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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION OF PEACE EDUCATION INTO THE JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION CURRICULUM: OBJECTIVES, CONTENT AND STRATEGIES

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Abstract

The study investigated teachers' perceptions of the integration of Peace Education into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum in South-South Nigeria. With reference to strategies, challenges and prospects Two specific objectives, two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 2,604 teachers in public Junior Secondary Schools across Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone. Using proportionate stratified random sampling, a sample of 781 teachers, comprising 290 males and 491 females, was selected. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Teachers' Perception of Peace Education Integration Questionnaire (TPPEIQ). The instrument was validated by three experts in the areas of curriculum studies and Educational Measurement and Evaluation. and its reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded a grand coefficient of 0.86. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed among other things that teachers held positive perceptions regarding the challenges, strategies and prospects for integrating peace education into the Junior Secondary School Education curriculum. The study also identified inadequate funding, insufficient instructional materials, lack of incentives, and inadequate professional development opportunities as notable challenges. Furthermore, the results showed no significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions on all variables investigated. It was recommended, among others, that peace education should be systematically embedded within related subjects, while regular training programmes, workshops, and seminars should be organized to enhance teachers' capacity for effective implementation of the curriculum.

Keywords: Peace Education, Integration, Content, objectives, Junior Secondary Curriculum

Introduction

The contemporary world is increasingly characterized by conflicts, violence and insecurity, with serious consequences for children and educational development. According to the United Nations (2024), grave violations against children in armed conflict increased by 25% in 2024, with over 5,301 children killed and 6,348 maimed. Similarly, UNESCO (2025) reported approximately 6,000 attacks on students, educators and educational institutions between 2022 and 2023, representing a 20% increase over the preceding two years. These developments underscore the urgent need for education to promote peaceful coexistence, tolerance and non-violent conflict resolution. This constitutes the fundamental concern of peace education and the focus of the present study.

Peace Education refers to the acquisition of values, knowledge, attitudes and skills that promote peaceful behaviour, prevent conflicts, encourage non-violent dispute resolution and sustain peaceful societies (Navarro-Castro & Nario-Galace, 2019; Rubab & Yousuf, 2022). It equips learners with competencies for managing disagreements constructively, respecting diversity and participating responsibly in society (Corkalo, 2023). Its integration into the formal school curriculum is particularly important at the junior secondary school level, when learners, typically aged 10–15 years, develop their identities, attitudes and social values.

Effective integration requires clearly defined objectives, relevant content and appropriate instructional strategies. The objectives should include promoting non-violence, tolerance, human rights awareness, intercultural understanding, conflict resolution and responsible citizenship (Bhuttah et al., 2020; Milican et al., 2021). Relevant content areas include human rights, conflict transformation, social justice, democracy, diversity, empathy, emotional management, non-violent communication and environmental peacebuilding (Kumar & Srivastava, 2020; Milican et al., 2021). These objectives and content areas should reflect learners' social realities and developmental needs.

Equally important are strategies for integrating and teaching peace education. Integration approaches may include infusing peace-related concepts into existing subjects such as Social Studies, History and Literature, introducing stand-alone modules, and employing extracurricular and school-wide peace initiatives (UNESCO, 2021; Ndwandwe, 2024). Classroom delivery may adopt learner-centred approaches such as cooperative, experiential and thematic learning to encourage active participation, empathy and problem-solving (Reardon, 2023). However, inadequate teacher training, limited instructional resources, insufficient institutional support and examination-oriented teaching practices may constrain effective implementation.

In Nigeria, persistent ethnic, religious, communal and resource-based conflicts have undermined social cohesion, security and educational development. The South-South region, in particular, has experienced militancy, youth restiveness and communal violence. These challenges reinforce the need for schools to cultivate peaceful attitudes, mutual understanding, tolerance and responsible citizenship among young people.

Although Nigerian educational policies emphasize national unity and peaceful coexistence, peace education has not been systematically integrated into the Junior Secondary School curriculum. Consequently, there is insufficient empirical evidence regarding the appropriate objectives, content, integration strategies and instructional methods for its effective implementation, particularly in South-South Nigeria.

Teachers, as frontline curriculum implementers, possess valuable knowledge of learners' needs, classroom realities and community challenges. Their perceptions are therefore essential for identifying appropriate approaches and potential barriers to integrating peace education into the school curriculum. The limited attention given to these perspectives constitutes a gap in curriculum development and educational policy.

