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Reintegration After Recurrent Flooding: Psychosocial Stress, Coping, and School-Level Barriers in Naseerabad's Public Schools

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Recurrent flooding disrupts schooling in Pakistan through prolonged closures, displacement, and unstable school functioning. Beyond infrastructure damage, psychosocial functioning shapes reintegration because fear, disrupted sleep, and reduced attention affect attendance, participation, and the capacity of teachers to restore learning, consistent with Education in Emergencies protection and wellbeing expectations. This qualitative phenomenology study was conducted in flood-prone public schools in Naseerabad Division, Balochistan. Participants included students, teachers, and head teachers selected using purposive sampling and variation by role, gender, school level, location, exposure frequency, displacement, and whether schools were used as shelters. Semi-structured individual interviews explored psychosocial impacts, reintegration barriers, coping, and feasible school-level supports. Data were analyzed using pragmatic, policy-facing reflexive thematic analysis. A five-item reintegration check-in was used descriptively to contextualize interpretation. Fear and worry disrupted sleep, concentration, and motivation, weakening classroom engagement and triggering weather-cued avoidance. The climate of the schools not only influenced return trajectories but also played a buffering role with coach support and understanding routines decreasing distress and increased withdrawal with teasing, stigma and scarce teacher time resources. Participants offered viable suggestions within boundaries, focusing on people's support of routine restoration, shorter check-ins, time spent in safe spaces, anti-stigma norms, catch-up learning which protects dignity and more clear pathways for help, and support contact with families, teacher peer support.

1. Introduction

Recurrent flooding in Pakistan affects schooling in far more ways than damage to buildings and materials. In case of flood-prone public schools of Naseerabad Division in Balochistan, reintegration is common in a situation that is influenced by fear of recurrence, poor sleep, lack of concentration, lack of motivation, uncertainties in basic needs and safety (Ahmad et al., 2024). These psychosocial and functional limitations play off with more obvious post-flood stressors, including displacement, livelihood shocks and interrupted household regimes which may compel children into haphazard attendance or lateness of attendance (Gul et al., 2024). In addition, the use of schools as emergency relief shelters may disrupt the timely reopening of schools, disrupt timings and reduce the predictability that learners and teachers require to stabilize learning routines (Akram et al., 2024). Such effects do not lie beyond the periphery of education: they are mechanisms for disaster exposure as learning loss (Giannakopoulos & Kolaitis, 2021). At the school level, teachers are expected to restore order, re-engage learners and re-capture instructional momentum while juggling their own household recovery and increased workload (Aslam et al., 2022). In many settings, reintegration is conceptualized as a binary goal: reopening of the school and return to a normal system. This study starts from a more stringent premise, which is more consistent with the way in which schools operate within the context of crisis recovery: reintegration is not only about reopening, but also about returning to functioning learning, which means sustained attendance, attention, participation, and the capacity of teachers to teach well in the continued context of uncertainty (INEE, 2024).

Accordingly, this qualitative-dominant study aims to explain post-flood psychosocial impacts and reintegration barriers among students and teachers in flood-prone public schools of Naseerabad Division, Balochistan, and to identify feasible school-level mechanisms for support.

1.1 Research Questions

The study addresses three research questions:

1 What psychosocial reactions and functional learning impacts do students and teachers describe following recurrent flooding, and how do these experiences shape day-to-day schooling after return?
2 What barriers and enabling conditions influence reintegration, including displacement logistics, household economic pressure, school functioning issues such as shelter-use, and classroom social dynamics?
3 What school-based supports are perceived as feasible and acceptable for protecting wellbeing and restoring learning within prevailing constraints?

2. Literature

An extensive literature base supports that psychological distress increased by disasters children and adolescents. With the common manifestations of an increased disasters mental distress, children might experience, for example sleep disruption, increased anxiety, irritability and intensified problems with attention regulation and self-regulation, all of which

might translate into classroom disengagement and interpersonal conflict (Cheema et al., 2023; Giannakopoulos & Kolaitis, 2021). These effects are not homogeneous; they are more intense depending on exposure degree, displacement, as well as the access to the supportive relations and regular and consistent routine. A multisystem resilience perspective is instructive here because it conceptualizes children's adaptation as being dependent on the interactions among systems that include children's families, schools, their communities, and their governance, rather than focusing on individual coping alone (Masten, 2021). Schools in particular are important as a recovery system, as they offer structure and the daily routines as a means of getting kids connected to their peers, supervision of adults, and a way to re-establish the sense of the safety and predictability after events in a crisis. Evidence from humanitarian and adversity settings also suggests that well-organized, school-based psychosocial interventions can improve the way that children function and reduce difficulties caused by distress, especially when delivered into classroom routines and activities supported by trained teachers (Jordans et al., 2010; Purgato et al., 2018; Ahmad et al., 2024).

Within Pakistan, emerging empirical work on flood impacts also shows that the disruption to schooling is shaped by compounding barriers exacerbating inequities, including limitations on the education of girls and increasing levels of drop-out risk following major flood shocks, providing support for the relevance of a reintegration lens for recovery in the country which goes beyond repairing the infrastructure (Gul et al., 2024; Akram et al., 2024).

