Individual Peacebuilding practices in Elementary Schools: Perceptions of Teachers

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Abstract

Human being has a profound relationship with peace in their individual and social life, which is why people study peace deeply and widely. Focus of the present study was to analysis of on-going and desired individual peacebuilding practices through the perception of 140 male and female teachers of humanity subjects at elementary school level from 36 selected schools of 3 sampled districts of Punjab. Survey methods were used to carry out this study. The informants were selected through multistage sampling technique. One self-developed questionnaire for the teachers was computed after pilot testing applying Cronbach's Alpha. The value of Cronbach's Alpha of both questionnaires was found 0.81. It was found that mean gain score of desired level of individual peacebuilding practices was significantly greater than the mean gain score of ongoing individual peacebuilding practices in elementary schools.

Introduction

Individual peace refers to a state of inner calmness and harmony that allows individuals to experience a sense of pleasure and satisfaction in their lives. Apart from this, individual peace building involves a combination of self-awareness, empathy, active listening, open-mindedness, forgiveness, and respect (Castro & Galace, 2019). Likewise, Siddiqi (2022) emphasized that individuals are the foundation of society, and only by changing them can peace education become meaningful and result-oriented. However, achieving individual peace is vital for a fulfilling life, and education can play a significant role in promoting individual peacebuilding. Education equips individuals with conflict resolution skills, intercultural understanding, critical thinking, and resilience. Furthermore, Haavelsrud (2019) stated that teachers can engage students in different learning experiences to develop their knowledge and skills, resulting in desired learning outcomes. Teaching peace involves educating students about the importance and benefits of peace in society and developing their abilities to handle disputes through negotiation and dialogue.

Statement of the Problem

Although, Pakistan's educational policies and constitutions emphasize peace education, but individual peacebuilding is often neglected. Despite the efforts of organizations like UNO, UNESCO and UNICEF, violence augmented due to neglect of individual peacebuilding. Education plays a crucial role in cultivating socially responsible citizens, but students' behavior is influenced by their learning environment. Despite the belief that education discouraged violence, it is evident that highly educated individuals engaged in violent activities. Research on individual peacebuilding can promote social cohesion, reduce violence, empower individuals, support sustainable development, and strengthen democracy in Pakistan.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

1. To explore the current practices of individual peacebuilding at elementary level in Pakistan.

2. To explore the desired practices of individual peacebuilding at elementary level in Pakistan.
3. To find out the difference between the current and desired practices of individual peacebuilding at elementary level in Pakistan.

Rationale of the Study

Pakistan, like many other countries, is facing challenges related to social unrest, intolerance, and conflict. Early intervention and education play a crucial role in addressing these issues by promoting values of peace, empathy, and mutual understanding. It is experiencing the worst ever moral, social, and political mess. Within country, an increased level of nervousness, confusion and intolerance towards others is being highly witnessed in the society. The personal and communal violence is prime terrifying challenge effecting Pakistan 's security, stability, and social harmony. The elementary level of education is a foundational stage where attitudes and behaviors of the individuals are shaped. Making it an ideal and fruitful situation, it's necessary to develop and validate individual peacebuilding module.

Literature Review

The Latin word "Pax" is where the term "peace" primary appeared. The Romans referred to it as "absentia belli," a situation in which no war was conducted within the Roman Empire (Carreira et al., 2014). Likewise, Gazali and Mohammed (2023) clarified that the concept of peace has been defined in a numerous means by various intellectuals. The word peace is initiated from the Latin term "PAX" which means agreement or a promise to close war.

The equivalent Greek term is "Irene," which denotes the absence of physical violence together with harmony and fairness. Similarly, the Arabic word "Salām" and the Hebrew word "Shalom" denote love, harmony, serenity, the sharing of assets, and peace. Similarly, the Sanskrit word "Shanti" implies to a cosmic understanding of calm rather than only mental and contentment tranquility. Similarly, the realization of oneness in diversity and harmony are central to the Chinese idea of Ping (Castro & Galace, 2019). Furthermore, they claimed that peace refers to the presence of just non-exploitative interactions, as well as human and environmental well-being, such that the root causes of conflict are reduced. Peace is a concept that lies at the core of human aspirations for harmony, tranquility, and the absence of conflict.

