

Unnoticed Child from the Conflict Zone: A Study of Human Behaviour in Select Indian Graphic Novels

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Abstract

Children in conflict-affected regions face numerous obstacles that can substantially impact their cognitive and behavioural development. The purpose of this study is to examine how Indian Graphic Novels, specifically Malik Sajad's *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* and Varud Gupta & Ayushi Rastogi's *Chhotu: A Tale of Partition and Love*, depict the routine of children's lives in conflict-prone regions. The selected novels effectively convey the lived experiences of the young protagonists and offer an original perspective on their struggles. Children who are deprived of a safe environment due to violence are frequently subjected to financial, sexual, psychological, and physical maltreatment, as well as rules and restrictions from their parents, teachers, and neighbours. The ecological system theory, which contends that a child's environment affects their general behaviour, is employed in the study. It underlines the effects of living in a conflict zone on behaviour, including post-traumatic stress disorder. Despite the significant influence of parents, culture, and social norms, the study demonstrates that the behaviour of young protagonists living in conflict zones is strongly influenced by their environment (chronosystem). According to the analysis, conflict-related violence against children has become a significant threat to global development. While the number of children affected by the violent environment is unclear, it is evident that those confined to 'home life' in a combat zone are at a greater risk of abuse and trauma. The study emphasises the critical requirement for defending the legal rights of children living in conflict areas and giving them a secure environment. It places a strong focus on the value of social services, healthcare, and education in preserving and advancing children's rights. The purpose of the study is to contribute to a greater understanding of human behaviour in the context of conflict and its potential long-term effects on the development of children. The need to create a just and peaceful world for all children is underlined in the study.

Keywords: Human (Child) Behaviour; Ecological System Theory; Conflict Zone; Partition India and Graphic Novels

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Introduction

Children living in conflict zones are confronted with a variety of difficulties, including displacement and loss of home, lack of access to education, traumatic experiences and psychological impact, inadequate healthcare, malnutrition and food insecurity, recruitment and exploitation, loss of family and community support, limited access to essential services, social and cultural disruptions, future uncertainty and limited opportunities that can have a profound effect on child's development and behaviour. Despite these obstacles, their experiences are frequently neglected or disregarded, leaving their voices unheard and unnoticed. As a result, there is a significant gap in understanding their realities and needs. The Indian graphic novels *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* by Malik Sajad and *Chhotu: A Tale of Partition and Love* by Varud Gupta serve as the basis for a study of the conduct of an unnoticed child from a conflict zone, which is based on a meticulous analysis of the two characters. These graphic novels offer a unique perspective on the experiences of young protagonists living in hostile and challenging environments, casting light on the behavioural effects of war on children. Using the ecological system theory as a framework, we investigate how a child's environment, which includes their family, school, neighbourhood, society, and the broader community, shapes their behaviour and influences their responses to conflict.

Conflict zones are unfavourable environments characterised by high levels of violence, political instability, and disruptions that cause terror, anxiety, and post-traumatic mental illness. In contrast, a comfortable environment is a positive space replete with support, respect, and harmony that encourages the development of socially responsible behaviour. Living in a conflict zone is one of the environmental alterations that can disturb a person's comfort zone and have adverse behavioural effects. The conflict zone can still significantly impact even if a person has a supportive family, community, and friends. The study emphasises the relevance of the Partition

in India, a significant historical conflict that continues to impact the people and the country (Butalia, 2017). Children's history texts do not adequately depict the effects of the conflict, even though writings about the Partition have captured the diverse human experiences before and after it. Therefore, Partition literature questions this disparity and strives to teach children about the hardships endured by those who lived through the Partition and how they overcame adversity to live better lives (Butalia, 2017).

Children who have not been taught to envision suffering can focus their vision on taking action by reading partition narratives, which help them visualise the sorrows and suffering of conflict zone residents. Despite the mayhem-like image of the Partition in novels, it allows readers to reflect on the people's suffering and recognise how their behaviour has changed due to the trauma. A child is specifically coerced to quit school and seek solace in the home, where their parents will govern and supervise their behaviour. Not every child is born into a loving, healthy family with a father and a mother; some children may have grandparents, single parents, half-widowed parents, widowed parents, disabled parents, and parents with varying occupations.

