Chapter 9

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION and IMPLICATIONS

The main objective of this chapter is to present a succinct picture of the entire study. It begins by summarizing the study, concluding its findings, drawing implications and finally stating its limitations.

9.1 Summary

9.11 Research concern

Resilience of adolescents living with political violence in Kashmir: the role of religious meaning system and political ideology.

The central theme of this study was to understand resilience in the context of political violence. We studied how various risk factors impinging on adolescents in Kashmir are organized with respect to meaning systems and political ideologies.

9.12 Objectives

- To understand how the community defines resilience in Kashmir.
- To understand children’s experiences of political violence and identify the risks associated with exposure to political violence.
- To understand ways in which children consolidated their knowledge of religion and politics to develop religious meaning systems and political ideologies.
- To study the resilience and vulnerability of adolescents.
- To identify factors associated with resilience and/or vulnerability.
- To develop a model explaining the role of religion and political ideology in fostering resilience amidst the risks associated with political violence.
- To suggest guidelines for preventive interventions for children living with political violence.
9.13 Methodology

The study followed a quantitative methodology based on a constructivist realism ontology (Cupchick, 2001) that aimed to understand the “reality” of living with political violence by studying the perceptions and attitudes of adolescents by using self-reporting measures. The concept of resilience was partly constructed in the community through interviews with community members, with an aim to contextualize the definition of “doing okay” which lies at the core of resilience.

9.14 Variables

**Predictors**
Violence proneness of the area
Exposure to violence
Socio economic condition
Age
Gender

**Moderators and mediators**
Religious meaning system
Political ideologies

**Outcome variables**
Responses to political violence:
Resilience
Mental health

9.15 Hypotheses

**About living with risks**

- Violence proneness of an area will be positively related to vulnerabilities and negatively related to resilience.
- High exposure to violence will be positively related to vulnerabilities and negatively to resilience.
- Vulnerability and resilience will differ significantly with age and gender.
- Socio economic condition will be positively related to psychosocial functioning.


**About religious meaning system and political ideologies**

- The relation between risks and vulnerability and resilience would be moderated and mediated by adolescent’s religious meaning system.
- The relation between risks and vulnerability and resilience would be moderated and mediated by adolescent’s political ideology.

**9.16 Procedure – data collection and analysis**

This was a cross-sectional survey study that included a component of qualitative data collection method to understand the meaning of resilience in the context. Pilot testing of the questionnaires was conducted before the actual data collection. Stratified sampling technique based on data obtained about rate of politically violent incidents occurring in all the areas of Baramulla district was used to select two areas differing in their violence proneness. List of government and private schools in Bandipora (high violence area) and Uri (low violence area) were obtained and random sampling was used to select the schools from which data would be collected. Attending government school was an indication of the adolescent’s lower socio-economic condition while attending private school was an indication of better socio-economic condition. Entire ninth and tenth standard classes were considered as a cluster and selected from each of the selected schools. The total sample consisted of 375 boys and girls who had given their written consents to participate in the research. The tools of data collection were in the form of a set of self-reporting questionnaires consisting of –

1. Exposure to Political Violence questionnaire
2. Self-reporting Questionnaire 20 (SRQ20)
3. Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM)
4. Religious beliefs questionnaire
5. Political beliefs questionnaire

The data were analysed by using SPSS 15 software. Correlation, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data to identify the trends and test the hypotheses. Principle components analyses were conducted to extract types of exposure to violence, type of meaning systems and political ideologies.
9.17 Findings

The main findings have been discussed according to the objectives stated above and not according to the organization of results chapters.

*To understand how the community defines resilience in Kashmir.*

Resilience is defined in terms of risks that are being experienced by a group. According to the community, the major risks that adolescents in Kashmir were facing could be divided into three major themes. Exposure to political violence and symbols of violence in the form of armed forces, bunkers, continuous body searches, etc. was the first theme of challenges confronting adolescents in Kashmir. The other theme was associated with the impact violence was having on education and opportunities of development for the youth. Lack of resources, disrupted schedules and lack of quality were main factors constraining the quality of education. Corruption was cited as a major problem responsible for spoiling education as a system. The final theme of challenges or risks consisted of the impact chronic violence and repression has had on the society. The outcome of societal impact was noticed in increased drug addiction, suicide rates and illicit sex.

