

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN FOSTERING SOCIAL HARMONY AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS: INSIGHTS FROM THE GUJRANWALA DIVISION

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine the role of education in promoting social harmony among secondary school students, drawing on the perspectives of head teachers, secondary school teachers, and students. The primary objective was to investigate how education contributes to enhancing civic understanding, empathy, conflict resolution skills, acceptance of diversity, and the instillation of social responsibility. A sample of 48 head teachers, 192 secondary school teachers, and 384 students from public boys' secondary schools equally representing urban and rural areas participated in the study. The multi stage random sampling technique was employed for data collection. Data were gathered using a self-developed rating scale and analyzed using SPSS software. It was found that there was an extremely high positive relationship between social harmony and education ($r = .976$, $p < .001$), which indicated the strategic importance of institutional policies and the curriculum in the promotion of social cohesion. Teachers noted a very high positive correlation ($r = .750$, $p < .001$), highlighting the significance of instructional strategies and classroom interactions in developing peaceful student relationships. Students reported a moderate positive correlation ($r = .593$, $p < .001$), indicating that though education has a positive impact on social harmony; their attitudes are also influenced by external factors. In the light of the study it suggested that in Promoting social harmony in schools requires curriculum reforms, inclusive policies, and teacher training in peace education. Active involvement of school leaders, parents, and students, along with regular evaluation and recognition, can foster a respectful and inclusive learning environment. It is recommended that school policies, inclusive of diversity, must be implemented to accommodate differences and eliminate tensions due to student conduct, community pressures, or parental lack of support.

Keywords: Education, Role of Education, Social Harmony, Civic Understanding, Conflict resolution skills, acceptance of diversity, social responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

We all reside in a violent and imbalanced world. According to the Global Peace Index 2023, harmony has gradually declined worldwide over the past few years, driven by escalating conflicts, political instability, and economic uncertainties that contribute to global hostility and disparity. Indeed, we are facing crunch of feeble, partial or wrecked relations, both at the individual levels and

at the levels of groups or societies. The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2023 signifies that social harmony erosion and interpersonal reliance deficits are main universal menaces, leading to discord communities and civilizations. This has affected the goal of achieving social harmony to the vilest.

The term social harmony refers to the cultivation of a cohesive and peaceful society within the broader framework of a state. It encompasses the processes of nurturing, demonstrating, and promoting values such as love, trust, respect, admiration, peace, generosity, and equity toward all members of society, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, gender, race, age, color, marital status, occupation, or other distinguishing attributes. In essence, social harmony constitutes a core element of social existence, as genuine social living necessitates the ability to coexist amicably and respectfully with others. (Sharma, 2015).

A mutually supportive and thriving society is characterized by individuals who provide assistance, goodwill, and trust to one another, thereby fostering mutual growth and collective well-being. Furthermore, authentic social harmony requires harmony with nature, which underpins the very existence and sustainability of society. Thus, human-nature harmony is a vital component of a truly harmonious society (Li et al., 2008).

The concept of social harmony can be traced back to ancient philosophical traditions, such as those of Confucius, who emphasized the importance of social order and communal respect. In contemporary contexts, social harmony has been reinforced by international frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and UNESCO programs, which highlight the role of education in fostering social harmony and cohesion. Empirical evidence further supports the view that education promotes social harmony by reducing prejudice and enhancing cooperation across diverse groups (UNESCO, 2019; United Nations, 1948).

Deteriorating social relationships and confidence are significant barriers to achieving social harmony, as they lead to increased social tensions and conflicts. In order to attain social harmony and to have good relationship, we must recognize the perception of social harmony and different institutional roles working for it (Sharma, 2017). The International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) put emphasis on the significance of sympathetic social harmony as a multidimensional perception that involves social justice, educational richness and fiscal constancy, highlighting the roles of educational institutions, governments, and NGOs in promoting these values.

Every individual is desired to think him an indispensable part of the society and to play his due role for the betterment of the society (Gbadegesin, 1991). So, for the improvement of society, social harmony performs dynamic role by cultivating collaboration, trimming down conflicts, and increasing by and large well-being and social consistency (Delhey & Dragolov, 2018).

