



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND GOVERNANCE

E-ISSN: 2664-603X

P-ISSN: 2664-6021

IJPSG 2022; 4(2): 29-35

www.journalofpoliticalscience.com

Received: 08-04-2022

Accepted: 12-05-2022

Abdul Raqib Sahibzada

Assistant Professor,
Department of Development
Management, Faculty of
Public Administration and
policy, Nangarhar University
Nangarhar, Afghanistan

Raihanullah Rahimi

Assistant Professor,
Department of Development
Management, Faculty of
Public Administration and
policy, Nangarhar University
Nangarhar, Afghanistan

Corresponding Author:

Abdul Raqib Sahibzada

Assistant Professor,
Department of Development
Management, Faculty of
Public Administration and
policy, Nangarhar University
Nangarhar, Afghanistan

The role of female students in promoting the culture of peace in universities and communities

Abdul Raqib Sahibzada and Raihanullah Rahimi

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26646021.2022.v4.i2a.167>

Abstract

Violence and conflicts occur constantly in communities and universities. We have also witnessed the war that has been raging in Afghanistan for 40 years now, which has severely affected the entire society, particularly women. This library research explores how women/girls can foster a culture of peace in the universities and community and reduce violence against people, particularly women. Existing scholarship and research findings in this area have indicated that conducting peace-related training programs for women in universities and involving women in policymaking, planning, politics, and leadership can be effective in promoting the culture of peace. Since woman is a mother, she can lay the foundation for the culture of peace by educating a peaceful child. A woman is a sister, daughter, and wife and most Afghans honor women; therefore, she can promote the culture of peace in the family and community. If women/girls are given a role in leadership and politics, they can promote the culture of peace effectively because they are more compassionate and merciful than men. For women to play a positive role in promoting the culture of peace in universities and community-based on previous research findings and recommendations, I suggest conducting training programs on peace and conflict recognition and conflict resolution skills in Afghan universities as well as involving women/girls in policymaking, planning, politics, and leadership to create the culture of peace.

Keywords: Peace, peace culture, role of women, factors of war, peace education

Introduction

The culture of peace is a way of cultivating values, practices, status, behavior, and life which is achieved through dialogue between individuals and groups (Yaacov, 2006). Whereas fighting is a condition in which, with the help of an individual or a group, the opposing person or group becomes incapacitated, injured, or killed if the fighting is intense (Creveld, 2010) [10]. Mayor (2009) [17] stated that culture of peace is a situation in which both parties live individually and/or as a group in a peaceful atmosphere-the emergence of the culture of peace depends on different factors (i.e., human rights, democracy, the promotion of tolerance, peace education, easy access to information, and greater participation of women). Mayor (2009) [17] adds that if the above-mentioned factors or principles are worked on, it can help to create the culture of peace in society.

The first part of the present study explores the role women/girls play in creating the culture of peace and the second part examines how we can strengthen the role of women in promoting the culture of peace. The current study is largely based on library research and with the use of first-hand information. After exploration and analyzing the data, it was concluded that a woman is a mother who based on the peaceful upbringing of her child, can lay the foundation for the culture of peace. The fact that a woman is a mother, a sister, a daughter, a wife, and a sister-in-law and is highly respected in Afghan society can promote the culture of peace in the family as well as community. If women are trained in peace and given role in community and university decision making, policy, leadership, conflict resolution, and planning, they can help create a peaceful environment in society and universities and can strengthen the role of women in promoting the culture of peace. Because women are more peace-loving than men, supportive, eloquent, less indifferent towards responsibilities, more inclined towards reconciliation, and have a calm personality that can easily create the culture of peace (Adirika, 2014; Aharoni, 2010; Ardizzone, 2007; Boulden, 2004; Hunt, 2001) [1, 4, 5, 7, 13].

