

# Psychological Distress During War-Related Crises: An Indian Perspective

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**Abstract:** ***Background:** War-related crises and geopolitical conflicts have emerged as important contributors to indirect psychological distress worldwide. Continuous exposure to war-related information through digital media and online news platforms may adversely affect mental health even among individuals residing far from conflict zones. In India, limited evidence exists regarding the indirect psychosocial effects of ongoing global conflicts among adults. **Aim:** To evaluate stress levels among adults during war-related crises and assess their indirect effects among the adult population in India. **Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional online survey was conducted among 6482 adults aged  $\geq 18$  years across different states and union territories of India. Participants were recruited using a non-probability snowball sampling technique through digital platforms. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of socio-demographic variables, a 15-item War-Related Stress Assessment Scale, and an Indirect Effects Assessment Checklist. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for analysis. **Results:** The findings revealed that 60.1% of participants experienced moderate stress and 20.6% experienced severe stress associated with war-related crises and media exposure. Social media was the predominant source of war-related information (46.1%). Nearly 75.5% participants reported anxiety or stress after viewing war-related news, while 67.4% stated that war-related crises affected their daily routine. Moderate indirect effects were observed among 57.7% participants, while 20.9% experienced severe indirect effects. **Conclusion:** War-related crises and continuous exposure to conflict-related media content significantly influence psychological well-being among adults in India. The findings highlight the need for preventive mental health strategies, responsible media engagement, and community-based psychological support interventions during periods of geopolitical uncertainty.*

**Keywords:** War-related crises, Stress, Mental health, Media exposure, Psychological distress, Adults, India

## 1. Introduction

Mental health has emerged as a major global public health concern, particularly during humanitarian emergencies, armed conflicts, and geopolitical crises. Although wars primarily affect populations directly exposed to violence, evidence suggests that war-related crises also produce indirect psychological effects among individuals residing far from conflict zones through media exposure, economic instability, fear, uncertainty, and continuous exposure to distressing information through digital platforms. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nearly 970 million people were living with mental disorders in 2019, with anxiety and depression being the most common conditions.<sup>1</sup>

Recent international conflicts, including the Russia–Ukraine war and the Israel–Gaza conflict, have intensified global psychological distress and increased awareness regarding the indirect mental health consequences of war. WHO estimates indicate that approximately one in five individuals living in conflict-affected settings experiences a mental health disorder.<sup>2,3</sup> Studies conducted in conflict settings have demonstrated increased prevalence of anxiety, depression, stress, and post-traumatic stress disorder among adults exposed directly or indirectly to war-related events.<sup>4</sup>

The advancement of digital media and 24-hour news exposure has amplified the indirect psychological impact of war across countries not directly involved in armed conflict. Continuous exposure to distressing war-related content through television, social media, and online platforms has been associated with increased stress, fear, emotional exhaustion, doomscrolling behaviors, sleep disturbances, impaired concentration, and reduced productivity.<sup>5,6</sup> Economic instability, inflation, uncertainty regarding global security,

and fear of escalation during international conflicts may further aggravate psychological distress among adults.<sup>7</sup>

India represents one of the largest populations vulnerable to stress-related mental health problems due to rapid urbanization, occupational pressure, financial insecurity, and increasing digital media exposure. Recent national reports have highlighted rising levels of anxiety, stress, and emotional distress among Indian adults, particularly among younger populations.<sup>8</sup> Despite increasing global evidence regarding the indirect mental health consequences of war-related crises, limited studies in India have specifically explored stress levels and indirect psychosocial effects associated with ongoing international conflicts.<sup>12,14</sup>

Existing literature has primarily focused on populations directly exposed to war, including refugees, military personnel, and residents of conflict zones.<sup>2–4</sup> Comparatively limited attention has been given to indirect psychological effects experienced by populations residing in non-war countries through continuous media exposure and geopolitical uncertainty.<sup>5,10</sup> Furthermore, limited Indian evidence is available regarding the indirect psychological, social, behavioral, and economic effects of war-related crises among adults.<sup>12,14</sup>

Understanding stress levels and indirect psychosocial effects associated with war-related crises is important for strengthening mental health awareness, promoting responsible media engagement, improving coping strategies, and guiding public health preparedness. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to evaluate stress levels among adults during war-related crises and assess their indirect effects among the adult population in India.

