

Individual Peacebuilding in the Elementary Schools: Voices of Punjab, Pakistan

Asifa Bano

Ph.D. Scholar, Minhaj University Lahore

Dr. Shafqat Ali

Professor, Department of Education, Minhaj University Lahore

drshafqat.edu@mul.edu.pk

Shahid Iqbal

Subject Specialist, Quaid e Azam Academy for Educational Development Punjab Lahore,
Pakistan

Abstract

In addition to reducing violence in homes, schools, and communities, individual peacebuilding efforts from an early age are crucial for maintaining social cohesion. The study used a qualitative research approach, and convenient sampling was used to choose 17 elementary public-school heads as respondents for in-depth interviews. School heads provided a broad definition of individual peace. The results were based on six values of individual peace as self-respect, recognition of one's dignity as a human being, inner stability, sense of hope and confidence, positive ways to response negative actions and fullness of the present. School heads also expressed worries about the harmful effects of the frequency of violence and intolerance among adults. School heads believed that a more comprehensive knowledge of what and how to improve individual peacebuilding was necessary. As the area that is currently receiving the least attention, they also urged that parents and educators increase their competence in individual peace and inner conflict resolution.

Keywords: Elementary Schools, School Heads, Individual Peacebuilding

1. Introduction

A state of harmony, tranquilly, and absence of strife is known as peace. It is the absence of conflict, animosity, and bloodshed. Individuals can experience peace, as can families and communities, nations can experience peace, and the world can experience peace. Beyond just the absence of conflict, peace includes social justice, equality, and the upholding of human rights, among other facets of human welfare. It entails using peaceful methods to settle disputes, cultivating empathy and understanding, and encouraging collaboration and respect among people and nations.

Promoting individual peacebuilding within elementary schools in Punjab, Pakistan is of paramount importance for fostering a harmonious society and nurturing future generations capable of resolving conflicts peacefully. In a region often marked by historical tensions, teaching young minds the principles of tolerance, empathy, and conflict resolution becomes a proactive approach to building a more stable and cohesive community.

Elementary schools serve as the foundational grounds for character development, and integrating peacebuilding into the curriculum can equip children with essential skills for managing interpersonal conflicts. By instilling values of understanding and respect early on, students are better prepared to navigate diverse perspectives and contribute to a peaceful coexistence.

Individual peacebuilding not only addresses immediate concerns within the school environment but also lays the groundwork for a broader societal transformation. Students exposed to conflict resolution techniques are more likely to become ambassadors of peace within their families and communities, creating a ripple effect that extends beyond the classroom. In Punjab, where cultural diversity is rich, promoting individual peacebuilding in elementary education can bridge divides, fostering unity among various ethnic and religious groups. This proactive approach empowers the youth to be agents of change, sowing the seeds for a more tolerant and peaceful future in the region. The father of peace research, Galtung (2018), developed a peacebuilding strategy with the goal of bringing about world peace. Peacebuilding is an approach that takes the initiative and places emphasis on implementing peaceful means of transforming society through advancements in politics, society, and economy. Additionally, he presented the idea that peace is a coin with two sides: good peace and negative peace. The absence of personal violence is known as negative peace, and the absence of institutional violence or social justice is known as positive peace. Barbey (2018) expounded on the notion of three distinct stages of peace, which are personal/individual, societal, and political. The inner state of serenity, contentment, and quiet that each person experiences is referred to as personal or individual peace. It means being free from anxieties, fears, and tensions as well as having a sense of balance and harmony.

Education is essential for promoting understanding, empathy, and critical thinking, all of which are necessary for individual peacebuilding. It gives people the skills and information needed to have productive conversations, settle disputes amicably, and foster harmony in their communities. The social progress and personal happiness are only possible under peaceful conditions. Siddiqi (2012) stated the truth that the transformation of society begins with personal transformation individuals are building blocks of society. It is required to learn the art of situation management at individual level by responding positively to negative situations.

In this way it will be possible to stop the poisonous cycle of violence from continuing at the social and national level. It means having a sense of balance and harmony in one's life, as well as being free from anxieties, fears, and worries. Political peace is concerned with political infrastructures, actors and institutions accountable for maintaining security and peace, and ethical ideals. Social peace is concerned with connections between individuals and social groups.

Furthermore, as noted by Nurhadi, Amali, and Aulia (2023) in their research, a prerequisite for peace is the curtailment of violence and the conversion of disputes into constructive, nonviolent exchanges. It takes proactive steps, like encouraging a peaceful culture, to alter thinking and behaviour. They contend that the advancement of political, social, and economic systems is the means by which peacebuilding seeks to bring about societal transformation. The ultimate objective is to promote conflict avoidance, resolution, and the creation of peaceful conditions in order to change from a culture of violence to one of peace.

