RESEARCH PAPER

Understanding the Relationship between Violence and Drug Use among School Students: Pathway to Peace Education

¹Dr. Muhammad Shahzad Ashfaq* and ²Dr. Muhammad Nasir Khan

1. Postdoc Fellow, Faculty of Education, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author:	drmsashfaq@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the relationship between violence and drug use among school students and highlight the role of peace education in addressing these issues. Previous research has shown a strong link between violence and drug use, with shared risk factors such as socio-economic status, family dynamics, peer influence, and mental health issues. However, there is a need for more in-depth studies on the causative pathways and educational interventions to address these issues. The researcher chooses a qualitative approach to recruit a smaller sample of teachers and students for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The researcher applied thematic content analysis. The study found that teachers need a better understanding of violence and drug use among students. They also lack a good knowledge of modern concepts and theories related to these issues. The authors suggest that teacher training programs should focus on addressing misconceptions about teaching violence and drug use to students. Effective peace education should also consider the relationship between drug use and violent attitudes among adolescents and the parental climate surrounding these issues.

KEYWORDS	Drug Use, Peace, School, Teaching, Understanding, Violence

Introduction

Teachers have been assigned the role of social cohesion (Smith et al., 2021). The crucial role of teachers in preventing or mitigating violence within schools is widely recognized. Therefore, it's essential to clarify the concept of violence in school teachings for the best utilization of knowledge regarding morality and peace in society. Violence is not considered violence if the teaching of violence is not effective, particularly at the secondary school level. It depends on how teachers teach the concept of violence from religious perspectives. How violence has been defined in religion? What kinds of violence have been elaborated by the religion? How the teachers are going to teach these questions in the classroom? Several youths are involved in crimes after completing secondary school education without understanding violence, and teaching violence with misconception leads to gaps in comprehension of the concept of violence. This situation leads to criminal thinking in adolescents in the future. Hence, it is crucial to impart an understanding of violence.

Partial Understanding of Usage of Drugs and Violent Attitude among Adolescents

Peace can be differentiated concerning meaning, nature, and practices with a clear elaboration of violence. It is important to teach a conceptual understanding of violence to school adolescents to build a clear image and intellectual approach to peace practices in their practical lives. Violence is commonly associated with criminal activities, but it's important to note that not all criminal acts involve violence, and not all instances of

violence are necessarily criminal, especially in the context of schools (Miller, 2023). Traditionally violence was defined in terms of physical offenses like assault, theft, and vandalism (Allen & Anderson 2017). However, the understanding of violence has evolved to encompass non-physical forms of harm, such as verbal taunts, threats, intimidation, harassment, and bullying (Abimanyu & Saraswati, 2022). Luft (2023), contends that violence can be defined as actions committed by individuals against others, which have the potential to cause physical or psychological harm. This includes how schools may exhibit violence towards students and contribute to the fostering of violent behaviours. Contemporary perspectives on school violence view it as a multifaceted concept that includes criminal acts and aggression within educational institutions. Such behaviour hinders both development and learning, while also adversely affecting the overall school environment. The term 'violence' gained prominence around 1992, as noted by Pailey, (2020). The World Health Organization's 2020 report defines violence in a similar manner; intentionally using physical force or power, whether it is threatened or actual, against oneself, another individual, or a group or community can lead to injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation. The definition of violence remains unsettled, with no universally accepted final definition (Miller, 2023).

For over a decade, school violence has emerged as a global issue. Despite significant endeavors in research, prevention, and intervention efforts, the impact of school violence extends beyond the confines of educational institutions, escalating into a broader societal concern. The escalating issue of school violence is a source of increasing worry for both students and school personnel globally (McMahon et al., 2024). Within the educational setting, the focus on violence often revolves around the examination of students victimizing their peers or teachers (Stallings & Hall, 2019). In the quest for violence-free schools, the perspectives of teachers and school counselors play a crucial role (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2024). Addressing violence in schools is a widespread issue demanding increased focus from educators, researchers and policymakers. The complex nature of school violence is rooted in various individual, school, family, and community-level risk factors that converge to increase susceptibility to violent incidents. Consequently, effective measures to reduce school violence must go beyond the confines of the school environment (Mahaye & Ajani, 2023)

Several authors, including Seddig and Davidov, (2018) have highlighted the distinctions between two primary dimensions of violent behavior: a behavioral dimension, characterized by hostile conduct aimed solely at causing harm, and an intentional dimension, where violence is employed as a means to achieve specific interests. These dimensions are identified as hostile violence, involving unplanned, rage-driven, impulsive actions typically in response to provocation and with the primary goal of causing harm, and instrumental violence, which is a premeditated form of violence with the sole purpose of attaining specific objectives by the aggressor and not as a reaction to prior provocation (Allen & Anderson, 2017). When considering the extent of the issue, it becomes apparent that this problem transcends national and international boundaries (Donnan & Wilson, 2021). The challenge of addressing school violence has grown increasingly complex and difficult to manage (Cohen, 2021).