Research Problem

Violence and conflicts occur constantly in communities and universities. As women/girls are more affected than men, when they try to fight to solve their problems, they face more problems such as sexual harassment, bribery, and so on. These problems arise for two main reasons. First, lack of awareness regarding the culture of peace in universities and organizations. Education policies in Afghanistan are designed with the sole purpose of producing workers. The policies do not address students' conflict resolutions skills, critical thinking, and analytical thinking skills, as well as peace issues, are overlooked. Second, our observations and numerous reports indicate that the role of policy, planning, and leadership in creating the culture of peace for women/girls not only in public but also in academic institutions is not given consideration which exacerbates these problems. Given these challenges, it is important to look at existing research to find out how conflicts in universities and communities are reduced, how female students can promote the culture of peace, and how to strengthen the role of women in the culture of peace. To this end, I have reviewed several articles and research papers conducted in different countries, the results and recommendations of which will be discussed in the following sections. It is important to note that review of the scholarship has demonstrated that no research has been done on this issue in Afghanistan, which is a huge gap. Therefore, the present study is conducted to fill the gap and increase the information in this regard.

Research objectives

- a) The main aim of this study is to find out how women can promote the culture of peace in universities and the community.
- b) The second aim of the study is to identify factors that strengthen the role of women in the culture of peace.

Research questions

To achieve the above objectives, I have created the following research questions.

- a) How can women/girls promote the culture of peace in universities and society?
- b) How can we strengthen the role of women in the culture of peace in universities and society?

Significance of the research

When the role of female students in creating the culture of peace is clarified and strengthened, women who are gentler, kind, supportive, peace-loving, cooperative, eloquent, less indifferent to responsibilities than men, more inclined to compromise, and have a calmer personality-can effectively create the culture of peace (Hunt, 2001) ^[13].

Literature review

As this article discusses the role of women/girls in the development of the culture of peace in universities and society as well as strengthening the role of women in the culture of peace, it is important to increase our awareness of peace education and culture, the role of women, and strengthening of the role of women in peace. It is also necessary to find out how can involving women/girls in policymaking and leadership, strengthening the role of women in peace culture can have an impact on promoting peace in academic institutions and society. These issues will

be discussed in the following sections.

Peace, violence, peace culture and education

Yaacov (2006) noted that the culture of peace is a way of cultivating values, practices, status, behavior, and life achieved through dialogue between individuals and groups. While fighting is a condition in which, with the help of an individual or a group, the opposing person or group becomes weakened, injured, or killed if the fighting is intense (Crevelde, 2010) ^[10]. In a similar vein, Mayor (2009) ^[17] mentioned that the culture of peace is a condition in which both parties live individually and/or as a group in a peaceful atmosphere—the emergence of the culture of peace depends on several factors (i.e., human rights, democracy, the promotion of tolerance, peace education, easy access to information, and greater participation of women). He adds that if the above-mentioned factors or principles are worked on, it can help to create the culture of peace in society. According to the United Nations, "the culture of peace is a collection of values, practices, and ways of life that reduce violence and prevent conflicts by resolving problems through dialogue between individuals, groups, and countries by eliminating their root causes" (Cairns, 2010) ^[8]. Creating the culture of peace in the university and society means promoting peace in daily life, practice, and behavior and to reduce conflicts in universities and the community. In peace education, values, practices, and ways of life change from theory to practice. Similarly, Frances (2005) ^[10] asserted that peace education refers to conflict resolution, international understanding and human rights, and critical pedagogy of international education. Peace education is also known for its knowledge of interaction and empowerment, social justice, living skills, and much more (Potter, 2005).

Peace education promotes human dignity, strengthens respect for fundamental freedom and human rights, and promotes understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all national, religious, or racial groups. Now that we understood the concept of peace education, it is worthwhile to understand the value of implementing peace-related programs in universities and other academic institutions. The following paragraphs are devoted to this area.

Johnson (1996) ^[15] stated that students trained in conflict resolution can reduce the level of violence and harassment in their university and community. Universities that implement peace education and mediation programs not only reduce violence but also provide social and emotional support to students. Such programs play a major role in preventing conflict and violence and promoting academic achievement (Turk, 2017). Hossain (2017) ^[12] noted that we have been able to protect our students and teachers from a hostile learning environment by guiding universities and professors based on research in several professions. Peace education started after the establishment of the United Nations in the year 2000. The United Nations was created after World Wars to save the victorious generation from disaster or war to reaffirm the belief in the dignity and worth of human personality, women and men should be given equal rights, conditions must be created to respect obligations arising from international law and other sources, as well as to promote social development and better living standards in independence (United Nation Charter).

