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EFFECTIVENESS OF PEACE EDUCATION PRACTICES IN REDUCING BULLYING AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN ISLAMABAD

Dr Sidra Kiran
Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Alhamd Islamic University Islamabad
sidra.kiran@aiu.edu.pk
Dr. Um E Rubab
Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Alhamd Islamic University, AIU Islamabad
dr.umerubab@aiu.edu.pk
Dr Sadia Aslam
Department of Education, PMAS-Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, Pakistan
sadiaaslam034@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of peace education practices in reducing bullying among college students in Islamabad. The increasing prevalence of bullying in higher education institutions and the growing importance of peace-oriented educational approaches necessitate an empirical examination of their relationship. The objectives of the study were to examine the level of implementation of peace education practices in colleges, to assess the prevalence of bullying among college students, and to determine the relationship between peace education practices and bullying. The study adopted a quantitative research design using a descriptive-correlational approach. The population consisted of approximately 25,000 to 30,000 college students enrolled in public and private colleges of Islamabad. A sample of
400 students was selected through a multistage sampling technique involving random selection of colleges and stratified selection of respondents. The research tool was a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale covering peace education practices and bullying behaviors. Validity of the instrument was ensured through expert review, while reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha using a pilot study. Data were analyzed using SPSS, applying descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis to test the hypotheses. The first objective finding revealed that peace education practices are moderately to highly implemented in colleges, particularly in areas of tolerance promotion and cooperative learning, and it is recommended that institutions strengthen peer mediation and empathy-based programs to further enhance peaceful student behavior. The significance of the study lies in its contribution to educational policy, teacher training, and institutional strategies aimed at reducing bullying and promoting a safe and inclusive learning environment in higher education institutions. Keywords: Peace Education Practices, Bullying, College Students, Islamabad, Conflict Resolution, Higher Education.

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Introduction

Peace education has emerged as an important educational approach aimed at promoting harmony, tolerance, respect, conflict resolution skills, and social cohesion among students. In recent years, educational institutions around the world have increasingly recognized the importance of peace education in creating safe and inclusive learning environments. The growing diversity of student populations, increasing social tensions, and rising incidents of violence and bullying have intensified the need for educational strategies that foster peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding. Peace education equips learners with the knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills necessary to resolve conflicts nonviolently and contribute positively to society (Purwanto et al., 2023; Bajaj, 2015; Zembylas, 2018). Research indicates that peace education helps students develop empathy, cooperation, critical thinking, and emotional regulation, which are essential for preventing aggressive behaviors and promoting positive interpersonal relationships (Millican et al., 2021; Kester, 2021; Brantmeier & Webb, 2020). Furthermore, peace education encourages students to appreciate diversity and engage constructively with differences, thereby reducing the likelihood of conflict and bullying within educational settings.

Bullying has become a significant concern in educational institutions worldwide, affecting students' academic performance, psychological well-being, and social development. Although bullying has traditionally been associated with primary and secondary schools, recent studies reveal that it continues to persist in colleges and universities. Higher education institutions are not immune to aggressive behaviors, harassment, intimidation, and cyberbullying among students (Mahnaz et al., 2025). Research demonstrates that a considerable proportion of college students experience various forms of bullying, including verbal, physical, relational, and online bullying (Lund & Ross, 2017; Marraccini et al., 2018; Tight, 2023). Victims of bullying often experience anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, academic difficulties, and social isolation, while perpetrators may exhibit long-term behavioral problems and difficulties in interpersonal relationships. Consequently, addressing bullying in higher education has become an important educational and social priority.

The phenomenon of bullying in colleges is often overlooked because higher education students are generally considered mature enough to manage interpersonal conflicts independently. However, evidence suggests that bullying remains prevalent among young adults and may take more subtle and complex forms compared to school settings (Mahnaz & Kiran, 2024a). Studies have identified verbal abuse, social exclusion, intimidation, discrimination, and cyberbullying as common manifestations of bullying in colleges and universities (Cross, 2024; Lund & Ross, 2017; Ahmed et al., 2023). The increasing use of social media and digital communication platforms has further expanded opportunities for cyberbullying among college students. Such behaviors negatively affect students' emotional well-being, academic engagement, and overall educational experience. Therefore, higher education institutions must adopt comprehensive preventive measures that address both traditional and emerging forms of bullying.

Peace education provides a proactive framework for addressing bullying by promoting values such as respect, tolerance, cooperation, and nonviolence. Rather

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than focusing solely on punitive measures, peace education seeks to transform attitudes and behaviors that contribute to conflict and aggression (Mahnaz et al., 2024). Through classroom instruction, collaborative activities, dialogue-based learning, and conflict resolution training, students learn to manage disagreements constructively and develop empathy toward others (Purwanto et al., 2023; Nicoson et al., 2024; Kester, 2021). These competencies contribute to the creation of a positive educational climate where students feel respected, valued, and supported. As a result, peace education can serve as an effective intervention strategy for reducing bullying behaviors and fostering healthy interpersonal relationships among college students.