Against this background, the study examines teachers' perceptions of integrating peace education into the Junior Secondary School curriculum in South-South Nigeria, with particular attention to its objectives, content, integration strategies, instructional methods and implementation challenges.

The general objective of this study is to investigate teachers' perception of integration of Peace Education into junior secondary education curriculum in Nigeria. Specifically, the study was designed to:

1. determine male and female teachers' perceptions of the objectives of Peace Education that should be integrated into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum.
2. determine male and female teachers' perceptions of the Peace Education contents that should be integrated into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum.
3. determine male and female teachers' perceptions of the strategies for integrating of Peace Education into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum

The following research questions guided the study.

v. What are male and female teachers' perceptions of the objectives of Peace Education that should be integrated into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum?

vi. What are male and female teachers' perceptions of the Peace Education contents that should be integrated into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum?

vii. What are male and female teachers' perceptions of the strategies for integrating Peace Education into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum?

The following null hypotheses were tested for the study at 0.05 alpha level of significance:

H01: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions of the objectives of Peace Education that should be integrated into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum.

H02: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions of the Peace Education contents that should be integrated into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum.

H03: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions of the strategies for integrating the identified Peace Education contents into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted. The population comprised 2,604 public junior secondary school teachers in Nigeria's South-South zone, from which 781 teachers (290 males and 491 females) were selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected using the researcher-developed Teachers' Perception of Peace Education Integration Questionnaire (TPPEIQ), validated by three experts in the areas of Curriculum Studies and Educational Measurement and Evaluation. Reliability-tested using Cronbach Alpha, yielding 0.86. Mean and standard deviation answered the research questions, while z-test tested the hypotheses at the 0.05 significance level.

For the research questions, a mean score of 2.50 and above indicated agreement or positive perception, while scores below 2.50 indicated disagreement or negative perception. For the hypotheses, the null hypothesis was rejected where the calculated z-value exceeded the critical z-value of ±1.96, or where the p-value was less than 0.05; otherwise, it was not rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: What are male and female teachers' perceptions of the objectives of peace education that should be integrated into the Junior Secondary Education Curriculum?

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation of teachers' perception of the objectives of peace education that should be integrated into the Junior Secondary Education Curriculum

S/N	Item Statement	Male (n=290)			Female (n=491)		
		$\bar{X}$	Std	Decision	$\bar{X}$	Std	Decision
1.	Promotion of peace through education	2.87	.815	Agreed	2.72	.952	Agreed
2.	Promotes the value of a culture of peace at all levels of educational systems	2.21	1.292	Disagreed	2.13	1.251	Disagreed

3.	Prevents continued cycles of violence in communities	2.64	1.083	Agreed	2.90	.974	Agreed
4.	Peace education encourages community development	2.63	1.110	Agreed	3.09	1.023	Agreed
5.	It builds security confidence among learners	1.33	.471	Disagreed	1.34	.475	Disagreed
6.	Creates a peaceful environment in schools and communities	2.98	1.041	Agreed	3.00	.893	Agreed
7.	Peace education contributes to the decrease in the number of conflict situations with violent outcomes	3.10	.883	Agreed	3.10	.951	Agreed
8.	It teaches the skills and values associated with peaceful behaviours	2.98	1.244	Agreed	2.95	1.203	Agreed
9.	Peace education brings about the attitude of living together and solving problems.	3.01	1.036	Agreed	3.29	.878	Agreed
10.	Develops people's constructive and peaceful skills for sustained community development	1.40	.599	Disagreed	1.48	.630	Disagreed
	Grand Mean	2.515	0.9574		2.600	0.923	Agree

Table 1 shows that male (M = 2.515, SD = 0.957) and female (M = 2.600, SD = 0.923) teachers had moderately positive perceptions of peace education objectives. Both groups agreed that peace education promotes peace, prevents violence, fosters peaceful behaviour and coexistence, reduces conflicts, encourages problem-solving and supports community development. However, they disagreed on its potential to build learners' security confidence, promote a culture of peace across educational levels and develop sustained community development skills. Overall, both groups supported integrating peace education into the Junior Secondary School curriculum, with females recording a slightly higher mean perception.

H01: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions of the objectives of peace education that should be integrated into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum.