The selected texts for the study, *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* (2015) and *Chhotu: A Tale of Partition and Love* (2019), offer a child's perspective on what it is like to experience violence in disaster zones, regardless of class or gender, for both children and adults. Some studies and records concentrate on the effects of conflict on people who experience it directly, such as death, physical harm, and loss (Hoeffler & Reynal-Querol, 2003; Slone & Mann, 2016), but it is unclear how conflict affects people who experience it indirectly, especially children who may be used as pawns in wars (Huynh et al., 2015). While physical injury resulting from conflict is typically detected and treated, the same cannot be said for mental illness, which is frequently unrecognised and can cause children to choose a side in the conflict. If family

members and society recognise and treat a child's mental illness, he or she can be raised to become an active citizen of the country. Unfortunately, adults frequently fail to recognise that a child's environment, including their family, school, and neighbourhood, can influence their behaviour during the developmental stage (Bandura, 1974). As a result, it is essential to recognise and resolve the effects of conflict on children's mental health to mitigate potential negative outcomes (Holmbeck et al., 2008). The study aims to increase awareness of the importance of recognising a person by examining how their environment influences their behaviour.

Given that a child's behaviour changes progressively in response to their sociocultural context or immediate social milieu, raising them in a conflict-free, healthy environment is crucial. Conflict can hinder a child's development, so the study emphasises the significance of raising children in a healthy environment. By examining the unnoticed behavioural changes in children caused by conflict zones, the study aims to shed light on the effect of conflict on the development of children and provide insight into how to support them.

The research begins with an introduction that describes the study's context and background, as well as its purpose and significance. The literature review section analyses the existing literature on human behaviour in conflict zones, with a focus on literature pertaining to children. The methodology section describes the research design and methodology utilised for the study. The analysis focuses on two literary works *Chhotu: A Tale of Partition and Love* and *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* that feature the plight of children living in conflict zones. The findings of the study were subjected to scrutiny, analysis, and comparison with existing literature, yielding crucial insights into the depiction of human behaviour in Indian graphic novels. The article acknowledged its limitations and suggested conducting additional research. This study emphasises the significance of comprehending the experiences of children who are unrecognised in conflict zones.

Literature Review

The study focuses on the Indian Partition and seeks to investigate the effect of conflict zones on individuals' experiences. The literature review is divided into three sections, each focusing on a different facet of the Indian Partition. The first section, titled 'Historical Background,' summarises the Indian Partition. The second section, titled 'Children in Partition Literature,' emphasises various works that centre on children's experiences in the conflict zone during the Partition. The final section, 'Effect of Conflict Zone,' investigates the effects of conflict on civilians. This literature survey is primarily based on scholarly journals, books, and periodicals.

Historical Background

In *Unsettling Partition* (2006), the history of Partition demonstrates how the 1947 Indian Partition signalled the end of British colonial control in South Asia and the birth of two modern nation-states. Violent murders and sexual assaults occurred as a result of the unprecedented mass migration brought on by the Two-Nation Theory. The Two-Nation Theory is distinctive in the idea that it incorporates both general definitions of a nation and the formation of a new nation based on religious identity. The theory arose from the wish to establish a separate, independent state in India and derives support from the cultural, linguistic, political, religious, economic, and social differences between the two coexisting communities. These fundamental differences have led to the separation of these societies, resulting in the formation of two separate nations (Chatterji, 2007). Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, a pioneer of Muslim nationalism in India, played a crucial role in promoting and advocating for the Two-Nation Theory among Muslims. He was one of the earliest advocates for the concept, emphasising the distinct identity and interests of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent. Muhammad Iqbal, a renowned poet, philosopher, and politician, is frequently attributed to developing the Two-Nation Theory's theoretical framework. In his speeches and writings, he emphasised the distinct religious, cultural, and political identities