Despite this knowledge, policy-facing operationalization of psychosocial recovery at the school level remains under-specified in flood-prone Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan where recurrent hazards intersect with constrained education services and limited specialist support. Global education-in-emergencies guidance positions protection and psychosocial wellbeing as foundational conditions for educational quality and access, not as an optional add-on to be considered after schooling “returns” (INEE, 2024; Aslam et al., 2022). Complementing this, emergency mental health and psychosocial support emphasize layered support that include strengthening community and institutional systems, with schools serving as central delivery platforms for routine restoration, social reconnection, and identification of learners and teachers who may require more focused support (IASC, 2007).

Yet these frameworks do not, by themselves, specify how psychosocial barriers and coping mechanisms operate within particular school environments, nor do they clarify what is feasible when teacher workload is high, stigma is present, referral capacity is limited, and school operations are disrupted by shelter-use or repeated closures. Qualitative evidence is therefore necessary to produce decision-relevant detail: it can specify mechanisms (how fear becomes absenteeism, how sleep disruption becomes concentration problems, how teacher stress shapes classroom climate), map differences across groups (students versus teachers, displaced versus non-displaced), and identify feasible sequencing (what can be done immediately upon reopening, what requires district coordination, and what should be built into seasonal preparedness planning).

3. Methods

This study used a qualitative-phenomenology design to examine post-flood psychosocial impacts and school reintegration barriers in flood-prone public schools in Naseerabad Division, Balochistan. Data were generated primarily through semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, and head teachers, with the interview guides designed to elicit functional learning impacts (for example, attention, motivation, classroom participation), reintegration barriers (for example, displacement, school closure, shelter-use), coping practices, and feasible school-level support mechanisms. An optional five-item reintegration check-in was administered to provide brief descriptive context for interpretation rather than diagnostic screening. The analytic orientation was pragmatic and policy-facing, prioritizing actionable explanations and implementable sequencing for school-level and district-level planning. The analysis followed the principles of reflexive thematic analysis with their focus on transparent analytic decision-making and iterative code development and refinement based on participant's accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Reporting was guided by: Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ), attention to research team characteristics, sampling, data collection procedures, analytic steps and strategies to strengthen trustworthiness (Tong et al., 2007). Participants were sampled purposively to ensure that there was maximum variation in respect of roles and conditions of exposure relevant to reintegration after flooding.

The sampling frame included students, teachers, and head teachers from public schools and recruitment structures were varied to capture the diversity in terms of the gender, school level (primary to higher secondary) and the school location (rural, peri-urban, and urban). Flood exposure characteristics were incorporated as sampling dimensions, including recent exposure frequency, displacement after the most recent flood, and whether the school had been used as a shelter, because these features are expected to shape both psychosocial experiences and practical reintegration constraints. The final sample comprised 72 participants (students, teachers, and head teachers), with variation maintained across the predefined sampling dimensions. Three tools were used. First, a short participant and exposure form captured role, gender, school level, location context, flood exposure frequency, displacement status after the last flood, whether the school was used as a shelter, and days of school closure. Second, semi-structured interview guides were developed separately for students and for teachers and head teachers. Each guide followed a common logic, progressing from rapport and schooling context to flood disruption pathways, psychosocial and functional learning impacts, reintegration barriers, coping and informal supports, and perceived feasible school-level mechanisms.

Third, a five-item reintegration check-in (five-point agreement scale) assessed perceived safety of return, concentration difficulty, worry about another flood, perceived mutual support, and clarity of school support pathways, used for descriptive triangulation only. Tool development was conceptually anchored to education-in-emergencies expectations on protection and wellbeing (INEE, 2024), layered MHPSS implementation logic emphasizing feasible supports within existing systems (IASC, 2007), and humane, non-intrusive interviewing principles aligned with psychological first aid (World Health

Organization, 2011; Akram, Sewani & Ahmad, 2024). Schools were approached through administrative channels, and recruitment proceeded via school leadership with clear separation between participation and any school evaluation processes. Interviews took place in private or semi-private environments at the school or in close vicinity to it in order to reduce interruptions and potential risk of disclosing information. Adult participants made informed consent. For students' consent/scientific scrutiny was sought from a parent or guardian where mandated by local structural ethics distributions/forces. Participation was voluntary; respondents could decline to answer any of the questions, they could pause, or they could withdraw their participation in the study at any time without penalty (Kolachi et al., 2024).

Given the potential for distress when discussing flood experiences, an attempt to adhere to a protocol for distress was implemented during interviews: stopping the interview, offering grounding and supportive listening, checking the immediate safety and comfort of the participant and allowing for options for providing support from local providers, and terminating the interview if distress continued or the participant asked to discontinue the interview (World Health Organization, 2011). Interviews were recorded audio-taped with authorization accompanied by short field notes. Recordings were transcribed word for word and any identifying information (names, exact village markers or uniquely identifying events) were excluded when the recordings were transcribed. Anonymization scheme was consistently used, with the use of role and context tags for quotations e.g. Student-F-Primary-Rural-Displaced and no location labels used which might allow for deductive disclosure. Transcripts, codebooks and analytic memos were kept in password protected files due to access restrictions to the research team (Tong et al., 2007).

Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, implemented as an audit-trailed, iterative process designed to yield explanatory and actionable themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2021). First, the team conducted familiarization by reading transcripts repeatedly and drafting brief case summaries focused on disruption pathways and reintegration constraints. Second, initial coding was performed using a meaning-unit approach, typically one to three sentences capturing a single idea (for example, "fear during rain," "loss of books," "teacher exhaustion," "peer teasing," "school as shelter delays reopening"). Third, codes were consolidated into a working codebook with definitions and inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the codebook was iteratively refined as new interviews were integrated. Fourth, candidate themes were generated by mapping clustered codes into broader patterns that explained how psychosocial reactions and contextual constraints interacted to shape reintegration. Fifth, themes were reviewed against coded extracts and across role groups to ensure internal coherence and clear boundaries between themes, with attention to contrasts such as displaced versus non-displaced participants, and student versus teacher accounts. Sixth, themes were defined and named to preserve participant language while maintaining conceptual clarity and were organized into a thematic structure aligned with reintegration mechanisms and feasible supports. To strengthen analytic rigor, a second coder independently reviewed approximately 15 to 20 percent of transcripts, discrepancies were discussed in structured reconciliation sessions, and code definitions were refined until

interpretations converged. Where double coding was not feasible for a subset, structured peer debriefing was used as an alternative check on interpretive drift (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Several strategies were used to strengthen trustworthiness. Credibility was supported through prolonged engagement with the dataset, iterative comparison across role groups, and member-checking of summarized findings when feasible, focusing on whether interpretations captured participants' intended meanings rather than validating raw codes. Transferability was supported through thick description of the setting and participant context dimensions relevant to flooding and schooling, including school level, location type, exposure frequency, displacement, and shelter-use, allowing readers to assess applicability to comparable contexts. These procedures map onto COREQ domains covering research team and reflexivity, study design, and analysis and findings (Tong et al., 2007).

4. Results

4.1 Participant profile

The study included 72 participants drawn from flood-prone public schools in Naseerabad Division. The sample comprised 50 students (69.4%), 14 teachers (19.4%), and 8 head teachers (11.1%). Participants were recruited across rural (n = 37, 51.4%), peri-urban (n = 19, 26.4%), and urban (n = 16, 22.2%) settings, representing primary (n = 31, 43.1%), middle (n = 12, 16.7%), secondary (n = 20, 27.8%), and higher secondary (n = 9, 12.5%) school levels. Overall, 43 participants (59.7%) were male and 29 (40.3%) were female. Reported flood exposure within the last three years was distributed as once (n = 20, 27.8%), twice (n = 23, 31.9%), and three or more times (n = 29, 40.3%). Following the most recent flood, 41 participants (56.9%) reported displacement, while 31 (43.1%) did not. Regarding school functioning during the emergency period, 33 participants (45.8%) indicated their school was used as a shelter, 22 (30.6%) indicated it was not, and 17 (23.6%) were not sure. Reported school closure following the last flood had a median of 17 days (IQR: 13 to 20), with a range from 3 to 35 days.

Table No 1: Participant Characteristics and Flood-Exposure Context

Role	Gender	School level	Location	Flood exposure category	Displacement (Y/N)	School used as shelter (Y/N/unsure)	Median closure days (IQR)
Student 50 (69.4%); Teacher 14 (19.4%); Head teacher 8 (11.1%)	Male 43 (59.7%); Female 29 (40.3%)	Primary 31 (43.1%); Middle 12 (16.7%); Secondary 20 (27.8%); Higher secondary 9 (12.5%)	Rural 37 (51.4%); Peri-urban 19 (26.4%); Urban 16 (22.2%)	Once 20 (27.8%); Twice 23 (31.9%); 3+ times 29 (40.3%)	Yes 41 (56.9%); No 31 (43.1%)	Yes 33 (45.8%); No 22 (30.6%); Not sure 17 (23.6%)	17 (13–20)

Notes: Percentages are based on **N = 72**. **IQR**: interquartile range. Closure days refer to days the school was reported closed after the most recent flood. No missing values were observed for variables reported in this table.

The sample included students, teachers, and head teachers across different educational rural and peri and urban settings and at the primary to higher secondary level. Variation in exposure to flooding in terms of frequency, displacement status, shelter - use of schools, and duration of closure - permitted study of differences in experiences between roles and exposure contexts.

