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Educational Interventions in Post-War Lands of the Global South

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Abstract: Armed conflict in the Global South has created an educational crisis, with millions of children experiencing disrupted schooling, psychological trauma, and compromised life opportunities. This review examines the nature, effectiveness, and sustainability of educational interventions implemented during and after armed conflict. Drawing on 18 peer-reviewed studies from nine countries and regions experiencing conflict, such as Myanmar, Somalia, Gaza, Iraq, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, and Sub-Saharan Africa, the analysis reveals nine thematic domains: (1) the multidimensional impact of conflict on education; (2) psychosocial and trauma-focused school-based interventions; (3) alternative and accelerated education pathways; (4) community-school-family partnerships; (5) curriculum reform and peacebuilding education; (6) literacy interventions in crisis contexts; (7) digital and non-digital educational scenarios; (8) mechanisms of conflict's impact on learning outcomes; and (9) equity, gender, and marginalized populations. Findings indicate that effective interventions share common characteristics: flexibility, community engagement, attention to psychosocial well-being, and responsiveness to local contexts. However, significant gaps persist in longitudinal evidence, comparative effectiveness research, and understanding of scalability. The review concludes with implications for policy, practice, and future research, arguing that education must be conceptualized not merely as service delivery but as a fundamental right and a cornerstone of peacebuilding, reconciliation, and sustainable development in conflict- affected settings.

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INTRODUCTION

The journey from conflict to classroom in war-affected regions of the Global South faces myriad challenges that obstruct children's access to quality education (Kohli, 2024). These include violence, forced displacement, and political unrest that fundamentally disrupt the educational landscape (No, 2024; Wang et al., 2024). As we progress further into the twenty-

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first century, the relationship between armed conflict and educational deprivation remains one of the most pressing yet under-examined challenges facing international development and humanitarian response (Belay et al., 2023).

For the past 70 years, there has been a downward trend in war sizes, but the idea of an enduring 'long peace' remains controversial (Spagat & Van Weezel, 2019). Although the scale of conflicts has reduced in terms of total casualties per conflict per year, they tend to be prolonged, and populated civilian areas have increasingly become battlefields or targets for terrorism, resulting in increased civilian victimization, including death, injury, or displacement (Ito et al., 2024). The changing nature of armed conflict in the 21st century, marked by the indiscriminate targeting of civilians, poses severe challenges for the continuation of teaching and learning in war-affected countries (Francia & Valenzuela, 2025). Conflict can affect schooling directly through attacks on students, teachers, and schools, and indirectly by undermining livelihoods (Agbor et al., 2022; Gates, 2014).

Moreover, the human toll of armed conflict extends far beyond immediate casualties (Vesco et al., 2024). War has severe direct and indirect effects on human health and development (Betancourt & Khan, 2008). It causes immense suffering for large populations (Levy, 2025). Beyond the obvious loss of life and destruction of property, war leads to devastating mental health consequences which may last for generations (Tutlam et al., 2022). Many countries across Asia and Africa face refugee crises and struggle to provide basic needs such as shelter, food, and healthcare (Hossain, 2023). Refugees are navigating turbulent times and facing numerous challenges to their lives and security worldwide (Yılmaz et al., 2025). Because they lack protection and rights in their home countries, many refugees are forced to flee and seek a better life elsewhere, straining host governments that struggle to provide necessary services and resources (Hossain, 2023).

Furthermore, children bear a disproportionate burden of conflict's destructive impact (Redlener et al., 2025). Experiencing armed conflict during childhood and adolescence poses serious mental health risks and threats to a child's development (Bendavid et al., 2021). Exposure to different types of violence, the duration of the conflict, and the nature of experienced and witnessed traumatic events are all associated with the onset and severity of mental disorders among conflict-affected children (Frounfelker et al., 2019). Extant research suggests that children affected by conflict and violence have greater difficulty developing positive social, emotional, and cognitive skills that can help them navigate the adversity they face in conflict- and crisis-affected contexts (Kim et al., 2026). The global literacy crisis among conflict-affected children remains particularly urgent. In countries such as Syria, Yemen, and Sudan, educational disruption caused by armed conflict and displacement severely impairs foundational literacy acquisition, reinforcing cycles of poverty, social exclusion, and long-term instability (Almazroui & Awad, 2025).