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### Need of the Study

War-related crises have become a recurring global phenomenon with widespread psychological, social, and economic consequences extending beyond directly affected countries. Continuous exposure to distressing war-related information through digital media, television, and social networking platforms may contribute to increased stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, fear, and behavioral disturbances among the general population.<sup>5,6</sup>

Existing literature has primarily focused on refugees, military personnel, survivors of armed violence, and populations directly exposed to armed conflicts.<sup>2-4</sup> Comparatively limited attention has been given to the indirect psychological effects experienced by populations residing in non-war countries through continuous media exposure, geopolitical uncertainty, and fear of global instability.<sup>5,10</sup>

In the Indian context, available mental health studies have largely concentrated on occupational stress, academic burden, pandemic-related distress, and financial instability.<sup>8,11</sup> Although a few recent Indian studies have explored psychological distress associated with crisis-related media exposure, limited evidence specifically addresses stress levels and indirect psychological, social, behavioral, and economic effects associated with ongoing war-related crises among adults in India.<sup>12,14</sup> Understanding stress levels and indirect psychosocial effects associated with war-related crises is important for strengthening mental health awareness, promoting responsible media engagement, improving coping strategies, and guiding public health preparedness. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to evaluate stress levels among adults during war-related crises and assess their indirect effects among the adult population in India.

### Aim of the study

To evaluate the stress levels among adults during war-related crises and assess their indirect effects among the adult population in India.

The objectives of the present study were to assess the level of stress among adults during war-related crises and to identify the indirect psychological, social, behavioral, and economic effects experienced by adults during such crises. The study also aimed to determine the association between stress levels and selected socio-demographic variables among adults, as well as to assess the association between media exposure related to war crises and stress levels among the adult population in India.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This was a descriptive cross-sectional online survey conducted among adults residing across different states and union territories of India from 12th March 2026 to 15th April 2026. A non-probability snowball sampling technique was used for participant recruitment. A structured self-administered questionnaire was developed using Google Forms, with an electronic informed consent form appended to it. The survey link was circulated through various digital platforms including WhatsApp, Telegram, email, Instagram, Facebook, and other social networking applications. Data were collected from adults across different regions of India.

Participants aged 18 years and above who were residents of India, able to understand English or Hindi, had access to smartphones or internet facilities, and were willing to participate were included in the study. Individuals below 18 years of age, participants submitting incomplete responses, and those unwilling to participate were excluded from the study.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section included socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, occupation, monthly family income, residence, religion, type of family, media exposure related to war crises, previous mental health history, and impact of war-related crises on daily routine. The second section included a self-structured 15-item War-Related Stress Assessment Scale assessing fear, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, sleep disturbance, concentration difficulties, insecurity, social withdrawal, and economic concerns using a four-point Likert scale ranging from Never (0) to Always (3). Total scores ranged from 0–45 and were categorized as mild, moderate, and severe stress levels. The third section included an Indirect Effects Assessment Checklist assessing psychological, social, behavioral, occupational, and economic effects associated with war-related crises. Total scores ranged from 0–15 and were categorized as mild, moderate, and severe indirect effects.

Content validity of the tool was established through expert review from specialists in mental health nursing, psychiatry, psychology, and public health. Reliability testing demonstrated acceptable internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.78. Administrative permission was obtained from the concerned institutional authority prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality and anonymity of participants were maintained throughout the study.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to describe study variables, while Chi-square test and correlation analysis were used to determine associations between stress levels, media exposure, indirect effects, and selected socio-demographic variables. A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

### Statistical Analysis

Data were entered and analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize the data. Inferential statistics including Chi-square test and correlation analysis were used to determine associations between variables. A p-value <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

