



# COMPLEX DYNAMICS OF EDUCATION IN POONCH OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

 Azmat Hussain Shah<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Education, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, India.

\*Corresponding Author: [azmatkzami3122@gmail.com](mailto:azmatkzami3122@gmail.com)

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The aims of the present study examine the challenges of border district Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir. In present study the researcher observed that the education system of Poonch district in Jammu and Kashmir faces multifaceted challenges stemming from its unique geographical, social, and political context. These challenges include inadequate infrastructure, limited access to education, poor quality of education, language barriers, security concerns, and disparities in literacy rates among different demographic groups. Despite these obstacles, government initiatives aimed at improving infrastructure, recruiting qualified teachers, promoting girls' education, and integrating innovative teaching methods offer opportunities for addressing these challenges. Collaborative efforts involving government agencies, non-governmental organizations, community stakeholders, and educational institutions are essential for overcoming these barriers and ensuring inclusive and equitable access to quality education for all children in the district. By addressing these challenges and leveraging opportunities for improvement, the education system in Poonch can play a pivotal role in fostering socio-economic development and empowering individuals to lead fulfilling lives.

**Keywords:** *Challenges in Education, Border Areas, Multifaceted Problem, Security Concerns, Lack of Facilities.*



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. It involves the systematic instruction, training, or development of individuals to enhance their intellectual, social, emotional, and physical capabilities. Education can occur through formal institutions like schools and universities, as well as informal means such as self-learning and life

experiences. Its primary goal is to empower individuals to reach their full potential, contribute to society, and lead fulfilling lives.

Poonch is divided in eleven educational zones of Bafliaz, Balakote, Harni, Kanoiyar, Mandi, Mankote, Mendhar, Nangali, Poonch, Sathra and Surankote. The four educational zones of Mandi, Bafliaz, Sathra and Surankote are winter zones while the other seven zones are summer zones as

they observe hot climate during summer. In winter zones, migration takes place during summer as the families migrate to upper reaches of the district along with their children and cattle. The literacy rate of Poonch district is as per Census 2011 is 66.7 per cent while in 2001 it was 51.19 per cent. The male literacy in Poonch is 78.84 per cent (**Census 2011**) in comparison to 65.04 % in 2001. The female literacy in Census 2011 in Poonch is 53.19 while in Census 2001 it was 35.96 per cent. The statistics for women, especially belonging to SC and ST community are not satisfactory. The lowest literacy rate is for educational zone Mandi which has only 17% ST population. The female literacy rate of Mandi educational zone is lowest at 14.09%.

Poonch, situated in the northernmost region of India, is a significant border district of Jammu and Kashmir. It shares its border with Pakistan and is located along the Line of Control (LoC), making it a strategically important area. The district is surrounded by the Kashmir valley to the northeast, Rajouri district to the south, and Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK) to the west. The topography of Poonch is characterized by rugged hilly terrain, with the Pir Panjal range forming a natural boundary that separates it from the Kashmir valley.

According to the 2011 Census, Poonch has a diverse population of 476,835 individuals, consisting of various religious and ethnic groups, including Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Paharis, Gujjar and Bakkarwal tribes, and other backward communities. Gujjars and Bakkarwals, in particular, are the two scheduled tribes residing in the district, constituting a significant portion of the population at 36.9%.

Despite its natural beauty, Poonch faces numerous challenges that hinder its overall development, with education being one of the critical sectors affected. The district's remote location, difficult terrain, and inadequate road connectivity pose significant obstacles to accessing education, especially in rural areas. Many villages are located in remote and inaccessible areas,

making it difficult for students to reach schools, and for teachers to travel to these areas regularly.

Additionally, Poonch struggles with the poor implementation of development schemes, which further exacerbates the challenges faced in the education sector. The lack of proper infrastructure, including schools, classrooms, and educational resources, hampers the quality of education provided in the district. As a result, Poonch has lower literacy rates compared to other regions, with particular disparities among women, Scheduled Caste (SC), and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities.

