollis (2026), reviewed evidence that depression is more common among women in many settings, which differs from the slightly higher mean for men in this sample. Georgiou et al. (2022) examined gender in relation to moral disengagement and school bullying, but their participants and outcome were distinct from adult war attitudes. More recent evidence on conflict exposure and gendered violence attitudes also reports associations that differ by sex and context (Wang & Hollis, 2026; Georgiou et al., 2022). Thus, apparently divergent findings may partly reflect differences in measures, social roles, and exposure rather than a straightforward contradiction that can be resolved from these data. Gender-related responses to conflict may depend on how displacement changes social expectations and opportunities. A study in northwestern Pakistan associated displacement with more egalitarian gender attitudes, illustrating that insecurity need not invariably reinforce hostile orientations (Kubota, 2025; Wang & Hollis, 2026). Research from another conflict setting found sex-specific patterns in the justification of intimate-partner violence, although domestic-violence attitudes are not interchangeable with attitudes toward war (Wang & Hollis, 2026; Kubota, 2025). These findings qualify any simple claim that one gender necessarily shows greater moral disengagement across

contexts. Until this study's inferential statistics are verified, the reported mean differences should be presented descriptively. The third hypothesis therefore cannot be classified confidently as supported or rejected.

The fourth hypothesis predicted differences in psychological distress, moral disengagement, and conflict attitudes across operation, post-operation, and comparison areas. The displayed means show higher depression (M = 7.76), anxiety (M = 5.83), and stress (M = 10.58) in North Waziristan, with war attitudes also highest there (M = 45.42) relative to the other groups. Previous accounts of conflict and displacement in northwestern Pakistan support investigating geographical variation in psychological and social outcomes (Yasmin et al., 2022; Mielke et al., 2021). Nevertheless, Table 5 repeats stress values in the moral-disengagement row, gives conflicting peace-attitude descriptions, and lists ANOVA degrees of freedom inconsistent with the study sample. The regional pattern is therefore suggestive, but statistical conclusions require correction of the original table and analysis. The reported regional differences are broadly compatible with research highlighting the psychological burden of conflict and displacement. Yasmin et al. (2022), alongside research on displacement by Mielke et al. (2021), documented self-reported consequences of armed conflict in Pakistan's Malakand district, offering evidence from a geographically relevant setting. A 2026 review of psychosocial interventions in active conflict areas similarly emphasized varied needs and the importance of tailoring responses to context (Fréel et al., 2026). However, large-scale research on wartime experiences finds that subsequent attitudes and behavior vary between settings, complicating a simple prediction that more exposure always produces a specific political orientation (Barceló, 2025; Mielke et al., 2021). The fourth hypothesis should consequently be interpreted in terms of the observed group means rather than a deterministic effect of area of residence.

Regional exposure is an imperfect proxy for the experiences that may affect psychological and peace-related outcomes. The study's non-operation label describes its sampling classification and does not mean that no residents of Peshawar, Charsadda, or Nowshera encountered insecurity. Research on peace and conflict-resolution initiatives reports varied psychological effects, indicating that recovery and reconciliation do not follow an identical course everywhere (García Durán et al., 2026; Fréel et al., 2026). Evidence about post-conflict gender attitudes likewise illustrates how displacement can be followed by differing social responses rather than a single trajectory (Kubota, 2025; Wang & Hollis, 2026). These comparisons suggest several possible influences—support, community reconstruction, trust, and individual exposure—that were not directly measured here. The regional hypothesis warrants cautious interpretation pending corrected analyses and more specific exposure measures. Overall, the findings suggest associations among psychological distress, moral disengagement, and attitudes toward war and peace, while leaving several inferential questions unresolved. The correlation table identifies links involving anxiety, stress, and moral disengagement, but not every predicted association was statistically marked as significant. Research on the heterogeneous consequences of wartime violence and intervention outcomes reinforces the need to interpret those links in their social context (Barceló, 2025; García Durán et al., 2026). In addition, the mediation table lacks the indirect-effect estimates needed to establish mediation, while gender and regional tables contain internal inconsistencies. Accordingly, the manuscript's conclusions should remain limited to the verified descriptive and correlational evidence until the original statistical outputs have been checked.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study has a few limitations that should be addressed in future research to deepen our understanding of the psychological impacts of conflict. One key limitation is the reliance on self-report questionnaires, which can be influenced by social desirability bias, as participants may underreport distress or moral disengagement. To mitigate this, future studies could incorporate more objective tools, such as behavioral assessments or in-depth interviews, to complement self-reported data and ensure greater accuracy. Additionally, the cross-sectional design used in this study limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. A longitudinal design would allow researchers to track changes in mental health and attitudes over time, particularly in response to evolving conflict situations or post-conflict recovery. The study also focused on specific geographical areas within Pakistan, which may not fully capture the diversity of experiences in conflict-affected regions. Future research should expand the geographical scope to include a broader range of conflict zones, both within Pakistan and internationally, for more generalizable findings. Lastly, the exclusion of individuals outside the age range of 18 to 50 years leaves out potentially valuable insights into how younger and older individuals experience and cope with conflict. To build on this research, it would be beneficial to include a wider age range to examine the psychological effects across different life stages. By addressing

these limitations, future studies can provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the psychological dynamics of conflict and better inform mental health and peacebuilding interventions.

Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for both psychological interventions and peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected regions. Understanding the relationship between mental distress, moral disengagement, and attitudes toward war and peace can help design targeted mental health programs that address the specific needs of individuals in conflict zones. By recognizing the mediating role of moral disengagement, interventions can focus on promoting empathy, conflict resolution, and peace-oriented attitudes, ultimately fostering resilience and social cohesion. These insights can inform policy decisions, humanitarian efforts, and psychological support strategies aimed at reducing the long-term psychological impact of conflict and promoting lasting peace.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlighted the significant role of mental health, particularly depression, anxiety, and stress, in shaping moral disengagement and attitudes towards war and peace. The findings highlight how individuals from conflict zones experience heightened levels of psychosocial distress, which in turn influences their perspectives on war and peace. Moral disengagement emerged as a key mediator in this relationship, affecting how participants rationalize violence and conflict. While gender differences were observed in mental health variables, attitudes towards war and peace remained largely similar across genders. Regional disparities were particularly notable, with those from active conflict areas exhibiting the most pronounced distress and moral disengagement. These results emphasize the need for targeted psychological interventions in conflict-affected regions, focusing on addressing mental health issues and promoting peace-oriented attitudes to mitigate the long-term effects of conflict. Ultimately, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological dynamics at play in conflict zones and offers valuable insights for both policy and therapeutic practices aimed at fostering reconciliation and healing.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

The author received no funding from any organizations.

VIII. REFERENCES

Aftab, S. R., & Malik, J. A. (2021). Mediating Role of Moral Disengagement between Emotional Manipulation and Psychological Well-Being: Does Age Matter? *Behavioral Sciences*, *11*(9), 117. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs11090117

Bandura, A. (1999). Moral disengagement in the perpetration of inhumanities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 3*(3), 193-209. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0303_3

Bandura, A. (2017). Mechanisms of moral disengagement. In *Insurgent terrorism* (pp. 85-115). Routledge.

Barceló, J. (2025). Attitudinal and behavioral legacies of wartime violence: A meta-analysis. American Political Science Review. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055425101299

Bar-Tal, D. (2011). *Intergroup conflicts and their resolution: A social psychological perspective*. Psychology Press.

Bauer, M., Cassar, A., Chytilová, J., & Henrich, J. (2014). War's enduring effects on the development of egalitarian motivations and in-group biases. *Psychological science*, *25*(1), 47-57. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613493444

Bauer, M., et al. (2016). The role of community resilience in reducing moral disengagement: Insights from conflict-affected populations. International Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies, 23(4), 367-384. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002714562780

Bizumic, B., Stubager, R., Mellon, S., Van der Linden, N., Iyer, R., & Jones, B. M. (2013). On the (in) compatibility of attitudes toward peace and war. *Political Psychology*, *34*(5), 673-693. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12032

Cohen, R., et al. (2011). The mental health impact of conflict on civilians: A systematic review. Journal of the American Medical Association, 306(13), 1472-1479. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2011.1424

Fabbe, K., Hazlett, C., & Sinmazdemir, T. (2024). Threat perceptions, loyalties and attitudes towards peace: The effects of civilian victimization among Syrian refugees in Turkey. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, *41*(3), 263-288. https://doi.org/10.1177/07388942231172754