In addition, personal peace denotes a condition of inner harmony and serenity that enables people to feel happy and fulfilled in their lives. Since people are the cornerstone of society, it is the individual who needs to change, not society. Change can only occur within the individual. Peace education can only become purposeful and goal-oriented by doing this (Siddiqi, 2019). In addition, individual peace building calls for a blend of the values as self-respect, recognition of one's dignity as a human being, inner stability, sense of hope and confidence, positive vision to response negative actions and fullness of the present. (Castro & Galace, 2019).

The kinds of materials that are taught have a big impact on how schooling affects pupils' behaviour. The influence of educational material on students' attitudes and behaviour is supported by an abundance of international research (Hayat & Sarwar, 2018). Consequently, it is critical to

investigate the role that education plays in fostering peace among the younger generation on an individual basis and to offer suggestions for maintaining peace while advancing the aspirations of the Pakistani generation.

Exploratory research refers to a study aimed at investigating a loosely defined problem. The purpose is to enhance understanding of the existing research challenge, although the findings may not provide definitive conclusions (Swedberg, 2020). In this context, an exploratory research endeavor was undertaken to explore the perspectives of school leaders on individual peace and individual peacebuilding. Purpose of the study was to:

1. Know the perceptions of school heads regarding the concept of individual peace.
2. Find out the strategies experienced by them to promote individual peace in schools.

Castro and Galace (2019), presented the concept of individual peacebuilding based on six values of individual peace as self-respect, recognition of one's dignity as a human being, inner stability, sense of hope and confidence, positive ways to response negative actions and fullness of the present.

2. Methodology

The most common study approaches are used: mixed techniques, qualitative methods, and quantitative methods (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2019). Exploratory research is study done to investigate a problem that is not fully defined. Although the results won't be conclusive, it's being done to better understand the current research problem. Known as the inductive method, this research type seeks to uncover overarching principles that can elucidate data and observations (Singh, 2021). For this study, a qualitative research approach and an exploratory research design were deemed most suitable. The research was conducted in Punjab, with data gathered through 17 in-depth interviews (IDIs) across six districts in Punjab. The specifics and geographical distribution of the sample are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1

Sample information

| Districts | School Heads | | |
|--------------|--------------|------|-------|
| | Female | Male | Total |
| Narowal | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Gujrat | 4 | 3 | 7 |
| Bahawalnagar | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Total | 10 | 7 | 17 |

The details about experience and qualification distribution of sample are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographical Information of Sample

| Experience | Qualification | | |
|------------|---------------|-------|---|
| Years 1-5 | 4 | M. A. | 4 |

| | | | |
|----------------|----|--------------|----|
| Years 6-10 | 1 | M.S./M. Phil | 8 |
| Years 11-15 | 3 | Ph. D. | 5 |
| Years 16-20 | 4 | | |
| above 20 Years | 5 | | |
| | 17 | | 17 |

Convenient sampling guided the sample selection process, enabling the inclusion of research participants from varied geographic regions, including Northern, Central, and Southern areas of Punjab, representing diverse socioeconomic strata and genders. In each district, a designated Research Coordinator (RC) conducted in-depth interviews (IDIs), transcribed the recordings, and translated the transcriptions into English. The study tool was translated into Urdu and underwent a pilot test before commencement of data collection. Each in-depth interview lasted approximately 40 to 60 minutes.

Thematic analysis was employed to scrutinize the qualitative data. Qualitative interviews, utilized in qualitative studies, require participants to engage more personally, offering in-depth information. Such interviews often involve follow-up questions, conducted in a conversational or discussion-style format. In contrast to group studies or comprehensive questionnaires, qualitative interviews are a less impersonal approach to defining study objectives. These formats typically incorporate follow-up and open-ended questions (Terry, Hayfield, Clark & Braun, 2017).

3. Concept of Individual Peace

The school heads highlighted the concept of individual peace in various aspects of an individual's life and well-being. Here are main the concepts of individual peace interpreted by elementary school heads selected as sample for this study:

1. According to a participant of the study, *"Individual peace involves experiencing a sense of inner harmony and balance, as well as a state of emotional calmness and tranquilly. It refers to a calm mental state that is marked by mental clarity, lack of mental turbulence, and a feeling of mental well-being"*. (Inner Stability)
2. Another school head indicated *"Courage and self-reliance permit persons to overcome hardship, take initiative, and contribute to building a better and peaceful personality because an optimistic mindset can be communicable, inspiring others to join efforts for peace"*. (Hope and Confidence)
3. A different head of the school conveyed, *"Individual peace emphasizes that the respect and rights of every individual despite of differences should be considered for fairness, sympathy, and peaceful sharing"*. (Dignity as a Human Being)
4. Another school head stated *" I think strong senses of self-respect increase a person's tendency for respectful interaction with others, healthy debate, and positive community contributions. It serves as the cornerstone for cooperative work and positive relationships"*. (Self Respect)
5. Yet another school leader highlighted, *" Responding to negative actions with a positive vision involves seeking solutions, reconciliation, and understanding rather*

than perpetuating a cycle of hostility. It contributes to the transformation of conflicts into opportunities for growth and learning."(Positive Vision)