Theme 1: Fear, worry, and functional disruption (sleep, concentration, motivation)

Fear and anticipatory worry were a dominant experience in the post-flood in which students can be seen influencing readiness experienced in returning to learning despite schools being open. Participants described persistently high levels of vigilance during rainy periods "another flood" and sleep disruption which in aggregate resulted in less concentration, more class intolerance, and less motivation to attend class normally. Others have explained it, describing what conditions they had to deal with simply because their environment has been so challenging: "When it rains at night I can't sleep," from a student. Strategy "In the morning my head is heavy, I do not understand the lesson" (Student-F-Secondary-Rural-Displaced). This suggests the existence of a direct avenue from flood-affecting arousal to lower cognitive availability in the classroom. One of the teachers mentioned the same process in the front of the classroom: In the post-flood era, a great number of children sat and kept gazing, and most of the time they do not remember the incident. "Even if the noise was small - they get alert" (Teacher-M-Secondary-PeriUrban). This translates the observation of distress in the form of decreased engagement and attentional instability. Students also associated attendance behaviour with worry: "I told my mother I will not go if clouds cometh, because again water can enter" (Student-M-Primary-Rural-Displaced). This shows that reintegration can be conditional as the weather can reactivate avoidance again.

Table No 2: Reintegration Check-In Items (Descriptive), Overall and by Role and Location

Item (1 to 5)	Overall mean (SD)	Students mean (SD)	Teachers/Heads mean (SD)	Rural mean (SD)	Urban/Peri-urban mean (SD)
I felt safe to return to school	3.02 (1.08)	2.94 (1.09)	3.22 (1.01)	2.86 (1.10)	3.20 (1.04)
I had difficulty concentrating after the flood	3.74 (0.92)	3.78 (0.90)	3.63 (0.95)	3.86 (0.88)	3.58 (0.94)
I worried another flood would happen soon	4.01 (0.89)	4.08 (0.86)	3.81 (0.93)	4.14 (0.83)	3.84 (0.93)
Students and teachers supported each other	3.46 (0.95)	3.44 (0.97)	3.52 (0.90)	3.35 (0.96)	3.58 (0.93)
It was clear where to seek help at school	2.71 (1.05)	2.62 (1.05)	2.98 (1.03)	2.55 (1.06)	2.90 (1.01)

Notes: Higher scores indicate stronger agreement. Teachers/Heads combine teachers and head teachers for stable descriptive.

Experiences varied according to exposure as well as role. Displaced students reported more common sleep disturbance and greater feelings of insecurity coming back, while the non-displaced students more commonly conceptualized worry as coming and going but still disruptive, with respect to the rain and river news. Teachers often looked online at the compounding effect of student stress, in addition to academic lag time, the shortened amount of time spent in instruction due to closures, which caused more pressure and less patience on both

sides. Rural participants more often connected fear to physical proximity to water, damaged routes, and unstable housing, while urban and peri-urban participants described fear tied to media reports and uncertainty about school functioning. A head teacher summarized the tension succinctly: “We reopen, but children return with fear and loss. The class is open, but learning is not settled” (Head-Teacher-M-Middle-Rural). This highlights the central reintegration problem as functional rather than administrative. Participants implied that feasible help would start with predictable routines, brief daily emotional check-ins, and clear reassurance messages from schools that normalize fear while restoring classroom structure.

Perceived safety of return and clarity of support pathways were lower than mutual support, while worry about another flood and concentration difficulty was more prominent.

Theme 2: Reintegration as a logistics and livelihood problem (displacement, finance, materials loss, closure days)

Reintegration was repeatedly described as a practical problem of movement, money, and lost learning resources rather than a simple decision to return. Displacement disrupted routines and increased distance to school, while damaged roads and transport costs made attendance irregular, especially for younger students and those living in temporary settlements. One student stated, “Our books went in the water. I came back, but without uniform and without notebook, I felt ashamed” (Student-M-Middle-Rural-Displaced). This shows how material loss becomes a psychosocial barrier that inhibits participation. A head teacher emphasized household constraints: “Many families had no income for weeks. Children were helping at home, and school became second priority” (HeadTeacher-F-Primary-PeriUrban). This means reintegration is competing with recovery such as labor and survival. Closure days were also important as gaps in learning were fast growing and participants spoke of returning to "advanced lessons" without bridging, losing confidence and persistence as a result. A teacher noted, “When school opens after many days, we start again, but the children are behind and they feel defeated” (Teacher-M-Primary-Rural).

These barriers were experienced unevenly. Displaced participants described the most severe disruptions, including temporary relocation, crowded living conditions, and loss of identity documents or school items, which delayed reenrollment and reduced continuity. Rural participants more often reported long closures, damaged access routes, and higher dependency on agriculture or daily wages, while urban and peri-urban participants emphasized rent stress, transport costs, and crowded classrooms after migration into safer areas. Students framed logistics as daily friction, for example transport, uniforms, and missing materials, whereas teachers and head teachers framed logistics as system-level constraints, including lack of replacement learning materials and difficulty tracking absentee learners. A student explained, “My father said first we rebuild the room, then school. I missed many days” (Student-F-Primary-Rural-Displaced). This reflects how household sequencing becomes schooling sequencing. Participants implied feasible solutions that were concrete: rapid distribution or lending of basic

learning materials, flexible re-entry for those who missed weeks, and structured catch-up time that reduces the humiliation of returning “empty-handed” and academically behind.

