



## Original Article

## Peace Education Concepts and Content in Secondary School Curricula of English and Urdu: A Qualitative Case Study of Government Secondary Schools in Peshawar, Pakistan

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## ABSTRACT

*The primary objective of this research was to examine and explore the foundational concepts and principles of peace embedded within the secondary school curricula of Urdu and English in Peshawar, Pakistan. To achieve this, the study employed thematic analysis, aiming to answer the central question: What peace education concepts and content are integrated into the secondary school curricula of English and Urdu in Peshawar, Pakistan? The research involved a detailed thematic analysis of the content in both Urdu and English subjects. This process included identifying initial codes, organizing these codes into categories, and developing overarching themes. The key findings from this analysis revealed a significant need for substantial improvement and revitalization of the content in both subjects. Although some elements of peace education were present, they were insufficiently developed and inadequately integrated. This gap highlights the necessity for a comprehensive overhaul of the curricula to better incorporate peace education concepts, content and principles. By doing so, the educational framework could be strengthened to more effectively foster peace among students.*

### Introduction

Peace, universally recognized as indispensable, remains elusive amidst diverse social and cultural influences, necessitating sustained dedication and collective effort. Schools occupy a pivotal role in shaping individuals and nurturing a harmonious society, with educational materials and curricula serving as crucial instruments for educators. Educational philosophies and policies, that prioritize peace, serve as the bedrock for developing pertinent academic content (UNESCO, 2014).

The behavior of certain educated individuals raises pertinent questions about the essence of education and its content. While educational policies emphasize peace, it is imperative to scrutinize non-scientific subjects to ascertain how concepts such as tolerance, mutual respect, and cooperation are integrated. This study aims to scrutinize the incorporation of peace education concepts within the secondary school curricula of Urdu and English, assessing their implications for educational institutions, students, educators, and society at large (Davies, 2004).

A balanced society hinges on the principles of equality, human rights, and ethical values. Beyond statutory laws, the educational system cultivates a culture of law-abiding peaceful coexistence. Education ought to humanize individuals through pragmatic measures, fostering inner peace, societal concord, and an affinity with the environment. In this study, peace education is defined as the promotion of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable students to attain harmony within themselves, with others, and with the environment. Given Pakistan's history marked by militancy, extremism, and conflict, it is crucial to explore perspectives, experiences, and practices pertaining to peace in education, as manifested through curricular frameworks, educators, classrooms, and students (Singh, 2013).

## Literature Review

The roots of peace education can be traced back to teachings from various religious and philosophical leaders who advocated for human welfare, compassion, and societal harmony. These early influences laid the groundwork for what would later evolve into formalized peace education. According to Johnson and Johnson (2005), figures such as Jesus, Buddha, and other prominent religious and philosophical leaders provided foundational inspiration for peace education, emphasizing values such as empathy, non-violence, and cooperation. These principles became integral to the modern understanding of peace, transcending mere conflict resolution and extending to the broader dimensions of human well-being and societal cohesion.

The academic establishment of peace education emerged in the mid-20th century, a period defined by geopolitical tensions, particularly during the Cold War. The formalization of peace education in academic settings began in 1948 with the introduction of the first peace studies program at Manchester College in Indiana, a groundbreaking initiative led by scholars and activists committed to addressing global conflicts through education (Harris, 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 2005; Harris & Howlett, 2013). This period saw a proliferation of studies, programs, and courses dedicated to fostering a culture of peace, with Reardon's *Comprehensive Peace Education* (1988) serving as a seminal work that greatly influenced the field's development.

As peace education continued to evolve, scholars and practitioners recognized the multiplicity of ways in which peace could be understood and promoted. Webster (n.d.) defines peace education as “a state of quiet or tranquility, freedom from agitation,” emphasizing that peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but also encompasses qualities like calmness, empathy, and cooperation. Freire (2006), on the other hand, conceptualizes peace education as a means of transitioning from a culture of violence to one of peace. His framework emphasizes conscientization — the process of critically analyzing and transforming societal norms in ways that promote peaceful coexistence and justice. Peace education, as per Freire, involves empowering individuals to challenge violent structures and ideologies while fostering a culture of critical thinking and active participation in building a more just and peaceful society.