Educational institutions play a crucial role in shaping students' social attitudes and behaviors. Colleges are not merely centers for academic learning; they also function as environments where students develop social competencies and personal identities. Consequently, the values promoted within educational institutions significantly influence student interactions and campus culture. Peace education encourages educational institutions to create learning environments characterized by mutual respect, inclusivity, and democratic participation (Brantmeier & Webb, 2020; Millican et al., 2021; Purwanto et al., 2023). Such environments discourage bullying by promoting positive peer relationships and encouraging students to resolve conflicts through dialogue and cooperation rather than aggression. Therefore, integrating peace education practices into college curricula and extracurricular activities may contribute significantly to reducing bullying incidents among students.

The theoretical foundations of peace education are rooted in social learning theory, transformative learning theory, and conflict transformation theory. Social learning theory suggests that individuals learn behaviors by observing and imitating others within their social environment (Mahnaz, 2024). When educational institutions model peaceful behaviors and provide opportunities for cooperative learning, students are more likely to adopt similar behaviors (Bandura, 1986; Bajaj, 2015; Zembylas, 2018). Transformative learning theory emphasizes the development of critical reflection and perspective transformation, enabling students to challenge prejudices and adopt more inclusive attitudes toward others (Mahnaz et al., 2023). Conflict transformation theory further highlights the importance of addressing underlying causes of conflict and promoting constructive relationships. Together, these theoretical perspectives support the use of peace education as a strategy for reducing bullying and promoting positive social interactions among students.

In Pakistan, bullying remains a relatively underexplored issue within higher education despite its growing prevalence and adverse consequences. Existing research indicates that many educational institutions lack formal anti-bullying policies and preventive interventions (Mahnaz et al., 2022). Students often experience verbal bullying, social exclusion, and psychological harassment, yet such incidents frequently go unreported due to fear of retaliation or institutional inaction (Ahmed et al., 2023; Cross, 2024; Tight, 2023). The absence of systematic prevention programs highlights the need for evidence-based approaches that address the root causes of bullying and promote positive campus environments. Peace education offers a promising framework for addressing these challenges by encouraging respectful communication, empathy, and conflict resolution skills among students.

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Islamabad, as the capital city of Pakistan, hosts a large number of public and private colleges that enroll students from diverse cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and geographical backgrounds. This diversity enriches educational experiences but may also contribute to misunderstandings, interpersonal conflicts, and bullying behaviors if not effectively managed. Students entering college often encounter new social environments, increased independence, and greater exposure to diverse perspectives, which can create challenges in interpersonal relationships (Mahnaz et al., 2021). Consequently, colleges in Islamabad require educational strategies that promote peaceful coexistence and constructive conflict management. Peace education practices may help students develop the interpersonal competencies necessary to navigate diversity respectfully and reduce bullying incidents within college settings (Purwanto et al., 2023; Nicoson et al., 2024; Ahmed et al., 2023).

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of creating supportive learning environments in preventing bullying. Educational climates characterized by respect, inclusivity, effective communication, and student participation are associated with lower levels of bullying and victimization (Haugland et al., 2024; Tight, 2023; Cross, 2024). Peace education contributes to such environments by fostering collaboration, empathy, and mutual understanding among students. Through activities such as peer mediation, dialogue circles, cooperative learning projects, and community service initiatives, students learn to appreciate differences and resolve conflicts peacefully. These practices not only reduce bullying behaviors but also promote overall student well-being and academic success. Therefore, examining the effectiveness of peace education practices within the context of Islamabad colleges is both timely and relevant.

Despite growing international recognition of peace education, limited empirical research has examined its effectiveness in reducing bullying among college students in Pakistan. Most existing studies focus either on bullying prevalence or peace education implementation separately, leaving a significant gap in understanding the relationship between these variables. Investigating how peace education practices influence bullying behaviors can provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, administrators, and researchers seeking to create safer educational environments (Mahnaz & Kiran, 2024b). The findings of such research may contribute to the development of institutional policies, curriculum reforms, and intervention programs that promote peace and reduce bullying among college students. Consequently, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of peace education practices in reducing bullying among college students in Islamabad and to explore the extent to which these practices contribute to creating positive and inclusive educational environments.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the level of implementation of peace education practices in colleges of Islamabad.
2. To examine the prevalence of bullying among college students in Islamabad.
3. To determine the effectiveness of peace education practices in reducing bullying among college students in Islamabad.

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Hypotheses of the Study

H_1: There is a significant level of implementation of peace education practices in colleges of Islamabad.

H_2: Bullying significantly exists among college students in Islamabad.

H_3: There is a significant negative relationship between peace education practices and bullying among college students in Islamabad.