Moreover, the district has been heavily affected by armed insurgency and cross-border tensions over the past few decades. Poonch has witnessed numerous instances of violence, including terrorist attacks, skirmishes along the LoC, and infiltration attempts from across the border. This instability has had a profound impact on the education system, with schools often becoming targets for militants, leading to the destruction of infrastructure and disruption of academic activities.

In conclusion, the challenges faced by Poonch in the education sector are multi-faceted and complex, stemming from its geographical location, inadequate infrastructure, and security concerns. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that involves improving infrastructure, enhancing access to education, and ensuring the safety and security of students and educational institutions. Additionally, efforts must be made to address socio-economic disparities and promote inclusivity and diversity in the education system to ensure equitable access to quality education for all residents of Poonch district.

## **2. CHALLENGES OF EDUCATION IN POONCH DISTRICT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR**

The education system in Poonch, a border district of Jammu and Kashmir, faces several challenges and opportunities due to its unique geographical, social, and political context. Here is an overview of the education system in Poonch:

**2.1. Infrastructure:** Infrastructure is a critical component of the education system in any region, and Poonch district in Jammu and Kashmir is no exception. The district encompasses a diverse landscape, including urban areas, rural villages, and remote mountainous areas. As such, the quality and availability of educational infrastructure vary significantly across different parts of the district.

In urban centres like Poonch city, infrastructure for education tends to be relatively better developed compared to rural and remote areas. Here, one can find well-constructed school buildings with adequate classrooms, furniture, and basic amenities such as electricity, water supply, and sanitation facilities. These schools may also have additional resources like libraries, computer labs, and playgrounds, providing students with a conducive learning environment.

However, the situation is starkly different in rural and remote areas of Poonch district. Due to challenging terrain, limited resources, and infrastructure constraints, many schools in these areas lack proper buildings and classrooms. Instead, students often study in makeshift structures, temporary shelters, or even open spaces under trees. The absence of permanent structures not only affects the safety and comfort of students but also hampers the overall teaching-learning process.

Moreover, rural and remote schools frequently face issues related to basic amenities such as electricity and water supply. Many schools struggle with irregular or inadequate power supply, making it difficult to conduct classes, particularly during inclement weather or in the evenings. Similarly, access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities is often inadequate, posing health risks to students and staff.

Furthermore, the lack of transportation infrastructure exacerbates the challenges of accessing education in remote areas. In mountainous regions where roads are limited or poorly maintained, students may have to travel long distances on foot to reach the nearest school.

This not only discourages attendance but also contributes to high dropout rates, especially among girls and children from marginalized communities. While Poonch district has a network of educational institutions ranging from primary schools to higher secondary schools, the quality of infrastructure varies significantly across different areas. While urban centers may have relatively better facilities, rural and remote areas often lack proper school buildings, classrooms, electricity, sanitation facilities, and other essential amenities. Addressing these infrastructure gaps is crucial for ensuring equitable access to quality education for all children in the district, regardless of their geographical location or socio-economic background.

**2.2. Access to Education:** Access to education is a fundamental right that should be available to all children, regardless of their geographical location or socio-economic background. However, in remote and hilly regions like Poonch district in Jammu and Kashmir, accessibility to education remains a significant challenge. Several factors contribute to this issue, including limited road connectivity, challenging terrain, and socio-economic barriers.

One of the primary obstacles to accessing education in remote areas of Poonch is the lack of adequate road infrastructure. Many villages and hamlets are situated in remote mountainous regions, making them inaccessible by conventional means of transportation. The existing roads may be poorly maintained or non-existent, making travel to and from schools arduous and sometimes dangerous, especially during adverse weather conditions such as heavy rainfall or snowfall. As a result, students, particularly those living in the interior parts of the district, often face difficulties commuting to school on a regular basis.