## Scope of Peace Education

Peace education is inherently multidimensional, encompassing a wide array of themes and practices aimed at fostering a culture of peace at both the local and global levels. Over the past five decades, global education movements and social initiatives have played a crucial role in advancing peace education across various domains. These efforts include but are not limited to the following:

*Disarmament Education:* promotes understanding and advocacy for reducing armed conflicts through nonviolent means, fostering awareness of the global impacts of militarization.

*Human Rights Education:* focuses on raising awareness and respect for human rights principles, encouraging individuals to advocate for the dignity and equality of all people.

*Global Education:* enhances understanding of global interconnectedness and cooperation, emphasizing the importance of cross-cultural dialogue and shared responsibility for global issues.

*Conflict Resolution Education:* equips individuals with the skills and strategies to peacefully resolve conflicts, both in personal and broader societal contexts.

*Multicultural Education:* encourages the appreciation of diverse cultures and perspectives, promoting respect for cultural differences and fostering tolerance.

*Education for International Understanding:* fosters knowledge of global issues and encourages cross-cultural dialogue, helping students understand the interconnectedness of world events.

*Interfaith Education:* promotes mutual understanding and respect among different religious communities, contributing to interfaith harmony and coexistence.

*Non-sexist Education:* addresses gender equality, challenges stereotypes, and advocates for gender-inclusive practices that promote respect for both genders.

*Development Education:* focuses on socio-economic development and global justice, emphasizing issues such as poverty, inequality, and human rights.

*Environmental Education:* encourages ecological sustainability, emphasizing the importance of responsible environmental stewardship and the interconnectedness of all living things (Castro & Galace, 2010a,b).

Each of these dimensions serves to build a holistic approach to peace education, which ultimately seeks to promote not just the absence of violence, but a thriving, interconnected global community where justice, equality, and mutual respect are foundational principles.

## Peace Education in Pakistan

In Pakistan, the need for peace education is particularly urgent, given the country's complex socio-political landscape. Khushik and Diemer (2018a, b) highlight the existence of three distinct educational systems in Pakistan, each catering to different socio-economic classes and fostering unique mindsets and ideological differences. These divisions often hinder societal harmony and tolerance, creating barriers between various communities. The introduction of

peace education concepts within the curriculum could serve as a vital tool to bridge these gaps and promote coexistence. However, despite the clear endorsement of peace education in Pakistan's national educational policy, the practical steps toward comprehensive implementation remains insufficient (National Education Policy, 2017).

The National Education Policy (2017) emphasizes the pillars of Taleem (education), Tarbiyya (training), and Tazkiyya (purification of the soul), all of which are rooted in Islamic values and universal ethical principles. The policy advocates for character building through the promotion of tolerance, respect for differing viewpoints, and interfaith harmony. It envisions the development of a morally upright society where peace is not only taught but practiced. However, the full integration of peace education into the national curriculum has yet to be fully realized, with significant gaps remaining in how these concepts are embedded into the classroom experience.

Moreover, Chubinidze (2004) contends that the effective delivery of peace education is not solely contingent upon the curriculum but also on teaching methodologies and classroom environments. The interconnectedness of these elements plays a profound role in shaping students' competencies in peace-building. Chubinidze emphasizes that peace-building skills, such as the ability to engage in respectful dialogue, work collaboratively, and promote social justice, are cultivated through a supportive and inclusive classroom atmosphere that encourages critical thinking, mutual respect, and democratic participation.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research is grounded in Harris's Peace Education Theory, which emphasizes the integration of human rights, conflict resolution, and social justice into educational curricula. According to Harris (2003), peace education is not only about the absence of conflict but also about the active promotion of values such as empathy, tolerance, and respect for diversity. His framework advocates for the development of critical thinking skills, enabling students to question societal norms and reflect on issues of violence, inequality, and injustice. It emphasizes the cultivation of conflict resolution skills, where students learn to address disputes constructively and peacefully, both at individual and societal levels. Furthermore, Harris's theory highlights the importance of fostering a sense of active citizenship, where students are encouraged to engage in peacebuilding efforts within their communities. In the context of this study, Harris's theory provides a comprehensive lens through which to assess how the secondary school curricula in Urdu and English in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa incorporate these key peace education principles. This framework guided the analysis to the extent to which these curricula promote human rights awareness, critical thinking, conflict resolution skills, respect for diversity, and active participation in building a culture of peace.