of Hindus and Muslims and advocated for the creation of a separate Muslim state. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, leader of the All-India Muslim League, was instrumental in advancing and popularising the Two-Nation Theory. He successfully mobilised Muslims and led the political fight for a separate Muslim homeland. Jinnah's unwavering commitment to the Two-Nation Theory and his negotiation skills during the partition process was instrumental in Pakistan's independence on 14 August 1947 (Şahbaz, 2020). In 1971, West Pakistan and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) were created as a result of this hypothesis (Akbar, 2017). Despite the fact that both countries have Muslim communities, their formation was influenced by regional and cultural differences that posed a challenge to the conception of a nation based solely on religious identity. Pakistan was founded as a two-winged state, with West Pakistan and East Pakistan geographically separated. However, disparities between the two regions led to an increase in demands for autonomy in East Pakistan, fuelled by Bengali nationalism and a desire for autonomy. This ultimately resulted in a full-fledged armed conflict in 1971, with India supporting East Pakistan. The conflict resulted in East Pakistan's victory, which led to the formation of Bangladesh as an independent nation. The creation of Bangladesh demonstrated the limitations of the two-nation hypothesis and the significance of contemplating diverse regional aspirations and identities outside of religious affiliation during the nation-building process. As sectarian tensions between Hindus and Muslims exploded into massive riots, mass deaths, and forced migrations, the Partition of India was accompanied by a great deal of violence (Talbot & Singh, 2009). Although the precise toll is unknown, estimates place the death toll between a few hundred thousand and two million and the number of displaced persons between 12 and 18 million (Bose, 2011; Butalia, 2017). Even though it is viewed as a horrible episode in Indian history, the memories of Partition bring back moments of love, caring, and optimism despite the severity of the conflict. In addition to history, the Partition is frequently depicted in testimonies, autobiographies, and

documentaries. Although the main emphasis is on local experiences and testimonies, Kushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, which was published in early 1956, gained a sizable audience interested in the truths of the Partition. The growing sectarian violence and the anniversary of Indian independence in the mid-1980s further contributed to the interest in what is now known as Partition literature (Didur, 2006).

Children in Partition Literature

The literature concerning the Partition of India in 1947 often explores the experiences and perspectives of children who were directly affected by this tumultuous historical event. Several notable works shed light on the profound impact of Partition on children, highlighting their concerns, fears, and struggles amidst the backdrop of political and social upheaval. Attia Hosain's book, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, delves into the effect of Partition on children through the story of a young girl. The novel emphasises a young girl's concerns about her freedom over her country's freedom. By depicting the child's perspective, Hosain provides insight into the complex emotions experienced by children during this period (Hosain, 2021). In a similar way, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India*, originally published as *Ice Candy Man* (Sidwa, 2000), depicts how losing someone due to Partition impacts a child. By highlighting this aspect, the author underscores the emotional and psychological trauma endured by children who were separated from their families and friends (Sidwa, 2010). *The Night Diary* by Veera Hiranandani shows the child's fear of their displacement, loss of homeland and identity crisis (Hiranandani, 2018). Similarly, Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award, explores these themes through the eyes of a child, shedding light on the lasting impacts of Partition on their lives (Ghosh & Amitav, 2010). *Train to India: Memories of Another Bengal* by Maloy Krishna Dhar narrates the tale of a 10-year-old child who witnessed the forced emigration of Bengalis during Partition. Through the child's perspective, Dhar reveals the hardships and challenges faced by young

individuals who were uprooted from their homes, emphasising the disruption of their childhood (Dhar, 2009). *Safar: A Child's Walk to Freedom During the Partition of India* by Amrik Singh Chattha, an autobiographical work, describes the horror of Partition on children and their encounters with violence and childhood trauma (Chattha, 2018). Nayanika Mahtani's *Across the Line* aims to raise awareness of the difficulties faced by individuals affected by Partition and its ongoing effects. The book sheds light on the experiences of children during this period, offering insights into their struggles, resilience, and the long-lasting consequences of the event on their lives (Mahtani, 2019). Swapna Haddow's *1947: Torn Apart: The Partition of India* presents a story where an Indian Hindu child saves a Muslim boy attempting to escape the turmoil by crossing the Pakistani border. This book highlights the human connections formed amidst the chaos and explores the impact of Partition on the relationships between children from different communities (Haddow, 2021). Through their narratives, authors explore the emotional, psychological, and physical challenges faced by children, revealing the lasting effects of this historical event on their lives and identities. By examining the impact of Partition on children, these works contribute to a deeper understanding of the human dimension of this significant period in history.

