



Exploring Gender Differences in Peace Perception among Undergraduate Students in Private Universities in Somalia

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Abstract

This research study aimed to investigate the perception of peace among undergraduate students in private universities in Somalia, focusing on the influence of gender and course of study. Additionally, the study examined the factors contributing to the advancement or decline of peace. The acquisition of values, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors related to peace is essential for individuals to live harmoniously with themselves, others, and the natural world. This study utilized a descriptive survey design to investigate the perception of peace among undergraduate students in private universities in Somalia. A total of 324 Somali students participated in the study, and data were collected using a peace perception scale and a peace perception questionnaire. The scale measured students' overall perception of peace, while the questionnaire gathered additional information on factors contributing to the advancement or decline of peace. The data collection process ensured confidentiality and anonymity of participants' responses, and ethical considerations were followed throughout the research. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and appropriate statistical tests. The study aimed to provide insights into the perception of peace, with a focus on gender differences and the influence of the field of study. Limitations of the study were also acknowledged, such as sample size limitations and potential biases. The findings revealed a significant difference in the average level of peace perception between male and female college students, while the field of study did not exert an impact on this perception. Moreover, the majority of students, over 70%, emphasized the importance of morality, ethics, and discipline for maintaining peace in society. Furthermore, peace was identified as an integral component of day-to-day living. The study recommends integrating peace education into university curricula through dedicated courses, workshops, and extracurricular activities. The study also recommends to enhance the awareness of peace among students. It also emphasizes the need to integrate moral and ethical education and promote gender equality and inclusivity to foster a peaceful and inclusive learning environment in private universities in Somalia.

Keywords

Peace education, Perception, Higher education, Gender, Somalia

INTRODUCTION

Most people define peace as the absence of violence and disputes in a society. Disparities in religion and geography, as well as the unequal distribution of resources and socioeconomic and political power, all contribute to conflicts (Swain & Mohanty, 2021). The school system must be the focal point of nurturing and peace building activities. According to this study, education needs to be able to advance ideals that support humanity, peace, and tolerance in a heterogeneous society. All people seek happiness and serenity, regardless of their cultural background. There is always a need for peace. Teachers and students who participate in peace education gain the information, comprehension, abilities, attitudes, and values necessary to foster a culture of peace in our society and promote harmonious living. The behavior that promotes harmony in interpersonal interactions and inhibits acts intended to damage, injure, or destroy one another is known as peace.

The process of gaining values, information, and the attitudes, abilities, and behaviors necessary to live in harmony with oneself, other people, and the environment is known as peace education. It is ingrained in all subject areas and is further supported when individuals treat one another with kindness on the playground, in their homes, and in their communities. Peace education is a comprehensive idea that encompasses children's intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development. The curricula and educational system need to incorporate peace education (Swain & Mohanty, 2021). People say that education is "the best weapon for peace" (Gordillo, 2021). Thus, following a conflict or war, education for peace (EfP) is one of the major variables that affects how individuals and society grow.

EfP offers information and abilities through an educational method designed to promote peace that improve a country's culture, people's spirits, and the values that unite us as human beings (Gordillo, 2021). Such an educational procedure entails instilling in kids a constructive mentality of social cohesion. Because of these factors, EfP is therefore required in post-conflict settings in order to, ideally, improve social welfare levels, lessen inequality, provide residents with fresh prospects for peace, and advance peace. There is a lack of consistency in the definitions, focuses, curriculum, methodology, and methods of training and supporting peace educators in the field of peace education. The principal issue within a given setting is typically reflected in the focus of peace education, which is very context-dependent (John, 2018).

Culture of Peace is a system of beliefs, customs, behaviors, and ways of living centered on respect for human life, the abolition of violence, and the practice and promotion of nonviolence by collaboration, communication, and education (Aden, 2017). The Learning to Abolish War Model was selected by the researchers as a conceptual framework to direct this research investigation, despite the unfavorable state of peace that now prevails in Somalia. For governments and non-governmental organizations, peace education has emerged as a critical topic of concern in post-conflict civilizations such as Somalia. After Said Barre was overthrown in 1991, Somalia has struggled to end a 30-year civil conflict centered on clans. Therefore, this study aims to examine the perception of peace for undergraduate students in private universities of Somalia. The above-described environment for education in Somalia, coupled with the country's ongoing civil unrest since 1991, has had detrimental effects. As a consequence, private citizens, Islamic charitable organizations, local nongovernmental organizations (LNGOs), and diaspora groups fund education to a significant level. Thus, LNGOs are primarily responsible for peace education in Somalia, with assistance from foreign NGOs and UN agencies. For instance, UNICEF has been actively involved in local communities, sometimes directly assisting with the construction of health centers, the drilling of boreholes, the installation of other social amenities, and peace schools. Between 1975 and 1989, public education spending fell from 2.2% of GDP to 0.3% of GDP (Mohamed, 2020). With an estimated 20–30% gross enrollment and some of the lowest public finance of any nation, Somalia now has one of the lowest student enrollment rates in the world. At all educational levels, girls are disproportionately underrepresented, particularly in rural regions. Over the last five years, girls' enrollment rates have been persistently low, at about 35% (Mohamed, 2020). In areas afflicted by hunger and/or drought, education still struggles to sustain funding and programs. Lack of funding for teacher incentives, educational supplies, and the renovation of classrooms and restrooms frequently hinders scale-up and backup plans.