## Research Question

The following research question guided the study:

- What peace education concepts (and content) have been incorporated in secondary school curricula of English, Urdu in Peshawar?

## Methodology

Qualitative content analysis for the subjects of Urdu and English was done to find out peace education concepts in secondary school curricula. The text was carefully read; resultantly, initial codes emerged, categorization of similar codes was done and finally broad themes were finalized. Every theme was discussed and analyzed through the text.

## Result and Discussion

### English Textbook

There were five major themes generated after thematic analysis of the content of English text books of class 9<sup>th</sup> and class 10<sup>th</sup>. These themes were

- Tolerance
- Generosity
- Freedom and social equality
- Peaceful coexistence
- Respect and humanity

In the English textbook for 9th grade students, there exists a lesson titled "Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), the model of tolerance." This lesson contains valuable material aimed at introducing and exemplifying the concept of tolerance to students. It provides comprehensive insights into the teachings and actions of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), highlighting his role as a paragon of tolerance. The lesson effectively demonstrates practical examples of tolerance, emphasizing its importance and relevance in fostering harmonious relationships and understanding among individuals.

In the English textbook for 9th grade students, there is a lesson titled "Quaid - A Great Leader." On page 26, there is a paragraph that contains content perceived as critical towards a specific religion.

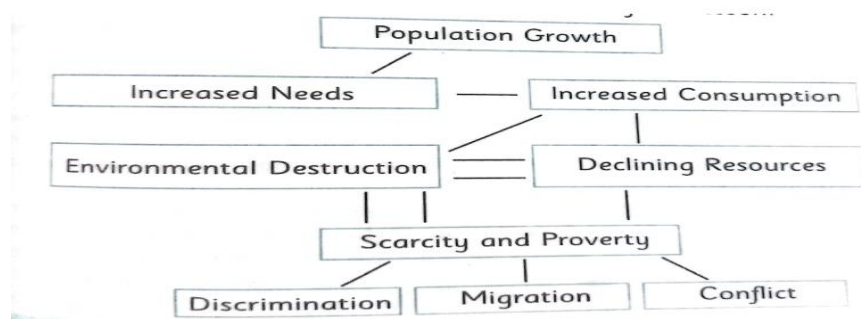
***Perhaps he was thinking of the thousands who were being attacked and killed on the roads and railways as they tried to reach their homeland. There was much in those days of violence to sadden Jinnah who was a man of very strong feelings although he rarely showed it. Yet those who were close to him on Independence***

The title of this lesson points to a focus on our revered leader, Quaid-e-Azam, and the early days of Pakistan, highlighting the significance of understanding our history. However, it's essential to recognize that while someone may be a hero to one, they may be perceived differently by others. The way we convey historical knowledge should be crafted in a manner that avoids instigating animosity toward any nation or country. Stirring negative sentiments can potentially be channeled by certain individuals into actions that disrupt peace. History, therefore, should be taught impartially, acknowledging that acts of violence occurred on both sides due to the actions of a few belligerent individuals.

Nayyar and Saleem (2003) contend that, upon examining the curricula of Pakistan across all educational levels, the inclusion of peace education is not evident, lacking a distinct subject dedicated to it. Moreover, they argue that certain aspects of the Pakistani curriculum may impart teachings against Hindus and Christians.