As per UNESCO's 2017 definition, the global scope of school violence encompasses various forms such as physical, emotional, and sexual violence (Nurwanto, Ismail & Amalia 2021)

i.   Perpetrators of school violence include not only students but also teachers and other staff members. Incidents can occur within school premises, outside

the school gates, during the commute to and from school in local neighborhoods, or even on transportation like buses and taxis.

ii.   School violence is not limited to the school environment, as community members, including parents and individuals affiliated with gangs, may also be involved in such acts.

iii.   Globally, incidents of sexual abuse are more commonly reported among girls than boys. However, it is essential to note that girls are not immune to corporal punishment or more severe forms, even though boys may be more frequently subjected to such disciplinary measures.

iv.   School violence can be attributed to various causes, including chronic poverty, gender disparities, societal norms, and broader contextual and structural factors.

iv.   Vulnerability to school violence is heightened for learners with disabilities, cultural or linguistic minority backgrounds, migrants, or those living in poverty. Adolescents who identify as sexual and gender minorities or diverge from traditional social or gender norms also face a disproportionate risk of being targeted.

v.   School violence can have lasting effects on its victims, but unfortunately, many remain silent about their experiences out of mistrust for adults, including teachers. The reasons for their silence are varied and complex, ranging from fear of retaliation, feelings of guilt and shame, confusion, concerns about not being taken seriously, and uncertainty about where to seek help. All of these factors make it difficult for victims to come forward and receive the support they need.

vi.   Acts of violence in schools are often overlooked or dismissed by parents and teachers.

Literature Review

This literature review examines existing research on these topics and their connection, highlighting the need for peace education initiatives.

According to the 2017 UNESCO report, in certain educational settings, school educators may perceive fighting and bullying as commonplace elements of discipline or the maturation process, often without recognizing the adverse effects these behaviors can have on the education, health, and overall well-being of adolescents. The intentional use of physical force or power is defined as violence according to the World Health Organization (2019), posing a significant risk of injury, death, psychological harm, or deprivation to another person, group, or community. Violence, characterized by aggressive behavior or hostile attitudes, represents the most extreme manifestations, such as attacks, rape, or murder.

The World Health Organization's (WHO) World Report on Violence and Health, which was released in 2019 brought to light the issue of violence against children as a global public health concern. In that year, the member nations of the United Nations (UN) pledged to attain eight Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power,

threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or a community. This can result in injury, death, psychological harm, or deprivation. This comprehensive definition encompasses the various forms of violence inflicted on individuals, particularly children, who are considered the most vulnerable demographic. In the year 2000, a staggering number of approximately 57,000 deaths were reported as a result of homicide among children who were under the age of 15. This statistic highlights the severity of the issue at hand and the need for increased measures to ensure the safety and well-being of children (Shah, Ahmed & Malik, 2023).

Child homicide global estimates indicate that infants and toddlers, aged 0-4 years, face the greatest risk, with a higher likelihood in lower-income countries compared to their counterparts in high-income countries. The African Region (AFRO) exhibits the highest rates of child homicide for those under five years, with 12.7 per 100,000 for girls and 17.9 per 100,000 for boys (Malisha, 2020).

Violence in Schools: A Growing Concern

School violence remains a significant global concern, encompassing physical aggression, bullying, cyberbullying, and weapon-related threats. Studies by the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) reveal a concerning prevalence of school violence, with negative consequences for victims, perpetrators, and the overall school climate (Turanovic & Siennick, 2022). Research suggests various factors contribute to school violence, including individual characteristics (mental health issues, impulsivity), social factors (peer pressure, gang affiliation), and environmental factors (poverty, lack of supervision) (Turanovic & Siennick, 2022).

Drug Use and its Link to Violence

Drug use among adolescents is another significant public health concern. Studies by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) highlight the prevalence of drug use among youth, with the potential for escalation into more serious issues (Nwogu, 2022). Research suggests a complex relationship between drug use and violence. Drugs can act as disinhibits, lowering inhibitions and increasing the likelihood of aggressive behavior (Keszycki, Fisher & Dong, 2019). Additionally, involvement in drug sales or gang activity can expose youth to violence (Leverso & Neill, 2022).

