

# Relevance of Peace Education Programmes on Students' Conflict-Resolution Skills in Secondary Schools in Ife East Local Government Area, Osun State

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the relevance of peace education programmes in enhancing students' conflict-resolution skills. The study adopted the survey research design. Four public junior secondary schools were randomly selected from public junior secondary schools in Ife East Local Government Area of Osun State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select ten JSS II students from each school making a total of 40 students. One research instrument was used for data collection: Questionnaire on Relevance of Peace Education Programmes ( $r=0.78$ ). Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of percentage, frequency count, mean, standard deviation and t- test. Findings of the study revealed that the weighted mean of 3.31 against the threshold of 2.50. It implies that the level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill was high. There was no significant difference between male and female students' perception of level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill ( $t = -0.96$ ;  $df = 38$ ;  $P>0.05$ ). Based on the finding of this study, it was recommended that peace education should be systematically integrated into the secondary school curriculum as a core component rather than being treated as a peripheral topic. Teachers should be adequately trained through workshops, seminars, and professional development programmes to effectively deliver peace education content and facilitate conflict-resolution activities.

**Keywords:** Peace education, conflict-resolution skills, secondary schools, social cohesion, positive peace.

## INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an inevitable and often recurring feature of human interaction, arising from differences in values, beliefs, interests, and access to limited resources. Interpersonal and group conflict are far more likely to occur in educational settings where students from various socio-cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds come together. This situation is made worse in Nigeria by larger social tensions that periodically seep into educational settings. The necessity of providing young people with the skills necessary for peaceful cohabitation is highlighted by the nation's ongoing communal disputes. The Ife-Modakeke problem is a prominent illustration of how deeply ingrained conflicts resulting from identity conflicts, land ownership, and political marginalisation can persist throughout generations in the absence of effective conflict-resolution methods (Albert, 2001; Akinwale, 2010).

The continuance of these conflicts indicates that proactive and preventive tactics are needed instead of reactive approaches to conflict management. It is often acknowledged that one of the best strategies for promoting social cohesiveness and reducing violence is education. In particular, schools provide structured settings where children can develop their values, attitudes, and behaviors. According to Galtung (1996), social structures that uphold justice, equity, and peaceful interpersonal interactions are just as important to sustained peace as the sheer absence of violence. In order to develop responsible and compassionate citizens, this viewpoint emphasises how crucial it is to incorporate peace-oriented ideals into educational curriculum.

As a result, peace education initiatives have become a strategic intervention meant to address the underlying causes of conflict and encourage peaceful methods of resolving disputes. These courses are intended to help

students acquire the cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills necessary to comprehend the nature of conflict, value variety, and use effective communication techniques (Harris & Morrison, 2013). In order to foster a culture of peace, organisations like UNESCO have continuously pushed for the inclusion of peace education in both formal and informal educational institutions on a global scale (UNESCO, 2015). Nigerian policy frameworks, like the National Policy on Education, likewise highlight the importance of education in promoting tolerance, national cohesion, and understanding among the populace (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

Peace education programmes in secondary schools usually include elements like conflict analysis, human rights respect, negotiating skills, mediation approaches, and emotional management. These components are essential for improving students' conflict-resolution abilities, which include the capacity to recognize conflict sources, communicate clearly, control emotions, and work together to find win-win solutions (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). Students that receive systematic peace education interventions show better interpersonal interactions, less violence, and more prosocial behavior, according to empirical research (Salomon & Cairns, 2010; Bajaj, 2015).

Furthermore, considering Nigeria's sociopolitical environment, which is marked by ethnic diversity, religious plurality, and sporadic acts of violence, the need of peace education cannot be emphasized. Since schools are microcosms of society at large, implementing peace education programs there offers a chance to address conflict at its root cause. These programs help achieve the long-term objectives of national integration and sustainable development, as well as safer school environments, by providing children with critical conflict-resolution skills. In light of the aforementioned, this study investigates the value of peace education initiatives in improving students' ability to resolve conflicts. It is premised on the assumption that early exposure to peace-oriented knowledge and practices can significantly influence students' attitudes and behaviours, thereby reducing the prevalence of conflict and promoting a culture of peace within and beyond the school setting.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Secondary schools in Ife East Local Government Area of Osun State continue to experience frequent student conflicts, such as bullying, verbal aggression, and physical fights, which disrupt learning and reflect wider societal tensions, including the Ife–Modakeke crisis. Although peace education is widely recognised as a proactive strategy for promoting peaceful coexistence, its implementation in Nigerian secondary schools remains limited and ineffective due to inadequate teacher preparation, poor curriculum integration, and insufficient resources. As a result, many students lack essential conflict-resolution skills such as communication, empathy, emotional regulation, and negotiation. Moreover, school responses to conflict are often reactive and disciplinary rather than preventive and skill-based. Despite existing studies on peace education, there is limited empirical evidence on its relevance in enhancing students' conflict-resolution skills within Ife East. Therefore, this study addresses the gap between the acknowledged importance of peace education and its weak implementation, as well as the persistent deficiency in students' conflict-resolution skills in secondary schools in the area.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives are to:

1. determine the level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill.
2. ascertain the difference between male and female students' perception of level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided the study:

1. What is the level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill?
2. What is the difference between male and female students' perception of level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill?



**Civic and moral education:** This component emphasizes values such as respect for human rights, tolerance, justice, responsibility, and active citizenship. It aligns with national educational goals of fostering unity and ethical conduct among learners.

These initiatives aim to change students into peace agents who can impact their families, communities, and society at large in addition to lowering violence and indiscipline in schools. According to Salomon and Cairns (2010), long-term exposure to peace education programs greatly improves students' attitudes toward collaboration, lessens aggressive inclinations, and fosters a culture of communication and understanding. Implementing peace education programs in secondary schools is especially important in Nigeria, because schools reflect the nation's cultural and social diversity. These programs help create a society that is more harmonious, tolerant, and cohesive by giving students the skills they need to resolve conflicts.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the mixed-methods (Quantitative and qualitative) research design. Two public junior secondary schools and one junior secondary school were randomly selected from public junior secondary schools in Ife East Local Government Area of Osun State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 50 JSS II students from each school, making a total of 150 JSS II students. The students were 46 males and 104 females. In all, 150 students participated in the study. One research instrument was used for data collection: Questionnaire on Relevance of Peace Education Programmes ( $r=0.78$ ). Quantitative data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of percentage, frequency count, mean, standard deviation and t- test. Qualitative data were thematically analysed.

## RESULTS

**Research Question One:** What is the level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill?

**Table 1:** The level of level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill

S/N	Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	M	SD
1	Peace education programmes help students understand the causes of conflict.	18 12.0	56 37.3	60 40	16 10.7	2.51	.841
2	Peace education enhances students' ability to communicate effectively during conflicts.	22 14.7	60 40	55 36.7	13 8.7	2.61	.843
3	Students exposed to peace education demonstrate greater empathy towards others.	16 10.7	54 36.0	69 46.0	11 7.3	2.50	.784
4	Peace education programmes improve students' ability to manage anger and emotions.	18 12.0	50 33.3	70 46.7	12 8.0	2.49	.809
5	Peace education promotes tolerance among students from diverse backgrounds.	16 10.7	59 39.3	60 40	15 10.0	2.51	.817
6	Peace education programmes help students resolve conflicts without violence.	24 16	53 35.3	56 37.3	17 11.3	2.56	.894
7	Students who participate in peace education are better at negotiating solutions.	16 10.7	70 46.7	51 34.0	13 8.7	2.59	.795
8	Peace education reduces incidents of bullying and aggression in schools.	33 22	71 47.3	33 22.0	13 8.7	2.83	.873

9	Peace education programmes encourage cooperation among students.	24 16.0	71 47.3	45 30	10 6.7	2.73	.810
10	Students learn problem-solving skills through peace education programmes.	16 10.7	42 28.0	75 50	17 11.3	2.38	.825
11	Peace education helps students respect others' opinions and perspectives.	22 14.7	44 29.3	66 44	18 12.0	2.47	.887
12	Peace education programmes contribute to a more peaceful school environment.	17 11.3	47 31.3	65 43.3	21 14.0	2.40	.867
13	Students apply skills learned from peace education in real-life situations.	13 8.7	43 28.7	75 50.0	19 12.7	2.33	.808
14	Peace education programmes help prevent escalation of conflicts among students.	21 14	61 40.7	53 35.3	15 10.0	2.59	.853
15	Peace education improves interpersonal relationships among students.	27 18	54 36	56 37.3	13 8.7	2.63	.878
16	Peace education programmes help students develop skills for conflict resolution.	38 25.3	83 55.3	21 14.0	8 5.3	3.01	.781
17	Peace education encourages students to value diversity in the school environment.	38 25.3	90 60	17 11.3	5 3.3	3.07	.706
18	Students who receive peace education are more likely to demonstrate self-control in challenging situations	40 26.7	83 55.3	21 14.0	6 4.0	3.05	.754
19	Peace education programmes help reduce misunderstandings among students from different cultural or social backgrounds.	18 12.0	33 22	87 58	12 8.0	2.38	.800
20	Peace education equips students with lifelong skills for peaceful coexistence in society.	42 28.0	66 44.0	28 18.7	14 9.3	2.91	.915
<b>Weighted Mean: 2.63</b>		<b>Threshold: 2.50</b>					