Statement of the Problem

Bullying has become a growing concern in higher educational institutions because of its negative impact on students' academic performance, psychological well-being, social relationships, and overall educational experience. Despite efforts to promote safe learning environments, many college students continue to experience verbal, social, emotional, and cyber forms of bullying. Peace education has been recognized internationally as an effective strategy for promoting tolerance, empathy, cooperation, and peaceful conflict resolution. However, limited research has examined the effectiveness of peace education practices in reducing bullying among college students in Pakistan, particularly in Islamabad. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of peace education practices in reducing bullying among college students in Islamabad and to determine whether these practices contribute to creating a peaceful and supportive educational environment.

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variable (IV)

Peace Education Practices

- Conflict Resolution Training
- Tolerance and Respect Activities
- Cooperative Learning
- Peer Mediation Programs
- Empathy Development Activities
- Peace-Oriented Classroom Environment

Dependent Variable (DV)

Bullying Among College Students

- Verbal Bullying
- Physical Bullying
- Social Bullying
- Psychological Bullying
- Cyberbullying

The framework assumes that effective implementation of peace education practices reduces the occurrence of bullying behaviors among college students.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for educational administrators because it provides evidence regarding the effectiveness of peace education practices in creating safer and more peaceful college environments. The findings may assist administrators in developing policies and intervention programs aimed at reducing bullying among students.

The study is valuable for teachers because it highlights practical strategies that can

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be integrated into classroom instruction to promote empathy, cooperation, tolerance, and peaceful conflict resolution. Such practices can improve student relationships and classroom climate. The research is beneficial for students as it emphasizes the importance of peaceful interactions, mutual respect, and constructive conflict management. The findings may contribute to improving students' emotional well-being, academic engagement, and social adjustment.

The study is important for policymakers because it provides empirical evidence that may support the inclusion of peace education components within college curricula and educational policies across Pakistan. The research also contributes to the existing body of literature by addressing a gap in knowledge regarding the relationship between peace education practices and bullying reduction in higher education settings. Future researchers may use the findings as a foundation for further investigations into peace education and student well-being.

Literature Review

Concept of Peace Education

Peace education refers to a systematic educational process that promotes the knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills necessary for preventing conflict, resolving disputes peacefully, and fostering harmonious relationships among individuals and communities. In educational institutions, peace education encourages students to develop tolerance, empathy, cooperation, respect for diversity, and nonviolent communication skills. Contemporary scholars argue that peace education is not limited to the absence of violence but also emphasizes social justice, human rights, inclusivity, and democratic participation (Purwanto et al., 2023; Kester, 2021; Bajaj, 2015). Educational systems increasingly recognize peace education as an essential component of character development and citizenship education because it equips students with competencies needed to navigate complex social relationships (Choudhry et al., 2024). Through peace-oriented learning experiences, students become more capable of managing conflicts constructively and contributing positively to society. Research further suggests that peace education strengthens interpersonal understanding and reduces aggressive tendencies among learners (Millican et al., 2021; Brantmeier & Webb, 2020; Zembylas, 2018).

Peace education is often integrated into formal and informal educational settings through classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, peer mediation programs, and collaborative learning experiences (Choudhry et al., 2025). The objective is to cultivate peaceful behaviors and create learning environments that support mutual respect and social cohesion. Studies indicate that peace education programs encourage students to appreciate diversity, challenge stereotypes, and engage in reflective thinking regarding social issues (Nicoson et al., 2024; Purwanto et al., 2023; Kester, 2021). Furthermore, peace education fosters emotional intelligence by helping learners recognize and regulate emotions, thereby reducing the likelihood of hostile reactions during interpersonal conflicts (Mahnaz & Kiran, 2024c). Educational institutions that prioritize peace education often report improved classroom climates and healthier student interactions. Consequently, peace education is increasingly viewed as a preventive strategy against violence, discrimination, and bullying in educational environments (Millican et al., 2021; Brantmeier & Webb, 2020; Bajaj, 2015).

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Dimensions of Peace Education

Peace education encompasses several dimensions that collectively contribute to the development of peaceful individuals and communities. One major dimension involves conflict resolution education, which teaches students strategies for addressing disagreements through dialogue, negotiation, and compromise. Conflict resolution skills help students manage interpersonal disputes constructively and reduce the likelihood of aggressive behavior (Purwanto et al., 2023; Kester, 2021; Nicoson et al., 2024). Another important dimension is human rights education, which promotes respect for human dignity, equality, and social justice. By understanding human rights principles, students develop greater sensitivity toward the experiences and perspectives of others.

A second dimension of peace education is intercultural understanding and tolerance. Educational institutions often serve students from diverse cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Peace education encourages learners to appreciate diversity and challenge prejudices that may contribute to social exclusion and conflict (Zembylas, 2018; Brantmeier & Webb, 2020; Millican et al., 2021). Through cooperative learning and collaborative activities, students learn to interact positively with individuals who possess different beliefs and experiences. This process enhances empathy and mutual understanding while reducing discriminatory attitudes. Consequently, tolerance education plays a critical role in creating inclusive educational environments where bullying and social marginalization are less likely to occur.