Georgy and Seberich (2004) further support this notion, asserting that while some subjects in Pakistan address peace education, the extent of its incorporation into the content is insufficient. In a country like Pakistan, where instances of violence, conflicts, and human rights violations are on the rise, they emphasize the critical importance of integrating peace education into the curriculum at every educational level. The objective is to instill a commitment to peace and understanding, countering the escalating challenges the nation faces.

In the book of 10th class lesson “Population growth and its impact on environment,” the following figure is presented:



The lesson presented by the author draws a connection between population growth and various social and economic challenges prevalent in the modern world. However, teaching about population growth is currently deemed unnecessary and futile. Rather than having a positive impact on students' minds, it may inadvertently instill disrespect towards individuals. Peace requires respect for everyone, and the content in the aforementioned chapter has the potential to generate a sense of disrespect towards large families. There exist numerous significant and pressing topics that deserve discussion and inclusion in the curriculum.

According to UNESCO (2017), educational content should foster respect and understanding among students to promote a culture of peace and inclusion. Similarly, Galtung (1996) emphasizes that peace education should encourage respect for all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds or personal choices, to build a more harmonious society.

One another lesson in the 10th class book named “The Aged Mother” at page 64:

Shinano, the town where they lived, was governed by a despotic leader who though a warrior, had a great and cowardly shrinking from anything suggestive of failing health and strength. This caused him to send out a cruel proclamation. The entire province was given strict orders to immediately put to death all the aged people. The days were barbarous, and the act of abandoning old people to die in isolation was not strange. The poor farmer had immense love and reverence for his aged mother and the order filled his heart with sorrow. No one could even think to refuse to obey the mandate of the governor. With many a deep and hopeless sighs, the youth prepared for the kindest mode he could kill his mother with.

In this narrative, the author tells a story about a ruler who demonstrates cruelty by issuing orders to abandon and forsake the elderly to their demise. The story centers on a mother and her son, highlighting their deep love and affection for each other. In Islam, parents hold an esteemed position, with the religion emphasizing utmost respect and kindness towards them. Muslims are instructed to treat all elderly individuals with gentleness and respect. Similarly, Pakistani culture and society highly value parents making any form of disrespect towards them unthinkable. Given our social context, teaching this particular lesson may be inappropriate, as the power of imagination can translate into real-life actions.

Introducing such material to students at an early age can be problematic, as early exposure to certain ideas can make them appear acceptable and doable. According to Berkowitz and Bier (2005), early childhood is a crucial period for moral development, and exposing children to negative behaviors can lead to their normalization and acceptance. Additionally, Gentile et al. (2004) argue that early exposure to harmful content can have long-term effects on children's behavior and attitudes, reinforcing the need for careful consideration of curriculum content.

### Urdu Textbook

By analyzing Urdu text books of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> classes following themes were driven related to peace aspects of education in one way or another.

- Respect
- Tolerance and harmony
- Violence
- Disrespect
- Social injustice.

Respect is fundamental to coexistence. In the Urdu textbooks for classes 9 and 10, there is considerable material on respect and peaceful coexistence. Specifically, the class 9 Urdu textbook includes a section titled "Disposition of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him)," which contains extensive content on respect and peaceful coexistence. This section also teaches tolerance towards others, including relatives, strangers, children, and servants.

Being Muslim, love for our Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) is an integral part of our faith. From a very young age, children develop a profound love and respect for the Prophet as they mature. The more one loves and respects someone, the more one idealizes that person and learns from them. We can teach every aspect of social life to adolescents through the life of our

beloved Prophet (peace be upon him). His demeanor, as discussed, is respectful and kind towards everyone, serving as an ideal model for behavior.