## 3. Results

### Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants

A total of 6482 participants from different states and union territories of India participated in the present study. The majority of participants belonged to the 18–25 years age group (38.4%), with a mean age of  $31.8 \pm 10.8$  years. Female participants constituted 53.0% of the study population, while

45.0% were male. More than half of the participants were single (51.3%), and the highest proportion had completed graduate-level education (40.9%), followed by postgraduate education (28.3%). Regarding occupation, students represented the largest group (30.6%), followed by private employees (26.6%). Most participants belonged to urban areas (55.0%) and nuclear families (60.1%). Hindu participants constituted the majority (71.4%), followed by Muslim participants (14.3%). A substantial proportion of participants regularly followed news related to war or international conflicts (88.2%), with social media emerging

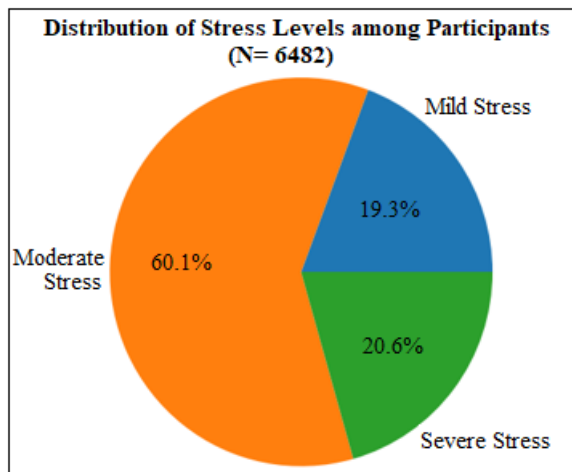
as the predominant source of information (46.1%). Participants spent an average of  $2.0 \pm 1.4$  hours daily following war-related news and international conflict updates through various media platforms.

Furthermore, 75.5% of participants reported experiencing anxiety or stress after exposure to war-related news, whereas 67.4% stated that war-related crises had adversely affected their daily routine. Previous history of mental health problems was reported by 18.3% of participants.

**Table 1: Responses on War-Related Stress Assessment Scale, N = 6482**

| S. No. | Statements                                                            | Never (%) | Sometimes (%) | Often (%) | Always (%) |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------------|-----------|------------|
| 1      | I feel worried after hearing news about wars or conflicts.            | 8.6       | 28.4          | 39.7      | 23.3       |
| 2      | I experience fear regarding global safety and security.               | 10.2      | 31.5          | 36.8      | 21.5       |
| 3      | I feel mentally disturbed by graphic or emotional news content.       | 12.8      | 34.6          | 32.5      | 20.1       |
| 4      | I find it difficult to concentrate on daily activities.               | 21.7      | 38.5          | 25.8      | 14.0       |
| 5      | I experience sleep disturbances after watching war-related news.      | 26.4      | 35.9          | 23.1      | 14.6       |
| 6      | I feel emotionally exhausted due to ongoing global conflicts.         | 14.9      | 33.7          | 31.4      | 20.0       |
| 7      | I feel helpless regarding the future of the world.                    | 18.5      | 34.8          | 28.6      | 18.1       |
| 8      | I avoid watching news because it increases my stress.                 | 24.1      | 32.9          | 25.0      | 18.0       |
| 9      | I frequently think about war-related events during the day.           | 19.3      | 36.4          | 28.7      | 15.6       |
| 10     | I feel anxious about economic or social instability caused by wars.   | 13.7      | 31.8          | 34.9      | 19.6       |
| 11     | I experience irritability or anger after consuming war-related media. | 22.6      | 37.5          | 24.0      | 15.9       |
| 12     | I feel emotionally affected by the suffering of people in war zones.  | 9.8       | 27.4          | 38.6      | 24.2       |
| 13     | I feel unsafe even while living away from conflict areas.             | 25.9      | 33.1          | 24.5      | 16.5       |
| 14     | I have reduced interest in social interaction due to stressful news.  | 28.3      | 34.5          | 22.4      | 14.8       |
| 15     | I feel stressed when discussing war-related topics with others.       | 20.7      | 36.8          | 26.9      | 15.6       |

The findings revealed that a considerable proportion of participants frequently experienced emotional and psychological distress related to war-related news and global conflicts. Nearly one-fourth of participants (23.3%) always felt worried after hearing news about wars or conflicts, while 24.2% reported being consistently emotionally affected by the suffering of people in war zones. More than one-third of participants often experienced fear regarding global safety and security (36.8%) and anxiety related to economic or social instability caused by wars (34.9%). A substantial proportion of participants also reported difficulties related to concentration, sleep disturbances, emotional exhaustion, irritability, and social withdrawal associated with continuous exposure to war-related media content, indicating the significant indirect psychological impact of ongoing global conflicts.