The above literature review has demonstrated that promoting the culture of peace in universities reduces violence and harassment against young people, especially

women/girls, in the university environment and society-as a result leads the society towards progress and prosperity.

Basic aspects of the culture of peace

The seven pillars of the international community's culture of peace (human rights, democracy, tolerance, development, peace education, easy access to information, and greater participation of women) have been outlined below.

Human rights

One way to move from conflict and disorder to the culture of peace is to accept the established international human rights law. For a state of peace to emerge from a state of conflict, it is necessary to establish individualistic and collective international human rights in tribes and nations.

Democracy

Another way to move from conflict and disorder to the culture of peace is to promote democracy. Democracy must be promoted to move from a state of war to a state of peace because in a democracy power and interests are divided between the parties rather than one side and each side enjoys equal rights and responsibilities. When power and interests are shared equally between the parties, it leads to the elimination of violence and the emergence of the culture of peace. War occurs when the demands of the other side are not accepted. For peace to take place there must be a state of democracy in which the demands of the other side are accepted and equality between individuals is established (Iwilade, 2011) ^[14].

Tolerance

Another way to move from conflict to peace is to build tolerance. War does not happen without an enemy. To create the culture of peace, the image of the enemy must be removed from the minds of tribes, nations, and peoples based on knowledge, tolerance, and unity. Collective unity, high hopes, and tolerance unite the society; therefore, the foundations of tolerance must be established in the society for peace to prevail (Arthur, 1995) ^[6].

Development

Another way to move from conflict and misery to peace is to foster development. Studies have indicated that poverty and misery are one of the causes of the war. According to the International Organization for Social Development, peace can be achieved through social development, social rights, and the elimination of poverty (Copenhagen, 1995). Also, according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), peace cannot be achieved unless there is intellectual, social, and financial development among the people.

Peace education

Peace education is another important way to build peace. The purpose of education is not only formal education studied in schools and universities but also non-formal education (i.e., family education and media). It is important to change the atmosphere of violence and fear into love through education. To create the culture of peace, from basic education to higher education the community people must be educated in the skills (i.e., negotiation, mediation, conflict resolution, unity, cooperation, and not fighting).

Easy access to information

Freedom of expression, expression, information, and recognition of human rights is an important factor in the culture of peace or the clarification of the factors that lead to war can lead to peace. The media can play a vital role in creating the culture of peace.

Greater participation of women

According to the 4th International Conference on Women, peace can only be achieved if there is equality between men and women (Plattner, 1996). According to the conference, if we want to make peace, we need to empower women in the political and economic spheres and participate in every decision-making process and benefit from their experiences, knowledge, and ideas. It is an internationally accepted principle that women are peaceful and loving. Mayor (2009) ^[17] asserted that to build a lasting peace culture, women's participation in all decision-making processes such as political, social, economic, peace building, and war prevention needs to be expanded.

The importance of women's participation in peace-related training programs and in promoting the culture of peace

According to the modern Hornby English Dictionary, a woman is an adult female human being, a natural resource, and a member of the fair sex. Thus, women should be included in peace education because they are first and foremost human beings, flesh and blood, affected by any issue that affects the human race. They must participate in any peace-related training programs because they are involved and are there.

The United Nation's year 2000 report on the world's population, published on the BBC World Service on January 5, 2001, clearly mentioned that women make up 51% of the world's population. This means that women are the majority. Women who work directly with peace education means that the majority of the world's population works for the peaceful coexistence of all human beings. Peaceful coexistence cannot be denied by any advanced-minded society of human beings, whether they are minority or majority. It is even better when they are in the majority.

It has been learned from the history that women and children are the most vulnerable during conflicts and/or wars. They suffered the most. Their children suffer from diseases and hunger, their fathers, brothers, and husbands are killed and maimed, and they are raped and put under pressure in less peaceful situations and circumstances. Think of the situations that promote peace to save yourself and the world from a bad situation (Boulden, 2003).