The concept of resilience emerged from the construction of risks. Thus resilience in adolescents in Kashmir was characterized by:

- Controlled reactions to experiences with armed forces and violent incidents
- Communication within the family and family’s values that encouraged support and sense of security
- Religious beliefs that inculcated a sense of surrender to Allah
- Personal achievements and ability to plan for the future that created a sense of goal directedness in adolescents
- Financial condition and feeling disadvantaged, the lack of which would indicate resilience
- Attitude towards use of violence as a solution to the problem in Kashmir
- Ability to keep oneself entertained and occupied
- Sense of responsibility and ability to get back to routine after a setback
- Relationship with friends and other peers
To understand children’s experiences of political violence and identify the risks associated with exposure to political violence.

The sample could be categorized according to the following risk factors –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk factors</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violence proneness of the area</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High (Bandipora)</td>
<td>176 (46.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low (Uri)</td>
<td>199 (53.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of school</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>187 (49.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>188 (50.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>199 (53.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>176 (46.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age levels</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>59 (15.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>146 (38.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>162 (43.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>8 (2.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus the participants were evenly distributed according to area, school and gender. Results showed that number of politically violent incidents experienced by Kashmiri children ranged from 0 to 22, with an average of about 8 incidents per child out of possible 32 (Mean = 8.01, SD = 4.51, SEM = 0.23). Around 10% of the sample had experienced 14 incidents of violence, 25% had experienced 11 incidents of violence and 75% of the sample had experienced at least 5 incidents of violence in their lifetime. Based on total sample statistic 68% had witnessed violent acts on others, 62.4% reported experiencing bereavement due to violence, 81.4% reported exposure to armed violence, 78.4% reported being victims of different forms of violence and 30% had experienced socio-economic effects of violence.

Adolescents living in Bandipora and attending government schools had a significantly higher risk of exposure to political violence than those living in Uri and attending private schools. Significant interaction effects were found between area, school and gender, showing that gender moderated the risk of exposure. Within private schools, girls were more prone to
experiencing political violence, while within boys, those attending government schools were more prone to experiencing political violence than boys attending private schools. Within government schools in high violence area – Bandipora and low violence area Uri boys were more prone to experiencing violence than girls. Within private schools girls were more prone to violence than boys only in Bandipora.

Three patterns of exposure were identified through Principle Components Analysis that explained 75.78% variance in the total exposure to political violence. These patterns were direct exposure to political violence, exposure through others and socio-economic impact of political violence. Of the total sample, 94.3% reported direct exposure, 80.5% reported exposure through others and 29.6% reported experiencing socio-economic impact of political violence. Adolescents living in Bandipora, attending government schools and older in age were most prone to direct exposure to violence. None of the risk factors predicted exposure through others. Attending government school and being younger in age were associated to experiencing socio-economic impact of exposure to political violence.

Total exposure was also divided across three levels of exposure and the analysis showed that living in Bandipora, attending government schools and being a girl were associated with medium and high levels of violence exposure thus making children vulnerable. On the other hand living in Uri, attending private schools and being a boy was associated with medium and low levels of exposure, signifying less vulnerability in relative terms.

To understand ways in which children consolidated their knowledge of religion and politics to develop religious meaning systems and political ideologies.

We conducted two Principle Components Analyses to identify factors within the religious and political beliefs reported by the sample. These beliefs were tested by means of questionnaires developed from narratives of adolescents from Srinagar. The PCA of religious beliefs showed that one component consisted of beliefs related to God exclusively and the other component included beliefs about self and society, which were more general and did not include any reference to God. Thus we identified a Religious Meaning System and a General Meaning System that explained 31.13% of the common variance. The PCA of political beliefs identified a Separatist ideology that consisted of beliefs supporting
independence of Kashmir, viewing Pakistan as an ally and possible choice over India and considering the Indian army as a sign of oppression of Kashmiri populace; and a Moderate ideology that consisted of beliefs that were moderate in the sense that they perceived the Indian army as a protection against Pakistan and militants, considered India as a better political choice and considered cooperation with the Government as a solution to the conflict. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients for religious meaning system scale was .74, for general meaning system was .61, for separatist ideology was .76 and for moderate ideology was .65.

The mean score of the sample for religious meaning system was 4.47 (± 0.52) which meant that on an average children prescribed strongly to religious explanations of self and the world with very little variation. The overall mean for general belief system was 3.82 (± 0.7) indicating that children tended to agree with beliefs describing the general meaning system without much variability. The two meaning systems had a significant positive correlation of .47 (p < .000) which showed that both meaning systems were not operating in two different directions in an adolescent in Kashmir. Thus one who would believe in God would also tend to have strong general beliefs. The test of difference revealed that religious meaning system mean was higher than mean of general meaning system and this difference was significant beyond .001 level: exact p < .000, which indicated that religious meaning system was stronger than general meaning system in the overall sample. Attending government schools was significantly associated with stronger general meaning system and weaker religious meaning system, while attending private school was significantly associated with stronger religious meaning system and weaker general meaning system. We also found that religious meaning system became stronger with age among adolescents.