Table 2: z-test Analysis between male and female teachers' perceptions of the objectives of peace education that should be integrated into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	z-value	p-value	Level of Sig	Remark
Males	290	2.515	0.957	1.05	0.293	0.05	Not Significant
Females	491	2.600	0.923				

able 2 indicates no significant gender difference in teachers' perceptions of peace education objectives ($z = 1.05$, $p = 0.293 > 0.05$). Thus, gender does not significantly influence their perceptions.

Research Question 2: What are male and female teachers' perceptions of the peace education contents that should be integrated into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum?

Table 3: Mean and Standard deviation of teachers' perceptions of the peace education contents that should be integrated into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum

S/N	Item Statement	Male (n=290)			Female (n=491)		
		$\bar{X}$	S	Decision	$\bar{X}$	S	Decision
11	Peace education should include teaching students the value of respect for human rights and dignity.	3.52	.754	Disagreed	3.46	.811	Agree
12	The curriculum should incorporate conflict resolution skills such as negotiation and mediation.	3.23	.775	Agreed	3.23	.884	Agreed
13	Students should be taught the importance of tolerance and acceptance of cultural and religious diversity.	3.20	.845	Agreed	3.12	.953	Agreed

14	Peace education content should emphasize non-violent communication and peaceful expression of emotions.	3.41	.600	Disagreed	3.37	.583	Agree
15	The curriculum should include lessons on national unity and patriotism.	2.70	1.215	Agreed	2.94	1.124	Agreed
16	Environmental sustainability and responsible use of natural resources should be part of peace education content.	2.79	.988	Agreed	2.86	1.035	Agreed
17	Students should be taught the dangers of violence, bullying, and aggressive behavior in schools and society.	2.82	.939	Agreed	2.62	1.003	Agreed
18	Peace education should include civic responsibility and active participation in community development.	2.74	1.018	Agreed	2.66	1.119	Agreed
19.	The curriculum should address gender equality and promote fairness between boys and girls.	3.40	.576	Disagreed	3.36	.537	Agree
20	Peace education contents should include awareness of the causes and consequences of social conflicts in society.	3.46	.582	Disagreed	3.40	.561	Agree
	Mean of Item Means	3.127	0.829		3.102	0.861	Agree

Table 3 indicates positive perceptions of peace education content among male (M = 3.127, SD = 0.829) and female (M = 3.102, SD = 0.861) teachers. Both groups supported including conflict resolution, cultural and religious tolerance, national unity, patriotism, environmental sustainability, anti-bullying, civic responsibility and awareness of social conflicts. Minor differences occurred regarding human rights, non-violent communication, emotional

expression and gender equality. Overall, both groups supported integrating diverse peace-related themes into the curriculum.

H0 2: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions of the peace education contents that should be integrated into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum.

Table 4: z-test Analysis between male and female teachers' perceptions of the peace education contents that should be integrated into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	z-value	p-value	Level of Sig	Remark
Males	290	3.127	0.829	0.36	0.718	0.05	Not Significant
Females	491	3.102	0.861				

Table 4 shows no significant gender difference in teachers' perceptions of peace education content ($z = 0.36$, $p = 0.718 > 0.05$). Thus, male and female teachers hold comparable views on the content for curriculum integration.

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of teachers' perceptions of the strategies for integrating the identified peace education contents into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum

S/N	Item Statement	Male (n=290)			Female (n=491)		
		$\bar{X}$	Std	Decision	$\bar{X}$	Std	Decision
21.	Developing learners' predisposition to acquiring knowledge on peace education	2.78	.946	Agreed	2.64	.942	Agreed
22.	Subject matter on peace education should meet the needs and interests of learners	2.73	1.018	Agreed	2.87	1.060	Agreed
23.	Information provided to learners should be structured for easy understanding	1.44	.788	Disagreed	1.32	.600	Disagreed

24	Introduction of proper rewards and punishments in the teaching and learning process	1.79	.900	Disagreed	1.36	.660	Disagreed
25.	Introduction of books, homework, and visual aids on peace education.	2.82	.962	Agreed	2.87	1.044	Agreed
26.	Effective sequencing and structuring of learning contents	2.90	.934	Agreed	2.76	1.068	Agreed
27.	Define learning activities on peace education integration.	2.72	1.068	Agreed	2.73	1.088	Agreed
28.	Through simulations, role play on peace education can be demonstrated in social studies	2.98	.878	Agreed	3.12	.783	Agreed
29.	The continuous coaching and assessment of learners on peace education imbibe the culture of peace	1.43	.822	Disagreed	1.31	.681	Disagreed
30.	Questioning strategy can be used to support the teaching of peace education content.	3.08	.820	Agreed	3.12	.895	Agreed
	Grand Means	2.467	0.914		2.410	0.882	Agree