Deaths due to violence among women in childbirth are common in war situations. Childbirth is stressful both psychologically and physically, so women need a relaxed and positive mental state. In conflicts and wars, medical equipment may be in poor condition due to war-related restrictions (Adirika, 2014 ^[1]) as a result, many women die during childbirth. If women giving birth are allowed to die without a fight, the world's population may shrink unfairly. In addition, in most cases of rape, the victims are women. Participating in peace education will give women the opportunity to educate and socialize their children and the world against incidents of death due to violence.

Bad customs and traditions against women such as early age marriages, domestic violence, and sexual violence are so

painful that made women suffer from stress and mental illness. Peaceful coexistence is needed to reduce this pressure. For a healthy life, women/girls must participate in peace training programs. If women do not participate in peace education, they may be exposed to widespread violence in their cultural and traditional sites, particularly in Afghanistan. Peace reduces physical violence, which in turn protects the physical and mental well-being of children, and thereby promotes the rapid growth of children. Adirika (2014) ^[1] explained that violence is a cause of instability and the sooner it is prevented, the easier it will be to achieve stability and development. Peaceful coexistence is a fundamental human right. Human rights are also women's rights. Therefore, they must work for their rights. Respect for women and peaceful coexistence are part of these rights. Education is a great tool for their understanding.

The significance of women's participation in leadership

This section will discuss what role will involving women/girls in leadership play in promoting the culture of peace.

According to Aharoni (2010) ^[4], women create life, and they make up 51 percent of the world's population. According to him, as women have suffered so much from wars, they can stop and eliminate the practice and ideology of "war" based on their numbers and strengths. Women can prevent the devastation and tragedy caused by wars through their creativity, participation in the new system of culture of peace, world care, and responsible governance. Aharoni (2010) ^[4] further adds that if women succeed in their quest for empowerment, and gain effective positions, they will not only save their children from being killed but will also save the whole of humanity from the coming World War III, which may be very devastating and frightening.

To promote the culture of peace, women must be involved in decision-making and policymaking as well as a separate women's groups must be formed. This is because by involving women in decision making, policymaking, and by creating different groups, Burundian women have been able to make significant progress towards peace, gained the rights that are not granted to women, and gained 30% power in the country's decision making (Agbalajobi, 2009) ^[2].

Given that men are more in favor of war than women and that most wars are started by men, how can a person who loves war and has always started war be effective in peace? Therefore, women should be given a greater role in creating the culture of peace because women are more peace-loving, cooperative, eloquent, less indifferent to responsibilities than men, more passionate about reconciliation, based on which culture of peace can be easily created (Hunt, 2001) ^[13].

Women are in a special position due to their biological, neurological, and cultural characteristics and can carry out the necessary tasks for peace. Women are good at creating art and literature and promoting peace values and culture. Many women around the world have joined non-governmental peace organizations (NGOs) which condemn the misconception that war can resolve conflicts. By highlighting the values of women's peace, NGOs believe that the whole concept and practice of warfare must be quickly thrown into the anachronistic density of history, wherever they belong. Women can be a powerful force for peace, as they constitute more than half of the world's population. Aharoni (2010) ^[4] stated that if the women of

the world succeed in their efforts for unity (with all the peace-loving and democratic men in the world who are interested in world peace), then they can succeed in their efforts to achieve world peace. Women are indeed the best allies for promoting peace, and research conducted on this question suggests that there is a close link between gender and peace. In our new era of globalization, when profound cultural changes and new social connections have taken place, women must be equally involved in shaping the world beyond war and violence. And the need for a new systematic culture of peace becomes even more apparent and urgent (Aharoni, 2010) ^[4].

Research shows that women's leadership in social activities has had a significant impact on women's rights movements in the 1960s and 1970s, including social justice and peace movements. Ardizzone (2007) ^[5] stated that "women have shown social responsibility and organizational leadership in key areas. Social issues, such as harassment, sexual orientation, and respect for individual rights have encouraged students to learn about issues, support a peaceful resolution of conflicts, and promote understanding among the general public". Briefly looking at research findings and past writings, it can be said that the participation of women/girls in leadership can be effective in promoting the culture of peace, conflict resolution, and reduction of violence in communities and universities.