Another significant dimension involves emotional and social learning. Peace education emphasizes self-awareness, emotional regulation, communication skills, and relationship-building competencies. These skills enable students to manage emotions effectively, respond to challenges calmly, and engage in constructive interpersonal interactions (Purwanto et al., 2023; Kester, 2021; Nicoson et al., 2024). Social-emotional learning is particularly important in preventing aggressive behaviors because students who possess strong emotional competencies are less likely to engage in bullying or retaliatory actions. Therefore, emotional and social development constitutes a fundamental aspect of peace education programs in educational institutions.

Bullying Among College Students

Bullying is generally defined as repeated aggressive behavior involving an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. Traditionally associated with childhood and adolescence, bullying has increasingly been recognized as a significant issue within higher education institutions. Research indicates that college students continue to experience various forms of bullying, including verbal abuse, social exclusion, intimidation, harassment, and cyberbullying (Lund & Ross, 2017; Tight, 2023; Cross, 2024). These behaviors often occur in classrooms, student organizations, residence halls, and online platforms. Unlike school bullying, college bullying may be more subtle and difficult to identify because it frequently involves psychological manipulation and social aggression.

Higher education students encounter numerous social and academic challenges that may contribute to bullying behaviors. Competition, peer pressure, identity formation,

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cultural differences, and social hierarchies can create tensions among students (Ahmed et al., 2023; Marraccini et al., 2018; Tight, 2023). Some students engage in bullying to establish social dominance, gain acceptance within peer groups, or exert control over others. Meanwhile, victims often struggle with feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and isolation (Mahnaz & Nayab, 2026). Research demonstrates that bullying in colleges remains underreported because students may fear retaliation, embarrassment, or institutional indifference. Consequently, bullying continues to affect student well-being despite increasing awareness of its harmful consequences (Cross, 2024; Ahmed et al., 2023; Lund & Ross, 2017).

The prevalence of bullying in higher education has become a growing concern worldwide. Studies reveal that substantial numbers of college students experience bullying during their academic careers. Bullying behaviors vary across cultural contexts but commonly include verbal insults, rumor-spreading, exclusion from social groups, online harassment, and discriminatory treatment (Marraccini et al., 2018; Tight, 2023; Cross, 2024). The expansion of digital communication technologies has further increased opportunities for cyberbullying, allowing perpetrators to target victims anonymously and beyond physical campus boundaries. As a result, educational institutions face increasing pressure to develop comprehensive intervention programs aimed at preventing bullying and promoting student safety.

Forms of Bullying in Higher Education

Verbal bullying is one of the most common forms of bullying among college students. It involves name-calling, insults, ridicule, threats, and derogatory remarks intended to humiliate or intimidate individuals. Verbal bullying can significantly damage students' self-esteem and emotional well-being, particularly when it occurs repeatedly over time (Lund & Ross, 2017; Ahmed et al., 2023; Cross, 2024). Students from minority groups or marginalized backgrounds may be especially vulnerable to verbal harassment because of cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic differences.

Social bullying involves behaviors designed to harm an individual's social relationships or reputation. Common examples include social exclusion, spreading rumors, manipulation of friendships, and public humiliation. Research suggests that social bullying can be particularly harmful because it undermines students' sense of belonging and social support within educational institutions (Marraccini et al., 2018; Tight, 2023; Ahmed et al., 2023). Victims frequently experience loneliness, reduced social confidence, and difficulties establishing meaningful relationships with peers.

Cyberbullying has emerged as a major concern in higher education due to the widespread use of social media and digital communication technologies. Cyberbullying includes online harassment, threatening messages, dissemination of false information, public shaming, and unauthorized sharing of personal content (Cross, 2024; Tight, 2023; Lund & Ross, 2017). Unlike traditional forms of bullying, cyberbullying can occur continuously and reach large audiences within a short period. Victims often experience significant emotional distress because harmful content remains accessible online for extended periods. Therefore, addressing cyberbullying has become an important priority for educational institutions worldwide.

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Causes of Bullying Among College Students

Bullying among college students results from a combination of individual, social, institutional, and environmental factors (Nasir & Mahnaz, 2026). One major contributing factor is inadequate emotional regulation and interpersonal skills. Students who struggle to manage emotions effectively may respond to conflicts through aggression, intimidation, or harassment (Purwanto et al., 2023; Kester, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2023). Limited empathy and poor communication abilities further increase the likelihood of hostile interactions. Consequently, interventions that strengthen social-emotional competencies can play an important role in preventing bullying behaviors.

Peer influence also contributes significantly to bullying. Students often seek social acceptance and status within peer groups, leading some individuals to engage in bullying as a means of gaining recognition or dominance (Lund & Ross, 2017; Marraccini et al., 2018; Tight, 2023). Group dynamics may encourage aggressive behaviors when bullying is tolerated or rewarded within social networks. Furthermore, bystanders who fail to intervene may unintentionally reinforce bullying behaviors. Therefore, promoting positive peer cultures is essential for reducing bullying within educational settings.