Harmonious society has been perceived in sundry ways among different civilizations and traditions. According to Confucians approach, social harmony is differently marked such as 'the absolute goodness (Yao, 2000), 'the most saver way of life' and 'the final objective' (Li, 2006) the 'original educational value in Chinese society' (Wei & Li, 2013) and the Confucian majestic model (Chan, 2014). Confucian idea of social harmony has been elucidated in details in "three links", where "for any relationship, it must be determined to ensure a harmonious society" (Fan, 2000). For human relationships, special harmony is essentially desirable between sovereigns/subjects, employer/employee, parents/child and male/female (Tu, 1998). In this respect, it is necessary for students to know that peace is the non-appearance of direct/physical violence as well as the nearness of states of prosperity, teamwork and only social harmony in the human being and environmental spheres (Castro & Galace, 2010).

Peace is just having a sentiment of safety, social harmony and passivity (Nair, 2005). In spite of the increasing number of projects and tasks that emphasis on social harmony as suggestion for violence remedial action, conflict change and peace-fabricating everywhere throughout the world, the subject is still portrayed by deficiency of lucid thoughts and sufficient assessment (Harris, 2002; Harris & Morrison, 2003 and Salomon, 2002). In the wider perspective, numerous researchers have examined and attempted to change clashes to build up a harmonious culture by utilizing inventive and tranquil means (Galtung, 1996).

In today's world, there is an urgent need to learn how to coexist in peace and social harmony, and education is the only means by which progress can be made in this direction (Singh, V. 2016). A few researchers have attempted to change individuals' reality perspectives to accomplish social harmony through education (Danesh, 2006).

The study conducted by Bjerstedt (1994) contemplated educator training processes in twenty countries. The study revealed that the

circumstances were similar in numerous countries. Certain tries were made in a few spots, yet they were restricted, and till now the normal educator does not get any genuine training in the field of harmonious education (Sri-Amnuay, 2011). Numerous countries have updated their nature of pre-administration educator education as to advancing harmony and peace through education (Fountain, 1999).

Education is the learning that joins schools with the community setting of the larger culture (Standish, 2016). Education ought to hence be a focal column to enhancing human relations in the family, in schools, at the work environment, inside nations and crosswise over borders (Murithi, 2009). Education in schools and colleges has consistently emphasized universal human values. Among these fundamental human values, peace and social harmony hold a significant position, and they should be instilled in humanity through the educational process.

Education plays a basic role in fostering social harmony in schools by developing a comprehensive environment where students from sundry backgrounds can learn to respect and welcome each other's differences, eventually leading to a more interconnected society (UNESCO, 2019). Because of educational programs that give emphasis to compassion, broadmindedness, and teamwork, schools can develop an awareness of harmony and mutual understanding among students, which is necessary for building a nonviolent and harmonious society (Bush & Saltarelli, 2020).

UNESCO expected to promote a harmonious society through education by endorsing education for all (concentrating particularly on young ladies) changing educational program to advance the subjective qualities, states of mind and conduct characteristic in a society of peace and preparing for struggle avoidance and determination, discourse, promoting education and dynamic peacefulness (UNESCO, 1998). Quantifying the significance of education, especially education for peace and a harmonious society, Pakistan must meet UNESCO's prerequisites and address internal conflicts.

Since Pakistan has had turmoil in various areas and is confronting profound security issues inside society, it is sensible to analyze the role of education and demand improvement for socially harmonious instructions. This country, as now, a major case of a nation who needs social harmony

and peace; its way of life is divided by dissimilarities of class, financial matters, public issues, philosophies, religion, dialect, region, position, and shading. The more youthful era, especially the school going youngsters is impacted by this sort of turbulence (Begum, 2012).

Education has always been expected to foster global peace and harmony. Schools and colleges have consistently emphasized the importance of universal human values. Peace and harmony represent two distinct aspects of these universal human values that should be nurtured among all individuals through the educational process. Regrettably, in contemporary education and its curriculum, both of these ideals receive insufficient attention. The modern world is marked by conflicts, uncertainties, violence, and discord stemming from political, racial, religious, and ethnic factors, all of which have a detrimental impact on humanity.

Therefore, this study tried to understand the concept of social harmony as well as the role of education in promoting social harmony in secondary schools of the Gujranwala division.

In light of the pressing challenges to social cohesion, this study seeks to investigate the role of education in fostering social harmony within secondary schools of the Gujranwala Division. It endeavors to examine how educational stakeholders specifically head teachers, secondary school teachers, and students perceive and implement practices that nurture empathy, facilitate conflict resolution, and strengthen social cohesion among learners. Through this inquiry, the study aims to contribute meaningfully to the broader academic and policy discourse on the transformative potential of education in cultivating more inclusive, peaceful, and harmonious societies.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. Investigate the role of education in promoting social harmony among school students n relevance to enhancing civic understanding, empathy, conflict resolution skills, acceptance for diversity, instilling social responsibility.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H₁: Integrating comprehensive educational programs focused on civic understanding, and conflict resolution skills significantly enhances social harmony among school students.