The meaning of "peace" varies depending on the cultural setting. Some saw it as a state of inner serenity. Few nations consider peace to be the fulfillment of every person's fundamental wants. However, peace is more than only the absence of conflict and violence or to provide for a person's fundamental needs while eliminating all forms of injustice on a national, international, intergroup, interpersonal, and other levels (McGlynn & Zembylas, 2009). Nearly all of the world's religions embrace the idea of "peace." Chérif, Niemiec, and Wood (2022) investigated at many levels, encompassing interpersonal, intrapersonal/individual, and individual intergroup levels. They highlighted the value of character qualities as a way to cultivate this condition of inner serenity. People can create a peaceful environment for themselves by making use of their characteristics. The idea of true peace is one that views it as including three dimensions: I, peace within; II, peace in society; III, peace in the environment. The extent and ontology of peace as a social reality are determined by these three dimensions. To achieve true peace, one must cultivate harmony in all three of these areas:

- Individual Peace: Inner tranquility inside the individual
- Social Peace: Social harmony among the community.
- Environmental Peace: Peace in the environment (Carreira et al., 2014).

Individual Peace has central role for personal and social well-being, endorsing acceptance, inner harmony, and quality of life. It promotes rights, freedom, equality, and responsibility, fostering a culture of peace.

Research indicates that individual peace is vital for human flourishing, including inner peace, acceptance of loss, transcendence of materialism, and inner calmness. A system dynamics approach examines how individual peace, influenced by health, spiritual preparation and environment, can create social harmony. Positive psychology concepts like well-being and resilience can contribute to personal peace, but their impact on broader peace is complex. Religion's unique contribution to flourishing is its focus on human wholeness, sacred matters, and integrating life experiences. It is highlighted the multifaceted nature of individual peace and its potential to affect social well-being, while recognizing the complications and probable disadvantages of convinced approaches (Zhuang, Reso, & Davis ,2016; Xi, & Lee,2021).

According to Erdmann (2024), the impact of an individual's identity on peace building, highlighting the diverse character strains and how their background influences their identity. It challenges traditional academic approaches and emphasizes the need for a comprehensive understanding of conflict management beyond strategies, methods, structures, and models. Bano, Ali and Iqbal (2024) clarified that the term "personal" or "individual" peace refers to the inner calm, contentment, and stillness that each person experiences. It entails having a sense of harmony and balance in addition to being free from stresses, worries, and fears. Saleem (2015) asserts that peace is a civil right for all individuals, and maintaining inner peace is crucial to prevent social conflicts. This inner peace leads to external peace, as mind agitations can trigger social conflicts. Spiritual peace can be achieved through forbearance, kindness, and avoiding quarrels.

In addition, Zhuang et al. (2016) introduced a system dynamics model that emphasizes individual peace, seeing aspects like health, nourishment, workout, genomic tendency, performances of compassion, environment, spiritual practice, motivations, visions and moments of insight. The model aims to understand the dynamics of systems involving inner peace and collective social harmony, and how peace propagates trans-generationally. As more people attain inner peace, human communities will contribute to superior social synchronization, endorsing a harmonious world.

Correspondingly, Castro and Galace (2019) also presented the concept of individual peace in their book "Peace Education: A pathway to a culture of peace Quezon City". The concept of individual peace as inner peace is consisted of the traits of individuals as self-respect, recognition of one's dignity as a human being, inner stability, sense of hope and confidence, fullness of the present and positive ways to response negative actions are discussed in their book. This study was based on the following six basic characteristics in of individual peace:

- Self-Respect
- Dignity as a Human Being
- Fullness of the Present
- Inner Stability
- Hope & Confidence
- Positive Vision

The literature explores various perspectives on individual peacebuilding, emphasizing the role of individual peacebuilders, their responsibility in resisting power, war, and societal patterns, and their role in promoting peace. These perspectives highlight the importance of individual agency and action in the pursuit of peace, which is a complex process involving inclusive communities, recognition of legitimacy, and human rights promotion. However, some criticize the "bottom-up" approach, emphasizing the need for individual efforts (Goetze,2016).

Likewise, Lefranc (2013) claimed the individual as the only true agent of peace. Critics of "bottom-up" peacebuilding argue that it often depoliticizes peace by focusing on individual transformation rather than systemic change. The grassroots peace-building and civil society

participation are crucial, while the concept of "everyday peace" emphasizes local agency and survival strategies. He analysed the assumption that peaceful individuals can generate peaceful societies through "bottom-up" peacebuilding approaches.