The average Separatist ideology score was 3.4 (±0.66) which meant that the sample did not hold an extremely separatist ideology but it tended towards agreeing with the separatist beliefs than not agreeing. The average mean score for moderate ideology was 3.53 (± 0.86) which meant that the sample tended to agree with these beliefs as well. The two ideologies were negatively correlated (r = -.11) which was however not significant. The results of the Sign test indicated that the mean of Moderate ideology was significantly higher than mean of Separatist ideology and the difference was significant at 0.02 level. Thus the sample was more moderate than separatist. Significant negative correlation between type of
school and separatist ideology \( r = -0.148, p < 0.01 \) indicated separatist ideology was stronger among government school children than among private school children. The results also showed that separatist ideology became stronger with age \( r = 0.102, p < 0.05 \). Adolescents in Uri had a stronger moderate ideology as compared to adolescents Bandipora, which made sense because Uri was the low violence area and exposure to violence was negatively related to moderate ideology, indicating that moderate ideology became stronger as exposure to violence decreased.

**To study the resilience and vulnerability of adolescents.**

The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the resilience scale was 0.82, which was quite high. The final questionnaire consisted of 41 items that included the site specific items constructed out of the understanding of resilience obtained from the interviews within the community, described as part of the first objective. Mean score of the entire sample on resilience scale was 3.57 (± 0.53), meaning that the sample had above average resilience. Items for which the sample mean was above 4 were those concerning service to the community, close relations with the family, support from family and friends, religious beliefs, self belief and ethnic identity. This indicated that these were the common resource of resilience for adolescents in Kashmir. The items on which the sample mean was below 3 were those related to the presence of army in Kashmir, indicating that the overall resilience decreased because adolescents in Kashmir were not able to deal with the presence of armed forces amidst them. Factors with significant positive correlation with resilience were – attending private schools, and a strong religious and/or general meaning system. Factors with significant negative correlation were – experiencing socio-economic impact of political violence and strong separatist ideology. ANOVA results showed that type of school moderated the impact of political violence on resilience, though it was not a linear relation. For private school children resilience decreased with increase in exposure to violence, while for government school children resilience increased with increase in violence.

The sample mean for SRQ20 was 6.29 (± 4) which meant that there was a large variation in the mean scores and the sample mean was below the cut-off score of 11/12, indicating that overall the sample did not fall in the caseness criterion. The most commonly reported difficulties were – “easily tired” (53.3% yes), “poor appetite” (52%), “frightened
easily” (51.2%), “work suffering” (43.7%) and “trouble thinking” (42.9%). Our findings showed that 42 out of 375 adolescents that is, 11.2% of the sample fulfilled the caseness criterion – had high chances of meeting diagnostic criteria for mental illness. Significantly more girls were represented in the caseness sub-sample and the probability of caseness increased with increase in violence exposure. There was a significant positive correlation between caseness and direct exposure ($r = .16, p = .01$) and socio-economic exposure ($r = .23, p < .01$), indicating that these types of exposure were more likely to occur in the lives of adolescents who developed mental illness. Our findings indicated that Kashmir’s most vulnerable adolescents were nervous, tensed or worried, and were plagued by various types of fears that affected their work. They had low energy levels and suffered from poor appetite and headaches. These adolescents cried a lot, were unhappy and could not enjoy their daily activities. These problems also manifested in cognitive impairments due to which they had trouble in thinking clearly and making decisions. ANOVA results showed significant interaction effects between gender and age levels for SRQ20 total score as an outcome. The findings indicated that vulnerability of girls in Kashmir showed a significant increase as they approached adulthood while for boys vulnerability seemed to decrease with age. Therefore, younger boys and older girls were more vulnerable in Kashmir.

To identify factors associated with resilience and/or vulnerability.

Hierarchical regression analysis results showed type of school ($Beta = -3.65$) was the strongest predictor of resilience followed by religious meaning system ($Beta = 3.64$), followed by separatist ideology ($Beta = -2.73$), socio-economic impact ($Beta = -2.70$) and direct exposure ($Beta = 1.99$) respectively. Therefore attending private school, having a strong religious meaning system, being less affected by socio-economic impact of political violence and being directly exposed to political violence were predictors of resilience.