Through scholarly collaborations between institutions in the Horn of Africa, higher education may significantly contribute to regional discourse for political stability, state formation, and economic and social growth (Tejendra Pherali & Lewis, 2017). Only Somalia National university is a public university; all other universities that provide higher education in Somalia are privately owned and may not prioritize peace and the public interest in favor of their personal financial interests. As a result, it is vital to ascertain how the country's private university students see peace. Numerous studies have examined how education might contribute to peacebuilding in different countries around the globe (Gordillo, 2021; John, 2018; Maiyo, Ngao, Mulwa, & Mugambi, 2012; Rasheed & Munoz, 2016). However, no study has been conducted in Somalia as best of our knowledge, particularly in higher education and culture of peacebuilding. Thus, this study hopes to fill this gap in the current academic provision in Somalia by exploring gender differences in peace perception among undergraduate students in private universities in Somalia.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the perception of peace for boys and girls in Somali private university students.
2. To Scrutinize the factors that promotes peace among higher education students in Somalia.
3. To investigate the factors responsible for deterioration of peace among higher education students in Somalia.
4. To suggest the best strategies and policies that could promotes peace and prevent conflict in Somalia.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the perception of peace for boys and girls in private university students of Somalia?
2. What are the factors that promote peace among higher education students in Somalia?
3. What are the factors responsible for deterioration of peace among higher education students in Somalia?
4. What are the best strategies and policies that could promotes peace and prevent conflict in Somalia?

METHODOLOGY

For the study, a descriptive survey approach was used. This study looked at how undergraduate students at private universities in Somalia saw peace differently based on their gender. To get suitable samples, both accidental and random sampling strategies were used. Even though there are more than 60 colleges in the whole country, the researchers only

arbitrarily chose students from four of them. These four academic institutions—Somali International University (SIU), Simad University, Mogadishu University, and Benadir University—were utilized in the case study. 324 students were included in the proposal for data collecting on the perception of peace overall. 110 students from Somali International University (SIU), 80 students from Simad University, 75 students from Mogadishu university, and 59 students from Benadir University. The method of incidental sampling was used to find the intended individuals. The boys' and girls' sense of peace questionnaires are self-created. Two questionnaires were utilized: one focused on promoting peace among higher education students and the other on variables that contribute to the decline of peace among students are adopted from (Swain & Mohanty, 2021).

The boys' and girls' sense of peace questionnaire uses the proper scale (important and not important, optimistic and pessimistic, yes or no scale type). Both the elements contributing to the decline in peace among higher education students and the ones promoting peace among them (both on a yes-or-no scale) were utilized in the questionnaire, which included both closed- and open-ended questions. Statistical techniques such as the t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and percentage were used to conduct a quantitative statistical analysis of the acquired data.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Peace education is a holistic education (N. C. Alimba, 2013). Its ambiguous and adaptable character led to the many interpretations of it. It was observed that peace education is a multidimensional educational program that incorporates various approaches that have the power to alter people's behavioral patterns by instilling the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary for them to effectively contribute to the political, social, cultural, and economic development of their nations (C. Alimba, 2007). The fields of education and conflict have seen an increase in interest throughout the previous 20 years (Leone, 2011; Novelli & Cardozo, 2008; T Pherali, 2019). But the most of this has been about educating kids in formal education settings. The literature has only just begun to address the significance of higher education in the process of socialization and rebuilding following violence; however, the bulk of these studies have been carried out in different countries, not in Somalia (Milton & Barakat, 2018; Narkurairattana, 2021; Pacheco & Johnson, 2017). The majority of people in Somalia are semi-nomadic pastoralists, who are divided into traditional clans and make up around 60% of the country's population. Italians (in the south and northeast) and British (in the north-west) made limited colonizations in the Somali region. Some Somalis developed an interest in the West and the contemporary global economy as a result of colonialism, and as a result, in Western education. However, the colonial administrations of Britain and Italy accomplished little to influence the majority's everyday life or foster a sense of national identity. The prevailing cultural tendency has been and continues to be toward a traditional Islamic lifestyle, which reflects differing opinions toward formal education, particularly for ladies. In most villages, religious leaders maintained Koranic schools where most students received their education, if any at all. Although Mogadishu served as the official capital after Somalia attained independence in 1960, there was not much real integration. Following the merger of the two previous protectorates, a phase of nation-building ensued, but the president was subsequently killed.