**Figure 1: Distribution of Stress Levels Among Participants (N = 6482)**

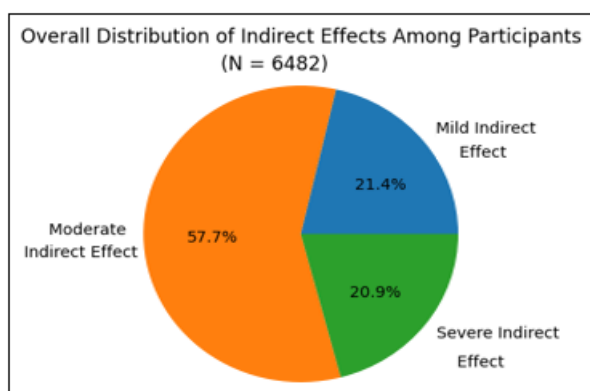
The findings revealed that the majority of participants experienced moderate levels of stress (60.1%) associated with war-related crises and conflict-related media exposure. Severe stress was observed among 20.6% of participants, whereas 19.3% reported mild stress. The results indicate a considerable psychological impact of war-related crises among the adult population in India

**Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Responses on Indirect Effects of War-Related Crisis**  
N = 6482

| S. No. | Indirect Effects                                           | Yes (%) | No (%) |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|
| 1      | Increased fear or insecurity                               | 74.8    | 25.2   |
| 2      | Sleep disturbances                                         | 58.6    | 41.4   |
| 3      | Reduced work productivity                                  | 49.3    | 50.7   |
| 4      | Difficulty concentrating                                   | 61.5    | 38.5   |
| 5      | Emotional distress                                         | 72.4    | 27.6   |
| 6      | Increased social media usage                               | 69.8    | 30.2   |
| 7      | Financial worries due to global instability                | 76.1    | 23.9   |
| 8      | Reduced social interaction                                 | 46.7    | 53.3   |
| 9      | Feeling hopeless about the future                          | 54.2    | 45.8   |
| 10     | Increased family discussions/conflicts related to war news | 43.5    | 56.5   |
| 11     | Fear regarding inflation or economic crisis                | 81.3    | 18.7   |
| 12     | Excessive checking of news updates                         | 67.9    | 32.1   |
| 13     | Feeling emotionally drained                                | 63.8    | 36.2   |
| 14     | Reduced interest in recreational activities                | 48.1    | 51.9   |
| 15     | Physical symptoms like headache, fatigue, or palpitations  | 57.4    | 42.6   |

The findings revealed that a substantial proportion of participants experienced various indirect psychological, behavioral, social, and economic effects associated with war-related crises. The majority of participants reported fear regarding inflation or economic crisis (81.3%), followed by financial worries due to global instability (76.1%) and increased fear or insecurity (74.8%). Emotional distress was experienced by 72.4% of participants, while 69.8% reported increased social media usage and 67.9% reported excessive checking of news updates related to ongoing conflicts.

More than half of the participants experienced difficulty concentrating (61.5%), feeling emotionally drained (63.8%), sleep disturbances (58.6%), physical symptoms such as headache, fatigue, or palpitations (57.4%), and hopelessness regarding the future (54.2%). These findings indicate the considerable indirect psychosocial and behavioral burden associated with continuous exposure to war-related crises and media content among adults in India.