The role of women in promoting the culture of peace

Child training

As actual human training begins from the family, the family can train their child as they want, hard, soft, hardworking, educated, and so on. The child is often with the mother so a woman can lay the foundation of the culture of peace by raising a peaceful child.

Family, class, and university

Women can promote the culture of peace in the family, class, and university with the help of their power, which is respected by men in society. It has been observed that whenever a fight breaks out in the family or between families, women can put an end to the fight by coming forward. For example, whenever women throw away their feathers in a state of war, the great wars are over.

Social media

Women can promote the culture of peace by implementing various training programs through social media.

Creating civil society (CSs)

By creating a civil society, women can promote the culture of peace. By establishing CSs in different countries, women have been able to create and promote the culture of peace.

Different groups of women

By creating different groups of women, women can solve the problems facing women and promote the culture of peace. By creating diverse groups in Africa, women can claim their rights from society and reduce the scale of conflict and create peace.

Implementing peace programs in universities and communities

Women can promote the culture of peace in universities and communities by implementing various programs on the

benefits and harms of peace and war (Nangarhar University Peace Center, 2021).

Factors that have reduced the effectiveness of women in creating the culture of peace

The sad fact is that women cannot play an effective role in the peace process, and they do not seem to be able to add real value to the peace process. Women are not effective in peace because of the following factors:

1. No commitment to equal rights for men and women.
2. Ignoring the needs of women in the process of rights and reconciliation.
3. Ignoring the special needs of women in economic development

Other factors reduce the effectiveness of women in the peace process, including the exclusion of women from politics, which in turn has reduced the effectiveness of women in building the culture of peace. We can briefly say that the following are the factors that have reduced the effectiveness of women in creating the culture of peace:

Lack of political power and vision

Peace building requires political education to formulate a political strategy and build peace based on it. Accordingly, in most countries, women are less likely than men to receive political education, which has reduced their effectiveness in creating the culture of peace.

Lack of experience, negotiation, defense, and lobbying skills and techniques

Women are excluded from politics and are not given equal participation in decision-making. The defense is lacking in technology and its effectiveness in the peace process has diminished.

Lack of political participation

Lack of political representation of women at the state level or in society has led to women being left in the lurch and are reluctant to participate in the peace process has decreased the effectiveness of women (Agbalajobi, 2009) ^[3].

Data collection methods

The study is largely library-based, with the use of first-hand information. Secondhand information on the subject was collected from authoritative, reliable, and up-to-date books, journals, reporting conferences, and first-hand information from Nangarhar University Peace Center officials and the Department of Women's Affairs, then this information was grouped and analyzed. After classification and analysis, information was provided on the role of female students in creating the culture of peace and strengthening the role of women in the culture of peace by considering the role of women in universities and society so that the women's role in the culture of peace be strengthened.

Findings and Conclusions

Based on existing scholarship in the field and findings of the current research, the study concludes that women in universities and society are more involved in child-rearing, social media, civil society, the creation of different groups, and in the family. By participating in classroom and/or university training programs they can promote the culture of peace and reduce conflict and violence. It was also revealed

that women/girls can play a vital role in creating a peaceful environment in the universities and society. Past research has demonstrated that conflict, violence, problems, and wars in the communities and universities have two main causes. First is the lack of knowledge about peace among the people of the community. Secondly, there is a lack of equal rights for women/girls in jobs, politics, and leadership. Different researchers/scholars have proposed following two suggestions to solve the mentioned problems. *First*, peace education programs should be implemented in universities so that students, especially women, can improve their conflict resolution skills, which will help bring peace to the community, especially in the universities. *Second*, women/girls should be given equal opportunities in jobs and leadership. Considering these results, it can be suggested that community, universities, and other academic institutions must be active in policymaking and leadership for women as well as implement peace-related training programs to promote the culture of peace and reduce conflict and violence in these institutions.