Following a bloodless revolution in 1969, Mohamed Siad Barre took over and established a military government based on Marxist principles. Beginning in 1991, Somalia had nearly three decades of conflict and civil instability (Williams & Cummings, 2017). The provision of social services, including education, was endangered by two decades without a functional central government. This included unsafe schools, the loss of infrastructure and educational materials, and instructors who were in danger of abuse. However, the corresponding governments have made some efforts to bring education back to life. The intentional devastation of schools, university lecture halls, libraries, and labs in Somalia, along with the occasional targeting of educated personnel among the warring groups, may tragically bring to mind other, if less hopeful, historical periods. The fall of the Alexandrian Library in ancient Egypt is one historical event that may be used as a pertinent example in this context. That library, which included an incredible collection of 400,000 books, was destroyed in 48 BC by Julius Caesar, the commander of the Roman army (Abdi, 1998).

The political, economic, cultural, and psychological factors that led to the Somali civil war are numerous and intricate (Elmi & Barise, 2006). Given how much Somali culture contributed to the justification for starting or sustaining the conflict, education may be able to transform Somali culture into one of peace. Education should focus on fostering respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights as well as the complete development of the individual (Abdi, 1998).

One could argue that despite the tremendous contributions these community-initiated academic establishments are making to higher education—especially in the lack of an efficient national government—a lot is still at risk in terms of evaluation and quality assurance, which are essential components required for institutional accreditation and the acceptance of credentials by other educational institutions awarding the same caliber of certificates (Eno, Eno, & Mweseli, 2015). There are no legally enforceable reviews or regulatory frameworks in place for the majority of private "universities" that make up Somalia's higher education system, which has resulted in an astonishing surge in enrollment but a corresponding reduction in the quality of higher education structures, connections, and dispensations (Abdi & Farah, 2023). Consequently, private colleges' primary motivation is profit rather than the good of the public or the goal of peacebuilding. A survey of the region's present academic offerings reveals that discussions of peace and conflict studies are not given enough attention (Tejendra Pherali & Lewis, 2017). Our new course aims to close this gap in the Horn of Africa's present academic offerings by fostering a multidisciplinary approach to teaching peacebuilding and conflict resolution, where higher education plays a key role. To achieve this, it is necessary to instill a culture of tolerance and nonviolence in all spheres of society, since this might contribute to the development of a peaceful society (Swain &

Mohanty, 2021). Students, especially those attending universities, need to be made aware of the need of peace education since they will be our nation's future (Bhatnagar, 2010). Studies on Somalia have been conducted extensively, primarily in foreign nations. Studies demonstrated the benefits of peace education. It was discovered that the relationships between students and instructors had improved, and that the conduct of the kids had changed for the better (Swain & Mohanty, 2021). The researchers chose to carry out the current study to close the gaps in the literature in this area of study in the context of Somalia since there hasn't been any research done on how students in higher education see peace.

RESULTS

The data have been analyzed objective wise and results are presented below:

Table 1 Respondents profile

Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	223	68.6
Female	102	31.4
<i>Age</i>		
below 20	126	38.8
20-30	187	57.5
31-40	9	2.8
41 and above	3	0.9
<i>Education Level</i>		
first year	70	21.5
second year	51	15.7
third year	68	20.9
fourth year	136	41.8
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	281	86.5
Married	44	13.5

A summary of the study's demographic component is given in Table 1. According to the data, 31.4% of respondents are women and 68.6% of respondents are men. The majority of respondents 57.5% are between the ages of 20 and 30. And 38.8% are under the age of 20, and 2.8% are between the ages of 31 and 40. Only 0.9% of respondents are older than 41. The percentage of first-year students, based on educational attainment, was 21.5%. while, 15.7% of the students are in their second year. The 20.9% of the students are third-years as well. Finally, the majority of responders (41.8%) are fourth-year students. 86.5 percent of the respondents were single, and only 13.5 percent were married.