Peacebuilding is a comprehensive process aimed at promoting sustainable peace through dialogues, discussions, and negotiations, focusing on root causes of conflict, gender justice, fair political, economic, and social establishments, and can be categorized into top-down and bottom-up approaches.Researchers emphasize the importance of peacebuilding at the elementary level, highlighting the role of peace education in fostering a culture of understanding among students. Education equips individuals with conflict resolution skills, intercultural understanding, critical thinking, active citizenship, addressing root causes of conflict, and building resilience. Investing in peace education contributes to a more peaceful and harmonious society. It is crucial to create awareness about peace among adults, including parents, community members, and teachers. The national curriculum for Early Childhood Education should be reviewed to include peacebuilding elements and bullying and corporal punishment should be discouraged. Peace education initiatives significantly impact children's emotional, physical, social, and cognitive development during their early years. Early childhood is a crucial time for developing peaceful interactions, social skills, and understanding oneself and others. Children can learn and acquire important social skills, including peace-making skills, that will benefit them throughout their lives (Lasi, Jiwan, Batool, Dhanani & Shrestha ,2017; Das & Behera,2020). Furthermore, Haavelsrud (2019) stated that teachers can engage students in different learning experiences to develop their knowledge and skills, resulting in desired learning outcomes. Peacebuilding involves educating students about the importance and benefits of peace in society and developing their abilities to handle disputes through negotiation and dialogue.

The influence of school education on students' behavior is significantly influenced by the type of content used in teaching. There is a wealth of evidence from around the world that confirms the impact of educational content on students' attitudes and behavior (Faheem & Iqbal, 2021; Hayat & Sarwar, 2022). Moreover, Putri (2024) discusses the implementation of human rights education in elementary schools, highlighting the importance of introducing children to non-discrimination practices and the concept of human rights from an early age.

Peace education is a comprehensive approach to learning that fosters human values and personality development in children. Countries like Japan, Finland, and Norway have a strong foundation in peace education, focusing on content, pedagogy, and school experiences. However, outcomes may vary due to regional disparities and educational reforms. Factors like cultural norms, policies, and individual perspectives influence the strength of peace education at the primary level.

Halai and Durrani (2018) concluded that teachers in Pakistan have a strong religious identity and agency in education, but their approach to social cohesion and peacebuilding is often non-critical and does not acknowledge diversity or reconcile tensions within the concept of 'unity in diversity'.

Research Design

As, the study was designed to collect and analyze quantitative data from the teachers, by following the combination of results, therefore, quantitative methods research design is considered suitable for this study (Mathiyazhagan & Nandan, 2010). So, this sudy was quantitative in nature and survey technique was used to collect data through questionnaire.

Population and Sample of the Study

All teacher of human subjects (English, Urdu, Islamiyat and History) teaching at elementary level of the country were the the population of this study.

A multilevel sampling approach was used to select sample for this study according to proportional ratio. This approach is also described as "selecting a sample from samples". This emerging

sampling technique is being widely used by present-day researchers in the fields of society. The researcher uses multiple sampling techniques-different techniques at different stages. The purpose of this technique is to attain better representation of the sub-groups within the main sample frame (Alvi, 2016; Khan, 2020; George, 2021). The 3 districts were selected by systematic random sampling technique from each zone of province Punjab which was selected through convenient sampling technique from other provinces of Pakistan.Moreover,140 male and female teachers were selected through purposive sampling technique from 2,2, tehsils of sampled districts. The detailed sample is also shown in table 1.

Table 1

Sample for the First Phase of the study

Districts	Tehsils	EST Teachers Male	EST Teachers Female
Narowal	Narowal	8	12
	Zafarwal	4	8
Gujrat	Gujrat	15	16
	Kharian	13	16
Bahawalnagar	Chishtian	12	16
	Haroonabad	8	12
3	6	60	80

Research tools

Research tools are essential in the Research process, providing assistance to collect relevant an accurate data to both individuals and the broader community. According to Ebrahim (2017), "Research Tools" as a collection of over 700 tools that support various research activities, such as literature search, paper writing, journal targeting, and research visibility. These tools aim to enhance research output accuracy and efficiency and are presented as an interactive web-based mind map across various research disciplines and institutions. A questionnaire is crucial for research, collecting data on a topic, but its effectiveness depends on careful design, validation, and psychological considerations, requiring professional advice and extensive planning. (Fraenkel et al., 2019; Taherdoost,2022).

Therefore, a close ended questionnaire was developed in English language for teachers consisted of 42 items based on six values of individual.