Moreover, the challenging terrain of Poonch district poses additional obstacles to accessing education. Steep slopes, rugged terrain, and dense forests characterize many parts of the region, making travel even more challenging,

particularly for young children and those with disabilities. In such areas, students may have to navigate treacherous paths or traverse long distances on foot to reach the nearest school, which can deter many from pursuing their education.

Socio-economic factors also play a significant role in hindering access to education in Poonch district. Poverty, unemployment, and limited resources often force families to prioritize other pressing needs over education, such as earning a livelihood or tending to household responsibilities. As a result, children, especially girls, from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be kept out of school or withdrawn at an early age to contribute to household chores or labour.

Consequently, the combination of these factors results in low enrollment rates and high dropout rates, particularly among marginalized communities in remote and hilly areas of Poonch district. Girls, in particular, are disproportionately affected by these barriers, as they often face additional cultural and societal constraints that further restrict their access to education.

Furthermore, addressing the challenges of accessibility to education in Poonch district requires a multi-faceted approach that involves improving road infrastructure, implementing innovative transportation solutions, addressing socio-economic barriers, and promoting community engagement and awareness. By overcoming these obstacles, we can ensure that every child in the district has the opportunity to access quality education and unlock their full potential, regardless of where they live or their socio-economic status.

**2.3. Quality of Education:** The quality of education in Poonch district is adversely impacted by several key factors, ultimately affecting the learning outcomes of students. One significant challenge is the shortage of trained and qualified teachers, particularly in rural areas. Many schools in remote regions of the district face difficulty in

attracting and retaining competent educators, leading to larger class sizes and inadequate teacher-student ratios. As a result, students may not receive the individualized attention and support they need to thrive academically.

Furthermore, outdated teaching methods and a lack of modern educational resources contribute to the overall decline in the quality of education. Traditional pedagogical approaches that rely heavily on rote memorization and passive learning often fail to engage students effectively or foster critical thinking skills. Additionally, the absence of essential teaching aids, such as textbooks, laboratory equipment, and educational technology, further limits the scope and effectiveness of instruction.

To address these challenges and improve the quality of education in Poonch district, concerted efforts are needed to enhance teacher training and professional development programs, promote innovative teaching methodologies, and provide schools with adequate resources and infrastructure. By investing in the professional growth of educators and embracing modern educational practices, the district can ensure that all students have access to high-quality education that prepares them for success in the 21st century.

**2.4. Language Barrier:** In Poonch district, the language barrier presents a significant hurdle to effective education, particularly for students hailing from rural areas. While Urdu and English serve as the primary mediums of instruction in schools, a considerable portion of the student population converses in Pahari or other local dialects within their households. This linguistic diversity creates a disparity between the language used at home and that employed in the classroom, leading to difficulties in comprehending and engaging with the curriculum.

For many students, especially those from marginalized communities, the transition from their native language to Urdu or English can be daunting, impeding their ability to fully grasp academic concepts and express themselves

fluently. Consequently, these language barriers often result in lower academic performance, increased dropout rates, and limited access to educational opportunities.

Addressing the language barrier in education requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges and respects linguistic diversity while ensuring equitable access to quality education for all students. Strategies may include implementing bilingual education programs, providing language support services, training teachers in language acquisition techniques, and incorporating culturally relevant content into the curriculum. By fostering an inclusive learning environment that embraces linguistic diversity, Poonch can enhance educational outcomes and empower students to reach their full potential.

**2.5. Security Concerns:** Security concerns in Poonch district, stemming from its status as a border region, pose significant challenges to the education sector. The district frequently grapples with incidents of violence, unrest, and cross-border tensions, exacerbated by militancy and ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC). These security threats disrupt the regular operations of schools and jeopardize the safety of students and teachers.

The volatile situation has led to targeted attacks on educational institutions by militants, resulting in damage to infrastructure and creating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty among students and educators alike. Moreover, the intermittent closure of schools due to security reasons disrupts the academic calendar, leading to interruptions in learning and hindering educational progress.