Beyond these concerns, educational equity remains a pressing challenge in the Global South, particularly for students affected by conflict and migration (Thinh, 2025). Yet despite these overwhelming obstacles, education provides a sustainable foundation for long-term

recovery, giving individuals and communities the knowledge and skills needed to shape a peaceful and prosperous future (Arinaitwe & Reddy, 2025). Education should be considered one of the mechanisms through which governments and nations succeed in post-conflict processes (Barrios-Tao et al., 2016).

This review paper examines educational interventions in conflict-affected settings across the Global South, synthesizing evidence on what works, for whom, and under what conditions. By critically analyzing the existing literature, this review aims to identify gaps in knowledge and practice and propose directions for future research and intervention design that better serve conflict-affected children and communities on their path from crisis to recovery. The following research questions have been formulated for this study which is as follows:

1. What are the major types of educational interventions identified in conflict- affected settings across the Global South?
2. How are these interventions reported to impact educational and psychosocial outcomes of conflict-affected learners?
3. What key factors and gaps are identified in the literature regarding their sustainability and scalability?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative literature review, with thematic analysis as the evidence synthesis tool. The review aims to develop an interpretive understanding of reimagined and delivered education in conflict-affected contexts in the Global South.

Data Sources

The review draws entirely on peer-reviewed journal articles from conflict-affected countries, including Myanmar, Somalia, Gaza, Iraq, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, and Sub-Saharan Africa more broadly. The decision to focus on peer-reviewed materials was intended to ensure that the evidence base was grounded in scholarly research with identifiable methodological and empirical foundations.

Selection Criteria

Studies were eligible if they addressed conflict-affected education, took place in the Global South, and were empirical. Studies were not included if they did not focus on education; were theoretical and lacked empirical evidence; or discussed contexts beyond conflict and post-conflict situations. These criteria helped keep the review focused on concrete, evidence-based reporting of teaching and learning in conflict settings, rather than hypothetical or theoretical discussion.

Data Collection Process

We identified and selected relevant literature based on its relevance to the research objectives and its empirical focus on education in conflict-affected contexts in the Global South. The selected studies were then closely read and analyzed thematically to identify recurring educational interventions, challenges, and practices across the contexts examined.

Data Analysis Method

The data were coded and categorized into nine thematic areas: impact of conflict on education, psychosocial interventions, alternative and accelerated education models, community partnerships, curriculum reform and peacebuilding, literacy interventions, digital and non-digital learning approaches, learning outcome mechanisms, and equity and gender considerations. These themes were not preconceived; they emerged inductively through multiple interactions with the data, ensuring the analysis was sensitive to the literature's content and emphasis.

This methodology enabled the review to distill lessons from diverse conflict settings in the Global South, including Myanmar, Gaza, Sierra Leone, and Sudan, while grouping findings thematically around key issues. Organizing the analysis thematically rather than geographically highlights the range of educational interventions, their theoretical foundations, and outcomes.

FINDINGS

Table 1. *Types of Educational Interventions in Conflict Settings*

Intervention	Target Group	Major Outcomes
Better Learning Program	School children	Reduced trauma, improved learning
General Educational Development Programme	Refugee adolescents	Flexible secondary education
Alternative Basic Education	Out-of-school children	Learning recovery
Accelerated Learning Program	Over-age learners	Faster completion of schooling
Community Schools	Displaced communities	Educational continuity
Peacebuilding Curriculum	National school systems	Civic participation and reconciliation
Digital Learning Platforms	Conflict-affected students	Remote access to education

The Multidimensional Impact of Armed Conflict on Education

Armed conflict has not decreased since World War II; it has simply taken on a new form. Civil war and intrastate conflict have become the main mode of warfare. Although human

casualties are fewer than in the past, they tend to last longer and take place in populated areas, where civilians are increasingly being killed, injured, and displaced (Ito et al., 2024). Children who have been experiencing violent conflict since birth have significantly lower reading and math scores in Sub-Saharan Africa (Salah & Saxena, 2025). Conflict in childhood is a serious mental health risk. The nature of violence, its duration, and form of trauma all influence the likelihood and extent of a child's mental disorder (Frounfelker et al., 2019). The impact of war on health and development is well established (Betancourt & Khan, 2008), and its psychological effects can be felt across generations (Tutlam et al., 2022).