H₂: Education that promotes acceptance of diversity and instills a sense of social responsibility positively influences students' ability to foster inclusive and harmonious social environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Modern societies are increasingly fragmented by divisions based on class, ethnicity, language, religion, and region. Pakistan, in particular, exhibits these fractures across its social and cultural fabric, where disparities in social and economic status, ideology, and regional identity have deepened over time. According to the Global Peace Index (2023), global harmony continues to decline due to rising conflict, political instability, and socioeconomic uncertainty. Similarly, the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report (2023) identifies erosion of social cohesion and loss of interpersonal trust as major threats to global stability. These conditions reflect a broader crisis of broken relationships at both individual and societal levels, presenting a profound barrier to achieving sustainable peace and progress.

In such a volatile context, education emerges as a critical instrument for fostering social cohesion and peace. Education is not limited to academic instruction but extends to shaping individuals' worldviews, values, and behaviors. Scholars such as Danesh (2006) and Murithi (2009) affirm that education must be central to building human relations at all levels—from families to schools, workplaces, and nations. UNESCO (1998, 2019) has long championed education as a means of promoting global harmony by advocating inclusive curricula, peace education, and conflict resolution training, particularly in culturally diverse contexts. Education provides the tools necessary for societies to confront challenges, fostering intellectual, social, and emotional development (Alpian, 2019). As Karan Singh (2000) asserts, education cultivates a “gentle and empathetic consciousness” vital for human survival. UNESCO's pillars of education—“Learning to Be” and “Learning to Live Together”—emphasize the transformative potential of education in shaping self-aware and socially responsible citizens.

Schools, as microcosms of society, serve as pivotal spaces where values of empathy, tolerance, cooperation, and civic responsibility can be nurtured. Social harmony, defined as a state of peaceful coexistence, collaborative engagement,

and minimal conflict, is essential for societal well-being and development (Xue & Parker, 2020; Dragolov & Delhey, 2018). Social harmony requires the active cultivation of inclusivity, empathy, and civic responsibility, going beyond the mere absence of conflict. Gbadegesin (1991) emphasizes that every individual must feel an indispensable part of society, contributing meaningfully to its collective progress.

Education that fosters social harmony integrates the development of emotional intelligence, conflict resolution skills, empathy, and appreciation for diversity. When students are taught to value differences, manage disputes constructively, and build positive relationships, they are better equipped to become socially responsible citizens (Delhey & Dragolov, 2018). In Pakistan, despite the critical need for social cohesion, school curricula and environments often provide insufficient emphasis on empathy, conflict resolution, and appreciation for diversity, particularly among youth vulnerable to polarization and unrest (Begum, 2012). This highlights the urgent need for educational reforms that actively promote values conducive to national unity and social resilience.

Civic understanding constitutes another crucial dimension of education for social harmony. It encompasses awareness of civic rights and responsibilities, democratic governance, social justice, and community participation. Civic education enhances critical thinking and responsible citizenship, enabling students to engage thoughtfully with societal issues (Kerr, 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Schools that integrate civic learning, community engagement, and issue-based discussions foster empathy, collective responsibility, and agency, which are fundamental for sustaining social harmony in diverse societies.

Teaching empathy and diversity further strengthens inclusive learning environments and promotes social cohesion. Empathy allows students to understand and share the experiences of others, while education on diversity cultivates respect for cultural, religious, and social differences (Banks, 2006). Interventions involving storytelling, cooperative learning, and perspective-taking exercises have been shown to enhance empathy and reduce discriminatory attitudes (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012). Integrating these strategies within school curricula not only supports personal growth but

also contributes to a more equitable and harmonious society.

Conflict resolution education (CRE) represents a proactive approach to building social harmony in schools. CRE equips learners with communication, negotiation, and emotional regulation skills, enabling them to resolve disputes constructively. Johnson and Johnson (1996) highlight that systematic instruction in conflict resolution reduces peer aggression, enhances school climate, and promotes academic engagement. Programs incorporating peer mediation, role-playing, and cooperative learning have proven effective in fostering respectful and responsible students who can contribute positively to society (Jones & Compton, 2003).