Impact of the conflict zone

The conflict zone affects the child's learning ability, opportunity and right to education (Nadaf & Basu, 2021). Undoubtedly, children who live in a region of turmoil miss out on their education. Individuals who are not directly exposed to conflict zones can still suffer from the consequences of conflict violence. For instance, research has shown that conflict violence experienced by a pregnant woman can adversely affect the physical and mental development of her unborn child. This implies that the child is affected by the harm inflicted even before being exposed to direct contact with the conflict zone (Çelik, & Özpınar, 2017). Exposure to violence has detrimental long-term effects. Alastair Ager's words in *What is family? The Nature and*

Functions of Families in the Time of Conflict, children lose the security and support of their families in a war zone, which hinders their capacity to experience healthy emotional development (Ager, 2006). The fear of insecurity causes long-term depression, insomnia, nightmares, and signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (Davidhizar & Shearer, 2002; Pynoos & Nader, 1993), anxious avoidance, and violent death and injuries, loss of places, screaming, and loss of entertainment (Ngoo, 2002; Thabet et al., 2002; Clark, 2003; Prasad & Prasad, 2009). In conflict zones, marginalising children with mental health problems can result in a cycle of neglect and abandonment of their most basic needs. Studies indicate that conflict zones negatively impact a child's right to an education and are the main cause of marginalisation in post-conflict regions (Ager, 2006; Watson, 2015).

The identified research gap is the need to investigate and analyse the depiction of human behaviour, specifically that of children, in the context of conflict zones in Indian graphic novels. While there have been studies examining the depiction of conflict and its impact in a variety of literary forms, such as novels and films, there appears to be a dearth of research on the narrative and visual possibilities offered by graphic novels. This study aims to fill this void by examining how Indian graphic novels portray the experiences, emotions, and adaptations of children living in conflict zones, casting light on their resilience, difficulties, and psychological responses. By examining this specific aspect of human behaviour within the realm of graphic novels, the study intends to contribute to a greater comprehension of the complex dynamics and psychological repercussions of conflicts on Indian children.

Methodology

The study employs visual analysis to examine the effect of conflict on children's behaviour. Graphic novels are unique in their ability to convey stories through a combination of text and illustrations. The study selects two graphic novels, namely *Chhotu: A Tale of Partition and Love* and *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir*, which

feature young protagonists impacted by conflict. The literature review covered news reports, dissertations, e-publications, research articles, and books that drew on substantial earlier work on the Partition issue. Accordingly, the study identifies that the children should be addressed as victims of the conflict zone, and their behavioural changes should be monitored. Insights from Ecological System Theory (EST), the study explores factors that have an impact on children. The Ecological Systems Theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1977) sees child development as a complicated web of interconnections influenced at various levels by the external environment.

Five separate systems—the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem—were used by Bronfenbrenner to categorise a person's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Microsystems are a child's close relationships with their family, school, neighbourhood, and peers. Mesosystems cover interactions between microsystems, parents, and teachers. Exosystems are extended families and the neighbourhood. Macrosystems are cultural attitudes and ideologies. Chronosystems relate to the historical and environmental changes that occur throughout an individual's life, including sociohistorical conditions, significant life events, and cultural shifts (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). According to Ecological Systems Theory, all systems are interconnected, making it essential to consider the child's environment in its entirety. The microsystem is regarded as the most influential because the immediate environment directly influences a child's development (Guy-Evans, 2020; Darling, 2007). The purpose of the study is to determine which of the two factors, microsystem and chronosystem, has a greater impact on the behavioural development of children. Therefore, this study considers it essential to comprehend each individual's environment (Zastrow et al., 2019; Greene, 2017).

Microsystem Vs Chronosystem Influence on Children

Munnu and Chhotu's families are two examples of people who live in a war zone where they must always be on guard against death and violence (Santa Barbara, 2006). The colour scheme in *Chhotu: A Tale of Partition and Love* and *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* signifies the extreme darkness of their respective places, emphasising dread, terror, conflict, and suffering. In Malik Sajad's graphic novel *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir*, the black and white colours represent the effects of violence and trauma on children. This profoundly impacts the emotional and behavioural development of Munnu and his siblings. The use of black and white in *Chhotu: A Tale of Partition and Love* represents the violent and chaotic nature of the Partition era in India, particularly in the lives of children, as well as the struggle for survival amidst the devastation and displacement caused by the conflict. Munnu, a Kashmiri child aged seven, resides with his mother, father, sister (Shahnaz) and brothers (Adil, Akhtar and Bilal). Munnu develops an appreciation for drawing as a result of his father's wood engravings. Although he struggles to replicate newspaper images of recognisable and disfigured individuals, he excels at drawing the AK-47, which gains him popularity among his peers. Figure 1 demonstrates how a child's life may be affected by seemingly little events as a result of the widespread and global coverage of wars in the news; he was encouraged by his father to draw but was readily persuaded to sketch an AK-47 because there is a constant stream of conflict-related news across all countries. People in the crisis zone are more genuinely interested in receiving updates on the situation. When adults hear the same news, they interpret it differently than children do. For adults, the news is a message of warning or the impending announcement of the next curfew. Three different influential factors can be seen from where Munnu lives: at home (microsystem), school (microsystem) and in the conflict zone (chronosystem).