Perception of Peace: Boys and Girls in higher education

The goal under this dimension was to examine how higher education students perceived peace in relation to their gender. "The mean peace perception scores of higher education students differ significantly with reference to their gender (boys and girls)" is the hypothesis that was put out. The t-test approach was applied to confirm the hypothesis. The outcomes are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2 Mean, SD and t-value with reference to Male and Female students (N=325)

Gender	Number of Students	Mean	SD	Calculated t-value	Table t-value	df	SED	Level of significance
Boys	223	1.31	0.465	50.962	0.000	324		0.05
Girls	102	1.42	0.345					

Table 2 shows that the mean scores for males and girls pursuing higher education in terms of peace perception are 1.31 and 1.42, respectively. The relative standard deviations are 0.345 and 0.465. The gender-specific estimated t-value is 50.962, while the table t-value at the 0.05 level was 0.000. The t-value is therefore significant at the 0.05 level. As result, the hypothesis that "there is a significant gender difference in the mean peace perception scores of higher education students" is maintained. It is determined that, when considering gender as a variable, there is a considerable difference in the mean perception of students in higher education.

Factors for Promotion of Peace among Higher Education Students

The objective was to find out the elements that support the development of peace among Somalian students participating in higher education institutions in order to examine the findings under this dimension. "What are the factors contributing to the promotion of peace among students of higher education institutions with reference to their social, personal, and educational life?" was the study question that was asked in accordance with the purpose. Students completed a questionnaire about the goal and research topic, which helped collect the data. For the purpose of data analysis, the percentages were computed. As presented in the table 3.

Table 3 Factors for Promotion of Peace among Higher Education Students

No	Factors	Yes (in%)	No (in%)
1	Peace is an essential element for day-to-day life.	87.4%	12.6%
2	Do you live peacefully at your home?	88.9%	11.1%
3	Do your family members cooperate to each other?	90.7%	9.2%
4	Parental conflicts result in loss of confidence among their children.	84.6%	15.4%
5	Is discipline a necessary element for an academic institution?	77.5%	22.5%
6	Do you think that there is better understanding among your family member?	85.5%	14.5%
7	Is non-violence the best way to maintain peace and tranquility?	77.5%	22.5%
8	Are moral and ethics essential element for promoting peace in the society?	82.2%	17.8%
9	Did you have encouragement of peaceful conflict resolution strategies?	82.5%	17.5%
10	Did you have a strong institutional commitment to peace education and peacebuilding initiatives?	86.2%	13.8%

According to the above table, the majority of students (90.7%) believe that family members help one another maintain peace. Furthermore, the majority of students (87.4%) believe that tranquility is a necessary component for daily and Although more than 88% of students believe they live happily at home, 11.1% of students do not share this belief for a variety of reasons. In a similar vein, the majority of respondents 84.6% think that parental confrontations cause their kids to lose confidence, while 15.4% disagreed. While 22.5% of respondents disagreed, the majority of respondents 77.5%, felt that discipline is an essential component of an academic institution. Regarding violence, 77.5% of students believe that nonviolence is the greatest method to preserve calm and peace, while 22.5% disagree. Additionally, 82.2% believe that morality and ethics are crucial components of fostering social harmony. Although 17.5% of respondents do not think they have encouragement of nonviolent dispute resolution tactics, the majority of respondents 82.5% agreed that they do. Lastly, 86.2% of respondents are very committed as an institution to peacebuilding and peace education programs.

Factors responsible for deterioration of Peace among Higher Education Students

The aim was defined as studying the causes of the decline in student peace in higher education institutions in order to ascertain the outcomes within this dimension. In line with the objective, a study question was developed that asked, "What are the factors responsible for the decline in peace among higher education students with reference to their social, personal, and academic lives?" Students completed a questionnaire about the aim and research topic, which helped collect the data. For the purpose of data analysis, the percentages were computed. Table 4 presents the findings related to the study topic.

Table 4 Factors responsible for deterioration of Peace among Higher Education Students

No	Factors	Yes (in%)	No (in%)
1	Do you think that ragging has positive impact on students?	75.7%	24.3%
2	Do you think media has acted as an effective role for solving conflicts?	78.8%	21.2%
3	Antisocial people are the main reason of violence.	74.2%	25.8%
4	Do your family members believe in conflicts?	72.3%	27.7%
5	Is terrorism only responsible for hampering peace in the present era?	69.5%	30.5%
6	Is there any relationship between growing crime rate and narrow politics in Somalia?	62.8%	37.2%
7	Did you believe external influences or involvement in conflicts outside the educational institution?	72.3%	27.7%
8	Did you believe insufficient awareness and understanding of the importance of peace among students?	82.8%	17.2%