From the analysis of both books of 9th and 10th there are many materials which shows disrespect for others. For example in the 9th book lesson named "حج اکبر" (Hajj-i-Akbar) at page 43;

ناکرہ جواب سے اور بھی برہم ہوئی: ”یہاں دفتر جانے کو دیر ہو رہی ہے، تمہیں سیر پانے کی سوجھی ہے“، مگر دایہ نے اس وقت دبے میں خیریت سمجھی۔ بچے کو گود میں لینے چلی، پر شا کرہ نے جھڑک کر کہا: ”رہنے دو! تمہارے بغیر بے حال نہیں ہو جاتا“۔

دایہ نے اس حکم کی تعمیل ضروری نہ سمجھی۔ بیگم صاحبہ کا غصہ فرو کرنے کی اس سے زیادہ کارگر کوئی تدبیر ذہن میں نہ آئی، اس نے نصیر کو اشارے سے اپنی طرف بلایا، وہ دونوں ہاتھ پھیلائے لڑکھڑاتا ہوا اس کی طرف چلا، دایہ نے اسے گود میں اٹھالیا اور دروازے کی طرف چلی، لیکن شا کرہ باز کی طرح چھینٹی اور نصیر کو اس کی گود سے چھین کر بولی: ”تمہارا یہ مکر بہت دنوں سے دیکھ رہی ہوں، یہ تمہارے کسی اور کو دکھائیے، یہاں طبیعت سیر ہوئی“۔

The interaction between the maid and the mistress in the narrative is highly disrespectful, showcasing poor mannerisms and a lack of decorum. During adolescence, it is crucial to expose students to scenarios that exemplify elevated standards of humanity and etiquette. By doing so, students can form an understanding of proper social interactions and strive to behave accordingly, embodying the highest standards of respect and mannerism.

Another lesson “مجھے میرے دوستوں سے بچاؤ” (protect me from my friends)

At page 30 in 10th book

لوگ کہیں گے کہ اس شخص کے کیسے بیہودہ خیالات ہیں۔ بغیر دوستوں کے زندگی دو بھر ہوتی ہے اور یہ ان سے بھاگتا ہے مگر میں دوستوں کو برا نہیں کہتا۔ میں جانتا ہوں کہ وہ مجھے خوش کرنے کے لیے میرے پاس آتے ہیں اور میرے خیر طلب ہیں مگر عملی نتیجہ یہ ہے کہ احباب کا ارادہ ہوتا ہے مجھے فائدہ پہنچانے کا اور ہو جاتا ہے مجھے نقصان۔

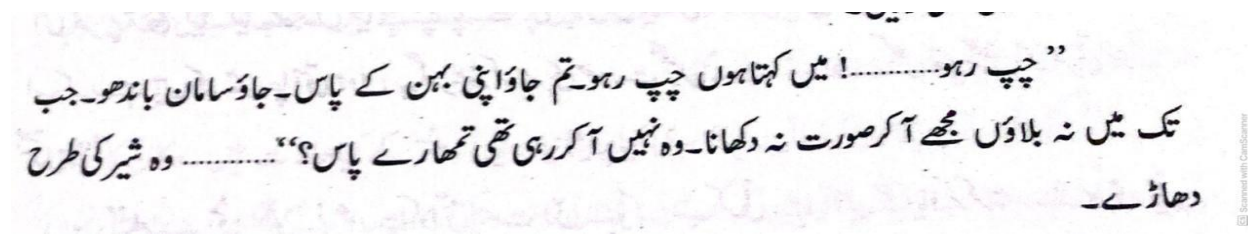
چاہے مجھ پر نفرت کی جائے مگر میں یہ کہے بغیر نہیں رہ سکتا کہ آج تک میرے سامنے کوئی یہ ثابت نہ کر سکا کہ احباب کا ایک جہم غصہ رکھنے اور شناسائی کے دائرے کو وسیع کرنے سے کیا فائدہ ہے؟ میں تو یہاں تک کہتا ہوں کہ اگر دنیا میں کچھ کام کرتا ہے اور باتوں ہی میں عمر نہیں گزارنی ہے تو بعض نہایت عزیز دوستوں کو چھوڑنا پڑے گا چاہے اس سے میرے دل پر کیسا ہی صدمہ ہو۔

The text is extracted from a lesson about friendships, where the author suggests that having a large number of friends, regardless of their sincerity and affection, can be detrimental by wasting time and energy. The author perceives friends as a disruption to daily routines. While the author's intention behind this piece of literature may vary, its inclusion in a 10th-grade textbook is debatable. When compiling a textbook, it is essential to consider the students' age and their capacity to understand the material.