Addressing security concerns in Poonch is crucial to safeguarding the well-being of students and ensuring uninterrupted access to quality education. Measures such as enhancing security measures around schools, providing psychosocial support to affected students, and promoting dialogue and reconciliation efforts can contribute

to creating a safer learning environment conducive to academic success.

**2.6. Government Initiatives:** In response to the multifaceted challenges facing the education sector in Poonch, the government has launched several initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of education in the district. One primary focus area is infrastructure development, with efforts underway to build and upgrade school buildings, classrooms, and facilities, particularly in rural and remote areas. This includes the provision of electricity, sanitation facilities, and other essential amenities to create conducive learning environments.

Recruitment drives for qualified teachers have been initiated to address the shortage of teaching staff in schools, ensuring that students have access to competent educators. Special emphasis is placed on promoting girls' education, with targeted interventions such as awareness campaigns, incentives, and scholarships to encourage female enrollment and retention in schools.

Furthermore, the government is exploring innovative teaching methods and integrating technology into the curriculum to enhance learning outcomes and engagement among students. Initiatives such as digital classrooms, e-learning platforms, and teacher training programs aim to modernize the education system and equip students with relevant skills for the future. By implementing these initiatives, the government seeks to overcome the barriers to education in Poonch and create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students, irrespective of their background or geographical location.

In summary, while the education system in Poonch faces several challenges, there are also opportunities for improvement and development. Addressing issues related to infrastructure, accessibility, quality of education, language barriers, and security concerns are crucial for ensuring inclusive and equitable access to education for all children in the district.

Additionally, collaborative efforts between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, community stakeholders, and educational institutions can play a vital role in transforming the education landscape in Poonch and fostering socio-economic development in the region.

### 3. OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

**Qian (2008)**, Conducted a study on Private returns to investment in education: an empirical study of urban China. In this study the researcher reveals that the role of education in shaping a country's development and societal transformation is undeniable. However, explosive violence, particularly along border regions, significantly impacts a nation's education system. Incidents such as shelling along the Line of Control have led to major disruptions in schooling, as evidenced by an Aljazeera report from 2016 detailing an exchange of shelling hitting a school van in Pakistan's Nakyal sector, resulting in casualties among students and staff (**Aljazeera Report, 2016**). A study of **Zahid Mushtaq (2017)** on children residing in conflict zones, like Kashmir, often experience psychological trauma and feelings of isolation due to the constant threat of violence. Studies by highlight the heightened impact of trauma on these children compared to their counterparts in peaceful areas. Additionally, **Shehryar Ali (2018)** underscores how militarism negatively affects children's psychological well-being and the quality of education, with cross-border shelling damaging school infrastructure. Research by **Pankaj and Pooja Sharma (2021)** conducted in Jammu's Heranagar area reveals that cross-border shelling adversely affects students' mental health and disrupts their academic performance during final exams. Moreover, the continuous ceasefire violations by Pakistan along the Line of Control, totalling 5601 incidents from 2019 to November 2021, exacerbate the challenges faced by students and educators in border regions (**India Today, 21 Dec 2021**).