The social, emotional, and cognitive skills that children develop in a violent environment are also less likely to help them cope with everyday stressors (Kim et al., 2026). This is particularly apparent in the situation of conflict-affected children in Syria, Yemen, and Sudan, where interrupted education undermines basic literacy and perpetuates poverty, exclusion, and instability (Almazroui & Awad, 2025). In particular, Salah and Saxena (2025) found that exposure to conflict is most damaging in early childhood (before school entry) rather than during school years, further supporting the idea that early nutrition and health are essential to later cognition. When conflict is intense and causes significant loss of life and property, as it does for most children before they enter primary school, it is most damaging to learning. The crisis of refugees in Asia and Africa only adds to the issue. Host governments are already under immense strain and cannot meet the basic needs of people displaced by conflict and insecurity in their own countries: shelter, food, and health care (Hossain, 2023). Since the 2021 coup in Myanmar, the formal education system has failed, and students have been directed to other internationally recognized routes (Thinh, 2025). Along the Thai-Myanmar border, Migrant Learning Centers (MLCs) have filled this void by providing primary and secondary education, vocational training, and psychosocial support to displaced students (Thinh, 2025).

Psychosocial and Trauma-Focused School-Based Interventions

Gaza's Better Learning Program (BLP) was implemented in layers, providing support for all students, targeting those who reported nightmares and sleep disturbance, and training teachers, counselors, and parents to help students regulate themselves. The model was implemented across 40 schools over 2.5 years and served about 35,000 students (Schultz et al., 2017). Teachers and counselors reported that the model was in line with their current teaching practices, and that they felt more confident in engaging with war-affected students; however, some teachers did not demonstrate calming exercises across genders, and many teachers added explanations to the program materials based on local tradition and the Quran (Schultz et al., 2017). In one aspect, the results were remarkable: participating students were suffering from trauma nightmares about five nights per week, with 71% suffering for more than a year. After 8 weeks, about 70% of participants reported that their nightmares had been eliminated or reduced to once a week (Schultz et al., 2017). A similar randomized controlled trial (RCT) (300 students ages 9-16 from Gaza) was conducted with a teacher-led version targeting academic underachievement. The results showed improvements in school

functioning, stress symptoms, emotional self-regulation, self-efficacy, study skills, and academic performance, with most improvements still observed five months after the intervention (Forsberg & Schultz, 2023). However, the results were mixed when it came to durability: self-regulation, self-efficacy, and study skills remained stable, but there was a slight decrease in gains for well-being and academic functioning by the five-month mark, and stress symptoms increased slightly shortly after the program and then rose again by 5 months (Forsberg & Schultz, 2023). A review of seven school-based intervention studies (four targeted, three general) showed that locally trained paraprofessionals can provide a viable, low-cost alternative to individual therapy in low- and middle-income, conflict-affected contexts that is feasible to implement. However, evidence on effectiveness was inconsistent: sometimes group crisis interventions did not reduce distress, and sometimes they exacerbated it (Persson & Rousseau, 2009).

Alternative and Accelerated Education Pathways

General Educational Development (GED) programs provide an alternative pathway to success for displaced students from Myanmar. The self-paced approach meets students' needs, as many have interrupted education due to conflict and migration; however, language barriers, legal restrictions, and resource limitations remain significant challenges (Thinh, 2025). In Somalia, the USAID-supported Bar ama Baro (BAB) program, an Alternative Basic Education (ABE) program, reached more than 100,000 out-of-school girls and boys (Farah, 2024). Interviewees praised the Alternative Basic Education (ABE) program for providing access to core skills to children who have not completed their formal education, for offering a sense of normalcy during crises, and for helping to build the community's ability to respond by integrating education into existing community networks, including the program's “crisis modifier package” (Farah, 2024). Since 2005, Iraq's Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) has been implemented in 10 governorates with UNICEF and has brought 1218–year–olds out of school, many traumatized and disenfranchised from school in 3 years. Three-quarters of participants said they enjoyed it very much, and about 90% of those who went on to further education, apprenticeships, or jobs said they enjoyed it very much (Bilagher & Kaushik, 2020). It also gave students a more positive attitude toward their future, including, importantly, reduced vulnerability to recruitment into militias, which is relevant not just in Iraq (Bilagher & Kaushik, 2020). The evaluators highlight three factors for scaling this model: awareness of the program, access to study spaces, and the elimination of enrolment restrictions (Bilagher & Kaushik, 2020).