Collectively, these strategies underscore the critical role of schools in shaping morally conscious, socially responsible, and civically engaged individuals. Education thus serves as a powerful tool not only for academic development but also for cultivating the social and emotional capacities necessary for achieving long-term harmony and stability in society (Davies, 2004; Novelli & Smith, 2011; Bajaj, 2008).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To comprehensively investigate the role of education in fostering social harmony among secondary school students, a quantitative research approach was employed in this study (Weyant, 2022). The study involved a sample of 624 participants from boys' public secondary schools from both urban and rural areas. A multistage

random sampling technique was used for the selection of sample. There were 48 head teachers, 192 secondary school teachers (SSTs) and 384 students of grade tenth (10th). To obtain data from the subjects, the researcher used a self-developed questionnaire based on five point Likert scale. In this connection, the questions were designed based on a detailed analysis of literature to verify that the questions were clear, the was good repeatability, and the questions were true to the nature of current study. Before collecting data, the necessary approvals were obtained from relevant education department (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Participants were informed of purpose of the study, and those who were willing to participate provided their consent. Collected data was analyzed statistically with respect to research objectives. The data collected was analyzed using SPSS software. An overview of the data was generated using descriptive statistics, along with inferential statistics were adopted in the current study to analysis the data. Frequencies, percentages, mode, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were calculated for quantitative data.

RESULTS OF DATA

The results, presented in tabular form, were utilized to address the study's objective of investigating the role of education in promoting social harmony among school students, specifically in relation to enhancing civic understanding, fostering empathy, developing conflict resolution skills, encouraging acceptance of diversity, and instilling a sense of social responsibility.

Table 1

Role of education in promoting social harmony among school students (Reported by Heads)

Education	Pearson Correlation	Education	Social harmony
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1	0.976**
			0.000

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table presents that a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the correlation between education and social harmony as seen by school heads. The findings indicated a very high positive correlation between the two variables, $r = 0.976$, $p < 0.01$, suggesting that as the importance of education is heightened, the degree of social harmony among students also rises significantly. The significance value ($p = 0.000$) indicated that the correlation is statistically

significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), as it implies that the probability of this strong association by chance is very low. In terms of Cohen's (1988) guidelines, a correlation coefficient of more than 0.70 would be regarded as strong, and this finding has much more than that value.

This strong correlation indicated that school administrators see education as a strong factor for the development of social harmony among students. This means that what goes on in schools in terms of educational practice, curriculum, and the school culture can contribute to the positive

development of civic knowledge, appreciation of diversity, empathy, and conflict management skills essential elements of a harmonious social atmosphere in schools. The conclusions emphasize

the need to incorporate social and moral education in the curriculum and pedagogy to create harmonious and peaceful school communities.

Table 2

Role of education in promoting social harmony among school students (Reported by Teachers)

		Education	Social harmony
Education	Pearson Correlation	1	0.750**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	192	192

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table presents that a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to study the correlation between education and social harmony from the viewpoint of school teachers. Data for 192 participants were analysed. There was a high, positive correlation between the function of education and the fostering of social harmony among students, $r(190) = 0.750$, $p < 0.01$. This implies that while the effectiveness or availability of educational interventions increases, so does the measure of social harmony among students in schools.

The significance value ($p = 0.000$) indicated that the correlation is 0.01 level (2-tailed) statistically significant, which asserts that observed association

is not likely to be due to chance. Based on Cohen's (1988) rules for interpreting correlation coefficients, a coefficient value of 0.750 asserts strong association. This high correlation suggests that educators see education as a fundamental means of imparting values like empathy, respect, cooperation, and civic knowledge principles that directly lead to a socially cohesive school culture. Overall, the results affirm the hypothesis that curriculum content and instruction are of central importance in promoting positive social behaviour and student-student relations as seen by the teaching community.

Table 3

Relationship between Education and Social Harmony (Reported by students)

		Education	Social Harmony
Education	Pearson Correlation	1	0.593**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	384	384

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table displays that Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the correlation of students' perceptions of education with its function in fostering social harmony. The data was analysed based on answers from 384 students. It was found that there was a moderate positive correlation, $r(382) = 0.593$, $p < 0.01$, where by students with more positive perception of education also perceived more social harmony within their school environment.

Correlation was statistically significant, as supported by the p-value of 0.000, which is lower than the traditional threshold of 0.01. It indicated that the probability of this relationship happening by chance is very low. A correlation coefficient of between 0.50 and 0.69, by Cohen's (1988)

standards, is moderate and indicated that although the relationship is significant, it is weaker than the relationship indicated by teachers and school heads in comparable analyses.