Theme 3: School climate after floods (peer support, stigma, teacher bandwidth)

Participants described post-flood school climate as a critical reintegration mediator, either amplifying distress or enabling recovery. Peer-relationship support and understanding teachers made conducting normalization and rebuilding normal progress but the teasing and stigma along with the empty bandwidth of the teachers played against them. A student manifested the impact of peer interactions in the following statement: "Some boys said, 'your house floated,' and I stopped answering in class" (Student-M-Secondary-Urban-Not displaced). This suggests that ridicule can turn an exposure to a disaster into a withdrawal from the social and whitening of the classroom voice. Teachers were similarly characterized by decreased skills in emotional capacity as a result of work pressure and personal pressure to recover: "We wanted to listen to children, but we had double work, no time, and our own problems at home" (Teacher-F-Middle-Peri-Urban). This indicates the degree of strain experienced by teachers and how this affects the safety of relationships that students need. Some faced on the contrary, 'My friends shared pencil and kept my seat,' members told. "One day I can feel that I can study again" (Student- F-primary-rural displaced). This relates to how little acts of peer support can lead to the recon notation of belonging and participation.

Contrasts were evident in terms of role, exposure and setting. Students talked more about peer behaviour and embarrassment that they may feel about damaged clothes or missing materials whereas teachers tended to focus on classroom management challenges, reduced timetables and pressure to 'cover the syllabus' as quickly as possible following closures. Displaced students reported increased sensitivity to stigma given that they returned marked with losses and were often disrupted with interrupted peer networks. Rural participants more frequently mentioned multi-grade or crowded rooms following displacement, as this reduced attention of the teachers; urban and peri-urban areas addressed problems with crowded enrolment and competition for limited resources. A head teacher summarized the problem as one of capacity: "After the flood, we need patience, but [teachers are] exhausted and there are a high number of pupils [in the class]." Climate becomes cruel & harsh without intent" (Head-Teacher-M-Secondary-Urban). This means that negative climate can be structural and not moral failure. Mapping Inheritable Teacher Norms Participants implied feasible improvements that focused upon norms and bandwidth: explicit anti-teasing messages, simple class agreements, brief (teacher support circles) and protected time for teachers to set routines prior to going 'rocket' up content coverage.

Theme 4: Feasible supports inside real constraints (routines, safe spaces, teacher peer support, referral clarity)

Participants articulated a set of supports which were seen to be feasible within the present limitations, including a focus on routine restoration, on the creation of psychologically safe

interaction, and have clear pathways for help. The action that was proposed in consensus more often than any other was predictable classroom structure: adding consistent opening activates, data on attendance and brief "settling time" to calm the arousal and re-establish learning readiness. One teacher has explained - "If we start with simple talk and then lesson children become calm." If we are starting from strict they close off, (Teacher-M-Primary-Rural). This means that pacing and tone are regulating mechanisms. Students also stressed the importance of creating safe non-judgmental places: "Conversation: If teacher says, "you can tell me, 'then I can say I am afraid. Otherwise, keeping quiet" (Student-F-Secondary-PeriUrban-NotDisplaced). These links believed that relational safety helped-sought after help-seeking. One head teacher illuminated the problem of this gap in the system: 'Children ask where to go when they feel bad.' "The other teachers were able to teach to suit their children, but we do not have a clear line as well and we manage ourselves" (Head-Teacher-F-Primary-Rural). This shows that feasibility is contingent on clarity and not just goodwill.

Feasible support was described differently in terms of role and context. Students presented the likes of being safe in relationships, not being teased, and having material dignity supported, like by getting notebooks or having school uniforms, or structured catch-up. Teachers stressed realism of workload: teachers wanted short repeatable strategies that are possible to teach inside classrooms without new staff, peer support of teachers themselves. Displaced participants requested flexibility in terms of attendance and assessment and for non-displaced, emphasis was on preparedness communication, for example, what to do if floods come again. Rural participants were more inclined to enquire for the basic facility fixes and safe drinking water, where the participants understood these as prerequisites for calm and concentration whereas the urban and peri-urban participants had a more crowded management and referral clarity.