Tutkun et al. (2012) argue that curricula aimed at achieving behavioral changes should be designed in a simple and understandable structure, considering individual differences rather than

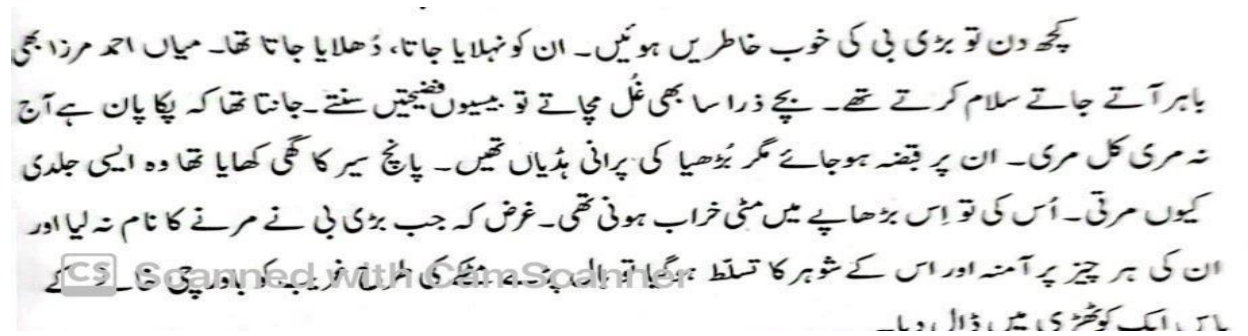
merely transmitting information. Crowe et al. (2008) recommend that age-appropriate content should be considered to support the developmental characteristics of students. Kellough and Kellough (2008) believe that during early adolescence, young children are more attracted to real-life experiences and learning, showing less interest in conventional school subjects. According to Scales (2010), young adolescents are keen observers of adult behaviors and are inquisitive about adults.

In the lesson “ایک کہانی بہت پرانی” (“An Old Story”), there is a significant amount of disrespectful material. This narrative revolves around domestic abuse, portraying intense emotions and events that are difficult for students to comprehend. The derogatory treatment of one character by another can negatively impact students' minds, potentially leading them to adopt similar behavior patterns. For example, on page 47, the interactions depicted are particularly concerning.



In the above lines, there is a dialogue between a husband and wife where the husband treats his wife very poorly, using abusive language and ordering her to leave his house and never return until he permits her. The husband is compared to a lion, which symbolizes bravery in our region. This comparison can create a harmful perception in children's minds, associating bravery with the act of insulting someone. It can also reinforce the notion of suppressing the opposite gender, leading to problematic attitudes and behaviors (Bandura, 2001; McLeod, 2018).

In the lesson titled “پرانی” (Great Grandmother) on page 11 of the 10th-grade textbook, there are dialogues involving ill-treatment of an elderly woman who is the great grandmother of the characters. The characters treat her very poorly, using abusive language and showing significant disrespect. Such content is highly inappropriate for young adolescents, as it can have a profoundly negative impact on their minds. Exposure to such abusive and disrespectful behavior can normalize mistreatment of elders, fostering harmful attitudes and behaviors that contradict the values of respect and compassion essential for peaceful coexistence and societal harmony.



The 9th-grade textbook contains substantial material that depicts violence within society and domestic life, which can negatively influence students' minds. Exposure to such violent

content at a young age can lead to internalizing these behaviors, as young adolescents are particularly impressionable and vulnerable. This exposure can inadvertently teach them harmful practices, which they may adopt. For instance, the lesson titled “غلام” (Servant) on page 64 of the 9th-grade textbook illustrates this issue.

