

Child resilience in Afghanistan study

Submission date 22/11/2024	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered
Registration date 27/11/2024	Overall study status Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Last Edited 29/01/2026	Condition category Mental and Behavioural Disorders	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
		<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data

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

Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)

Nil known

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: -

Study design

Two-arm cluster-randomized trial

Primary study design

Interventional

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

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Study participating centre

Mardara Primary School

-

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Afghanistan

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Study participating centre

Mashhad Primary School

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Afghanistan

-

Study participating centre

Nayeb Saray Gharbi Primary School

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Afghanistan

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Study participating centre

Said Abdul Karim Boys High School

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Afghanistan

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Study participating centre

Sayed Mohammad Dehqan Primary School

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Afghanistan

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Study participating centre

Shatak Primary School

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Afghanistan

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Study participating centre
Wakhshi Primary School

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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

Norwegian 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 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