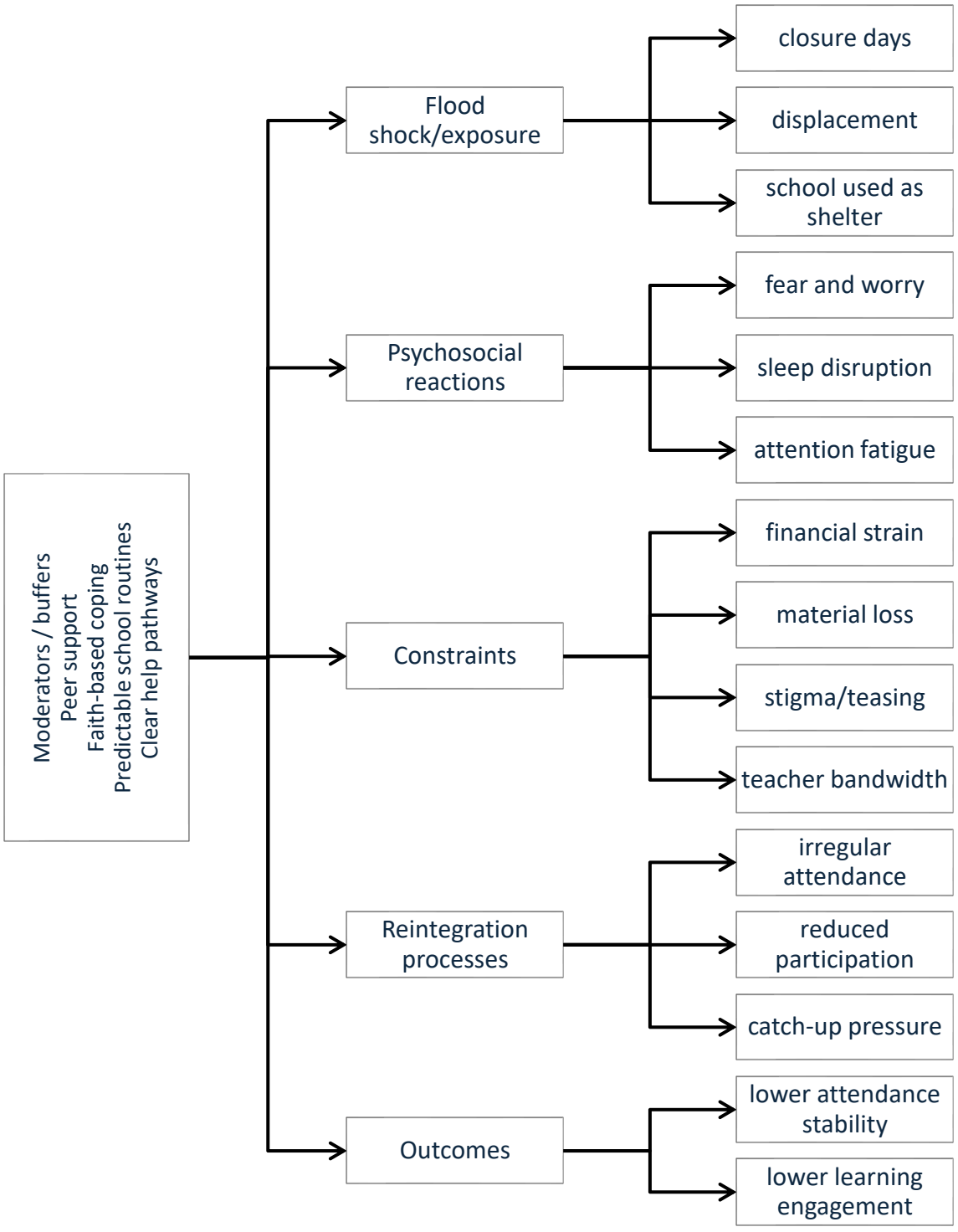
Table No 3: Theme Occurrence by Participant Role (Coded Indicators)

Theme (coded indicator)	Students (n = 50)	Teachers (n = 14)	Head teachers (n = 8)
Theme 1: Fear, worry, functional disruption	41	12	6
Theme 2: Logistics and livelihood barriers	38	11	7
Theme 3: School climate (support, stigma, bandwidth)	29	13	6
Theme 4: Feasible support and pathways	26	12	8

Notes: Counts represent the number of participants whose transcripts included at least one coded segment for the theme. These figures indicate coding density and concentration of experiences by role, not statistical prevalence.

A student summarized the desired change in one line: “If school feels normal and safe, then I can focus” (Student-M-Middle-Rural-Displaced). This indicates that the “package” is not one intervention but a coherence of routines, norms, and help pathways. Overall, participants implied a practical bundle: structured reopening routines, simple teacher check-in scripts, a designated safe corner or time, peer norms against teasing, teacher peer debriefing, and a clear referral or escalation pathway, even if limited to basic counselling linkage at the district level.

Coding density suggests that fear and worry and faith-based coping were frequently invoked across roles, while teacher burnout was concentrated in teacher narratives. **Figure No1: Reintegration Pathway Model**



This model summarizes how flood-related disruptions and post-flood psychosocial reactions interact with livelihood and school constraints to shape reintegration as functional learning rather than reopening status. It shares expectations of Education in Emergencies protection and wellbeing and with a stack of support logic, prioritizing on the actions that should be provided by schools and enabling clarification of pathways of escalation of higher-need cases (INEE, 2024; IASC, 2007).