Fida, R., Tramontano, C., Paciello, M., Guglielmetti, C., Gilardi, S., Probst, T. M., & Barbaranelli, C. (2018). 'First, do no harm': The role of negative emotions and moral disengagement in understanding the relationship between workplace aggression and misbehavior. *Frontiers in psychology*, *9*, 671. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00671

Fréel, S., Punski-Hoogervorst, J. L., Hoeboer, C. M., Ruzek, J. I., Beardmore, L., Olff, M., & Javakhishvili, J. D. (2026). Mental health and psychosocial support interventions for populations affected by ongoing armed conflict: A scoping review. BMJ Global Health, 11(5), e022708. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2025-022708

Gabrisch, H. (2019). *Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*. Routledge.

García Durán, M. C., Singh, R., Avendano, M., & Lund, C. (2026). The impacts of peace and conflict resolution interventions on mental health and psychological well-being: A systematic review. Conflict and Health, 20, Article 69. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-026-00804-2

Georgiou, S. N., Charalampous, K., & Stavrinides, P. (2022). Moral disengagement and bullying at school: Is there a gender issue?. *International Journal of School & Educational Psychology*, *10*(3), 395-407. https://doi.org/10.1080/21683603.2020.1859421

Hamid, N. (2022). *Sacred values, social exclusion, community norms and willingness to fight and die* (Doctoral dissertation, UCL (University College London)).

Hassan, G., Ventevogel, P., Jefee-Bahloul, H., Barkil-Oteo, A., & Kirmayer, L. J. (2016). Mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of Syrians affected by armed conflict. *Epidemiology and psychiatric sciences*, *25*(2), 129-141. https://doi.org/10.1017/S2045796016000044

Hijazi, A., Ferguson, C. J., Richard Ferraro, F., Hall, H., Hovee, M., & Wilcox, S. (2019). Psychological dimensions of drone warfare. *Current Psychology*, *38*, 1285-1296. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-017-9684-7

Hoffman, D. (2014). Conflict exposure and moral disengagement: Cognitive processes behind violence. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 58(3), 422-441. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002714521982

Hoffman, L., & Krosnick, J. A. (2014). Moral disengagement in the face of violence: Psychological implications of violent conflict exposure. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 106(2), 303-317. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035087

Ilyas, M. (2024). The impact of armed conflict on education and children in Jammu and Kashmir: implications for peace education. *Journal of Peace Education*, 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/17400201.2024.2433783

Jehangir, A. (2023). *Afghan Refugees, Pakistani Media and the State: The Missing Peace*. Taylor & Francis.

Khan, S. (2023). *Militarizing the psyche: security, kinship and psychiatry in pakistan* (Doctoral dissertation, Johns Hopkins University).

Khattak, A. (2022). *The bio-political empire sovereignty, race and war in Afghan, Iraqi and Pakistani literatures* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Warwick).

Kip, A., Nickerson, A., Specker, P., Langiu, A., Nguyen, T. M. T., Churbaji, D., & Morina, N. (2026). Mental health of internally displaced persons: A meta-analysis. BMJ Global Health, 11(6), e023173. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2025-023173

Kubota, Y. (2025). Internal displacement and post-conflict gender attitudes: Evidence from northwestern Pakistan. Social Forces, Article soaf105. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soaf105

Kuehner, C. (2017). Why is depression more common among women than among men?. *The lancet psychiatry*, *4*(2), 146-158. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(16)30263-2

Levy, G. (2024). Bias in the Evaluation of Violence Against Civilians: Cognitive Dissonance and Moral Disengagement in Colombia.