Education (microsystem) balances a child's good mental health and behaviour, yet getting an

education in a conflict zone is difficult. Munnu and the other children stayed home instead of going to school since it interfered with the national conflicts. For their protection, people in a conflict area must remain inside their houses during war or conflict. They may hear and watch acts of violence being done against their neighbours, strangers, and themselves, even if they reside in their homes. It was “like a horror movie. when the dead bodies approach[ed]. Munnu shivered and buried his face in Shahnaz’s arms” (Sajad, 2015, p.35). He started having nightmares after that and was then brought to peer sahib. He needs to play because he is lonely and terrified like a fish in a tank, says the peer sahib. Even if they live with a prophet, children need company. The mother of the boy responded, “[h]is school wasn’t reopened yet”

(Sajad, 2015, p.60). This upholds the idea that a child needs a healthy environment, and that education makes that possible. As a result, the school is thought of as a therapeutic resource for those trying to escape the atrocities of a conflict zone. However, when a child’s education falls short of their expectations, it causes a behaviour change. In combat zones, children are punished for their behaviour, where “[a]n awful dread of school turned Munnu numb” (Sajad, 2015, p.86). A terrible punishment is meted out for even the smallest transgression; in Figure 2, for example, Munnu was severely beaten up because he chose to grow his hair, which led to him experiencing intense pain and sorrow before eventually losing consciousness (Sajad, 2015, p.121). In the end, “he found consolation in isolation” (Sajad, 2015, p.122).



Figure 1- Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir
 Source: Sajad, 2015, p.5



Figure 2- Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir
 Source: Sajad, 2015, p. 121

An adult might not always resolve a child’s problem. Still, it is the parent’s job to ensure that

the setting is comforting or secure, although some may assume that sending their child to

school will help with behavioural adjustments. Adults are made aware of the possibilities of traumatic events when children exhibit regressive behaviour, such as waking up in the middle of the night or asking odd questions. Parents or other adults ought to be aware of the behaviour and offer aid instead of ignoring or punishing the child.

A child encounters difficulties from sources other than their own family and social network, such as their neighbours and school. They frequently end up being exploited as a tool by society and others to take advantage of them. Conflict zones are rife with sexual assault (Solangon & Patel, 2012), which happens to people of both sexes; Munnu himself was the victim of such an attack, fear, shame and chaos of thoughts froze Munnu in place. "He felt unclean and gripped with unidentified guilt" (Sajad, 2015, p.143). He experienced an unclean feeling and unnamed remorse. This illustrates the reality of an abused child who loses his ability to communicate verbally and suffers internal injuries as a result. They may remain invisible since they do not share anything with others. Rather, they keep it all to themselves. This kind of children's experience is never mentioned in the survey conducted among conflict zone victims.

Contrarily, when dissent rules the social conversation, people get curious. Residents of crisis zones accept and view their life as normal. Munnu says that when he starts sketching, "he wants to portray the Indo-Pak relations" (Sajad, 2015, p. 153). He also wishes to convey the suffering and grief he is currently experiencing. As individuals experience violence every day and know nothing will change, he noted that even holidays are routine days or another curfew. Even though his father had told him to concentrate on the exam, he disregarded it to research Kashmiri history for his newspaper drawing (caricatures). As stated by Sajad, he believed that the pain of Kashmiris is disregarded in favour of "the tongue-twisting words that make history books sound official and like the holder of sacred truth" (Sajad, 2015, p. 193). The combination of Munnu's profession,