Table 5 indicates slightly positive perceptions of peace education integration strategies among male (M = 2.467, SD = 0.914) and female (M = 2.410, SD = 0.882) teachers. Both groups supported learner-centred approaches, relevant learning materials, structured content, simulations, role-play, questioning and appropriate learning activities. However, they disagreed on strategies involving simplified information presentation, rewards and punishments, and continuous coaching and assessment. Overall, both groups demonstrated similar, though relatively modest, support for the proposed integration strategies.

H03: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions of the strategies for integrating the identified peace education contents into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum.

Table 6: z-test Analysis of the difference between male and female teachers' perceptions of the strategies for integrating the identified peace education contents into the Junior Secondary Education curriculum.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	z-value	p-value	Level of Sig	Remark
Males	290	2.467	0.914	0.98	0.327	0.05	Not Significant
Females	491	2.410	0.882				

Table 6 reveals no significant gender difference in teachers' perceptions of peace education integration strategies ($z = 0.98$, $p = 0.327 > 0.05$), indicating comparable views among male and female teachers.

Findings and Discussions:

The study revealed that teachers generally had positive perceptions of peace education objectives, particularly promoting peaceful coexistence, reducing violence, fostering community development, creating harmonious school environments and developing problem-solving skills. However, agreement was weaker regarding learners' security confidence and long-term, systemic peacebuilding.

No significant gender difference was found in teachers' perceptions, suggesting a shared understanding of the relevance of peace education irrespective of gender. These findings agree with Rubab and Yousuf (2022), Bhuttah et al. (2020), and Gul et al. (2020), who emphasized the importance of clearly defined peace education objectives and the limited influence of personal characteristics on teachers' perceptions. They also align with Jamal et al. (2022) and Wint Zaw Htet (2025), who highlighted teachers' emphasis on practical outcomes such as tolerance, harmony and conflict resolution.

Overall, the findings suggest that although teachers recognize the immediate benefits of peace education, further professional development is needed to strengthen their understanding of its broader, long-term peacebuilding objectives

The findings revealed that teachers generally had positive perceptions of peace education content, particularly conflict resolution, cultural and religious tolerance, national unity, environmental sustainability, civic responsibility, violence prevention and social conflict awareness. However, some variations occurred regarding human rights, non-violent communication, emotional expression and gender equality. No significant gender difference was established, indicating shared perceptions among male and female teachers.

These findings align with Morales and Gebre (2021), Ndwandwe (2023), Emelogu et al. (2024), Bhuttah et al. (2020) who emphasized contextually relevant content, particularly conflict resolution, tolerance, human rights and peaceful coexistence. Overall, teachers favour practical content that addresses learners' everyday school and community experiences.

The findings indicated generally positive but moderate perceptions of integration strategies. Teachers favoured practical, learner-centred approaches, including instructional materials, simulations, role-play, effective content sequencing and questioning techniques. However, they expressed reservations about rewards and punishments, continuous coaching and assessment, and highly structured information delivery. No significant gender difference was established.

These findings support Ndwandwe (2024), Morales (2021), Ezeoba (2012) and Millican et al. (2021), who emphasized curricular infusion, interactive teaching methods and institutional support as important conditions for effective peace education integration. The findings particularly reinforce the relevance of integrating peace education into existing subjects rather than creating additional curriculum demands.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Junior Secondary School teachers generally support integrating peace education into the curriculum to promote peaceful coexistence, conflict resolution and responsible citizenship. They favour practical, learner-centred approaches within existing subjects. However, effective implementation requires adequate instructional resources, professional development and institutional support. Gender does not significantly influence teachers' perceptions.

Recommendations

1. Government and educational stakeholders should explicitly integrate peace education into relevant subjects in the Junior Secondary School curriculum.
2. Teacher education institutions should strengthen pre-service and in-service training in peace education content and instructional strategies.
3. Government should provide adequate instructional materials, including textbooks and multimedia resources.
4. Schools should promote learner-centred approaches such as group discussions, debates, simulations and role-play to strengthen practical peace education competencies.

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