Existing Research on Violence and Drug Use

Studies have documented a positive correlation between drug use and school violence. For example, a study by Miley et al. found that adolescents involved in substance abuse were more likely to be perpetrators and victims of violence (Miley et al., 2020). Similarly, research by Felson and Deane found that drug use environments (places associated with drug sales or use) were more likely to have violent incidents (Chroback, 2022).

However, it's important to acknowledge the complexity of the relationship. Not all drug users become violent, and other factors can contribute to school violence. Mental health issues, for instance, can play a significant role.

Peace Education: A Potential Solution

Peace education offers a promising approach to addressing violence and drug use in schools. Peace education encompasses a variety of practices that equip students with

the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to resolve conflicts peacefully, promote empathy, and build a culture of peace (Setiadi, Kartadinata & Nakaya, 2017).

Research suggests that peace education can be effective in reducing violence and promoting positive social interactions in schools. A study by Guarini et al., (2020) found that peace education programs led to a decrease in bullying and improved conflict resolution skills. Similarly, research by Hymel and Darwich, (2018) found that peace education programs could foster empathy and prosocial behavior in students.

Understanding the complex relationship between violence and drug use among school students is crucial for developing effective interventions. The existing research suggests a positive correlation, with potential explanations provided by social learning theory, general strain theory, and social control theory. Peace education emerges as a promising approach, with research highlighting its effectiveness in reducing violence and promoting a culture of peace.

Methodology

This study explores the relationship between violence and drug use among school students. The methodology section elaborates on the specific research design employed to understand this relationship. The researcher chooses a qualitative approach, specifically thematic content analysis recruiting a smaller sample of teachers and students for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. It expands on the following aspects:

Research Design

Through an interpretive paradigm, the researcher sought to comprehend the emotions, experiences, social contexts, and occurrences of violence within the authentic realm of educators. The fundamental principle of interpretive research is to analyze data within its specific context (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Employing a qualitative approach, specifically thematic content analysis, this study collected comprehensive data in a focus group setting, aiming to extract the feelings, thoughts, opinions, and perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding safety in their schools. Thematic content analysis was employed to identify and explore patterns, or themes, in the data that are deemed significant or noteworthy. Unlike a mere data summary, a robust thematic analysis involves interpretation and sense-making. Kim, Lee and Cho, (2022) caution against using primary interview questions as themes to avoid common mistakes.

Selection of participants

The snowball sampling method was employed for the identification of peace educators. This non-random technique operates without the necessity of underlying theories or a predetermined number of participants. In essence, the researcher determines the specific information required and actively seeks individuals capable and willing to share relevant knowledge or experiences (Pawar et al., 2023). The participant of the study were teachers and students of government secondary schools.

Sample

The researcher chooses a qualitative approach, recruiting a smaller sample of teachers and students for in-depth interviews and focus groups. This approach allowed

teachers and students to elaborate on their experiences and provide richer details about the connections between violence and drug use.

Instrument and Procedures

Tool of Research

Participants engaged in unstructured face-to-face interviews, chosen for their ability to yield more in-depth data compared to other interview formats (Osborne & Grant-Smith, 2021). Unstructured interviews aim to establish a personal connection with the interviewee and prioritize understanding over explanation. The primary objective of employing one-to-one unstructured interviews is to gain insight into individuals' experiences and their subjective interpretations of those experiences (Opoku, Ahmed & Akotia, 2016).

Date Collection/Data Analysis

Interviews and Focus Groups

- **Interview/Focus Group Discussion:** An unstructured interview schedule and focus group discussion guide were developed to explore the research questions. The guide asked students about their experiences with violence and drug use, their perceptions of the connection between these issues, and their thoughts on the role of peace education in their lives.

- **Data Analysis:** The interview and focus group data were analyzed thematically, identifying recurring patterns and insights in the students' experiences and perspectives of the teachers.

Additional Considerations

- **Ethical Approval:** Regardless of the data collection method, the researchers had obtained the ethical approval from the Institutional Head to ensure the study protects the participants' privacy and well-being (Ramrathan et al., 2017).

- **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** Students and teachers were assured of confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process.

Results and Discussion

It has been depicted in the results of interviews conducted with school educators. The school educators elaborated in detail:

Interviewer

How do you define violence and its relationship with the usage of drugs among school adolescents and why is it important for students to understand its meaning in the context of promoting peace at school?