Being a girl in Kashmir was the strongest predictor of vulnerability ($Beta = -.341$), followed by being directly exposed to violence ($Beta = .21$), followed by experiencing socio-economic difficulties due to exposure to violence ($Beta = .151$), followed by family and close others injured or killed due to violence ($Beta = .135$), followed by attending government school ($Beta = .134$) and finally believing in a separatist ideology ($Beta = .08$).
To develop a model explaining the role of religion and political ideology in fostering resilience amidst the risks associated with political violence

This objective was achieved by conducting person based and variable based analysis. The person based analysis considered government school as high risk and private school as low risk based on the results obtained so far. The findings showed that stronger religious meaning system was a protective factor at high as well as low risk situations. Strong general meaning system was protective only for adolescents living with low risks. Strong separatist ideology predicted a decrease in resilience for adolescents living in low risk conditions but it was not related to level of resilience of those living with high risk.

The variable based approach tested moderating and mediating mechanisms of meaning systems and political ideologies. Meaning systems did not moderate the impact of risks on resilience, and they had significant main effects. According to Garmezy et al. (1986) therefore religious meaning system was a compensatory factor, whose presence would compensate for the presence of risks in an adolescent’s life. We found that the relation between type of school attended and resilience was moderated by level of direct exposure. At high levels of direct exposure both the schools had similarly high levels of resilience, however at low levels of direct exposure, government school children reported lowest resilience while private school children reported highest resilience. Thus direct exposure to political violence caused situations that were conducive to improving an adolescent’s resilience in a lower socio-economic condition. Social support is one such probable condition that is created by direct exposure and whose absence during periods of low direct exposure could be responsible for low resilience in adolescents attending government schools.

We found that general meaning system moderated the effect of exposure to political violence and type of school on vulnerability. Our results showed that at very high levels of exposure, those with weak general meaning system experienced more vulnerability. The relation with type of school was same as the results of person based analysis. Separatist ideology moderated the effect of exposure to political violence and type of school on vulnerability. At highest exposure to violence those with a weak separatist ideology were more vulnerable than those with stronger separatist ideologies. Vulnerability of adolescents in both type of schools was similar if they had weak separatist ideologies, but as separatist ideology became stronger the vulnerability of government school children became very high.
and that of private school children became very low. Strong separatist ideology was therefore a vulnerability factor for government school children and a protective factor for private school children, this finding corroborated the findings of person based analysis.

We also tried to identify mediating roles of the meaning systems and political ideologies and found the presence of partial mediation. Our findings showed that strong religious meaning system partially mediated the impact of attending private school on resilience or in other words, a partial reason for lower resilience in government school children was because they had weaker religious meaning systems. Moreover, the reason why government school children were more vulnerable was partially because they had stronger separatist ideologies and higher levels of exposure to political violence.

**Hypotheses**

**About living with risks**

- Violence proneness of an area will be positively related to vulnerabilities and negatively related to resilience.
  Not accepted, as there was no significant relation between violence proneness of the area and vulnerabilities and resilience.

- High exposure to violence will be positively related to vulnerabilities and negatively to resilience.
  Partly accepted as high exposure to violence was positively related to vulnerabilities but had no significant relation to resilience. However, direct exposure to violence was positively related to resilience.

- Vulnerability and resilience will differ significantly with age and gender.
  Partly accepted as girls were significantly more vulnerable than boys, and vulnerability increased with age for girls. Age did not have a significant main effect on vulnerability or resilience.

- Socio economic condition will be positively related to psychosocial functioning.
  Accepted as government school children, assumed to represent lower socio-economic condition were significantly more vulnerable and less resilient than private school children, assumed to represent better socio-economic condition. Moreover socio-
economic difficulties caused due to exposure to political violence were significantly related to increase in vulnerability and decrease in resilience.

**About religious meaning system and political ideologies**

- The relation between risks and vulnerability and resilience would be moderated and mediated by adolescent’s religious meaning system.
  Partly accepted, as religious meaning system partially mediated the relation between type of school and vulnerability.
- The relation between risks and vulnerability and resilience would be moderated and mediated by adolescent’s political ideology.
  Partly accepted as separatist ideology moderated the relation between exposure to political violence and attending a particular type of school and vulnerability. Separatist ideology also partially mediated the relation between type of school and vulnerability.

### 9.2 Conclusion

“*Vulnerable but invincible*” this is how Werner and Smith (1982) described the children of Kauai in their seminal longitudinal study and the same line best captures the life of children in Kashmir, born in a Valley of violence. The study is nowhere close to Werner and Smith’s protracted analysis but it presents the microcosmic picture of adolescents living in contemporary Kashmir. The findings reiterate the complexity of living in a society coming to terms with chronic political violence. A society that lives in a time wrap because time stood still for Kashmir from the 1990s till the beginning of the 21st century and during that time the whole society went through a change that spread all over its ecosystem.