6. Some of them pointed out, "*Living in the present fosters mindfulness and a focus on the immediate context. It can contribute to better communication, understanding, and connection with others, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings and conflicts*". (Fullness of the Present)
7. Another head of school brought to attention, "*At the individual level, peace frequently entails accepting oneself—that is, accepting one's strengths and shortcomings without harboring ongoing self-judgment*".(Self Respect)
8. Another school head pointed out, "*Tolerance, empathy, and mutual understanding are creates a welcoming and peaceful atmosphere where people value variety and collaborate to achieve shared objectives and all these character qualities are fostered by respecting the dignity of others*". (Dignity as A Human Being

After, thematic analysis of mentioned above conceptual perceptions of school heads about the individual peacebuilding values (IPVs) are related for the values of individual peace presented by Castro and Galace (2019).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study placed greater focus on the concept of individual peacebuilding presented by Castro and Galace (2019) based on six values of individual peace as self-respect, recognition of one's dignity as a human being, inner stability, sense of hope and confidence, positive ways to response negative actions and fullness of the present. School heads also expressed worries about the harmful effects of the frequency of violence and intolerance among adults. School heads believed that a more comprehensive knowledge of what and how to improve individual peacebuilding was necessary.

School heads were more focused on growing their knowledge of what can be done in the schools and classrooms and how to adapt the current curriculum to include themes related to individual peacebuilding. As the area that is currently receiving the least attention, they also urged that parents and educators increase their competence in individual peace and inner conflict resolution. It is also revealed that a well-defined concept of individual peace and individual peacebuilding is missing. Likewise, relevant content and effective teaching practices are also required to cope up the expectations and needs of the country with the context of individual peace building.

According to the viewpoints of school leaders, teachers were deemed to possess sufficient awareness regarding the importance of early years. Teachers unanimously acknowledged the advantages of a strong foundation in the early years, emphasizing that positive early experiences contribute to better outcomes later in life. A participant highlighted that without peace education at the individual level, youngsters may be less equipped to positively and successfully confront challenges in their future practical lives. All the school heads involved in the study expressed support for incorporating individual peacebuilding education during the school years. They strongly believed that experiences in the early years empower individuals to reject violence later in life.

5. Suggestions for individual peacebuilding

According to research participants teaching individual peacebuilding should be mandatory .The more notable suggestions are:

1. "School administration and teachers should be aware about individual peace concepts and have a good command on knowledge and skills. Teacher should be a role model and demonstrate confident and trustworthy."

2. "An explicit subject on individual peacebuilding should be offered in curriculum for elementary schools in Pakistan"
3. "Teachers should be trained to teach students about tolerance and humanity in an objective and logical way for dealing with their preconception without being influenced by emotions."
4. "It is needed to bring up the students in such an environment where they like peace, work on peace, create a peaceful society and become peace leaders later in life."
5. "A course for individual peacebuilding should be included in-service and pre-service teacher training programs".

References

- Castro, L. N., & Galace, J. N. (2019). *Peace education: A pathway to a culture of peace*. 3rd edition. Quezon City: Center for Peace Education.
- Ahmed, Z. S., & Zeb, K. (2023). The challenges of assessing peacebuilding in Pakistan. *Are we making a difference?: Global and Local Efforts to Assess Peacebuilding Effectiveness*, 141.
- Barbey, C. (2018, March). Soft justice for all three levels of peace [Blog post]. *à propos Swisspeace*. <https://www.swisspeace.ch/apropos>
- Bromley, D. B. (1990). Academic contributions to psychological counseling: I.A philosophy of science for the study of individual cases. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 3(3), 299-307.
- Castro, L. N., & Galace, J. N. (2019). *Peace education: A pathway to a culture of peace*. 3rd edition. Quezon City: Center for Peace Education.
- Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. H. (2019). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (edisi ke-10).
- Galtung, J. (2018). Violence, peace and peace research. *Organicom*, 15(28), 33-56.
- Singh, A. (2021). An introduction to experimental and exploratory research. *Available at SSRN* 3789360.
- Hayat, Z., & Sarwar, M. (2018). An analytical study of secondary school textbooks with reference to peace values. *Pakistan Journal of Distance and Online Learning*, 4(2), 259-270.
- Nurhadi, I., Amali, M., & Aulia, R. N. (2023). Peace culture in school: Analyzing the Wahid Foundation's Peace School Program. *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman*, 34(1), 139-152.
- Smith, A. (2011). *The influence of education on conflict and peacebuilding*. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001913/191341e.pdf>.
- Stevens, L., & Wrenn, C. (2013). Exploratory (qualitative) research. *Concise encyclopedia of church and religious organization marketing*, 53.
- Swedberg, R. (2020). Exploratory research. *The production of knowledge: Enhancing progress in social science*, 17-41.
- Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, 2, 17-37.
- Yin, R. K. (2010). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York: Guilford Press.