Peace Educator 1

Any action that is intended to hurt, offend, or exercise control over others — whether it be physical, verbal, or emotional — is considered to be violent. It covers a wide range of behaviours, including physical assault and bullying as well as psychological duress and intimidation. For

many reasons, including recognizing harmful behaviours, fostering empathy, conflict resolution, breaking the cycle, building respectful relationships, encouraging active bystander intervention, creating informed decision-makers, cultivating responsible digital citizenship, and encouraging advocacy, it is essential for students to understand the concept of violence in the context of promoting peace at school. In general, educating pupils about violence within the context of fostering peace in the classroom is a crucial step toward raising a generation that values cooperation, empathy, and nonviolence. It equips students with the tools they need to actively contribute to creating a peaceful learning environment and gets them ready to contribute responsibly and kindly as future members of society.

Interviewer

In your opinion, what are some of the key factors for the usage of drugs that lead to violent activities among adolescents in a school environment, and how can understanding these factors help in fostering a peaceful atmosphere?

Peace Educator 2

Understanding these factors is essential to promoting a peaceful environment, as they include: lack of communication and conflict resolution skills; bullying and peer pressure; violence at home or in the community; social and cultural factors; poor emotional regulation; lack of inclusion and acceptance; access to weapons and violent media; substance abuse; and lack of adult supervision. Schools can implement targeted intervention programmes and educational activities to address violence and its underlying causes by having a thorough understanding of these elements and their potential impact. An environment where students feel supported, respected and empowered to resolve disagreements without resorting to violence can be developed in schools through open discussions and proactive initiatives. A welcoming and inclusive environment for all pupils and staff can be created in schools by addressing these characteristics and promoting a culture of empathy, tolerance and cooperation.

Interviewer

How can schools measure the impact of drug use and peace-building initiatives?Are there any metrics or indicators of success that can be used to evaluate their effectiveness?

Peace Educator 3

To determine their effectiveness and make informed decisions about programme improvement, violence education and peace-building projects need to be evaluated for their impact on students. Here are some typical procedures and success measurements that schools might utilize, while the assessment techniques may change depending on the particular goals and objectives of each initiative: Pre- and post-intervention surveys, behavioural observations, disciplinary records, attendance, and academic performance, peer and teacher evaluations, incident reports, use of peer mediation, student behavior self-assessments, school atmosphere surveys, and long-term effect studies are a few examples.

Interviewer

What role does education play in addressing relationship of usage of drugs and violent activities among adolescents? How can teaching about violence contribute to creating a safer and more respectful learning environment?

Peace Educator 4

In order to confront violence and resolve conflicts among students, education is essential. Schools can promote awareness and understanding, encourage empathy and compassion, teach conflict resolution techniques, empower bystander intervention, build a culture of respect, provide coping mechanisms, address root causes, in still a sense of responsibility, foster a supportive environment, and prevent cyberbullying by incorporating lessons about violence into the curriculum. Schools can foster a pleasant and supportive learning environment by incorporating instruction about violence and conflict resolution into the curriculum.

Interviewer

As violence and conflict are not limited to the school environment, how can students be encouraged to apply the principles of peace and non-violence beyond the school setting, such as in their homes and communities?

Peace Educator 5

To promote positive change in children's homes and communities, educators must encourage pupils to practice the values of nonviolence and peace outside of the classroom. Role modeling, community service, and outreach, parent and family involvement, peer education programs, civic education and human rights, media literacy, community partnerships, social media and digital advocacy, school-based campaigns, student leadership opportunities, reflection, and discussion are some methods to encourage the application of these principles.

Interviewer

In your view, what is the ultimate goal of teaching about violence in schools, and how can it contribute to a more peaceful and inclusive society in the long run?

Peace Educator 6

In the long term, a safer, more tolerant, and inclusive society is what schools should be teaching about when they discuss violence. Schools hope to accomplish several broad goals by incorporating violence education into the curriculum, including educating students about the topic, fostering conflict resolution abilities, encouraging empathy and compassion, encouraging active bystander intervention, creating a culture of non-violence, addressing the causes of violence, promoting responsible digital citizenship, and preparing students to be peace advocates. Through comprehensive education on violence, we can make a significant impact on the next generation and build a more inclusive and peaceful society in the long run. By equipping our youth with a better understanding of the negative consequences of violence, we can foster a society that is more accepting and tolerant of others. It can lead to a more harmonious and peaceful world where individuals can coexist without fear or prejudice.