خدا بہتر جانتا ہے کہ مجھ کو کس غرض کی تکمیل اور کس خیال کو پیش نظر رکھ کر پیدا کیا گیا ہے۔ مجھے تو بظاہر اپنے یہاں آنے کی کوئی خاص وجہ نہیں معلوم ہوتی۔ ہاں! اگر سرکار کے چانٹوں کے لیے کسی گڈی کی؛ بیگم صاحبہ کے طمانچوں کے لیے کسی اگلے کی؛ صاحب زادے صاحب کی ٹھوکروں کے لیے کسی پنڈلی کی اور صاحب زادی صاحب کی چٹکیوں کے لیے کسی ہاتھ کی ضرورت تھی، تو میرے پیدا کرنے کے لیے بہت کافی وجوہ موجود تھے اور شاید اسی خیال سے میری ہڈیاں مضبوط، میرا گوشت سخت اور میری گڈی مضبوط بنائی گئی ہے، یا رفتہ رفتہ بن گئی ہے۔

The above lines are taken from a lesson where the author describes a child servant's experiences and the harsh treatment from the masters. The text contains numerous derogatory words and statements that can instill false and harmful beliefs about social interactions and potentially promote violence against servants and others. Terms like "kick," "slap," and "pinching" are used in a manner that normalizes the mistreatment of servants as a form of punishment.

Research indicates that exposure to violent literature can have significant behavioral impacts on readers. For instance, Coyne et al. (2012) found that participants who read stories involving relational aggression exhibited higher levels of relational aggression, while those who read stories involving physical aggression showed increased physical aggression. These findings underscore the importance of carefully considering the content included in educational materials to prevent the promotion of violence (Coyne, Ridge, Stevens, Callister, & Stockdale, 2012).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the English and Urdu textbooks for classes 9 and 10 reveals a mixed yet promising foundation for peace education. On the one hand, there are commendable sections that emphasize positive values such as respect, coexistence, and harmony with nature. These portions of the textbooks highlight essential principles for fostering a peaceful and cooperative society. However, on the other hand, there are significant areas of concern where content could potentially undermine the development of these values. For example, lessons that depict disrespectful interactions, domestic violence, or the mistreatment of individuals may inadvertently normalize harmful behaviors and attitudes, particularly during adolescence, a critical stage in a student's moral and social development. Adolescents, being highly impressionable, are especially vulnerable to the influence of such negative content, which may shape their perceptions of social norms and interpersonal relationships.

Research has shown that exposure to violent or aggressive content in literature and media can have lasting detrimental effects on young individuals, influencing their behavior and attitudes in real-life interactions (Coyne et al., 2012; Kellough & Kellough, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial to critically assess and revise the textbooks to eliminate or modify any material that could inadvertently promote unhealthy behaviors. In doing so, the curriculum can better align

with the goal of peace education by emphasizing content that actively promotes tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful conflict resolution.

The incorporation of more specific, targeted content focusing on human existence, social harmony, and peaceful coexistence is essential for ensuring that students are not only exposed to positive values but also equipped with the necessary skills to practice them. Given the developmental stage of adolescents in secondary school, it is especially important that the curriculum resonates with their age group and interests, making peace education both relevant and engaging. By integrating these values more comprehensively into the curriculum, we can better prepare students to navigate complex social dynamics with empathy, understanding, and a commitment to peaceful coexistence.

Ultimately, the revised curriculum should not only reinforce the ideals of peace and respect but also actively foster these values in a manner that is both meaningful and practical for students. Through these adjustments, the educational system can contribute significantly to shaping a generation that values peace, equity, and cooperation. Such an approach will not only enhance the academic experience but will also have a lasting impact on students' personal development and, by extension, on the broader societal fabric. By doing so, we can create a more effective and productive educational framework that aligns with the developmental needs and interests of students, laying the foundation for a more peaceful, respectful, and harmonious society.

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