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Child resilience in Afghanistan study

Submission date	Recruitment status	[ ] Prospectively registered
22/11/2024	No longer recruiting	[ ] Protocol
Registration date	**Overall study status**	[ ] Statistical analysis plan
27/11/2024	Completed	[X] Results
Last Edited	**Condition category**	[ ] Individual participant data
29/01/2026	Mental and Behavioural Disorders	

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Growing evidence indicates that school-based psychosocial interventions may help address the mental health gap in low- and middle-income countries, including conflict and crisis contexts. This study aims to compare a psychosocial intervention with usual teaching in Afghanistan. A two-arm cluster-randomised trial was implemented in 83 rural primary schools within three provinces of Afghanistan. This study will assess whether school-based interventions delivered by trained field education officers can effectively promote child mental health in conflict and crisis settings and have great potential for scalability.

Who can participate?
All children in grades 3 to 5, their teacher and one adult family member (mother or father, older sibling) at enrolment.

What does the study involve?
Schools were randomly assigned (1:1) to one of two groups: a psychosocial intervention group composed of whole classes with a one-week classroom-based teacher and children component and a one-day family engagement component; and, a control group. Children, teachers and parents were surveyed at baseline and four months postintervention.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
There was the possible benefits to improve learning skills both academic and non academic (lifeskills) learning skills. There was no risk in participating in this research.

Where is the study run from?
Washington University in St. Louis, USA

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
August 2021 to December 2023

Who is funding the study?
1. Economic Social Research Council (ESRC)
2. Norwegian Development Agency

Who is the main contact?
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Contact information

Type(s)
Public, Scientific, Principal investigator

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
CRAS01092021

Study information

Scientific Title
Classroom-based psychosocial randomised trial in primary schools of Afghanistan

Acronym
CRAS

Study objectives
School based psycho-social intervention to improve child mental well-being and resilience in Afghanistan

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
1. Approved 30/08/2021, Human Research Protection Office Washington University in St Louis (One Brookings drive, St Louis, 63130, United States of America; +1 314-747-6800; ehiggs@wustl.edu), ref: 201712020

2. Approved 17/09/2022, Norwegian Afghanistan Committee Board (Kolstadgata 1, Oslo, 0652, Norway; +47 994 09 159; t.watterdal@nacaf.org), ref: -

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Two-arm cluster-randomized trial

Study type(s)
Quality of life

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Anxiety and depression

Interventions
This study is a two-arm cluster-randomised trial implemented in 83 rural primary schools within three provinces of Afghanistan. Eligible participants were all children in grades 3 to 5, their teacher and one adult family member (mother or father, older sibling) at enrolment.

All primary schools in each province were first enumerated, either governmental or community-based schools, receiving some support from the two NGOs and having at least one classroom of grades 3 through 5. Among 292 schools across these three provinces, a random number generator was used to select schools within each province (83 schools). To avoid the risk of contamination, sampling without replacement was used to ensure that only one school was selected per village. Schools within each province were randomly assigned in a 1:1 ratio to one of two groups (40 to the intervention group, and the remaining to the control group). Within each school, whole grades 3 through 5 classes were selected when the total number was below 20 children per class. In classes with more than 20 children, 20 children were randomly selected as participants. From a total cohort of 3254 children, 1522 children were enrolled in the intervention group and 1732 in the control group. Children, their teacher (one per class), and their parents formed this study's participants.

Schools were randomly assigned (1:1) to one of two groups, with the intervention group consisting of (1) a week-long classroom-based training with teachers and children together, and (2) a one-day training with parents using a culturally adapted version of the "A hopeful, healthy, and happy living and learning toolkit" developed by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and a control group. The final program for teachers and children was delivered in Dari and Pashto, composed of 42 activities consisting of a week of training including reflective exercises, didactic short lectures on lessons learned, drama, games, mindfulness, and breathing exercises. The parent component of the intervention was delivered in Dari and Pashto and consisted of one day spent on a series of activities aiming at promoting psycho-social well-being at home after cultural adaptation of the parent-caregiver toolkit by the same team.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

The following primary outcome measures were assessed at baseline and endline after 4 months:
1. Child anxiety and depression measured using the simplified revised child anxiety and depression scale
2. Life skills core domains measured using the multidimensional scale of life skills in late childhood
3. Self-efficacy measured using the self-efficacy questionnaire for children
4. Resilience measured using the child and youth resilience measure
5. School-based discrimination measured using the discrimination scale developed for the Maryland adolescent development in context study
6. Stigma measured using the discrimination and stigma scale

Key secondary outcome(s)
Proficiency in reading and mathematical literacy measured using the Monitoring Education Development in Afghanistan (MED-A) framework developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER 2013) that includes comprehensive and context-appropriate definitions of “literacy score” to evaluate reading and writing in Dari/Pashto, as well as mathematics at baseline and endline after 4 months

Completion date
30/12/2023

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Enrolled in grade 3 or 5 in participating schools

Participant type(s)
Learner/student

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Child

Lower age limit
8 Years

Upper age limit
14 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
2592

Key exclusion criteria
Children in 1, 2, 4 or 6 grade

Date of first enrolment
01/05/2022

Date of final enrolment
30/03/2023

Locations

Countries of recruitment
Afghanistan

France

Study participating centre
Aanj Girls' High School
-
-
Afghanistan
-

Study participating centre
Dasht E Badara Primary School
-
-
Afghanistan
-

Study participating centre
Etarchi Mixed High School
-
-
Afghanistan
-

Study participating centre
Gulaki primary school
-
-
Afghanistan
-

Study participating centre
Mardara Primary School
-
-
Afghanistan
-

Study participating centre
Mashhad Primary School
-
-
Afghanistan
-

Study participating centre
Nayeb Saray Gharbi Primary School
-
-
Afghanistan
-

Study participating centre
Said Abdul Karim Boys High School
-
-
Afghanistan
-

Study participating centre
Sayed Mohammad Dehqan Primary School
-
-
Afghanistan
-

Study participating centre
Shatak Primary School
-
-
Afghanistan
-

Study participating centre
Wakhshi Primary School
-
-
Afghanistan
-

Study participating centre
Abdul Qadir Hanif mixed school
-
-
France
-

Sponsor information

Organisation
Washington University in St. Louis

ROR
https://ror.org/01yc7t268

Funder(s)

Funder type
Research council

Funder Name
Economic and Social Research Council

Alternative Name(s)
Social Science Research Council, ESRC, SSRC, UKRI ESRC

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
National government

Location
United Kingdom

Funder Name
Norwegain Development Agency

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The datasets generated and analysed during the current study will be stored in a public available repository at the UK Data Service: http://reshare.ukdataservice.ac.uk/

• The type of data stored: .csv data
• Timing for availability: end of 2024
• Whether consent from participants was required and obtained: All participants provided written (or witnessed, if they were unable to read and write) informed consent.
• Comments on data anonymization: The data is stored encrypted in the database without any name or other possibility of individual identification. The database is protected by a password. All unique identifiers have been be deleted once the database is complete. The database is totally anonymous. The only copies of the database is stored on the encrypted cloud of the Brown School at Washington University in St Louis
• Any ethical or legal restrictions: none
• Any additional comments: none

IPD sharing plan summary
Stored in publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article		25/01/2026	29/01/2026	Yes	No
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes