

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE ABROGATION OF ARTICLES 370 AND 35A ON KASHMIRI POPULATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study has examined the psychological effects of the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A on the people in Kashmir in the aftermath of the constitutional changes that were introduced in August 2019. The researchers used a systemic review of available literature, network reports, documentation of human rights, and published accounts to identify mental health consequences of these political changes. The study employed content analysis, thematic analysis, and the critical discourse analysis of the secondary materials such as peer-reviewed articles, governmental reports, and testimonials to pinpoint the key psychological implications to which Kashmiri community could be exposed. The results showed that there were seven significant themes such as collective trauma and identity crisis, increased levels of anxiety and uncertainty, lack of autonomy and agency, grief and mourning processes, intergenerational psychological effects, resilience and coping strategies, and political alienation and erosion of trust. The study revealed that there was a high level of psychological distress among the affected groups which was manifested in the sense of dispossession, fear, anger, and helplessness. The research also reported on the resilience measures used by the communities to overcome the political and emotional turbulence. The study has led to the realization of the overlap between political change and mental health in the conflict-stricken territories and the criticality of culturally sensitive psychological interventions and policy implementation addressing the emotional health of the people that underwent such significant changes in their constitutions.

Keywords: psychological effects, abrogation, Articles 370 and 35A, constitutional changes, human rights, Kashmiri community.

INTRODUCTION

August 5, 2019, the publications of the Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution were abrogated, and this became a breakthrough in the political and social life of Jammu and Kashmir (Agreement 2024). These new clauses in the constitution provided the special autonomous status to the region and provided permanent residents with the exclusive right on property ownership, employment and settlement. This sudden withdrawal of these articles transformed radically the legal, political and social organization, which has been a law on the territory throughout the past seven decades. This historic constitutional reform was supplemented with the communication blockade, the restriction of movement, dispatch of additional security forces, and arrest of political leaders that created the image of uncertainty and fear among the local population (Baig and Dixit 2024). The psychological implications of such extreme political revolutions are much wider than the legal and administrative reforms that exist at the time, and penetrate the corporate consciousness and personal psychological health of the communities concerned (Bhattamishra 2023). It is significant that the psychological implication that political events have on the populations is relevant in the overall implications of the policy decisions and constitutional amendments (Ahmad, Kaker et al. 2020). There is a highly sensitive yet poorly researched dimension of human security and wellbeing, namely, mental health in crisis-prone and politically unstable locations (Ilyas 2025). Traditionally, the Kashmiri people have long been exposed to a history of political instability, armed conflict, waves of violence, which have cultivated a cumulative trauma, which predisposes them and communities to be more susceptible to other forms of stressors. Abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A brought additional psychological pressure linked to the feeling of identity, belonging, autonomy, and future opportunities to the already existent mental health problems in the region (Firdous 2022). The correlation between the changes in politics and the psychological wellbeing is on a few levels including the threat of cultural identity, the disturbance of the social order, the lack of financial security, and the feeling that you cannot influence his or her fate (Jaswal 2024). The special status assured by Articles 370 and 35A was not a juristic declaration to Kashmiri people as it was a statement of symbols of separable identity, past agreements and the promise of self-determination. Most individuals saw the deletion of such articles, therefore, as actual breach of trust and assault on identity in group, like collective identity, which had led to ambivalent responses of shock and disbelief at the best and anger, mourning and resignation at the worst (Dar and Deb 2022). As time goes by and the strengthening of such emotional responses at

the level of politics and security, the same can be more entrenched as mental health problems regarding the functioning of individuals and the unity of communities (Naitthani 2024).

The study sought to fill in a major gap in research on how drastic change that occurs in constitutional and political systems affects the mental health and psychological wellbeing of affected groups. To the extent that it is accurate to note that the legal, political and geopolitical issues of the abrogation have been given a great deal of attention, psychological and emotional implications have been comparatively under academic scrutiny. The paper can contribute to the gap in understanding the human costs of political decisions more comprehensively and provide the evidence of how mental health policy and considerations and future approaches to managing political transitions in countries prone to conflict can be informed specifically by examining the mental health implications of such transitions.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. The primary psychological responses and mental health impacts that were applied by the Kashmiri communities in the aftermath of the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A.
2. To examine how constitutional differences, perceived loss of autonomy, and psychological outcomes, including anxiety, depression, collective trauma, and identity-related distress, are related.
3. To document coping structures, resilience strategies and support structures the communities which had been affected were incorporating in surmounting the psychological shock which had been caused by the political transformation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Which are the most prevalent psychological consequences and mental health outcomes of Kashmiri people since the repeal of Articles 370 and 35A?
2. How does the security practices relate to the changes in the constitution and identity crisis, loss of autonomy, and collective trauma in the communities that have experienced it?
3. What is the adaptation of the various population groups in Kashmir to the ensuing psychological suffering induced by these political transformations and what are the resiliency strategies that they have employed?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings contain evidence-based data on the psychological cost of constitutional and political reforms, and such aspect implies that mental health should be included in the policy-making process concerning vulnerable populations. This study will be beneficial to mental health professionals as it will offer them insights on how trauma manifested in politically unstable settings so that they can respond to the intervention in a culturally sensitive manner. The article contributes to the general academic discourse on the politics of psychology, collective trauma, and government-mental well-being interface, and provides a document that can be referred to in order to advocate the possible psychological support services in Kashmir and other parts of the conflict-related world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The impetus of political change and mental health is well-documented in the academic literature addressing the influence of conflict-based areas, post-colonial states, and groups in the political turmoil (Shah, Shah et al. 2023). Studies on the subject of political trauma shows that significant constitutional amendments, especially those viewed as forced as opposed to agreed-upon, may produce great psychological distress at both a personal and a group level (Yair 2024). Research in different geopolitical settings such as Palestine, Tibet, Northern Ireland, and South Africa has confirmed that political incidents that influence identity, autonomy, and status of territory develop unique patterns of psychological reaction that may involve collective lamentation, perplexity of identity and general anxiety on the future (Abou Fadel 2022). Collective trauma has been a fruitful concept used to explain the way collective painful events are processed and how they are experienced by communities as a whole. As compared to individual trauma which shapes as a result of personal experiences, collective trauma is caused by occurrences that influence the social, collective identity and communal stories of a group (Badarin 2025). The academic literature on the topic of collective trauma underlines the fact that collective trauma becomes part of collective memory, is passed on through generations, and reflected in community-wide collective patterns of behavior, belief, and emotional response. In situations where groups of people have a history of long-term war, political or other forms of instability, new traumatic experiences do not exist in a vacuum but instead add to existing fragilities, forming cumulative layers of trauma responses that are especially hard to heal and resolve (Bukhari, Khan et al. 2024).

Studies that have specifically targeted Kashmir have recorded the presence of high prevalence of mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and complicated grief among the community (Dar and Deb 2022). It is believed that these high rates have been caused by decades of armed conflict, being exposed regularly to violence, loss of family members, economic instability, and insecurity (Hussain, Dar et al. 2024). Preexisting mental health surveys that were carried out before the 2019 constitutional modifications were able to indicate that Kashmiri populations were already experiencing symptoms of trauma at rates that were far above the national levels, indicating that there was already a vulnerability base that would be threatened by further stressors (Bashir, Batool et al. 2023). The value of constant political instability, limited liberties and felt unfairness in sustaining and escalating mental

health struggles has been referred to in several studies that have explored the area (Wani, Joshi et al. 2024). The connection between autonomy and self-determination and psychological wellbeing has attracted a lot of research on psychological literature (Jan and Roy 2024). According to self-determination theory, autonomy is a basic human need and the threat of autonomy creates a lot of psychological discomfort. When used in group settings, this framework proposes that the anxiety, helplessness and demoralization among populations that are losing their political autonomy or self-government ability will be high (Nazam and Munawar 2025). Studies on indigenous people who have been encroached upon their traditional lands, minority groups who have been marginalized, and areas which are politically assimilated against local will have always shown a correlation between the perception of loss of autonomy and worsening mental health indices (Khan, Mohsin et al. 2025).

Identity-related psychological stress is another aspect that is of critical dimension reported in the literature on politically conflict areas (Ziyi and Kamaruzaman 2025). When political shifts pose risks to fundamental facets of collective identity such as cultural practices, language rights, demographic make-up or symbolic acknowledgment, the afflicted populations tend to suffer identity crisis marked by bewilderment over group membership, doubtfulness about cultural persistence and fear of extinction or acculturation (Rahim, Mooren et al. 2023). The analysis of Tibetan communities, the Kurdish people, and other indigenous groups has shown how political practices that seem to threaten identity produce some unique psychological reactions such as the formation of in-group solidarity, nostalgic romanticizing the past, and resisting behavior that has psychological protective roles even at the cost of being economically expensive (Ballentyne 2024). Other stressors, which are psychological in nature, are pointed out in the literature on communication blackouts and information restrictions in the time of political crises (Vough, Cardador et al. 2024). Some studies carried out after communication blockages in different situations have recorded that the inability to reach family members, confirming information, and comprehending the developing processes causes acute anxiety and rumination (Khan 2023). The information vacuums that information creates usually result in worst-case scenario thinking, conspiracy theories, and overall suspicion of authorities (Dar and Lone 2022). The investigations of the 2019 internet blockage in Kashmir particularly mentioned the mental cost of extended communication limitations, such as broken social support frameworks, economic worries, and alienation to the wider global community (Hassan 2022).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted qualitative research design to explore the psychological consequences about the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A on the people of Kashmir, through a systematic review of the literature available, the media coverage and documented records. The researchers examined a significant amount of peer-reviewed journal articles, governmental reports, recording of human rights, news media reports, and published testimonials that had been published after August 2019. The academic databases were accessed (PubMed, JSTOR, Google Scholar), reports by the United Nations, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch were also utilized. The researchers employed content analysis methods in order to note the patterns of psychological distress, collective trauma, and identity crisis and emotions that have been documented in these secondary sources. The thematic analysis was used to determine shared themes in the psychological problems as anxiety, uncertainty, lack of autonomy, and shared grief that were frequently used in journalistic interviews, op-eds, and documentary accounts. By synthesizing the findings of observation among mental health professionals, case studies, and published in the literature and sociological studies, the authors could arrange a full-fledged image of the psychological impact of marijuana. To examine the contexts of the constitution amendments in each of the narratives and the potential psychological consequences to the target populations, the critical discourse analysis was applied. By a combination of triangulation of different secondary resources, the researchers were able to provide rigorousness in the methodology by cross-checking the incidents recorded and systematically recording converse views. The secondary data and mediated accounts were also weaknesses despite the researchers acknowledging this weakness since they proceed with the essence of synthesis and critical interpretation of this politically sensitive phenomenon.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The objective analysis of the secondary sources including high-level publications, human rights, media, and testimonials presented in documents revealed that such effects of psychological impact had general trends in different aspects. The scholars identified seven major thematic themes that described the most frequent psychological responses and mental health outcomes of the Kashiriti communities after the abrogation of the Articles 370 and 35A. These themes were numerous and manifested in different places repeatedly and were referred to by the triangulation of multiple types of documentation, which is why the results can be believed in despite the use of the secondary data.

Theme 1: Collective Trauma and Identity Crisis

The documented reports indicated the most common reality of collective trauma in which loss, betrayal, and existential threat to the Kashmiri identity were experienced collectively. According to a number of sources, the abrogation was

seen as the simplified assault on being Kashmiri, which gave rise to the sense of confusion with the identity and the feeling of anxiety about the cultural survivability. The testimonials revealed that citizens experienced problems with the questions related to their role in the adjusted constitutional order and feared the demographic and cultural reformation. The trauma was reported to be collective because it affected the whole community and not a small group of people but generated shared discursive forms of dispossession and loss that reinforced the group identity and at the same time threatened the survival of the group.

Theme 2: Heightened Anxiety and Uncertainty

The levels of anxiety were constantly recorded to be high regarding the political, economic, and personal future outlooks. The indistinctness of the process of new legislation enforcement, the potentially altered demographics, the property rights, the occupation, and the political representation all resulted in universal preoccupation with anxiety. Various reports have indicated that the increase in the manifestation of anxiety associated symptoms; insomnia, hypervigilance, rumination and somatic complaints, was observed among mental health professionals. The reality that there is no communication and an obvious fact on what the government is about increased the aspect of anxiety by leaving an information vacuum that was filled by rumors and worst-case scenarios. This continued status of indecisiveness guaranteed the absence of psychological adaptation and kept populations in a continuous form of stress.

Theme 3: Loss of Autonomy and Agency

According to the records, the feeling of loss of autonomy at both group and individual levels was common. The emphasis of the reporting was on the fact that people were considered and even consulted without their consent on the decisions that affected such fundamental aspects of Kashmiri life as to instill the feeling of powerlessness and disenfranchisement. This entrapment of agency as realized by restricting movements, arrest of leaders and withholding peaceful assembly was reinforced further. The literature of psychology quoted in reports alleged that this perceived lack of control of their fate is a critical risk factor of depression as well as the learned helplessness. According to the testimonials, individuals were reduced to secondary consumers of the decisions made and this resulted to totally different ways of perceiving effectiveness and self-determination.

