

# Findings

## **Topic of Research: Lived Experiences of Youth in Conflict Zones: A Sociological Study of Urban Kashmir**

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This study explores the lived experiences of youth in a conflict setting of Kashmir by treating youth as agential category. It takes as a starting point that conflict is experienced and narrated in different ways and all layers are important to consider while attempting at understanding or explaining social suffering violent conflict brings, both at individual as well as collective level.

In protracted conflicts that have lasted for more than ten years (contemporary Kashmir conflict is ongoing for seven decades), the boundaries between the violent episodes or events and everyday life blurs. The violent conflict enters the realm of everyday life gradually becoming an inescapable reality and spills across the landscapes and cityscapes of prosaic life Violence attains the labelling of lives who are suffering it on a daily basis. Such societies become engulfed in confusions and uncertainties. Kashmiri youth living under such conditions are continually engaged in reinventing their lives and looking for the means of coping mechanism and survival

The everydayness of violence makes them anxious and fearful about the ever-changing and unpredictable circumstances. Whether violence is taking place in someone's home, on the streets or on an encounter site or in a secret interrogation labelling and whether direct violence has personally touched everyone's life yet it (violence) has attained the centrality in everyday life of the youth. Kashmiri youth

navigate daily routines of relationships, school, friendships, love, play and leisure time alongside the deadly consequences of political violence.

When one delves into the lives of these young people one realizes that multiple forms of violence - direct and indirect, have embodied consequences that echoes in their relationships in both private and public spheres.

The long-running conflict in Kashmir has resulted in complex, difficult, and entangled manifestations of violence in and through the lives of all Kashmiris, particularly Kashmiri youth. This study focuses on the subjective experiences and perspectives of youth from the fieldwork site, diverging from the conventional state narratives and political rhetoric. It acknowledges the agency of conflict-affected youth and regards them as competent but marginalised. This study recognizes the importance of exploring the narratives of those who are negatively framed and written out of discourses appearing as mere numbers represented by statistics without understanding the complexity of their habitus. Therefore by centring the youth's understanding of the everyday life they occupy helps as to gain a better understanding of the complexities and interconnected effects of living in a situation of conflict, violence, and (in)security.

Young people of conflict zone like Kashmir are marginalised and rarely have a say in the debates and narratives that invoke or characterise them. This study respects the intrinsic significance of young people's observations and narratives by recognising them as agential, contested narrators and observers of their live scapes. The first-hand narrative testimonies of Kashmiri youth contained in this study support the argument that, while the site of everyday experience in Kashmir is complex, broken, and difficult to examine, it is nonetheless a site of negotiation and resistance, and hence a crucial site of study. It adds to a growing corpus of research arguing that everyday experiences are crucial in understanding a war-like situation. This study uses narratives to bring the voices of marginalized Kashmiri youth to the foreground, countering the negative framing of youth in the dominant-partial discourses.

**Keywords:** Lived Experiences; Everyday; Kashmir; Conflict; Violence