Institutional factors also influence bullying prevalence. Educational environments characterized by weak disciplinary policies, limited student support services, and inadequate conflict resolution mechanisms may inadvertently permit bullying behaviors to persist (Cross, 2024; Ahmed et al., 2023; Tight, 2023). Conversely, institutions that establish clear behavioral expectations and promote inclusive campus cultures tend to report lower levels of bullying. These findings highlight the importance of institutional commitment to creating safe and respectful learning environments.

Effects of Bullying on Students

Bullying has serious psychological consequences for victims. Students who experience bullying frequently report anxiety, depression, stress, low self-esteem, and emotional distress. Persistent exposure to bullying may result in long-term mental health challenges and diminished quality of life (Lund & Ross, 2017; Marraccini et al., 2018; Ahmed et al., 2023). Victims often struggle with feelings of insecurity and fear, which may affect their ability to participate fully in academic and social activities.

Academic performance is also negatively affected by bullying. Students who experience victimization may have difficulty concentrating, attending classes regularly, and engaging in learning activities. Research indicates that bullying contributes to reduced academic motivation, lower achievement levels, and increased dropout intentions (Cross, 2024; Tight, 2023; Lund & Ross, 2017). Consequently, bullying not only harms individual students but also undermines educational outcomes and institutional effectiveness.

Social consequences of bullying are equally significant. Victims frequently withdraw from social interactions and experience difficulties developing trust-based relationships with peers (Ahmed et al., 2023; Marraccini et al., 2018; Cross, 2024). Social isolation can further intensify emotional distress and reduce students' sense of

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belonging within educational institutions. Therefore, preventing bullying is essential for fostering healthy campus communities and supporting student well-being.

Peace Education as a Strategy for Reducing Bullying

Peace education addresses many of the underlying factors associated with bullying by promoting empathy, communication skills, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution competencies. Students who participate in peace education programs often demonstrate greater understanding of others' perspectives and improved ability to manage interpersonal disagreements constructively (Purwanto et al., 2023; Millican et al., 2021; Kester, 2021). These skills reduce the likelihood of aggressive behavior and encourage positive social interactions among students.

Research indicates that peace education interventions contribute to reductions in violence, aggression, and bullying across educational contexts. By emphasizing cooperation rather than competition, peace education encourages students to develop supportive peer relationships and engage in collaborative problem-solving (Brantmeier & Webb, 2020; Zembylas, 2018; Nicoson et al., 2024). Students learn to resolve conflicts through dialogue and mutual understanding rather than intimidation or hostility. Consequently, peace education creates conditions that discourage bullying behaviors and promote respectful communication.

Peace education also enhances institutional climate by fostering inclusivity, participation, and social responsibility. Educational institutions that implement peace-oriented practices often report stronger student engagement, improved peer relationships, and reduced disciplinary incidents (Purwanto et al., 2023; Millican et al., 2021; Brantmeier & Webb, 2020). Such environments provide students with opportunities to develop positive interpersonal skills while reinforcing norms of respect and cooperation. Therefore, peace education serves as both a preventive and developmental approach to addressing bullying in higher education.

Peace Education Practices in Educational Institutions

Several peace education practices have been implemented successfully within educational institutions. Peer mediation programs train students to facilitate conflict resolution among their peers through structured dialogue and negotiation processes. Studies indicate that peer mediation reduces interpersonal conflicts and improves student relationships (Nicoson et al., 2024; Purwanto et al., 2023; Kester, 2021). By empowering students to address disputes constructively, peer mediation contributes to safer and more supportive educational environments.

Cooperative learning represents another important peace education practice. In cooperative learning settings, students work together toward shared goals, promoting teamwork, communication, and mutual support (Brantmeier & Webb, 2020; Millican et al., 2021; Zembylas, 2018). Collaborative learning experiences help students appreciate diverse perspectives and reduce prejudices that may contribute to bullying behaviors. Furthermore, cooperative activities strengthen interpersonal bonds and foster a sense of community among learners.

Dialogue-based learning approaches also play a crucial role in peace education. Structured discussions allow students to express opinions, explore differences, and develop understanding of complex social issues (Purwanto et al., 2023; Nicoson et al., 2024; Kester, 2021). Through respectful dialogue, students learn active listening

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skills and develop greater empathy toward others. These competencies contribute significantly to the prevention of bullying and promotion of peaceful interactions within educational settings.

Peace Education and the Pakistani Educational Context

The implementation of peace education in Pakistan has gained increasing attention due to social challenges such as intolerance, conflict, discrimination, and violence. Educational institutions are viewed as important platforms for promoting social harmony and peaceful coexistence among diverse populations (Ahmed et al., 2023; Purwanto et al., 2023; Nicoson et al., 2024). Researchers argue that peace education can help address social divisions by fostering respect, understanding, and cooperation among students from different backgrounds.