**Figure 2:** Overall Distribution of Indirect Effects Among Participants (N = 6482)

The findings demonstrated that the majority of participants experienced moderate indirect effects (57.7%) associated with war-related crises, while 20.9% experienced severe indirect effects. Only 21.4% of participants reported mild indirect effects. The results suggest that war-related crises and continuous exposure to conflict-related media content substantially affected the psychological, social, behavioral, and economic well-being of adults in India.

#### Association of Stress Levels with Selected Socio-demographic Variables (N = 6482)

Association analysis revealed statistically significant relationships between stress levels and selected socio-demographic variables including age ( $\chi^2 = 14.92$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ), monthly family income ( $\chi^2 = 11.24$ ,  $p = 0.024$ ), previous history of mental health problems ( $\chi^2 = 42.36$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and disruption of daily routine due to war-related crises ( $\chi^2 = 51.48$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Participants with previous mental health problems and those whose daily routine was affected by war-related crises demonstrated comparatively higher levels of severe stress. Younger adults aged 18–25 years and participants belonging to lower income groups also demonstrated relatively higher stress levels compared to other groups.

However, no statistically significant association was observed between stress levels and variables such as gender ( $p = 0.084$ ), marital status ( $p = 0.061$ ), educational qualification ( $p = 0.071$ ), occupation ( $p = 0.063$ ), place of residence ( $p = 0.103$ ), type of family ( $p = 0.087$ ), and religion ( $p = 0.129$ ). These findings suggest that indirect stress associated with war-related crises may affect adults across diverse socio-demographic backgrounds irrespective of sociocultural differences.

Note: Categories with smaller subgroup frequencies were combined for inferential statistical analysis.

**Table 3:** Association Between Media Exposure Related to War Crises and Stress Levels Among Adults (N = 6482)

| Variables                                                                   | Mild Stress (%) | Moderate Stress (%) | Severe Stress (%) | $\chi^2$ Value | p-value | Significance    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------|---------|-----------------|
| Do you regularly follow news related to war or international conflicts?     |                 |                     |                   | 12.46          | 0.002   | Significant     |
| Yes                                                                         | 17.1            | 62.4                | 20.5              |                |         |                 |
| No                                                                          | 41.4            | 47.1                | 11.5              |                |         |                 |
| Main Source of Information                                                  |                 |                     |                   | 10.28          | 0.068   | Non-significant |
| Television                                                                  | 19.9            | 61.1                | 19.0              |                |         |                 |
| Social media                                                                | 16.5            | 61.6                | 21.9              |                |         |                 |
| Newspaper                                                                   | 21.8            | 59.1                | 19.1              |                |         |                 |
| YouTube                                                                     | 18.5            | 61.5                | 20.0              |                |         |                 |
| Family & Friends                                                            | 25.9            | 54.3                | 19.8              |                |         |                 |
| Others                                                                      | 34.4            | 45.1                | 20.5              |                |         |                 |
| Average Time Spent Following War-related News Daily                         |                 |                     |                   | 28.54          | <0.001  | Significant     |
| <1 hour                                                                     | 26.8            | 56.3                | 16.9              |                |         |                 |
| 1–2 hours                                                                   | 18.4            | 62.4                | 19.2              |                |         |                 |
| 3–4 hours                                                                   | 14.2            | 60.2                | 25.6              |                |         |                 |
| >4 hours                                                                    | 12.7            | 59.7                | 27.6              |                |         |                 |
| Have you ever experienced anxiety or stress after viewing war-related news? |                 |                     |                   | 36.82          | <0.001  | Significant     |
| Yes                                                                         | 13.2            | 63.6                | 23.2              |                |         |                 |
| No                                                                          | 37.8            | 49.2                | 13.0              |                |         |                 |

The findings demonstrated statistically significant associations between stress levels and variables such as regular exposure to war-related news, average time spent

following war-related news, and anxiety experienced after viewing war-related news ( $p < 0.05$ ). Participants who spent longer durations following war-related news and those who



experienced anxiety after viewing war-related news demonstrated comparatively higher levels of severe stress.

However, no statistically significant association was observed between stress levels and the main source of information ( $p > 0.05$ ). These findings suggest that the duration and emotional impact of media exposure may influence stress levels more strongly than the specific platform used for obtaining war-related information.