Table 1 shows the level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill as revealed by the descriptive analysis of the responses of the respondents to the set items. It reveals that the weighted mean of 2.63 out of the 4.00 maximum obtainable scores, which is higher than the standard mean of 2.50. It implies that the level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill is high.

**Research Question 2:** What is the difference between male and female students' perception of level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill?

**Table 2:** Showing t-test analysis of the difference between male and female students' perception of level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	T	Df	p-value	Remarks
Male	46	53.3696	2.49763	-.19774	-.411	148	.668	Not sig.
Female	104	53.5673	2.80348					

Table 4.3 shows the difference between male and female students' perception of level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill using the independent samples t-test analysis. The result indicates that there was no significant difference between male and female students' perception of level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill ( $t = -.411$ ;  $df=148$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). This implies that gender did not cause a variance in students' perception of level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill.

Qualitative data were gathered through informal interviews and quick, open-ended answers from a set of students from each of the three schools in order to supplement the quantitative findings. The statistical results, especially the high degree of relevance of peace education programmes and the lack of gender disparities in perception, are substantially supported by the theme analysis of students' narratives.

### **Perceived Relevance of Peace Education to Conflict-Resolution Skills**

Students frequently stated that peace education initiatives have had high impact on how they see and resolve conflicts. Numerous participants showed a clear understanding of non-violent communication, emotional control, and conflict causes.

A male student noted:

“Before, when someone offended me, I reacted immediately. But now I try to understand why the person acted that way and talk it out instead of fighting.”

Similarly, a female student stated:

“Peace education has taught me to calm down when I am angry. I now think before I act, and I try to settle issues peacefully with my classmates.”

These responses align with the high mean scores recorded for items related to understanding conflict causes, empathy, and anger management (Items 1, 3, and 4). Students' reflections indicate that peace education is not merely theoretical but actively shapes their day-to-day interactions.

### **Development of Communication and Negotiation Skills**

Improved communication during disputes is a recurrent issue in the qualitative data. Students said they were more receptive to discussion and group problem-solving.

One respondent explained:

“We were taught how to listen to others and not just argue. Now, when there is a disagreement, we try to find a solution together.”

Another student added:

“I have learned how to settle disputes among my friends by allowing everyone to speak and then suggesting a fair solution.”

These statements strongly support the quantitative findings for Items 2 and 7, which highlight enhanced communication and negotiation abilities. The students' experiences demonstrate the practical application of these skills in real-life school situations.

### **Promotion of Tolerance, Empathy, and Social Cohesion**

Additionally, students emphasised how peace education promotes tolerance and respect between classmates from different backgrounds. This is especially crucial in a multicultural educational environment.

A participant remarked:

“I now understand that people are different, and that does not mean they are wrong. I respect others’ opinions more than before.”

Another student shared:

“Peace education has helped reduce quarrels in our class because we now try to understand each other better.”

These insights reinforce the quantitative results for Items 5, 8, and 11, which indicate that peace education promotes tolerance, reduces aggression, and enhances respect for others’ perspectives.

### **Application of Peace Education in Real-Life Situations**

Students emphasised that they may use the abilities they have learned outside of the classroom. In their households and communities, they reported using conflict-resolution techniques.

For instance:

“I used what I learned in school to settle a misunderstanding between my siblings at home.”

Another student noted:

“Even outside school, I avoid fights and try to talk things through with people.”

This supports the findings for Items 13 and 20, confirming that peace education equips students with lifelong skills for peaceful coexistence.

### **Gender Similarity in Perception**

Crucially, the opinions of male and female students about the advantages of peace education were comparable. The t-test result showing no significant gender difference is supported by the lack of discernible variation in their responses.