Community-School-Family Partnerships

In Myanmar's township of Pekon, more than 12,000 children now attend flexible, community schools, thanks to families, schools, and communities working together through flexible schedules, emotional support, and grassroots initiatives (No, 2024). This is accompanied by a strategic focus on extracurricular and cultural activities, such as oral history, traditional arts, and sports, provided by community volunteers, which help keep students engaged and maintain cultural identity and community connections essential for resilience in conflict

situations (No, 2024). When buildings cannot be used for formal classes, communities have constructed makeshift classrooms, sometimes adjacent to bomb shelters, and paid for them by pooling resources and charging small fees (No, 2024).

This trend of communities stepping in where the state fails is familiar. Conflict undermines school systems, disrupts communities, and hinders the recruitment, training, and payment of teachers; when governments are unable or unwilling to provide education, non-state actors and local communities can step in (Jen et al., 2016). Education matters not only for its own merits, but because it can help lead a society's recovery, making community-based reconstruction of schooling a priority. Effective community participation provides insights into local priorities, mobilizes local resources, and fosters buy-in, for example, by engaging local security and child-protection actors to keep schools safe (Jen et al., 2016).

In Sudan, education is considered central to the reconstruction process after the war, supporting empowerment, reconciliation, economic recovery, and social healing (Arinaitwe & Reddy, 2025). Conflict has destroyed the labor market and left many in the population relying on aid; therefore, building human capital through education is seen as necessary to end poverty and reconstruct livelihoods (Arinaitwe & Reddy, 2025).

Curriculum Reform and Peacebuilding Education

The UNICEF-supported framework review of Somalia's curricula was an intentional process that included conflict actors to strengthen peacebuilding capacity at the individual, group, and policy levels. The logic is that if changes occur only at the individual level and are not integrated into the political process, they will have little impact on conflict dynamics. If peacebuilding does not involve the people with the power to make a difference, it will have little effect (Renders & Knezevic, 2017). In Somalia, nearly 6,000 individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds were consulted in developing a socially inclusive curriculum. Yet, despite these efforts, reform alone was insufficient to address the country’s persistently low enrolment rates, which are shaped by multiple structural and contextual drivers (Renders & Knezevic, 2017).

A comparative review of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and South Africa underscores education's role in post-conflict recovery. South Africa provides the most striking example: under apartheid, the system was fragmented into 19 racially and geographically segregated education departments, with access to schooling manipulated as both a reward and a mechanism of control (Barrios-Tao et al., 2016). Since the democratic reforms of the 1990s, the curriculum has been reoriented to embed principles of human dignity, social justice, and democracy. Parents have gained greater representation through school governing bodies, and the once-segregated teacher-training system has undergone significant restructuring (Barrios-Tao et al., 2016). Importantly, reconciliation-oriented education initiatives in all three countries extended beyond children, engaging survivors, parents, teachers, and civil society in the broader process of healing and social reconstruction (Barrios-Tao et al., 2016).

In Sudan, civic education is seen as a basis for more accountable governance, and teaching rule-of-law concepts in schools is believed to foster public trust and support for justice for war victims (Arinaitwe & Reddy, 2025).

Literacy Interventions in Crisis Contexts

Community-based literacy initiatives, rooted in the oral tradition, storytelling, and peer learning, were found to produce the highest levels of engagement and retention, especially because they reflected the lived experience of the learners, in the case study of Jordan's Mrajeeb Al Fhood refugee camp (Almazroui & Awad, 2025), based on interviews and data from international assessments (PIRLS, PISA, TIMSS). Formal schooling, by contrast, faced challenges from teacher shortages, inadequate space, and curricula that did not align with students' prior education, compounded by language and emotional barriers for refugee learners (Almazroui & Awad, 2025).