Based on past research studies and the findings of this study, it is concluded that women/girls can promote the culture of peace in universities and the community in different ways such as promoting the culture of peace through child-rearing. As most of the personality development of human beings happens at home and most of the role in the formation of personality belongs to the woman. The culture of peace can be created if a mother who is a woman educates her children properly. Women can promote the culture of peace by participating in social media. Given that on the one hand there is a lot of respect in Afghan society and on the other hand, men are more prone to war. Considering these two options, women can develop the culture of peace by implementing different programs. Women can also build power through various groups such as civil society, charities, and NGOs and promote the culture of peace through the implementation of various programs. As mentioned earlier, men have high regard for women in Afghan society. Women can use this power to promote the culture of peace in the family, classroom, university, and society.

It was also revealed that women/girls can play a vital role in creating a peaceful environment in universities and society. If women/girls are given time to develop the culture of peace, they can be more effective than men. Because women are more peace-loving than men, supportive, eloquent, less indifferent to responsibilities, more inclined towards compromise and reconciliation, and have a calm personality that can easily create the culture of peace. The participation of women in the peace process of different countries has proved to be effective.

However, some factors are more effective in creating the culture of peace for women than for men, which has diminished the role of women in the peace process and in creating the culture of peace. If these factors are addressed, the role of women in the peace culture and process can be strengthened.

- a) Lack of peace education for women.
- b) Lack of commitment to equal rights for men and women.
- c) Disregard the needs of women in the process of rights and reconciliation.
- d) Disregard the special needs of women in economic reconstruction.

- e) Deprivation of women from politics.
- f) Disenfranchisement of women/girls in policymaking and leadership.

Peace education results in tolerance, dialogue, negotiation, cooperation, agreement, and reconciliation techniques, recognizing each other's feelings and rights, and builds the culture of peace, and so on. The role of women in the culture of peace can be strengthened if women are educated in this field. Due to the lack of equality between men and women in society, women have been marginalized and deprived of peace education, which prevents women from playing a constructive role in the culture of peace. Considering women's rights, we can strengthen the role of women in the culture of peace. Ignoring the needs of women in the process of rights and reconciliation leads to women being marginalized and deprived of peace education and their role in the culture of peace is diminished.

Since most of the violence is based on poverty, economic development leads to the culture of peace. Since the needs of women are not taken into consideration in economic development, the culture of peace has diminished. If the needs of women in the economic sector are addressed, the role of women in the culture of peace can be strengthened. Another factor that has diminished the role of women in the culture of peace is the exclusion of women from politics. In other words, the factors that have reduced the effectiveness of women in creating the culture of peace are:

- a) Lack of vision and political power.
- b) Lack of experience, negotiation, defense, and lobbying skills and techniques.
- c) Lack of political Participation.

Since creating the culture of peace requires political education, it is important to formulate a political strategy to build the culture of peace based on it. Accordingly, in most countries, women are less likely than men to receive political education which in turn has reduced the effectiveness of women in creating culture of peace. To strengthen the role of women in the culture of peace, it is necessary to empower women in political power, government, and society. Also, it is essential to acquire the courage and strength of dialogue, peace building, defense techniques, and strengthen their role.

The lack of participation of women/girls in policymaking and leadership has led to a diminishing role of women in the culture of peace. If women are given a role in policymaking and leadership not only will the role of women be strengthened in the culture of peace but also the culture of peace will easily become common in the university and society. This is because women are more peace-loving than men, supportive, eloquent, less indifferent to responsibilities, more inclined towards compromise and reconciliation, and have a calm personality.

Considering these results, it can be suggested that to promote the culture of peace in the community, universities, and other academic institutions, and to reduce conflict and violence, these institutions must be active in policymaking and leadership for women as well as implementing peace-related training programs.

Limitations of the research

While none of the research and scholarly writing is free of limitations, our writing also has some limitations which are

as follows. First, this study has used library research form only. In every research, people's opinions and field research are very important. To measure the views/perceptions of Afghans on peace education and the role of women/girls in leadership, future research can use different data collections tools and methodology such as interviewing, surveys, and discourse completion tasks (DCTs).

Recommendations

Based on the existing scholarship in the area and the findings of the current study, it can be suggested that the following actions should be taken to strengthen the role of women in the culture of peace:

- 1) Women should be educated about peace.
- 2) Women should be involved in policymaking, politics, and leadership.
- 3) Women should be given equal rights with men.

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