4.2 Joint Interpretation with Check-In Descriptive

The reintegration check-in suggests that worry about another flood and post-flood concentration difficulty were more prominent than perceived safety of return and, especially, clarity about where to seek help at school, with rural respondents reporting comparatively lower safety and lower clarity. Overall, mutual support was rated moderately, indicating some relational resources, but not enough structured guidance to translate support into consistent reintegration. Interview accounts explain these patterns by showing how worry is repeatedly reactivated by rainfall cues, unstable housing, and unresolved livelihood pressure, producing sleep disruption and attentional fatigue that directly weakens classroom engagement. Students described returning with fear, shame about lost materials, and sensitivity to teasing, while teachers described constrained bandwidth and pressure to "cover" missed content, which can unintentionally harden classroom climate. Lower clarity about help pathways reflected an institutional gap: participants relied on informal teacher kindness rather than a known, consistent support mechanism. What participants implied would help is a coherent, low-burden package: predictable reopening routines, brief daily check-ins, explicit anti-teasing norms, catch-up learning that reduces humiliation, teacher peer support to preserve patience, and a simple referral or escalation pathway that schools can explain to students in ordinary language.

4.3 Discussion

This study demonstrates the post-flood reintegration is driven by an interacting chain of conditions and is not just one barrier. Fear and over-engagement in worry about floods and recovery are causing loss of sleep, loss of ability to focus for attention and motivation and compromising the ability of learners to engage when schools reopen for the teaching-learning process. Practical reintegrating constraints, such as displacement, loss of transport, material items and long closure follow, then convert this distress into irregular attendance and lower classroom participation. Finally, school climate and teacher bandwidth are amplification factors (i.e., are they supportive routines and norms of peers or are the cultures at the school and in the hospital stigmatizing and teasing or exhausted teaching capacity) - the supports or barriers to commencing return and return to learning. The answers of the participants share one agreeable, school-based intervention that reinstate normalcy, self-respect, and elucidate help strategies with no intellectual clinical services within the schools through effective leadership (Ahmad, Sewani, & Fatima, 2025).

Interpreted through Education in Emergencies Protection and Wellbeing, the results clarify that reintegration is not an administrative act of reopening but the restoration of conditions that allow safe participation and learning. The INEE Minimum Standards define protective learning environments as secure, safe settings that promote psychosocial wellbeing for learners and education personnel, positioning wellbeing as integral to access and quality rather than an optional add-on (INEE, 2024). Protection and wellbeing were articulated by participants as predictable routines, adult responsiveness, reduced humiliation linked to lost materials or learning gaps and explicit norms that prevent teasing and stigma (Faheem, Gulab, & Ahmad, 2025). These practical protections align with disaster education evidence that schools are pivotal recovery systems because they re-establish structure and connect children to supportive adults and peers, and because they often provide services beyond instruction during and after crises (Lai et al., 2024; Masten, 2021).

In other words, the mechanisms identified here specify what “protective learning environments” look like in recurrent-flood settings: calm, routine-based classrooms; structured catch-up that reduces shame; and visible, simple pathways for help-seeking. The implication for EiE planning is that reintegration success should be assessed using functional indicators, such as sustained attendance, concentration, classroom voice, and reduced peer harm, rather than reopening status alone (INEE, 2024).

Mapped to the IASC layered supports framework, participants’ needs and proposed responses largely fall within layers that schools can deliver or coordinate. At the basic services and security layer, predictability is itself psychosocial support, including stable reopening schedules, classroom routines, and shelter-use coordination that protects schooling continuity. At the community and family supports layer, participants repeatedly described reliance on peer solidarity and household coping, which can be strengthened through attendance tracing, non-blaming family communication, and school messaging that, normalizes fear while encouraging return (Dilshad, Shah, & Ahmad, 2023). At the focused, non-specialized supports layer, teachers and heads described feasible actions such as brief check-in scripts, structured safe-space time, and class agreements to prevent stigma and teasing, all consistent with low-intensity supports that improve functioning rather than treating diagnoses. The weakest element in this study has been the referral layer: in both check-in patterns and interviews there was evidence of lack of clarity about where they go for help (indicating the need for an appropriate, local realistic pathway for escalation, even if minimal and primarily coordinative); Notably, the layer approach makes sense in schools as the participants described it - the aim is not to turn schools into clinics, but to make supports for everyone dependable as well as make the "next step" visible for the 'more-than-ordinary' cases that go beyond the classroom support (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2007).

The study’s findings converge with the child disaster literature on both symptom patterns and functional impacts, while also extending it by specifying school-level reintegration mechanisms. A Lancet Psychiatry correspondence on Pakistan’s flood context highlights that

floods can cause substantial negative impacts on children's mental health, including disturbed sleep and distress, and calls for urgent attention to child mental health needs (Cheema et al., 2023; Jabeen, Ali, & Ahmad, 2023). Sleep disruption as a common post-trauma pathway is also supported by broader reviews showing elevated sleep problems following traumatic events, which are consistent with participants' descriptions of night fear, hypervigilance, and next-day attentional fatigue (Giannakopoulos & Kolaitis, 2021; Haider, Ahmad, & Ali, 2024).