#### 4. Discussion

The present study was conducted to evaluate stress levels among adults during war-related crises and assess their indirect psychological, social, behavioral, and economic effects among the adult population in India. The findings revealed that a substantial proportion of participants experienced moderate-to-severe levels of stress associated with exposure to war-related crises and continuous conflict-related media content. The study further demonstrated that prolonged exposure to war-related news was associated with emotional distress, fear regarding global safety, financial insecurity, sleep disturbances, excessive media engagement, and disruption of daily routine among adults.

The findings of the present study are consistent with growing global evidence indicating that armed conflicts and geopolitical crises exert considerable indirect psychological effects even among populations geographically distant from conflict zones. The World Health Organization has emphasized that humanitarian emergencies and conflict-related uncertainty significantly contribute to anxiety, stress, emotional exhaustion, and psychological distress among the general population.<sup>2,3</sup> Recent literature has further highlighted that repeated exposure to conflict-related information through digital media can intensify emotional vulnerability and fear responses among viewers.<sup>15</sup>

In the present study, a large proportion of participants regularly followed war-related news, with social media identified as the predominant source of information. Participants who spent longer durations following war-related news demonstrated significantly higher stress levels. These findings are supported by Shabahang et al.<sup>5</sup> and Bendau et al.<sup>10</sup>, who reported that excessive exposure to crisis-related media content was associated with heightened anxiety, emotional fatigue, doomscrolling behavior, and increased psychological distress. Similar observations were also reported in recent studies examining media-induced uncertainty and mental health, where prolonged exposure to distressing conflict-related information was associated with increased stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and impaired emotional regulation.<sup>15,16</sup>

The present study further revealed that a considerable proportion of participants experienced fear regarding global insecurity, emotional exhaustion, emotional distress, and helplessness associated with war-related crises. These findings are comparable with the observations reported by Carpiniello<sup>6</sup> and Amsalem et al.<sup>9</sup>, who identified indirect traumatic stress, emotional dysregulation, and anxiety-related symptoms among individuals exposed to conflict-related media content and geopolitical uncertainty. A recent

longitudinal study examining the mental health consequences of the Israel–Gaza conflict also demonstrated increased symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress among individuals exposed to war-related experiences and economic insecurity.<sup>18</sup>

An important finding of the present study was the high prevalence of economic concerns among participants. A large proportion reported fear regarding inflation, financial instability, and global economic uncertainty associated with war-related crises. These findings may reflect the broader global economic consequences of ongoing geopolitical conflicts, including disruptions in fuel supply, inflationary pressures, rising living costs, and uncertainty regarding employment and economic security. Previous public health reports have acknowledged that economic instability and financial insecurity significantly contribute to stress-related mental health problems and reduced psychological well-being.<sup>7</sup> Similar findings have also been observed during recent global crises, where economic uncertainty and fear regarding future stability were strongly associated with psychological distress among adults.<sup>17</sup>

The present study additionally demonstrated multiple indirect psychosocial and behavioral effects associated with war-related crises, including sleep disturbances, difficulty concentrating, emotional drainage, excessive checking of news updates, increased social media usage, and reduced social interaction. These findings indicate that continuous engagement with distressing conflict-related media content may negatively influence behavioral coping mechanisms and daily functioning. Grover et al.<sup>12</sup> and Varshney et al.<sup>14</sup> similarly reported increased psychological distress, emotional exhaustion, and excessive digital media engagement among Indian adults during periods of crisis-related uncertainty. Recent Indian psychiatric literature has also emphasized that constant exposure to violent and emotionally disturbing news content through digital platforms may intensify stress, anxiety, and emotional instability among vulnerable populations.<sup>16</sup>