Discussion

The behavior of a student is greatly impacted by the family unit. Issues such as dysfunction, substance abuse, or inadequate parental guidance may increase the chances of a student getting involved in violent behavior or trying drugs (Trucco, 2020). Investigating the familial origins can aid in creating comprehensive intervention tactics. Having drugs readily available at or near school can greatly increase drug use among students. Analyzing the accessibility and origins of drugs can provide insights for developing school policies and law enforcement strategies to address the issue effectively from the beginning (Ozalp et al., 2022). The decisions that students make can be affected

by the quality of education and the availability of proactive prevention programs. An inclusive strategy that combines drug abuse education, conflict resolution training, and mental health support can contribute to creating a positive school atmosphere. Utilizing evidence-based prevention programs that target both violence and drug use can effectively reduce these issues (Evans, Stalke & Brown, 2021). These programs need to prioritize developing skills, resolving conflicts, and educating students on the impacts of drug use.

There has been an increase in school violence and drug use over the past few years among teachers, parents, and policy makers (Beserra et al., 2019). In this article, we explore and analyze the complex relationship between school violence and drug abuse. We can develop strategies and interventions to address these challenges and create safer educational spaces for our youth by investigating the factors contributing to the problem (Astor et al., 2021). The school setting is essential in influencing student conduct. Ferreira-Fernandes and Peça, (2022); Fazel et al., (2024) suggest that influences like peer pressure, bullying, and social hierarchies may play a role in the emergence of violent behaviors and substance abuse. According to Cole (2024), understanding the interaction of these social dynamics is crucial for creating specific interventions. Personal psychological issues like stress, anxiety, and inadequate coping skills may cause students to turn to violence or substance abuse as a way to cope. Analyzing the mental well-being of students allows us to pinpoint possible causes and offer suitable assistance.

Providing students with access to counseling services in schools might help them cope with pressures and emotional issues, lowering their chances of resorting to violence or drugs as an outlet (Scherer & Leshner, 2021). The collaboration between schools and families may foster a supporting network for pupils. Open communication and engagement may address difficulties at home and school, enabling a comprehensive approach to intervention (Lynch, 2021). It is critical to implement and enforce strong drug-free and violence-free rules in schools. Consistent repercussions for such behavior can serve as a deterrent and contribute to a secure learning environment. Recognizing the complicated link between student aggression and drug use involves a holistic approach that takes into account social, psychological, and environmental aspects (Olimov & Hayitova, 2024).

The concept of peace education can be defined as a method of teaching values such as respect, love, tolerance, equality, and justice so individuals can become aware of their common goals and values. The educational approach is intended to pass on knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and peace-making processes, allowing individuals to resolve problems and conflicts arising from coexisting peacefully. It is similar to definitions found in studies conducted in Kenya (Ngigi, 2023) and other countries (Tanyel & Kıralp, 2021; Wibowo, (2022). It is worth noting that the focus on values in this study is similar to that of the study by Bhuttah, Sarwat and Farid, (2020) which outlined perspectives on peace education. A study by Bashir and Akbar, (2021) concludes that teacher training programs should incorporate peace education courses and provide in-service training on peace education for working teachers.

Conclusions

Addressing social, psychological, and environmental factors is key to understanding the complex relationship between violence and drug use among students. By acknowledging the various factors that affect the well-being of our young learners and by taking specific measures to address them, we can strive to create educational settings that are not only physically safe but also supportive of mental, emotional, and

social growth. Ultimately, by prioritizing the health and safety of our youth, we can help them thrive academically and beyond. The success and well-being of students depend on the collaborative efforts of educators, parents, and policymakers. The study emphasized the importance of teachers having a comprehensive and clear understanding of the concept of violence. This includes not only its nature and meaning but also its various characteristics. In order to effectively educate students on this topic, the study suggests that teachers should provide detailed explanations of different types of violence, including physical, emotional, and sexual violence. To aid in this process, teachers can use relevant references and examples to help students fully comprehend the impact and consequences of violent behavior.

The study concluded that the teachers have poor knowledge of the modern conceptual and theoretical knowledge concerning the conceptual understanding of violence. The study concluded that the teaching content of textbooks was insufficient to clarify the conceptual understanding of violence and peace to the students. It has been concluded that the content of textbooks needs to be revised with the addition of material concerning clarity with a conceptual understanding of violence and peace.

Recommendations

The authors recommend that teacher training programs should focus on addressing misconceptions about teaching violence to adolescents, including identifying the factors that promote such misconceptions. Effective peace education should also take into account the indicators of the relationship between drug use and violent attitudes among adolescents, as well as the parental climate surrounding drug use and violent attitudes.

Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this study suggested that further research is needed on the factors promoting misconceptions about teaching violence to school adolescents. Except this, further research can be conducted on the gaps and challenges in the teacher training programs regarding teaching the concept of violence to school adolescents.

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