The November 2003 ceasefire treaty marked a significant milestone in the historically strained relationship between India and Pakistan, particularly concerning the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir. This agreement followed a period of prolonged violence along the 725-kilometer Line of Control (LOC), which divides Jammu and Kashmir into two parts: Pak-occupied Kashmir (POK) and Indian-Administered Kashmir. Serving as a basic Military Confidence Building Measure (CBM), the ceasefire not only aimed to maintain military confidence but also facilitated bus services and trade across the LOC, bringing relief to the thousands of people residing along the border. Despite its initial promise, the ceasefire treaty has faced multiple violations over the years. RTI information obtained by Pune-based activist Prafful Sarada highlighted that Pakistani forces were responsible for the highest number of ceasefire violations in the Jammu and Kashmir border region over the past 17 years (**Jha, A., 2021**). In February 2021, both India and Pakistan made a mutual decision to bolster the 2003 ceasefire agreement and opt for a diplomatic resolution to the ongoing conflict. Military operation commanders from both countries convened a meeting to assess the current status of the Line of Control (LOC) and other sectors in a constructive atmosphere. During this meeting, the Director Generals of Military Operations (DGMOs) agreed to engage in discussions regarding any issues or concerns that could potentially impede peace in the LOC region (**Hindustan Times, 2021**). (**Mushtaq, 2023**) conducted a study on Engagement in Blended Learning and Academic Performance Among Secondary Level Students. A descriptive survey method applied for the research; Probability sampling types was used to collect the data from 400 secondary level students. To collect the data a self-developed questionnaire was used in this study. Frequency, range, percentage, mean average, product moment correlation, and paired sample t-test were used as statistical techniques. the study emphasizes the importance of continuous efforts to enhance

teaching methods and educational practices to meet the evolving needs of students. Through collaboration and innovation in education, educators can effectively prepare students for success in their academic journey and beyond.

#### 4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of study indicates that the challenges in education in border district Poonch of Jammu and Kashmir lies in understanding the unique obstacles faced by these regions. It offers insights into the educational disparities, poverty, unemployment, resource deficiencies, and security concerns affecting the learning environment. Addressing these challenges is crucial for promoting equitable access to education and fostering development in this sensitive border areas.

#### 5. RESEARCH QUESTION

**RQ<sub>1</sub>:** What are the challenges faced by the students of border district Poonch of Jammu and Kashmir.

#### 6. METHODOLOGY

The present study aims to examine the educational challenges in the border district of Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir. Understanding the unique obstacles encountered by these regions is crucial for addressing the issues effectively. To conduct this study, the researcher utilized a combination of personal observation and secondary sources of data, including newspapers, journals, articles, and governmental reports. This approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of the challenges faced by the education system in Poonch and provides valuable insights into potential solutions.

#### 7. CHALLENGES FACED BY THE STUDENTS OF BORDER DISTRICT POONCH OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR.

The students of the border district of Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir face numerous challenges. These include:

- Limited access to education due to remote locations and challenging terrain.

- Inadequate infrastructure in schools, including a lack of proper buildings, classrooms, and basic amenities.
- Language barriers, as many students speak local dialects at home, while instruction is primarily in Urdu or English.
- Security concerns due to proximity to the Line of Control, leading to disruptions in schooling and threats to the safety of students and teachers.
- Psychological trauma and stress resulting from exposure to violence and conflict in the region.
- High dropout rates, particularly among marginalized communities, due to socio-economic factors and the impact of conflict on education.
- Poor quality of education, including a shortage of trained teachers and outdated teaching methods.

These challenges collectively hinder the educational attainment and well-being of students in the border district of Poonch. The challenges faced by students in the border district of Poonch, Jammu and Kashmir, paint a complex picture of the educational landscape in conflict-affected regions. Limited access to education, stemming from remote locations and difficult terrain, poses a significant barrier to learning for many students. The inadequate infrastructure further exacerbates this issue, with schools lacking proper buildings and essential amenities.

Language barriers add another layer of difficulty, as students may struggle to comprehend instruction delivered in Urdu or English, especially if their primary language is a local dialect. Moreover, security concerns due to the district's proximity to the Line of Control contribute to disruptions in schooling and threaten the safety of students and teachers alike.

The psychological toll of exposure to violence and conflict cannot be understated, with many students experiencing trauma and stress as a result. This, coupled with high dropout rates among marginalized communities due to socio-

economic factors, further compounds the challenges faced by students in accessing quality education.