The association analysis in the present study demonstrated statistically significant relationships between stress levels and variables such as age, monthly family income, duration of media exposure, previous mental health problems, and disruption of daily routine. Participants with prolonged media exposure and previous mental health problems demonstrated comparatively higher levels of severe stress. These findings are supported by previous studies suggesting that individuals with pre-existing psychological vulnerability may exhibit greater sensitivity to distressing crisis-related information and uncertainty.<sup>6,13</sup> Furthermore, younger adults and students demonstrated comparatively higher stress levels, which may be associated with increased digital media engagement, frequent social media exposure, and greater uncertainty regarding future social and economic stability. Recent Indian mental health reports have similarly highlighted increasing psychological vulnerability among younger adults due to digital overexposure, uncertainty, and stress-related pressures.<sup>19,20</sup>

Interestingly, no statistically significant association was observed between stress levels and variables such as gender,

educational qualification, occupation, religion, and place of residence. This finding suggests that indirect stress associated with war-related crises may affect individuals across diverse demographic backgrounds irrespective of sociocultural differences. The widespread accessibility of digital media and continuous exposure to global conflict-related information may contribute to relatively universal psychological responses during periods of geopolitical uncertainty.

The findings of the present study have important implications for mental health nursing, psychiatric practice, public health preparedness, and community-based psychological interventions. The study highlights the urgent need for mental health awareness programs addressing the psychological consequences of excessive crisis-related media exposure. Public health professionals, policymakers, and mental health practitioners should promote responsible media consumption, digital mental health literacy, stress management strategies, and early psychological support services to reduce the long-term psychological burden associated with global crises.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of integrating mental health preparedness into disaster and crisis management frameworks even in countries not directly involved in armed conflicts. Strengthening community resilience, promoting healthy coping mechanisms, and improving accessibility of mental health support services through digital and community platforms may help reduce stress-related psychological consequences among vulnerable populations.

Overall, the present study contributes valuable evidence regarding the indirect psychological, behavioral, and economic effects of war-related crises among adults in India. The findings underscore that continuous exposure to conflict-related media content and geopolitical uncertainty may significantly influence emotional well-being, daily functioning, and mental health among the general population, highlighting the growing importance of preventive mental health strategies in the contemporary digital era.

## 5. Limitations of the Study

The present study has certain limitations. The study utilized a non-probability snowball sampling technique and online data collection method, which may limit the generalizability of findings to individuals without internet access or digital literacy. The cross-sectional design of the study restricts causal interpretation between media exposure and stress levels. Responses were self-reported and may have been influenced by recall bias or subjective interpretation. Furthermore, the study assessed indirect psychological effects associated with war-related crises rather than clinically diagnosed psychiatric disorders.

In addition, the public health applicability of the findings should be interpreted with caution. As the study employed a cross-sectional design with non-probability snowball sampling and self-reported measures, the results primarily provide descriptive evidence and cannot establish causal relationships or be generalized to the entire Indian population. Further nationally representative and longitudinal studies are

needed to generate stronger evidence for public health policy and intervention planning.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study concludes that war-related crises and continuous exposure to conflict-related media content have substantial indirect psychological, behavioral, social, and economic effects among adults in India. A considerable proportion of participants experienced moderate-to-severe stress characterized by fear, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, sleep disturbances, financial concerns, reduced concentration, emotional distress, and excessive media engagement associated with ongoing global conflicts.

The study findings further indicate that prolonged exposure to war-related news and crisis-related media engagement significantly contribute to elevated stress levels among adults. Participants with previous mental health problems and those whose daily routine was affected by war-related crises demonstrated comparatively higher levels of severe stress. These findings suggest that indirect exposure to global conflicts through digital media may adversely affect psychological well-being even among populations geographically distant from conflict zones.

The present study emphasizes the urgent need for preventive mental health strategies, responsible media engagement, psychological awareness programs, and community-based interventions aimed at promoting emotional resilience and healthy coping mechanisms during periods of geopolitical uncertainty. Strengthening digital mental health literacy, psychological preparedness, and accessibility of mental health support services may help reduce the long-term psychosocial burden associated with war-related crises among the general population.

Overall, the study contributes valuable evidence to the limited Indian literature regarding the indirect mental health effects of war-related crises and highlights the importance of integrating psychological preparedness into public health and crisis management frameworks in the contemporary digital era.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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No external funding was received for the present study.

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