Digital literacy tools had potential but limited reach: hybrid digital-classroom models were effective in Iraq and South Sudan, while in refugee camps, a lack of infrastructure, limited devices, and digital illiteracy (particularly among girls who are culturally restricted) constrained the uptake of digital literacy tools (Almazroui & Awad, 2025). Materials that were culturally responsive and trauma-sensitive were the ones that were successful across the board: standardized text-heavy curricula were unsuccessful for students who had been out of school or who had attention issues due to trauma, while narrative, visual, and survival-literacy content (health, legal, procedural texts) resulted in higher engagement and understanding (Almazroui & Awad, 2025). Bilingual teaching and oral/visual narration made language acquisition more accessible. They helped overcome the learning challenges faced by students with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, mirroring trauma-informed approaches already part of the Finnish and Norwegian national curricula (Almazroui & Awad, 2025).

Digital and Non-Digital Educational Scenarios During War

A literature review identified 14 scenarios and strategies for sustaining education during wartime, including digital and non-digital approaches, as well as inspirational, hands-on, and fun-based teaching; these were carried out not only by teachers but also by parents, neighbors, and other community members (Salha et al., 2024). Two types of technologies were identified: low-tech technologies, such as radio or offline digital tools, for contexts with destroyed infrastructure, and high-tech technologies, such as online platforms, that still have power and internet. (Salha et al., 2024) One interesting development is educational smartwatches that activate interactive lessons (language, math, games) through the user's own movement and don't require a power source (Salha et al., 2024).

The funding situation for post-war recovery is dire: from 2000 to 2020, only 2.4% of humanitarian funds went to education. Expanding this is necessary not only to relieve the burden on parents and under-resourced schools, but also because education is a fundamental government duty following a conflict (Salha et al., 2024). In general, the importance of education in post-conflict reconstruction has long been recognized (Salha et al., 2024), and

post-war education should now focus on the physical, psychological, and social reconstruction of both the person and society.

Mechanisms of the Impact of Conflict on Learning Outcomes

Salah and Saxena (2025) find that exposure to conflict from birth is highly detrimental to reading and math outcomes. Conflict in early childhood, before children even begin school, is the single most important factor associated with learning deficiencies later in life, likely because it affects household income, nutrition, and access to health services during the critical period for cognitive development (Salah & Saxena, 2025). Violent conflict also affects the physical and institutional infrastructure of schooling, educational territorial development, and, to a lesser extent, school buildings, further reinforcing the argument that more destructive conflicts have greater educational impacts (Salah & Saxena, 2025).

With an Emphasis on Equity, Gender, and Marginalized Populations

Conflict and migration-affected students continue to experience significant educational inequities across the Global South (Thinh, 2025). Interestingly, research shows that conflict's impact on learning does not differ by socioeconomic status; in other words, it does not appear to exacerbate disparities between social groups. However, conflict does negatively affect female enrolment, although its precise influence on the broader gender gap in learning outcomes remains less well understood (Salah & Saxena, 2025).

Marginalized groups, typically defined as those experiencing exclusion due to race, disability, gender, or socioeconomic status, are disproportionately affected by the costs of war, with women and children most at risk of poverty, exploitation, and exclusion from decision-making (Arinaitwe & Reddy, 2025). Girls' education, in particular, represents a compelling investment, as educated women contribute to stronger community and economic outcomes. This holds true for displaced South Sudanese, former child soldiers, women, and people with disabilities, all of whom play a vital role in the reconstruction of South Sudan (Arinaitwe & Reddy, 2025).

Gender disparities in education may not always be visible in quantitative data but often emerge through lived experiences. For example, while data from Jordan showed no significant gender differences, qualitative interviews highlighted barriers such as early marriage, domestic labor, and restrictions on girls' digital access—factors program design often overlooks (Almazroui & Awad, 2025). Addressing these challenges requires intentional, gender-responsive strategies, including recruiting female teachers, establishing girls' reading groups, implementing flexible timetables, and setting up mobile learning centers tailored to local social constraints. Without such measures, global literacy goals will remain elusive, particularly for girls in crisis contexts (Almazroui & Awad, 2025).