Table 4 shows that almost 80% of respondents think that students in Somalia lack awareness and comprehension of the value of peace. As long as the majority of students think that higher education students are less conscious of peace, then teaching them about peace and its value is necessary. Regarding ragging, students (75.7%) express agreement that it has a beneficial effect on them, stating that there is something positive to be learned from it. One of the most crucial foundations of every democracy, including Somalia, is the media. However, the data shows that, out of 325 students, 78.8% think that the media can effectively and socially acceptably resolve conflicts in today's society, while 21.2% disagree and think that the media cannot effectively or socially acceptable resolve conflicts in today's society. Over one-

fourth of them (25.8%) disagreed with the statement that antisocial people are the primary cause of violence, while much more than (74%), agreed. It's noteworthy to note that 72.3% of family members think that disputes occur in the family. Therefore, in order to develop civil and harmonious family members, the family members should be taught peace and quiet rather than confrontation. Comparably, the vast majority of respondents 69.5% think that terrorism is the sole thing impeding peace in Somalia in the modern era, whereas a small percentage of respondents 30.5% disagreed, believing that other causes could also be at play. As a result, the government should concentrate on the key elements to improve social harmony. However, the majority of students (62.8%) believe that narrow politics alone is to blame for Somalia's rising crime rate. Finally, the vast majority of respondents (72.3%) think that there are extraneous influences or parties involved in disputes that take place outside of the educational setting.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to ascertain how higher education students saw peace education in relation to their gender. It was discovered that gender had bearing on how people perceived peace. The outcome shows that students in higher education have a significantly different mean assessment of their gender as a variable (boys and girls). The mean for males is 1.31 percent, whereas the mean for girls is 1.42 percent. In comparison to male students, female students had higher mean scores. This might be because females are generally more calm than boys and have not been involved in the hostilities that have plagued the country for more than thirty years. Thus, it may be said that there is a need for students to become more aware of the teaching of peace education, with a particular emphasis on boys. The outcomes of this study confirm the conclusions from (Faheem & Iqbal, 2021; Swain & Mohanty, 2021).

When data from a questionnaire regarding the causes of developing and deteriorating peace were analyzed, it became clear that the majority of students (87.4%) believed that non-violence was the best way to preserve peace and tranquility and that peace was a necessary component of daily life. The majority of students (77.5%) said that discipline was an essential component of a learning environment. The majority of students (77.5%) thought that the greatest approach to preserve calm and peace was through nonviolence, and 82.2% said that morality and ethics were crucial for fostering peace. Regarding awareness of peace, over 80% of respondents feel that students in Somalia lack appropriate knowledge and comprehension of the significance of peace. As long as the majority of students think that higher education students are less conscious of peace, then teaching them about peace and its value is necessary. The study's findings are in line with (Swain & Mohanty, 2021). The result also shows that 72.3% of family members think that disagreements are inevitable. Therefore, in order to develop civil and harmonious family members, the family members should teach peace and quiet rather than confrontation. Comparably, the vast majority of respondents 69.5% think that terrorism is the sole thing impeding peace in Somalia in the modern era. sole a small percentage of respondents 30.5% disagreed, believing that other causes could also be at play. However, the majority of students (62.8%) believe that limited politics alone is to blame for Somalia's rising crime rate. In order to ensure that the political system is equitable and accessible to all citizens, which will promote peace and lessen conflict, it is necessary for it to be open to all of them.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

A culture of peace is a set of values, norms, practices, and lifestyles that are based on respect for human life, the outlawing of violence, and the cultivation of nonviolence by cooperation, dialogue, and instruction (Aden, 2017). Therefore, the study's conclusions will aid in fostering peace ideas among undergraduate students. According to the researcher's recommendations, educational institutions might use a variety of research projects to promote student harmony. Refresher courses are necessary to help teachers advance their understanding of peace. According to this study, higher education students especially boys should be offered specialized classes on peacebuilding, given that ladies tend to be more peaceful than boys. Furthermore, given that the survey reveals a low level of peace awareness, the government needs to impose mandatory measures on university administrations to raise student knowledge of peace and emphasize the significance of peace in higher education. According to the research, teachers should receive training in the subject of teaching peace education in order to prepare them for teaching peace education. As the next generation of citizens, kids will adopt a peace culture if their professors are committed to its development. According to the results, 72.3% of family members think that disagreements are inevitable. According to the study, the best way to raise a civic and peaceful family is to begin peacebuilding at home. Ultimately, the study suggests that in order to ensure that the political system is equitable and accessible to everyone, which would promote peace and lessen conflict, it should be available to all residents.

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