Theme 4: Grief and Mourning Processes

The mourning feelings that were reported by other sources were comparable to bereavement and people/societies mourned the loss of special position, political obligations, and future prospects. They stated that the lack of social approval or confirmation complicated the mourning due to the official accounts which explained the changes as the positive changes. This disenfranchised grief that is a consequence of loss that is not socially acknowledged was reported to impede healthy mourning and has the potential of leading to psychological distress that could last long. It was reported that they had collective lamenting practices, symbolic demonstrations and demonstration of loss in art and poetry which is evidence that communities were in the business of mourning but the political awareness of mourning was repressed.

Theme 5: Intergenerational Psychological Impact

Some apprehensions have been documented with regards to psychological impacts that trickle down to the generations particularly to the children and the young. They reported that the youth were disoriented, angry and they had no hope with respect to the future of the new political environment. Parents said that they had been worried how they were going to explain to the children what had happened, and how the cumulated trauma would define the worldview and the mental health of the next generation. The studies included in the literature review showed that political trauma during the formative years can cause identity formation, distrust in institutions, susceptibility to mental disorders, and this was an area of concern in the eventuality of the psychological impact on a population-level in the long-run.

Theme 6: Resilience and Coping Mechanisms

Despite the dominating reports of psychological distress, some reports were also of much resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms communities were reduced to. The family reliance, religious orientations, cultural practices and community bondage was reported to be what made them strong and purposive. The means to help people and communities to cope with the problematic emotions and to stay psychologically stable have been reported to be the informal support networks, retelling of the stories, the expression of art and preservation of cultural practices. Mental health specialists noted that resilience and vulnerability can be attributed with a more thorough and respectful understanding on how the afflicted communities respond to misfortune.

Theme 7: Political Alienation and Erosion of Trust

The review demonstrated that it has a broad level of political alienation and a falling trust in the governmental institution, democracy and state communications process. It was claimed that the channel of implementation like communication blackouts and security measures promotion enhanced the ideology of the people being treated as subject (to be controlled) against being a citizen (to be consulted). This skepticism was passed on to the skepticism on future commitments of the government and less faith in the promise that political talk or representation could hold. It is reported that psychological researches are utilized to suggest that political alienation is linked to civic disengagement, social disintegration and prone to radicalization with potential long-term impacts other than the immediate mental health impacts.

DISCUSSION

The findings present the profound and complicated psychological consequences of major constitutional amendments to be implemented in political sensitive environments. The fact that the themes of various sources agree contribute to the increased certainty that the patterns identified can be accepted in spite of the restrictions of methods. The distress and resiliency reports provide an advanced perspective of not victimization of the afflicted population but the true misery. Many stressors including threats to identity, loss of autonomy, communication and security restriction were combined, which made the psychological environment very challenging. The findings emphasize the point in that the psychological implications of political decisions, even when it comes to immediate legal and administrative reforms, reach a long way beyond the immediate alterations in legal and administrative frameworks to influence mental health, social integration, and intergenerational wellbeing which may have long-term effects than those that are causally preceded by the events themselves.

CONCLUSION

In this study, severe psychological impacts of the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A among Kashmiri communities were described in which the tendencies of collective trauma, anxiety, the feeling of loss of control, loss, and political isolation along with resilience and adaptive coping were reported. The findings emphasize the thought that constitutional and political reforms in contentious regions have psychological effects, which require the keen interest of policy-makers, mental health professionals and human rights advocates. The second source, methodologically must be used, since it would be impossible to access the population directly, offers less layers and immediacy of the knowledge which can be acquired in direct contact with the affected population. Further research based on a primary data collection would also be beneficial as additional information and more detailed intervention would be created to address the described psychological requirements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings suggest that there is an immediate need of greater mental health provision in Kashmir that would combine trauma-informed and culturally sensitive interventions within collective and individual psychological impacts. Policymakers should consider the fact that psychological wellbeing is a very significant factor of governance of politically sensitive regions, and any major change in the constitution should be supplied with the tools of mental health assistance and communal recovery. To intervene evidence-based, international organizations and mental health professionals should aim at documenting the impacts of politics on the psyche of conflict territories. The study must adopt participatory research design that places voice and opinions of the affected communities in the center as soon as it can be permitted to facilitate the generation of knowledge that are actually beneficial to the population and not personal interests of outsiders.

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