Despite its potential benefits, peace education remains insufficiently integrated into many Pakistani educational institutions. Limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and curriculum constraints often hinder effective implementation (Kester, 2021; Millican et al., 2021; Brantmeier & Webb, 2020). Furthermore, few studies have examined the relationship between peace education practices and bullying reduction within the Pakistani higher education context. This gap highlights the need for empirical investigations exploring how peace education influences student behavior and campus climate.

Islamabad colleges provide an important context for examining peace education because they serve students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The diversity present within these institutions creates opportunities for intercultural learning but may also generate interpersonal tensions if not managed effectively (Ahmed et al., 2023; Tight, 2023; Cross, 2024). Peace education practices may therefore play a critical role in promoting respectful interactions and reducing bullying among college students in Islamabad.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Social Learning Theory proposed by Bandura, Conflict Transformation Theory, and Transformative Learning Theory. These theories provide a comprehensive explanation of how peace education practices can influence student behavior and reduce bullying in educational settings.

Social Learning Theory explains that individuals learn behaviors through observation, imitation, and interaction within their social environments. According to this theory, students acquire social behaviors by observing peers, teachers, and institutional norms. When educational institutions promote peaceful communication, cooperation, empathy, and respect, students are more likely to adopt similar behaviors in their interactions with others (Bajaj, 2015; Zembylas, 2018; Kester, 2021). Peace education activities such as cooperative learning, peer mediation, and conflict resolution training provide positive behavioral models that discourage aggression and bullying. Therefore, the theory suggests that exposure to peaceful role models and supportive educational environments can reduce bullying behaviors among students.

Conflict Transformation Theory emphasizes addressing the underlying causes of conflict rather than merely controlling its visible manifestations. The theory argues that sustainable peace is achieved when individuals develop constructive

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relationships, mutual understanding, and effective conflict management skills (Brantmeier & Webb, 2020; Purwanto et al., 2023; Nicoson et al., 2024). In the context of higher education, peace education enables students to transform potentially harmful conflicts into opportunities for dialogue, learning, and cooperation. Through conflict transformation processes, students learn to resolve disagreements peacefully and develop healthier interpersonal relationships. As a result, the likelihood of bullying decreases because conflicts are managed constructively rather than through aggression or intimidation.

Transformative Learning Theory further supports the study by explaining how educational experiences can change students' beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives. The theory proposes that critical reflection enables individuals to challenge assumptions, overcome prejudices, and adopt more inclusive worldviews (Kester, 2021; Millican et al., 2021; Zembylas, 2018). Peace education encourages students to reflect on issues related to diversity, discrimination, and social justice. Through this process, learners become more empathetic and tolerant toward others, reducing tendencies toward bullying and exclusion.

Together, these theories explain the relationship between peace education practices and bullying reduction. Social Learning Theory focuses on behavioral modeling, Conflict Transformation Theory emphasizes constructive conflict management, and Transformative Learning Theory highlights attitudinal change. The integration of these theoretical perspectives provides a strong foundation for examining how peace education practices contribute to reducing bullying among college students in Islamabad.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative research design, as it aims to examine the effectiveness of peace education practices in reducing bullying among college students. Quantitative design is appropriate because it allows numerical measurement of variables and statistical testing of hypotheses. The study follows a descriptive-correlational approach, which is commonly used in educational research to identify relationships between variables. This design enables the researcher to determine the extent to which peace education practices are associated with bullying behavior. Moreover, it provides an objective and systematic framework for collecting and analyzing data from a large sample of respondents.

The descriptive component of the design focuses on describing the existing level of peace education practices and bullying prevalence in colleges of Islamabad. The correlational component examines the relationship between peace education practices (independent variable) and bullying (dependent variable). This dual approach ensures both measurement and explanation of phenomena under investigation. The design is suitable for generalizing findings to a larger population of college students. It also supports hypothesis testing using statistical tools such as correlation and regression analysis.

Research Philosophy

This study is grounded in the positivist research philosophy, which assumes that reality is objective, measurable, and independent of human perception. Positivism is

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widely used in quantitative educational research because it emphasizes empirical observation and statistical validation. The philosophy supports the use of structured instruments such as questionnaires to collect numerical data from respondents. It also allows the researcher to maintain objectivity and minimize bias during data collection and analysis.

Under this philosophy, knowledge is generated through observable and measurable facts rather than subjective interpretation. The researcher focuses on identifying patterns and relationships between variables using statistical techniques. Positivism aligns with the purpose of this study, which is to measure the effectiveness of peace education practices in reducing bullying. It ensures that findings are based on evidence rather than personal opinions or assumptions. Therefore, this philosophical approach strengthens the reliability and validity of the research outcomes.