DISCUSSION

The literature reviewed yields complex and sometimes contradictory findings, as interventions in conflict-affected areas of the Global South vary widely. The multi-faceted and

profound effects of armed conflict on education are well documented, but the effectiveness and sustainability of post-conflict interventions are more complex. The review identifies tensions between the effectiveness of small-scale, targeted interventions and the larger, systemic challenges of scaling and sustaining these solutions in fragile political and social environments.

The literature's most consistent finding is the long-term, severe effects of conflict on cognitive development, especially during childhood. Salah and Saxena's (2025) quantitative findings are compelling: exposure to conflict before school entry is the strongest predictor of later learning deficits, suggesting a need to move beyond providing schooling to meeting the physiological and psychological prerequisites for learning. Previous research also shows that malnutrition, disease, and toxic stress during sensitive periods harm brain development, which is crucial for life-course outcomes (Richter et al., 2019; Stevens et al., 2023). This review contributes to understanding developmental risks in children and their close link to the conditions of armed conflict.

One surprising finding is that conflict does not exacerbate the learning gaps between rich and poor children. This suggests that individuals exposed to armed conflict may experience trauma in broadly similar ways, temporarily diminishing differences across social groups. Nevertheless, pre-existing structural disadvantages mean that certain populations remain disproportionately vulnerable. Thus, the relationship between conflict, social status and learning outcomes is more complex and requires further research.

School-based psychosocial interventions, such as the Better Learning Program (BLP) in Gaza, show that short-term, teacher-led interventions can significantly reduce trauma symptoms and improve academic functioning (Forsberg & Schultz, 2023; Schultz et al., 2017). This result aligns with previous research, which found that school-based mental health interventions are among the most effective and scalable ways to reach conflict-affected children (Alansari et al., 2026). The BLP's multi-layered design is based on best practices in child mental health, which emphasize the importance of universal, targeted, and intensive support. However, a review reveals gaps in the evidence supporting these practices. Persson and Rousseau (2009) found that group crisis interventions can sometimes be harmful, highlighting the risks of a one-size-fits-all approach. This is a longstanding concern that programs that are not culturally adapted or trauma-informed can actually have adverse effects (Perera et al., 2020).

The BLP further demonstrates that gains in well-being and academic performance are accompanied by persistent stress symptoms, and these improvements tend to diminish over time. This is a key shortcoming of the short-term, problem-oriented approach; it can work in the immediate crisis but falls short in the long, protracted nature of today's conflicts. The challenge is not only implementing such programs but also designing them for sustainability, embedding them into an operational school system, and ensuring they are part of a continuum of care that accounts for the stress factors that persist in a conflict zone.

Alternative and accelerated learning programs have become important temporary alternatives because formal schools are inadequate. The GED in Thailand, Bar ama Baro in Somalia, and Iraq's ALP have engaged populations not in school and, in the case of the ALP, even proved protective against militia recruitment (Bilagher & Kaushik, 2020; Farah, 2024; Thinh, 2025). These results align with previous studies on education's protective role, which indicate that education can reduce the risk of violence by improving children's prospects and fostering social cohesion in communities (Varlık et al., 2025). These, however, are mostly parallel systems that can be used to shift the burden of the national education system's reconstruction from the state to others. The sustainability of these programs is tenuous and depends on the logistical capacity of international donors and NGOs. A key gap in the literature concerns how to systematically integrate alternative educational pathways into a reformed public education system, ensuring they complement rather than supplant its permanent structures. Removing enrolment restrictions was a key factor in the success of the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) in Iraq. At the state level, implementing this policy requires strong commitment and coordination. It emphasizes a dual-track approach: providing immediate access to education and pursuing long-term systemic reform.