The adolescent participants of this research were very simple people who had lived extraordinary lives. In many ways they were more innocent than adolescents elsewhere but in many ways they displayed the maturity that close encounters with death creates in human beings. Resilience is not an artefact, nor is it exclusive; in fact it is one of the most natural processes in human life. There is no drama involved with resilience; hence it did not attract as much attention as PTSD till recently. However, this ordinary facet of human life is what
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explains the immense and at times surprising fortitude displayed by people living with adversity and resilience as we found in our study, indicated the fault-lines of a particular society.

Suffering and resilience were part of a social ecology, because of which the social conditions in which an adolescent in Kashmir lived explained why she/he was resilient. Factors that indicated resilience were social and cultural in nature. Living in a better socio-economic condition, being a boy and having a strong religious meaning system were associated with resilience in our study and all the three factors were features of Kashmiri society and culture that protected its adolescents despite the adversities of living with political violence. We also found that though exposure to political violence was definitely undesirable for an adolescent’s mental health, its impact could activate protective forces in the society which eventually made the adolescent resilient. We found that being directly exposed to political violence was indeed related to increase in resilience in adolescents living in lower socio-economic conditions. Therefore it would be erroneous to conclude that exposure to political violence and lower socio-economic conditions would only and always make adolescents vulnerable. Instead our study compels us to look for interrelations between factors, the unique organization of which actually explains an adolescent’s life course. Thus it is not unique features but unique organization of those features which explains why everyone is not equally resilient or equally vulnerable in a society.

Our study also reflected a “psychological conflict between horror and heroism” (Punamaki and Suleiman, 1990) and we found that children at times paid a price for achieving resilience while living with adversities (Masten and Coastworth, 1998). These features were reflected among adolescents living in lower socio-economic conditions. This group is what Punamaki and Suleiman (1998, p 74) so succinctly describe as those “…who try hard actively and courageously to confront the hardships, but who are, nonetheless, negatively affected by the objective traumatic reality”.

Another major finding of our study though not a very surprising finding was the role of religion in the lives of Kashmiri adolescents. Silberman’s (2005) observation that religion has been instrumental in social well-being as well as social conflict couldn’t be more appropriate for the condition in Kashmir. The fact that religious meaning system was a significant predictor of resilience, shows that when reality of living with violence and
adversities in Kashmir was perceived through the lens of Islam, it made the suffering meaningful, it explained a divine purpose of existence and it made surrendering to Allah one of the most beautiful and powerful ingredient of a Kashmiri Muslim adolescent’s life.

Our study also explored the connection between making sense of the political context and personal attitude towards the ongoing violence and resilience. Bettelhaim (1961 as cited in Punamaki, 1996) observed that strong religious beliefs and ideological commitment provided religious Jews and communists in the Dachau concentration camp, with a clear explanation for why hardships happened to them. Our study indicated that commitment to separatist ideology in Kashmir during periods of high exposure to violence was a protective belief system. However, separatist ideology was not a very simple factor within the socio-political context in Kashmir as we found. Instead it emerged to be an ideology that one could ‘afford’ to have if one belonged to a protected socio-economic group. For adolescent’s belonging to a relatively disadvantaged group, separatist ideology augured more vulnerability. Our findings have added on to Punamaki’s (1996) finding that political hardships increased the ideological commitment that in turn was related to low level of psychosocial problems, because in Kashmir the protective functions of ideological commitment also depended on the social milieu in which the adolescent’s reality was embedded.

The findings and conclusion of this study would be incomplete if they did not provide directions for intervention because the importance of social research can only be realized through practice. Thus the next section would elucidate how our findings and conclusions can be used to create a contextual intervention program for children in Kashmir and inform interventions for children living with conflict elsewhere.

### 9.3 Implications for interventions

The findings of resilience research are significant for developing relevant interventions for children living with risks. Protective processes and specific vulnerability markers identified through research can guide interventions to foster the former and attenuate the latter. However, the interface between research and practice is still developing and an area that can be mutually beneficial for resilience research is the area of developmental psychopathology. Developmental psychopathology emphasizes a life span developmental
approach in tracing the origins, precursor signs and time course of disorder. It recognizes the continuity and discontinuity at various points in development, seeks to identify the stressors and typify transition points in development and emphasizes the need for an awareness of the personal vicissitudes that mark the lives of persons who occupy “at risk” statuses (Garmezy and Masten, 1986, p. 505-506). Similar to resilience research, developmental psychopathology locates maladaptation within the dynamic relation between the individual and the internal and external contexts (Cicchetti and Rogosch, 2002). Thus, developmental psychopathology can serve to be the medium by which results from resilience research are translated into interventions to alleviate psychopathology in at-risk children.