The questionnaire was divided into six groups according to the concept of values for individual peace derived by Castro and Galace (2019) in their book "Peace Education". A five-point Likert scale was used to identify the perceptions of the respondents because Likert scale is applied as one of the most fundamental and frequently used psychometric tool in educational and social sciences research (Joshi, Kale, Chandel & Pal, 2015).

The process of tool development and validation consisted of three steps:

According to Mazoor (2021) the process of construction and validation of research instruments consisted of three by following the systematic steps:

1.   Theoretical: This phase referred to collection / structure of items pool.
2.   Empirical: A phase of discussion on items with Experts and pilot study.
3.   Analytical : This step was to apply reliability scale for tool validation.

Table 2

Alpha Reliability of Instruments 42 Items

Respondents	N	Desired	Current
Teachers	140	0.81	0.81

Data Collection

Perception of the teachers of humanities subjects (Urdu, English, Islamiyat and History) at elementary school level were collected through survey method to identification of gap between the current and the desired level of individual peacebuilding practices in schools. The respondents' perception on desired and current level of individual peacebuilding practices were collected on self-constructed five-point Likert scale.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the most important and crucial segment in the research which involves the systematic collection, transformation, narrative and interpretation of data using technical and statistical techniques (Abu-Bader, 2021; Verma, Verma & Abhishek, 2024). This study was designed as quantitative research so, the collected data were analyzed by applying descriptive statistics (mean and Std deviation) and inferential statistics (paired samples t-test).

Table 3

Difference between Desired and Current Level of IPPs (Teachers' Perception)

Value	Level	*Mean*	*Means Difference*	*SD*	*t*	*P*
Individual Peacebuilding Practices	Desired Current	4.53 2.99	1.54	0.47	43.74	000*

*df = 139, *p < 0.01.*

Data in table 2 reflects mean 4.53 of the desired level while mean 2.99 of the current level of overall practices of individual peacebuilding and its basic characteristics as perceived by the teachers of humanity subjects at elementary level. Statistics in the table show that, as a whole, the current extent of individual peacebuilding practices at elementary level in schools was reported at moderate level and the desired level of individual peacebuilding practices at elementary level in schools was reported high. Thus, the current level of IPPs was lower than desired level of IPPs with 1.54 means 'difference. The study found a significant difference between desired and current level of overall individual peacebuilding in schools of Punjab, Pakistan, as perceived by respondents. The current practices were less than the desired level, as per paired samples t-test results (t = 43.74, p< 0.01, df = 139).

Table 4

Difference between Desired and Current Level of Basic Characteristics of IPPs

Districts	Tehsils	EST Teachers Male	EST Teachers Female
Narowal	Narowal	8	12
	Zafarwal	4	8
Gujrat	Gujrat	15	16
	Kharian	13	16
Bahawalnagar	Chishtian	12	16
	Haroonabad	8	12
3	6	60	80

*df = 139, *p < 0.01.*

The information reflects the desired level of overall practices of individual peacebuilding and its basic characteristics as perceived by the teachers of humanity subjects at elementary level. Collected data showed that, as a whole, the respondents highly desired the individual peacebuilding practices at elementary level. The desired level for each of the six basic characteristics of individual peacebuilding (self-respect, dignity as a human, inner stability, hope & confidence, fullness of the present and positive vision). was also reported at high level of mean.

Discussions and Conclusions

The study reveals significant gaps between desired and current conditions of all six basic characteristics of Individual peacebuilding (self-respect, dignity as a human, inner stability, hope & confidence, fullness of the present and positive vision). The study explored that the most practiced value of individual peacebuilding was "dignity as a human" while the lowest level of practice in schools is found "fullness of present" according to the responses of participants. On the other hand, "self-respect", "hope & confidence" and "positive vision" are desired to be practiced in schools at highest mean 4.72 perceived by the respondents and "dignity as a human", 'inner stability", and "fullness of the present" were also desired with a significant high mean to be practiced in schools. The outcomes of the present study matched with the findings of Manzoor, Sarwar and Shah (2020) that the desired level for teaching peace and its subsidiary values was significantly higher than the existing level of peace teaching practices at university level. It leads towards the conclusion that there is more need for all six basic characteristics of Individual peacebuilding to school students.

Recommendations

In the light of the results and conclusions of this study, the recommendations to improve the current level of IPPs are following:

- Individual peacebuilding as a separate subject may be combined in the school curriculum.
- It may be declared a compulsory part of the course syllabus at every stage of the educative process.
- Some essential changes regarding to individual peacebuilding may be applied in the design of teacher training programs.

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