The importance of schools as recovery systems is emphasized in multisystem resilience perspectives, which argue that children's adaptation depends on interconnected systems, including families and schools, and that schools can stabilize routines and provide relational support after disasters with technical training and support (Lai et al., 2024; Masten, 2021; Pirzada, Tabassum & Ahmad, 2024). Intervention evidence is similarly consistent with this study's emphasis on low intensity supports and functional outcomes. For example, a focused psychosocial interventions individual participant data meta-analysis found overall benefits for reducing PTSD symptoms and functional impairment and for increasing hope, coping, and social support, with particular attention to displaced and younger children (Purgato et al., 2018; Imran et al., 2023), aligning with this study's emphasis on displacement-sensitive supports and school-based feasibility. At the same time, a school-based trial in war-affected Burundi reported no overall main effects but did show moderator-dependent benefits and harms, reinforcing that context, family conditions, and exposure patterns shape outcomes, and that implementation must be pragmatic and carefully monitored by professional development (Tol et al., 2014; Ahmad, Sewani, & Channa, 2025).

A school-based intervention trial in Nepal similarly reported limited effects on psychiatric symptoms but beneficial effects on social-behavioral and resilience indicators for subgroups, suggesting that school-delivered interventions may more reliably improve functioning, behavior, and hope than reduce clinical symptom clusters in complex settings (Jordans et al., 2010; Oad et al., 2024; Thomas, Khan & Ahmad, 2022). Finally, Pakistan flood education evidence supports the study's "logistics plus livelihood" theme: using evidence from Pakistan's 2010 floods, Adverse short- to long-term effects on educational outcomes for children and adolescents, indicating that flood shocks can impair education beyond immediate closures (Ahmed et al., 2022). More recent Pakistan-focused evidence on the 2022 floods similarly documents severe disruption and barriers for girls' education, consistent with participants' accounts that household recovery trade-offs and material loss affect who returns and when (Gul et al., 2024; Naeem, Ali, & Ahmed, 2022). Together, these studies support the credibility of the mechanisms identified here and justify a reintegration package focused on function, dignity, and feasible school routines and quality education (Ahmad, Noorani, & Channa, 2025).

The practical implication is working out low-cost reintegration and psychosocial support package with delineated roles and provided timings and appropriate for flood prone schooling systems. The implementation should be done in ways that are repeatable, time efficient, and sensitive to the teacher workload, creating a minimum but an explicit referral mechanism for

higher need cases (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2007). Psychological First Aid principles align with this approach where the normal school setting of eliciting details of traumatic events is not a suitable approach and the focus is on humane listening, stabilization and practical supports, as well as linking to services (World Health Organization, 2011). The package is structured to decrease the role of fear-induced avoidance, safeguard individual dignity during catch-up learning, or succumb to peer destruction that leads to increased withdrawal.

5. Conclusion

Recurrent flooding disruption is not only affecting schooling in Naseerabad by damaging infrastructure, but creating a destabilized environment of human conditions in which learning can take place. This study reveals a connected chain of mechanisms whereby flood exposures and recovery stresses set off fear and anticipatory worry that disrupts sleep, concentration and motivation that undermines learner's functional preparedness to engage when schools are re-opened. These psychosocial disruptions interact in turn and add to the practical elements of reintegration such as displacement, transport and livelihood constraints, loss of learning materials, and prolonged closures as educating students attending irregularly, contribute to loss of classroom voice and a sense of de-moralization when they return to the classroom, academically behind. Reintegration outcomes are finally mediated through school climate and teacher bandwidth, with norms and predictable routines of support mediating to the balance between distress and humiliation; stigma and teasing and through exhausted staff capacity, outcomes of withdrawal and disengagement. The payoff of this is that these paths lead to a reasonable, inexpensive bundle of schooling stabilizing routine, preventing dignity in the face of catch up instruction, normalizing short- Checks, minimizing harm among peers and explicating channels of assistance without redundant transforming schools into clinics.

Implemented in the first two weeks after reopening, the package can stabilize classrooms and attendance; extended over one to two months, it can reduce humiliation-driven dropout risk and rebuild learning engagement; embedded as seasonal preparedness, it can strengthen referral mapping, teacher orientation in supportive responses, and shelter-use coordination to protect reopening timelines. Before the next flood season, district and school decision-makers can operationalize this package through simple protocols, assigned focal persons, and monitoring of functional reintegration indicators such as attendance stability, classroom participation, and reported clarity of help-seeking pathways.

5.1 Recommendations

Low-cost school reintegration and psychosocial support package for flood season:

1. **Immediate (first 2 weeks after reopening):** restore routine (predictable start, settling activity), introduce brief teacher check-in scripts (2 to 3 minutes), establish safe-space time or a quiet classroom corner, and begin daily attendance tracing with supportive family contact.

2. **Short-term (1 to 2 months):** deliver structured catch-up learning with low-stakes assessment, integrate low-intensity psychosocial activities (peer support, cooperative tasks), enforce anti-stigma norms and anti-teasing agreements, and communicate simple parent guidance on sleep, routines, and attendance.
3. **Seasonal preparedness:** map and publicize a referral and escalation pathway, orient teachers in PFA-informed supportive responses and boundaries, and coordinate shelter-use arrangements to reduce prolonged occupation and reopening delays (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2007; World Health Organization, 2011).

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