family, and transgression led to his nicotine addiction, and even his "Papa doesn't scold Sajad for smoking anymore" (Sajad, 2015, p. 266). Later, he was imprisoned due to a false "terrorism" accusation. As stated in the quotation, "Munnu never sought any meaning from his scribbling, but after growing into Sajad he used to it to criticise, to express, to expose, to seek revenge against time passing by without fulfilling the promises" (Sajad, 2015, p. 346), the experience made him realise that being a child is different from being an adult. It is essential to protect a child's behavioural health. Even the study emphasises that children who live in conflict zones exhibit acute discomfort from numerous traumatic events through emotional issues that might appear as a post-traumatic stress disorder, dissociative disorders, anxiety, and substance abuse (Pynoos & Nader, 1993). It discusses Munnu's resilience and adaptability despite the difficulties he encounters. Indeed, through Munnu's artistic talent, the novel emphasises the ability of children to express themselves and cope with trauma through their artistic abilities.

In contrast, Varud Gupta's *Chhotu: A Tale of Partition and Love* explores the effects of the Partition of India on ordinary people, specifically children. The book describes how living in a conflict zone can hinder the behavioural development of children. One of the novel's central themes is the effects of trauma on children. The protagonist, Chhotu, endures the violence and upheaval of the Partition and experiences loss and displacement. This trauma causes Chhotu to become withdrawn and isolated, unable to perceive the world around him. Chhotu was a little child who was nurtured by his foster father, Bapu, in 1947, as the British started to depart India progressively. Bapu cautions him not to become involved in anything and to be watchful. He used to emphasise "head down, happy life", "this parantha isn't I taught u", and "out there, in the world, there's only trouble to be found" (Gupta & Rastogi, 2019, p. 6). Chhotu wanted to do a particular *parantha* (a kind of Indian food) after falling in love with Heer. So, he asked his father to help him make *parantha*, as seen in Figure 3. However, Chandni

Chowk experienced an aloo (potato) shortage, which impacted Babu’s company.



Figure 3- Chhotu: A Tale of Partition and Love
Source: Gupta & Rastogi, 2019, p. 6



Figure 4- Chhotu: A Tale of Partition and Love
Source: Gupta & Rastogi, 2019, p. 63

Even after knowing that there had been a crime in the city, he kept in mind Babu’s advice “[t]his is none of your business. Report it to the Vilayti soldiers and return to your homework. Remember... head down, happy life.” (Gupta & Rastogi, 2019, p. 15). However, Chhotu felt bad for doing nothing in response to the crime, the Partition declaration, and Heer’s relocation to Pakistan. When he wanted to speak out about the crime, his father advised him, “[b]e careful, Chhotu. Sometimes, it’s easier to stay out of it all. Head down? Happy life.” (Gupta & Rastogi, 2019, p. 50). His Babu’s repeated insistence that “a single tomato can change the entire gravy” (Gupta, 2019, p. 63) demonstrates his concern for Chhotu’s safety. However, Chhotu was unexpectedly detained for aloo theft, which he had bought. He became involved in the world of crime and corruption as a result of it. “Chhotu, I can’t let you make this mistake” (Gupta &

Rastogi, 2019, p. 62); Babu tries to stop him since he is still dealing with the effects of his past. Chhotu became hostile out of frustration and answered, “I’m no longer happy keeping my head down.” (Gupta & Rastogi, 2019, p. 63). Figure 4 shows an angry Chhotu who struggles to break free from his father’s clutches on him and fight back against the brutality happening in society. He joined the group and finally trained with the weapons before aiming at the adversary that Babu had long avoided. But Chhotu loses Babu as a result of his decision. He sets up a trap for Sheer (the adversary) to fall into as a form of vengeance for his deceased parents, Babu and Heer. Even if he completes his task, he is still filled with loss, suffering and longing. This observation validates the arguments of Davidhizar & Shearer (2002) that a child may exhibit post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms due to losing their parents, siblings, and peers.



Figure 5- Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir
 Source: Sajad, 2015, p. 266



Figure 6- Chhotu: A Tale of Partition and Love
 Source: Gupta & Rastogi, 2019, p. 73

Both protagonists became the victims of the conflict zone though they had supportive families. As World Health Organization (2022) reports:

Violence results in negative coping and health risk behaviours. Children exposed to violence and other adversities are substantially more likely to smoke, misuse alcohol and drugs, and engage in high-risk sexual behaviour. They also have higher rates of anxiety, depression and other mental problems and suicide.