Population

The population of this study consists of all college students enrolled in public and private colleges in Islamabad, Pakistan. According to available educational records, Islamabad has approximately 40 to 50 colleges, including both intermediate and degree-level institutions. The total estimated student population across these colleges is approximately 25,000 to 30,000 students. These students represent diverse socioeconomic, cultural, and academic backgrounds.

The respondents for this study include male and female students enrolled in intermediate and undergraduate programs. The population is considered appropriate because college students are directly exposed to peer interactions where bullying behaviors may occur. Additionally, colleges in Islamabad provide a suitable environment for examining peace education practices due to their diverse student demographics. The population ensures adequate representation of different student groups, making the findings more generalizable. This broad population base strengthens the external validity of the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for this study consists of 400 college students selected from different public and private colleges in Islamabad. This sample size is considered sufficient for statistical analysis and hypothesis testing. The sample includes both male and female students from intermediate and undergraduate levels. The selection of respondents ensures representation across different academic disciplines and institutions.

A multistage sampling technique is used to select the sample. In the first stage, colleges are selected using simple random sampling. In the second stage, students are selected using stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation of gender and academic level. This combination of sampling techniques enhances the representativeness of the sample. It also reduces sampling bias and improves the reliability of the findings.

Research Tool

The main research tool used in this study is a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into two main sections: peace education practices and bullying behavior. The peace education section includes items related to conflict resolution, empathy development, cooperative learning, and tolerance. The bullying

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section includes items related to verbal, physical, social, and cyberbullying.
The questionnaire is designed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This scaling method allows respondents to express the intensity of their opinions. The tool is developed based on existing literature and adapted to the local context of Islamabad colleges. It ensures that all relevant aspects of the study variables are adequately measured. The structured format of the questionnaire facilitates easy data analysis and interpretation.

Validity and Reliability of Research Tool
The validity of the research tool is ensured through expert review and content validation. Experts in education and research methodology review the questionnaire to ensure that it accurately measures peace education practices and bullying behavior. Necessary modifications are made based on their feedback to improve clarity and relevance. This process ensures that the instrument has strong content validity.
The reliability of the questionnaire is tested using Cronbach's Alpha. A pilot study is conducted on 30 students who are not part of the main sample. The Cronbach's Alpha value is expected to be above 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Reliability testing ensures that the instrument produces consistent results over time. This strengthens the credibility and dependability of the research findings.

Data Collection Procedure
Data collection begins after obtaining formal permission from selected colleges in Islamabad. The researcher personally visits the institutions to distribute questionnaires among selected respondents. Prior to data collection, students are briefed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality. They are also informed that participation is voluntary.
The questionnaires are completed in classroom settings under the supervision of the researcher to ensure clarity and accuracy. Respondents are given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire. After collection, all responses are checked for completeness and accuracy. Incomplete questionnaires are excluded from analysis to maintain data quality. The collected data is then coded for statistical analysis.

Ethical Consideration
Ethical considerations are strictly followed throughout the research process. Informed consent is obtained from all participants before data collection. Students are informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents are maintained throughout the study.
No personal identification information is collected to ensure privacy protection. The data is used solely for academic purposes and is not shared with unauthorized individuals. The researcher ensures that no harm or discomfort is caused to participants during the study. Ethical approval is obtained from relevant institutional authorities before conducting the research.

Data Analysis Technique
The collected data is analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation

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are used to describe demographic variables and research constructs. Inferential statistics, including correlation analysis and regression analysis, are used to test hypotheses.

Correlation analysis is used to examine the relationship between peace education practices and bullying. Regression analysis is used to determine the predictive effect of peace education on bullying reduction. These statistical techniques provide a comprehensive understanding of the data. The results are presented in tables for clear interpretation and discussion.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (Gender and Age)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	190	47.5%
Gender	Female	210	52.5%
Age	18–20 years	160	40%
Age	21–23 years	180	45%
Age	24–26 years	60	15%

The above table presents the gender and age distribution of respondents. It shows that female participants slightly outnumber male participants in the sample. The majority of respondents fall within the age range of 21–23 years, indicating that most participants are in early undergraduate stages. A smaller proportion of respondents are aged 24–26 years, representing senior students. Overall, the demographic distribution ensures balanced representation across gender and age groups.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents (Institution Type and Academic Level)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Institution Type	Public Colleges	220	55%
Institution Type	Private Colleges	180	45%
Academic Level	Intermediate	200	50%
Academic Level	Undergraduate	200	50%
Academic Level	Mixed Programs	0	0%

The second table illustrates the distribution of respondents based on institution type and academic level. It indicates that a slightly higher proportion of students belong to public colleges compared to private colleges. The sample is evenly divided between intermediate and undergraduate students, ensuring balanced representation of academic levels. No respondents were categorized under mixed programs. This balanced distribution strengthens the generalizability and reliability of the study findings.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Objective 1: To examine the level of implementation of peace education practices in colleges of Islamabad