Lovibond, P. F., & Lovibond, S. H. (1995). The structure of negative emotional states: Comparison of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS) with the Beck Depression and Anxiety Inventories. *Behaviour research and therapy*, *33*(3), 335-343. https://doi.org/10.1016/0005-7967(94)00075-U

Luo, A., & Bussey, K. (2023). Moral disengagement in youth: A meta-analytic review. *Developmental Review*, *70*, 101101. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2023.101101

Maftei, A., Opariuc-Dan, C., & Vrabie, T. (2024). Moral disengagement and academic engagement: the moderating roles of educational anti-mattering and psychological distress. *Ethics & Behavior*, *34*(5), 342-359. https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2023.2225203

McAlister, A. L. (2001). Moral disengagement: Measurement and modification. Journal of Peace Research, 38(1), 87–99. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343301038001005

McAlister, A. L. (2010). Moral disengagement and tolerance for health care inequality in Texas. *Mind & Society*, *9*, 25-29. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11299-009-0065-2

McAlister, A. L., Bandura, A., & Owen, S. V. (2006). Mechanisms of moral disengagement in support of military force: The impact of Sept. 11. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *25*(2), 141-165. https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2006.25.2.141

McNally, R. J. (2015). Psychological effects of conflict: Trauma, resilience, and recovery in post-conflict societies. Psychiatry Research, 230(2), 268-274. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2015.05.015

Mielke, K., Shahid, M. N., Khatana, A. R., Ahmed, Z., Irshad, A., Kiran, S., & Javed, M. M. (2021). Figurations of Displacement in and beyond Pakistan: Empirical findings and reflections on protracted displacement and translocal connections of Afghans.

Muhammad, H., Saddique, A., Shahid, H., Ullah, Z., Hussain, B., & Afridi, Y. (2025). Moral Disengagement and Suicidal Ideation: Leading to Peace and War Attitude. *Journal of Social Signs Review*, *3*(03), 127-136.

Nawaz, F. (2022). *Three Essays on the Determinants of Radicalization: A Case of North-Western Pakistan* (Doctoral dissertation, Dissertation, Dresden, Technische Universität Dresden, 2022).

Raheem, I. (2025). Studying How Psychological Factors Influence Conflicts and Peacebuilding Efforts within Societies. *The Critical Review of Social Sciences Studies*, *3*(1), 93-108.

Rengifo, M. (2025). Advancing the study of moral disengagement: a summary of current research and future directions. *Handbook of Ethics and Social Psychology*, 299-312. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035311804.00031

Riaz, F., Masood, S., & Haleem, M. (2024). Negative Affect Mediates Perceived Marginalization and Violent Extremism among Students with Diverse Ethnic Backgrounds. *Pakistan Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *22*(1), 15-22.

Sakeena, T., Pervez, A., & Lolansen, C. (2026). Post-traumatic stress disorder among civilians in Indian-administered Kashmir: A systematic review. Frontiers in Psychiatry, 17, 1919292. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2026.1919292

Shah, S., Yezhuang, T., Muhammad Shah, A., Khan Durrani, D., & Jamal Shah, S. (2018). Fear of terror and psychological well-being: The moderating role of emotional intelligence. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *15*(11), 2554. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15112554

Soboleva, V. (2021). Navigating Civic (Dis) Engagement in Conflict: An Integrative Literature Review on Emerging Adults in Aggressor States. *ResearchGate.*

Tabares, A. S. G., & Palacio, N. M. D. (2021). The protective role of empathy and emotional self-efficacy in predicting moral disengagement in adolescents separated from illegal armed groups. *Anuario de Psicología Jurídica*, *31*(1), 127-136. https://doi.org/10.5093/apj2021a10

Tillman, C. J., Gonzalez, K., Whitman, M. V., Crawford, W. S., & Hood, A. C. (2018). A multi-functional view of moral disengagement: Exploring the effects of learning the consequences. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *8*, 2286. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02286

Van der Kolk, B. A. (2014). The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma. Penguin Books.

Wang, D., & Hollis, A. (2026). Divergent effects of conflict exposure on gendered attitudes toward intimate partner violence in Nigeria. Journal of Interpersonal Violence. https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605251415156

Welton-Mitchell, C. E. (2013). UNHCR's mental health and psychosocial support. *Geneva: UNHCR*.

Yasmin, R. S., Iqbal, F., Iqbal, M., & Din, S. (2022). Participant-Reported Effects of Armed Conflict and Displacement on Behaviour and Attitudes in Malakand District of Pakistan. *Pak-Euro Journal of Medical and Life Sciences*, *5*(1), 155-160. https://doi.org/10.31580/pjmls.v5i1.2419

Zhang, S. I. (2016). *Chinese War Correspondents: Covering Wars and Conflicts in the Twenty-First Century*. Springer.