Interventions informed by resilience research can be applied at primary as well as secondary prevention level, though most clinical efforts in the context of terrorism with its ramifications for posttraumatic risk has been directed towards secondary prevention (Slone and Shohani, 2008). At primary level, aimed at preventing the onset of disorder in children living in at risk situations such as, extreme poverty, parental mental illness, community violence, etc., resilience research can guide interventions that would promote processes with a high probability of positive outcomes. At secondary prevention level, after exposure to a traumatic event the knowledge of resilience research can inform how developmental psychopathology deals with onset of disorder. Resilience research studies normative development in children living in communities instead of children already diagnosed with psychopathology. Such information about normative processes within a risk context can play a crucial role in determining the ways to identify behaviour that departs from the norm. Once such behaviour has been identified, resilience research can throw light upon the protective processes and vulnerability markers that mediate between risk and outcome.

In order to make resilience research more action oriented it is important to appreciate it as an applied theory and Ungar (2008) has beautifully described how resilience theory applies to practice and the ways in which it informs interventions. The five principles of resilience relevant to practice as explained by Ungar (2008) are discussed with respect to examples of intervention within the context of risks created by political violence in Kashmir based on the findings of the present study.
9.31 Resilience is nurtured by an ecological, multilevel approach to intervention

The resilience approach to intervention is multilevel and ecological because it recognizes the cumulative impact of risks at various levels of a child’s functioning. Longitudinal studies like Rutter’s (1979) and Werner and Smith’s (1982) have demonstrated the complexity of resilience as a construct. Thus, interventions also need to be multilayered and integrative. For example, interventions for children living with political violence will need to have an impact on all the dimensions that are affected, like education, shelter, emotional support, developing a political understanding, etc. Interventions have to be aware of the niches available to adolescents, because the way their individual characteristics develop will depend on them. Children growing up in disorganized communities will have fewer niche options, and the ones that are available may be largely negative. Thus, providing more positive niches to adolescents that match their particular strengths may facilitate their exhibition of competence and striving (Cicchetti and Rogosch, 2002).

As we found socio-economic condition of the child plays a very dominant role in setting limits on resilience in Kashmir. Therefore, interventions would have to take into consideration aspects of socio-economic conditions that are malleable to positive change. Gender differences in vulnerability indicate that some changes in the socialization process of girls may improve their resilience. Girls sometimes end up being repressed by the conflict in the society and the demands of the social culture. However interventions that only aim at empowering girls without changing the way society constructs the female gender would end up creating more conflict and resistance. Thus, multilevel interventions, especially while addressing sociological issues are best suited for a conservative and patriarchal society such as Kashmir.

9.32 The study of resilience shifts our focus to strengths of individuals and communities

The study of resilience moved research attention from psychological distress and related problems among populations under stress and opened the possibilities of studying strength and designing programs that build capacity rather than addressing risks. Building on
adolescents’ strengths and promoting competence are important prevention strategies to protect against emergent psychopathology (Masten and Curtis, 2000). However, the context must be used as a yardstick to design capacity-building interventions because capacities are defined differently in different contexts. This understanding of customizing intervention is a significant contribution of resilience research. What is adaptive in one context may not be so in another.

For example, in the socio-political context of Kashmir, adolescents are kept under strict parental vigilance and thus development of autonomy and independence is discouraged. Adaptive behaviour for an adolescent in Kashmir would not define autonomy in the same way as it is defined in a city like New Delhi and thus an intervention to build strengths in a Kashmiri child, will have to build strengths that are culturally and contextually congruent. There are several clusters of protective processes evident in the actions of children who develop well. These include processes that

- Reduce the impact of risk on a child (as in when a perceived danger, like seeing armed forces with machine guns at every corner of the street is made to seem less frightening);
- Reducing negative chain reactions such that one problem, like being frisked and provoked by the army, does not lead to another, like retaliating physically or verbally and then being beaten up;
- Improving self-esteem and self-efficacy, or the ability to like one’s self and change one’s world, and
- Opening up opportunities, like when classes were disrupted due to curfews, schools transmitted lectures through local cable televisions during the recent violence over the Amarnath Shrine land transfer issue.