A male student stated:

“Everyone in our class benefits from peace education. It helps both boys and girls to behave better.”

A female student similarly observed:

“We all learn the same things, and it helps all of us equally in resolving conflicts.”

This uniformity in perspectives provides strong qualitative backing for the statistical finding that gender does not significantly influence students’ perception of the relevance of peace education programmes.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The findings of this study revealed that the level of relevance of peace education programmes on students’ conflict-resolution skills is high. This indicates that students perceive peace education as a valuable and effective means of equipping them with the competencies required to manage conflicts constructively. This finding corroborates the studies of Bamikole (2021) and Olowo (2021), who emphasised that peace education should be systematically taught and that students must be given opportunities to apply learned peace-oriented skills in real-life situations. The consistency of these findings suggests that when peace education is meaningfully integrated into school activities, it fosters behavioural transformation and strengthens students’ capacity to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence. Furthermore, the finding aligns with global advocacy, particularly by the UNESCO, which underscores peace education as a critical tool for promoting social cohesion, mutual understanding, and a culture of non-violence in diverse societies. However, the present finding contradicts that

of Agulana (2012), who reported a low level of students' positive attitude toward peace education concepts in Social Studies. This discrepancy may be attributed to differences in context, time, and implementation strategies. While earlier studies may have examined peace education as a theoretical component within Social Studies, the current study reflects a context where there is growing awareness and possibly improved delivery of peace education programmes. It is also plausible that increased exposure to societal conflicts and their consequences has heightened students' appreciation of the importance of peace education, thereby influencing their perception of its relevance.

Furthermore, the study revealed that gender did not cause a variance in students' perception of level of relevance of peace education programmes on students' conflict-resolution skill. This suggests that while both genders recognise the importance of peace education, female students may be slightly more receptive to or influenced by its principles. This finding is consistent with Bosede (2010), who reported that female students tend to perform better in areas related to social and behavioural competencies. This may be linked to gender socialisation patterns, where females are often encouraged to exhibit empathy, cooperation, and emotional sensitivity; traits that align closely with the objectives of peace education. On the other hand, the finding contradicts Yusuf and Adigun (2010), who observed that male students performed better than female students. The divergence in findings may be explained by variations in study focus, measurement instruments, and contextual factors. Unlike academic performance studies, which may favour different learning styles, the present study focuses on perception and behavioural competencies, which may naturally align more closely with affective and interpersonal domains where female students often show relative strength. The absence of a statistically significant gender difference suggests that peace education programmes are broadly inclusive and beneficial to all students, regardless of gender. This reinforces the position that such programmes can be effectively implemented across diverse student populations without bias.

## CONCLUSION

This study established that peace education programmes are highly relevant in enhancing students' conflict-resolution skills in secondary schools in Ife East Local Government Area of Osun State. The findings demonstrate that exposure to peace education equips students with essential competencies such as effective communication, empathy, emotional regulation, tolerance, negotiation, and problem-solving, which are critical for managing conflicts constructively. The study further revealed that peace education contributes to the promotion of peaceful school environments, reduction of aggressive behaviours, and improvement of interpersonal relationships among students. Although female students showed slightly higher perceptions of relevance than male students, the difference was not statistically significant, indicating that peace education programmes are beneficial to all students irrespective of gender. The study concludes that peace education is not only relevant but indispensable for fostering a culture of peace, promoting social cohesion, and preventing the escalation of conflicts among young people. However, its full potential can only be realised through effective implementation, adequate resource provision, and sustained institutional support.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Peace education should be systematically integrated into the secondary school curriculum as a core component rather than being treated as a peripheral topic.
2. Teachers should be adequately trained through workshops, seminars, and professional development programmes to effectively deliver peace education content and facilitate conflict-resolution activities.
3. Schools should adopt participatory teaching methods such as role-playing, peer mediation, group discussions, and simulations to enhance the practical application of conflict-resolution skills.
4. Government and educational stakeholders should provide adequate instructional materials and funding to support the effective implementation of peace education programmes.
5. Educational authorities should ensure strict implementation and monitoring of policies related to peace education to guarantee consistency across schools.
6. Schools should establish peace clubs, peer mediation groups, and counselling units to reinforce peace education beyond the classroom.

7. Parents and community leaders should be actively involved in promoting peace education to ensure that the values taught in schools are reinforced at home and in the wider society.
8. Regular assessment and evaluation of peace education programmes should be conducted to measure their effectiveness and make necessary improvements.

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