The statement implies that children exposed to violence and other adversities are likelier to adopt unhealthy coping mechanisms and engage in health-threatening behaviours. These behaviours may include smoking, alcohol and substance abuse, and engaging in high-risk sexual behaviour (Jones et al., 2012). In addition, children who have been exposed to violence and adversity are more likely to develop mental health issues such as anxiety and depression and

are at a greater risk of committing suicide. As depicted in Figures 5 and 6, both protagonists ultimately became victims of violence that resulted in mental illness. Chhotu's decision to join the gangsters to exact revenge reveals his propensity for aggressive behaviour. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a lasting scar caused by engaging in conflict out of anger and encompasses depression, suffering, and loss. On the other hand, Munnu has addictions to tobacco, alcohol, and narcotics. Eventually, when an individual realises their predicament and makes an effort to flee, the recollections of the incidents bring back the misery of their deeds and lead to addiction, aggression, social isolation, and mental illness. This highlights the significant impact of violence and trauma on children's physical and mental health and the importance of addressing these issues to promote healthy development. In Mary Richmond's words, a person's behaviour "was a product of their environment", which means that one may comprehend a person's behaviour

by looking at their environment and cannot be judged visually (Richmond, 2017).

Conclusion

Children living in conflict-affected regions face numerous obstacles that significantly impact their cognitive and behavioural development. The study focuses on the depiction of the daily lives of such children in Indian Graphic Novels, specifically *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* by Malik Sajad and *Chhotu: A Tale of Partition and Love* by Varud Gupta & Ayushi Rastogi. The conflict altered Munnu and Chhotu's behaviours and adult lives because of the challenges they encountered in their families, societies, and environments. The setting of both novels is a conflict zone; the protagonists are young and raised by instructive parents; Partition, however, hampered their education; they are not direct victims of the conflict zone but are unnoticed pawns of conflict violence; both are influenced by society and yearn for freedom. These are the similarities that can be found in both novels. But in the end, Munnu became fearful and apprehensive about his acts, while Chhotu felt awful and guilty for his deeds and for defying his foster father. The study supports the person-in-environment theory, which holds that the environment influences behaviour. It is well documented that the three main determinants of behaviour are family, school, and society. Contrarily, it is impossible to live in a conflict zone without understanding parents, a good education, and a peaceful environment. Therefore, it is crucial to establish policies specifically for children affected by conflict and raise awareness of the available organisations, such as The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Save the Children, International Medical Corps, Child Rights and You (CRY), and War Child India, who work for the rights, assistance, protection, and mental health care of children affected by conflict and violence. Furthermore, the conflict zone is not about people's lives during the Partition but also for people in today's globe who deal with obstacles in their families, societies, neighbourhoods, and environment. Preventative action has to be taken to rescue children from distressing

circumstances. The study will serve as a resource for raising an understanding of the history of their forebears in India, considering that a child will eventually become a parent and a member of society. The study suggests a child's overall behavioural development depends on a secure setting. This projection of behavioural changes in graphic novels offers a quick understanding of behavioural developments and changes throughout time to shield a youngster from developing post-conflict traumatic disorder.

Limitations

Even though the analysis of human behaviour in Indian graphic novels provides essential insights into the complexity of Indian culture and society, it is crucial to keep in mind that the results are only applicable to the particular graphic novels that were examined and may not be generalisable to all of Indian literature or culture. Future research should broaden the analysis's focus to include different genres or traditional literature to acquire a more thorough picture of human behaviour in India. The study does not take into consideration other elements like genetics or individual differences, even while it emphasises the impact of a child's surroundings on their behaviour. These aspects could be investigated in more detail in future studies. Last but not least, although the study increases awareness of the effects of conflict on children, it largely focuses on able-bodied children and could utilise a more inclusive approach that takes into account the experiences of children with disabilities in conflict zones.

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The authors affirm that no conflict of interest exists and that ethical approval has been obtained for this work.

Author Contribution Statement

Cynthiya Rose J S has conceptualised, collected resources, analysed and written the original draft.

Dr Bhuvanewari R is the corresponding author and supervisor. She edited, reviewed and developed the final draft.

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