This result confirms that students understand the contribution of schooling to values, behaviours, and interpersonal relations that make school climate harmonious. Yet, the moderate correlation strength also implies other contributions like peer influence, school culture, and family background could be equally important in students' social-emotional experiences of harmony. Overall, the analysis emphasizes the positive but moderate influence of education on social harmony as students see it, and the need for educational

approaches that encourage civic values, empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect in school life.

FINDINGS

There was an extremely high positive relationship between social harmony and education ($r = .976$, $p < .001$), which indicated the strategic importance of institutional policies and the curriculum in the promotion of social cohesion (Table 1).

Teachers noted a very high positive correlation ($r = .750$, $p < .001$), highlighting the significance of instructional strategies and classroom interactions in developing peaceful student relationships (Table 2).

Students reported a moderate positive correlation ($r = .593$, $p < .001$), indicating that though education has a positive impact on social harmony; their attitudes are also influenced by external factors (Table 3).

DISCUSSION

The results indicated a high positive relationship between social harmony and education, both as stated by institutional records ($r = .976$, $p < .001$) and teachers ($r = .750$, $p < .001$), where students responded with a moderate but significant association ($r = .593$, $p < .001$). This result is in agreement with other research claims indicating that education is critical to developing civic knowledge, tolerance, and inclusive citizenship (Banks, 2020; UNESCO, 2022).

Most of the teachers concurred that fostering social harmony is a core component of their professional lives, and they articulated favourable attitudes toward moral and civic education. The findings are consistent with recent work by Raza and Iqbal (2021), who emphasized that the role of teachers in developing moral reasoning and conflict resolution skills is becoming more well understood.

From the students' point of view, a moderate positive and statistically significant correlation was found between the school institutional environment and social harmony as perceived by students. This indicates that students are sensitive to elements of the institutional climate, particularly when it manifests itself in equity, inclusivity, civil staff-student relations, and opportunities for participation. These observations are corroborated by Jones et al. (2019) and UNESCO (2022), who state that a good school climate heightens student belongingness, empathy, and tolerance, thus ensuring social harmony.

CONCLUSION

This research sought to investigate the educational role in fostering social harmony among school children in terms of enhancing civic understanding, empathy, conflict resolution skills, acceptance for diversity, instilling social responsibility.

There was a high positive correlation between education and social harmony, followed by heads, teachers' views and students' views. It is concluded from findings that the foundational status of education especially institutional approaches and classroom practices in influencing students' attitudes towards harmony while acknowledging external sociocultural factors.

The study concluded significant issues at systemic and societal levels. While most teachers indicated they controlled time and curriculum constraints effectively, almost half were concerned that there was insufficient curriculum content and pressure to put academics before values education. Low levels of consensus about challenges associated with student diversity, conflicts, and home-based biases imply the necessity of preparing educators with conflict management and inclusive instruction competencies. Additionally, teachers overwhelmingly felt they lacked institutional support, had insufficient leadership attention, were low on resources, and had low levels of parental involvement as key obstacles to fostering social harmony. These results necessitate systemic changes and community partnership to enhance school peace-building initiatives.

Overall, as the study confirms the capability of education as a dynamic agent for the development of social harmony, it also indicates areas of implementation deficit, systemic backing, and stakeholder convergence. These imperfections need to be overcome by means of capacity development, curriculum enhancement, institutional transformation, and community mobilization in order to achieve the transformative ambitions of peace education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Based on findings, discussions and conclusion following recommendations were made:
- Reforming the curriculum to emphasize civic responsibility, empathy, and diversity as overarching themes across the curriculum in all grade levels may be a priority.

- Training sessions and awareness campaigns may be done to inform students, particularly those under outside influences, of the effects of education on social cohesion.
- Compulsory professional development programs in peace education, inclusive pedagogy, and conflict resolution must be implemented.
- Continuous guidance and guidance by school administration and colleagues may be offered to assist teachers in embedding values-based instruction within daily teaching.
- Curriculum reviews may be undertaken to secure adequate incorporation of civic, moral, and social harmony material.
- School policies, inclusive of diversity, must be implemented to accommodate differences and eliminate tensions due to student conduct, community pressures, or parental lack of support.
- Parent and community participation programs need to be established to promote partnerships that strengthen empathy, respect, and tolerance at home and school.
- Encouragement of student voice and involvement in school governance may be promoted for purposes of creating a more harmonious and inclusive environment.
- Routine dialogue platforms among heads, teachers, students, and parents may be put in place in order to facilitate a shared vision and collective efforts towards social harmony.

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