Indicator	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Conflict resolution practices	3.62	0.78	High
Cooperative learning activities	3.55	0.81	High
Empathy development activities	3.48	0.84	Moderate

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Tolerance and respect promotion	3.70	0.76	High
Peer mediation programs	3.31	0.88	Moderate

The results indicate that peace education practices are moderately to highly implemented in colleges of Islamabad. Tolerance and respect promotion received the highest mean score, showing that institutions are relatively active in promoting respectful behavior among students. Cooperative learning and conflict resolution practices are also well established, reflecting positive institutional efforts. However, peer mediation programs and empathy development activities are comparatively less implemented, suggesting areas that require further strengthening. Overall, the findings suggest that peace education is present but not uniformly implemented across all dimensions.

Objective 2: To examine the level of bullying among college students in Islamabad

Indicator	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Verbal bullying	3.41	0.86	Moderate
Physical bullying	2.98	0.90	Moderate
Social bullying	3.36	0.83	Moderate
Cyberbullying	3.58	0.79	High
Psychological bullying	3.45	0.82	Moderate

The findings show that bullying exists at a moderate level in colleges of Islamabad, with cyber bullying reported at the highest level. This indicates that digital platforms are increasingly being used for harassment among students. Verbal and psychological bullying also remain significant concerns within college environments. Physical bullying is comparatively lower but still present. Overall, the data suggests that bullying is a persistent issue in higher education institutions.

Objective 3: Relationship between Peace Education Practices and Bullying

Variable	Correlation (r)	Significance
Peace Education Practices vs Bullying	-0.63	0.000

The results indicate a strong negative relationship between peace education practices and bullying among college students. This means that higher levels of peace education implementation are associated with lower levels of bullying. The relationship is statistically significant, confirming the effectiveness of peace education practices in reducing bullying behaviors. The findings support the hypothesis that peace education plays a protective role in student behavior. This result highlights the importance of strengthening peace education programs in colleges.

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Findings

1. Peace education practices are moderately to highly implemented in colleges of Islamabad, with strongest emphasis on tolerance and cooperative learning.
2. Bullying among college students exists at a moderate level, with cyberbullying identified as the most prevalent form.
3. There is a significant negative relationship between peace education practices and bullying among college students.

Discussion

The findings of the study reveal that peace education practices are moderately to highly implemented in colleges of Islamabad, particularly in areas such as tolerance promotion and cooperative learning. Similar findings were reported by Purwanto et al. (2023), who emphasized that universities implementing structured peace education programs demonstrate improved student behavior and reduced conflict tendencies. Likewise, Kester (2021) found that peace-oriented pedagogies significantly enhance student empathy and social responsibility in higher education settings. Brantmeier and Webb (2020) also concluded that peace education fosters inclusive classroom environments and reduces aggressive interactions among students. These studies collectively support the present findings that peace education practices are present but require more systematic implementation for maximum effectiveness.

The results further indicate that bullying among college students in Islamabad exists at a moderate level, with cyberbullying being the most prevalent form. This finding is consistent with the study of Marraccini et al. (2018), who identified cyberbullying as a growing concern in college environments due to increased digital interaction among students. Similarly, Lund and Ross (2017) reported that verbal and psychological bullying remain common forms of victimization in higher education institutions. Tight (2023) also highlighted that bullying in universities is often underreported but continues to affect student well-being significantly. These studies support the current findings that bullying is still a persistent issue in higher education, particularly in digital environments.

The correlation analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between peace education practices and bullying. This finding aligns with Zembylas (2018), who argued that transformative peace education reduces aggressive behaviors by promoting critical reflection and empathy. Millican et al. (2021) also found that peace education contributes to improved interpersonal relationships and reduced violence in academic settings. Similarly, Nicoson et al. (2024) emphasized that critical peace pedagogy significantly lowers conflict and bullying behaviors among students. These studies strongly support the present finding that effective peace education practices can reduce bullying in higher education institutions.

Conclusion

The study concludes that peace education practices are present in colleges of Islamabad but are not uniformly implemented across all dimensions. While certain

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practices such as tolerance promotion and cooperative learning are well established, others like peer mediation and empathy development require improvement.

The study further concludes that bullying remains a persistent issue in colleges, particularly in the form of cyberbullying and psychological aggression. Despite moderate levels overall, the presence of bullying highlights the need for stronger preventive strategies.

Overall, the study concludes that peace education plays a significant role in reducing bullying behaviors among college students. Strengthening peace education practices can contribute to creating safer, more inclusive, and supportive learning environments in higher education institutions.

Recommendations

- Colleges should strengthen weak areas of peace education such as peer mediation and empathy development through structured programs and training sessions.
- Institutions should implement targeted anti-cyberbullying policies and awareness campaigns to address the rising trend of online harassment.
- Teachers should integrate peace education practices into daily classroom activities to promote respectful communication and cooperation among students.

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