Promoting each of these processes through an intervention designed to suit the cultural context is a way of making practice guided by theory. Finally the significant impact of religious beliefs must be woven into any intervention aimed at fostering resilience in Kashmir. This has to be different from religious education; instead it must aim at making religion practical, creating an enlightened way of interpreting Islam in the present context, that addresses the conflicts arising in children’s minds. Family ties are still very strong in Kashmir, and extended family serves as a major support system. Social support therefore is a
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natural source of resilience and interventions must nurture these resources already present in Kashmir. It is a close-knit community, which has survived through decades of violence by depending on family, religion and economy and interventions would be more incisive by building on these broad resources.

9.33 Research on resilience shows that multifinality or many routes to many good ends, is characteristic of population of children who succeed

Multifinality is a principle that is central to the conceptualization of developmental pathways (Cicchetti and Rogosch, 2002). Multifinality specifies that diverse outcomes are likely to evolve from any original starting point. Thus, individuals sharing characteristics at a specified starting point will not exhibit the same pattern of later developmental outcomes (p 11). A related though contrasting concept is that of equifinality, which specifies that a common outcome will develop over time from different starting points indicating that diversity in processes is involved in attaining the shard outcome (p 12). These principles inform us that prevention strategies need to take into account individual differences that lead to successes or failures and different pathways that can lead to successes or failures. Children demonstrate a great deal of difference in how they define and experience success or failure. For example, a group of children coping with a grenade explosion in Srinagar had varied means of dealing with their fears and anxieties, which included positive perception of self, increase in confidence, change in religious beliefs, making sense of the event, positive experiences of social support, avoidance, rumination, preparedness for death, etc. (Dasgupta, 2006).

Thus, an intervention that is aware of these multifinal outcomes and different pathways to resilience or vulnerability would be more effective than one that restricts itself to expect the development of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder only. An intervention plan that fails to consider individual differences leading to different outcomes and different pathways leading to same outcomes, restricts itself to a unidimensional method, that may often be a biomedical way of treating symptoms than, building capacity.

Our findings show that field reality can be quite different from what we expect. Thus, two risk factors such as poor socio-economic condition and direct exposure to violence, together can lead to resilience. Or the same factor, such as separatist ideology can be
protective for one group and vulnerability inducing for another. In such cases an intervention not informed by these field realities, would perhaps work exclusively on treating symptoms “expected” to befall children living in lower socio-economic conditions and with direct exposure to violence or it would assume that separatist ideology is undesirable for all. Therefore, it would miss out on utilizing the resilience that also exists with vulnerability in such groups. The multifinal outcome principle helps to keep a check on becoming unidirectional at the cost of losing out on positive features that are unexpected and embedded in the culture.

9.34 The study of resilience has shown that a focus on social justice is foundational to successful development

Interventions that are informed by resilience research cannot ignore the voices of children. The term ‘social justice’ is not restricted to macro-level interventions but is an issue of equity and justice that includes the provision of resources that fit the child and her family’s definition of the problem. This is a child rights perspective that develops interventions that ensure that strengths a child values are given space for expression and respects divergent paths to well-being children may follow.

Our findings show that children in Kashmir need to feel secure, have access to education, recreation and a resolution of the problem in Kashmir. They don’t want to be frisked, or live with armed forces around them; in fact most of them are not able to adjust with this feature of their society.

9.35 Resilience research focuses on cultural and contextual heterogeneity related to children’s thriving

What we know about resilience is beginning to inform a “rich tapestry of interventions that must be tailored to the specific cultures and contexts in which they are used” (Ungar, 2008, p. 30). Culture and context refers to the community’s geographic location, the economic status of the family, and the level of safety in the family, school or community. These factors would influence the quality of the indicators of success the child and her/his family seek to attain. International examples of resilience promotion strategies
can be tailored to the requirements of local populations, helping individuals set personal development goals that are relevant to a community’s definition of resilience. The principles derived through resilience research are uniform, but their applications will depend on the cultural context of the child.

Findings need to be interpreted with caution. There may be cultures, where cultural adherence does not play an important role, because it is a dominant culture and thus is invisible in its ubiquity, like in Kashmir. Our results also show that the same ideology could serve different protective functions in different social milieus within Kashmir. Thus, it is best to construct interventions based on local findings of studies which were however developed on the principles identified from the repository of resilience research.