The most promising, but least empirically supported, interventions tackle the root causes of conflict through curriculum reform and community engagement. Curriculum reform in Somalia and post-apartheid education in South Africa show the power of education to promote peace, social justice, and reconciliation (Barrios-Tao et al., 2016; Renders & Knezevic, 2017). These cases build on developing scholarship on peacebuilding education, which argues that peacebuilding can be taught explicitly, with a focus on civic values and the legacies of violence (Kester et al., 2025). A clear disconnect exists between the Somali reform and its actual results. The process was participatory but did not significantly increase enrolment, suggesting that greater challenges like poverty and insecurity must be addressed beyond curriculum change. This reflects a broader concern in conflict-affected settings: education is sometimes seen as a peacebuilding tool, but if it is not accompanied by economic and political growth, it can be a symbolic exercise, not a transformative one.

Furthermore, most evidence on these reforms is retrospective and qualitative. A longitudinal, mixed-methods study is needed to evaluate the long-term impacts of curricular change on social cohesion, civic participation, and the likelihood of conflict. This type of research would help move the field away from rhetoric and toward evidence-based practice.

While conceptually solid, the literature focuses on literacy, trauma, and equity, and applying these concepts in practice can be difficult. Community-based literacy programs grounded in oral traditions are more effective than formal schooling for refugees, offering a strong critique of the formal, top-down curriculum that ignores learners' lived experience (Almazroui & Awad, 2025). This underscores the need for learner-centered, trauma-informed pedagogies. This finding aligns with previous findings on culturally responsive education, which highlight the need to leverage learners' existing knowledge and cultural assets, and with trauma-informed approaches that acknowledge how adversity affects learning and

behavior (Hilliard et al., 2024; Krishnamoorthy et al., 2024). However, the failure to close the gap between the rhetoric of gender-responsiveness and the reality of the exclusion of girls from education suggests a deeper failure. Barriers like early marriage and limited access to digital media are well documented, but proposed solutions like hiring female teachers or establishing girls' reading groups are often treated as single interventions rather than part of a broader, politically savvy approach. These interventions must be culturally appropriate and build on the cultural norms and economic realities that perpetuate the barriers; otherwise, they will be superficial and ultimately ineffective.

CONCLUSION

This review examined the landscape of educational interventions in conflict-affected settings across the Global South. The findings show that while conflict devastates educational systems and undermines children's cognitive and psychosocial development, multiple pathways exist to maintain and rebuild education in these challenging contexts. The evidence shows that effective interventions are flexible, community-engaged, mindful of psychosocial well-being, and responsive to local contexts. Accelerated learning programs, trauma-informed psychosocial support, community-school partnerships, and conflict-sensitive curriculum reform all offer promising approaches. However, significant gaps remain in our understanding of long-term outcomes, comparative effectiveness, and pathways to scale. As armed conflicts continue to affect civilian populations across the Global South, the imperative to maintain and rebuild education grows ever more urgent. The global literacy crisis among conflict-affected children remains urgent yet under-examined. Future research and practice must move beyond fragmented, short-term interventions toward systemic, inclusive, and sustainable educational strategies that recognize education not merely as a service delivery but as a fundamental right and a cornerstone of peacebuilding, reconciliation, and human development. The findings of this review underscore that when educational interventions are designed with attention to conflict drivers, embedded within communities, and responsive to the holistic needs of learners, education can fulfill its transformative potential, offering not only knowledge and skills but also healing, hope, and a pathway from conflict to classroom, and from crisis to recovery.

Author Contributions

- Mohd Shahbaz Khan: Conceptualized the study, designed the review methodology, conducted the literature search and screening, analyzed and synthesized the findings, drafted the manuscript, and coordinated the revision process.
- Dr. Sameer Babu M: Supervised the study, contributed to the conceptual framework, critically reviewed the methodology and interpretation of findings, and provided substantial revisions to the manuscript.

- Dr. Syarip Hidayat: Contributed to the interpretation of findings, reviewed the manuscript for intellectual content, and provided critical feedback to improve the quality of the review.
- Dr. Mahwish Farooq: Contributed to the critical review of the manuscript, assisted in refining the discussion and conclusions.
- All authors reviewed, revised, and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Data Availability Statement

This study is a review article based exclusively on published literature. No new datasets were generated or analysed during the current study. All data supporting the findings are available within the cited references included in this article.

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