Additionally, the poor quality of education, characterized by a shortage of trained teachers and outdated teaching methods, hampers students' academic progress and overall well-being. These multifaceted challenges underscore the need for comprehensive interventions to address the educational needs of students in the border district of Poonch.

Overall, while the obstacles may seem daunting, it is crucial to recognize the resilience and potential of students in overcoming these challenges with adequate support and resources. Efforts to improve access to education, enhance infrastructure, address language barriers, ensure security, and prioritize mental health support can collectively contribute to fostering a conducive learning environment for students in conflict-affected regions like Poonch.

## 8. REVIEW BASED DISCUSSION

The literature presented in the discussion highlights several key themes related to education, conflict, and efforts towards peace-building in the context of border regions, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir.

Firstly, the literature emphasizes the undeniable importance of education for personal development, societal progress, and economic growth. Studies by [Qian \(2008\)](#) and others underscore the critical role of education in shaping a country's development trajectory and societal transformation. However, the discussion also brings attention to the adverse impact of explosive violence, particularly along border regions, on a nation's education system. Incidents such as shelling along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir have led to significant disruptions in schooling, as evidenced by reports of casualties among students and staff ([Aljazeera Report, 2016](#)).

Furthermore, research by [Zahid Mushtaq \(2017\)](#) and others highlights the psychological

trauma experienced by children residing in conflict zones like Kashmir. The continuous threat of violence negatively affects their well-being and academic performance, emphasizing the need for interventions to support these vulnerable populations. Additionally, studies by [Shehryar Ali \(2018\)](#) and [Pankaj and Pooja Sharma \(2021\)](#) underscore the detrimental effects of militarism and cross-border shelling on children's psychological health and educational infrastructure.

In light of these challenges, the discussion also touches upon diplomatic efforts to mitigate conflict and promote peace in the region. The November 2003 ceasefire treaty between India and Pakistan represented a significant milestone in easing tensions along the Line of Control. However, as highlighted by RTI information and subsequent discussions in February 2021, ceasefire violations remain a persistent challenge, underscoring the complex dynamics of the conflict.

Lastly, the literature introduces a study by [Mushtaq \(2023\)](#) on the impact of engagement in blended learning on academic performance among secondary level students. This study emphasizes the importance of innovative teaching methods and continuous efforts to enhance educational practices to meet the evolving needs of students, particularly in conflict-affected regions.

Overall, the discussion provides a comprehensive overview of the intersection between education, conflict, and peace-building efforts in border regions like Jammu and Kashmir. It underscores the multifaceted challenges faced by students and educators in these contexts while highlighting the importance of education as a tool for resilience and positive change.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to assess the challenges in education in the border district of Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir, with a focus on understanding the unique obstacles faced by these regions. Through personal observation and the analysis of secondary data sources such as

newspapers, journals, articles, and governmental reports, the study delved into the multifaceted issues surrounding education in conflict-affected border areas.

The review-based discussion presented a comprehensive overview of the intersection between education, conflict, and peace-building efforts in regions like Jammu and Kashmir. It underscored the undeniable importance of education for personal development, societal progress, and economic growth, as highlighted by various scholars. However, the discussion also shed light on the adverse impact of explosive violence, particularly along border regions, on the education system. Incidents such as shelling along the Line of Control have led to significant disruptions in schooling and have negatively affected the well-being and academic performance of children residing in conflict zones.

Furthermore, the discussion touched upon diplomatic efforts to mitigate conflict and promote peace in the region, highlighting the ceasefire treaty between India and Pakistan as a significant milestone. However, persistent ceasefire violations underscored the ongoing challenges faced by students and educators in conflict-affected areas.

Lastly, the literature introduced a study on the impact of engagement in blended learning on academic performance among secondary level students, emphasizing the importance of innovative teaching methods in meeting the evolving needs of students, particularly in conflict-affected regions.

Overall, the study provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of education in border regions like Poonch, emphasizing the importance of addressing these challenges to ensure access to quality education and promote positive change in these communities.

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