9.4 Limitations

Limitations are one of the most integral parts of any human endeavour and they are especially integral to any social science research. Our study of adolescents living in Kashmir led to myriad findings which helped us reach certain conclusions. However these conclusions and findings would be incomplete without understanding the methodological constraints impinging on them. It would be erroneous to ignore the fact that “reality” is fluid and dynamic. The study mirrors a “reality” captured in the moments of the research, but this is not absolute, nothing is absolute. Therefore the first limitation is the fact that the subject matter of the study is highly subjective, contextual and emergent. The thesis is an ambitious attempt at presenting this subject matter within the purview of social science research methodology but it is extended with the knowledge that every finding is subject to falsification.

We are also aware of the fact that data were collected from only one source (adolescents) and at only one point (cross-sectional). Collecting data from various sources is a way of making the finding more reliable and hence only one source is considered a limitation by many. However, it must be pointed out that I as the researcher firmly believe in Antoine de Saint-Exupery’s (1945) sagacious observation that, grown ups cannot on their own understand the world from the child’s point of view and therefore they need children to explain it to them. Hence the roots of this study were planted in constructions of children from Kashmir and the concept of collecting data from teachers and parents to validate or
develop a holistic understanding, though valid, was not very impinging on the present researcher’s methodological decisions. Cross-sectional studies have their own limitations because they cannot capture the natural progression of processes because here we are measuring the exposure and outcome at the same time. What is presented as a process is just an estimate of the process, and longitudinal studies in Kashmir would be necessary to carry forward the leads obtained through this study.

The retrospective approach of asking adolescents to recall and report their exposure to political violence and its effects has been considered to be a limitation by some (Haj-Yahia, 2008), however, the aim of this study treads the area between objective reality and subjective perceptions of that reality. We accept that it would be impossible to reconstruct objective reality retrospectively and hence our findings are based on highly subjective recollection and reconstruction of those events and experiences. The limitation here is that the results are not unconditional in fact they are contingent on my being a non-Kashmiri female researcher as much as they depend on the fact that responses were constructed in the social setting of the research. The only source of continuity was the fact that each of the 375 adolescent participants was answering the same questions. Thus, there are many confounding factors present in this study, factors that were not measured but could be playing a role in shaping the responses. We accept this and urge the reader to appreciate the dynamic nature of human life of which, a study like this is just representing a slice.

Two genuine methodological limitations of our study are – conceptualization of socio-economic condition and exposure to political violence. The operationalization of socio-economic condition could have been more statistically refined. The logic of using type of school as an indicator of socio-economic condition was grounded in reality as explained in the methodology chapter, but we wish we could have procured some other indicators of quality of life, not necessarily income/expenditure indicators but something that could have measured the social indicators of poverty in a more structured manner. The limitation of using scales to measure exposure to political violence suffered from the general limitation of scales, which delimit the response range. We used self-report checklist to measure exposure that resulted into summed traumatic event scores which failed to reveal their meanings to a child, which according to Slone et al.’s (1999) study is an important aspect of a child’s psychological distress. Thus our conceptualization of exposure to political violence would
have been richer if we had also included the meaning such exposure has for children, though we managed to classify their total exposure into different types of exposure and also described the nature of exposure.

**A final word**

Notwithstanding the limitations of the present study, the findings add to our rudimentary understanding of resilience in adolescents living in Kashmir. This is a significant study because there are very few studies focusing on resilience as an outcome in a context of political violence, there are none in Kashmir. Second, very few studies have explored the importance of religious meaning systems and political ideologies for this age group (14 – 17 year olds), again there are none in Kashmir. The most salient feature of this study is the way it was conducted. The research process began with grounded reality, from constructions of adolescents in Kashmir and from there we drew our hypotheses, which were tested in the present study. Thus, what you see now is a dovetailed culmination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, with an aim to achieve richness and precision both. The detailed process is perhaps the reason why our findings can be used to develop contextually relevant interventions in Kashmir. The trends identified in this study would be best validated through action research and the complexities of living with political violence must foment research that aims to study the phenomenon from an interconnected ecological framework. For example, the connection between higher direct exposure to violence in lower socio-economic conditions and resilience requires more fine grained analysis by specifically looking for features of adolescents living in such sub-cultures. The scale of resilience, religious meaning system and political meaning system need more validation through careful and culturally grounded research. Political violence as a phenomenon is something that cannot be wished away, but responses to it can definitely be shaped to incur as little psychological damage as possible and insights drawn from the people living in such contexts can be used to inform practices as well as policy. Bandipore, may be infamous for being the most violence prone area in Kashmir but it isn’t too late to look at what it was famous for, according to an octogenarian in Bandipore, it used to be a land recognized for – “Aab (water, because of the largest freshwater lake Wular), adab (courtesy, referring to the quaint Kashmiri hospitality) and Ilm (knowledge, or enlightenment)".