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# Traditional Peace Education and its Conflict Prevention Role among Indigenous Ghanaian Societies

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## Abstract

Among the varied United Nations (UN) conflict containment templates, the 'Peace Education' concept is of relative novelty. Nonetheless, it has proven to be an effective conflict prevention tool at all societal levels. However, long before its official acceptance as a conflict prevention mechanism by the UN, traditional peace education had deep roots in Africa where parents and society have consciously thought the youth the essence of peaceful coexistence. In particular, Ghanaian children at their early stages through to adulthood are taken through lessons of several virtues at home that include love, togetherness, equality, fairness, tolerance, forgiveness, hospitality, reconciliation, and the fear of God, amongst others in terms of peace education. This study examined the conflict-preventive role of traditional peace education in Ghana. Accordingly, the study used an exploratory mixed-method approach to seek the views of 30 participants qualitatively and 1456 respondents quantitatively. It also relied on the content analysis of secondary and tertiary sources using sociological and historical approaches. The findings are that peace education *via* both formal and informal channels has become a key conflict prevention tool of the United Nations, and peace education has the potential and prospects of preventing conflicts in the 21st Century. Further, Ghana is recognized globally as one of the most peaceful countries in the world as largely attributed to its adherence to traditional home-grown lessons on peace education. Following challenges regarding the full-scale implementation of both formal and informal peace education in Ghana, the paper amongst others recommend that peace education programs should be incorporated into the regular school curriculums, with the total commitment of the government in terms of implementation and funding. Moreover, to prevent conflicts at the local level, there is a need to build the capacities of communities in terms of knowledge and skills in peace education.

## Introduction

The practice of peace education as a conflict prevention tool of the United Nations (UN) is one of novelty, even though today, it is one of the most globally adopted strategies regarding the prevention of conflicts within societies [1]. Its global acceptance was hugely enhanced in 2013 when the UN made a strong case for the concept among member states [2]. Peace education has since provided another channel for the ending of the cycle of global violence and extremism within societies, though amidst challenges in its implementation because of the non-commitment of governments to both fund and incorporate the concept within the formal sector of education [3]. Nonetheless, the role of academia in the recognition of the peace education concept on the global stage cannot be underemphasized. Scholars from varied disciplines continue to provide theoretical and conceptual frameworks for peace education programs. Maria Montessori the globally acclaimed educationist, once remarked that peace could only be established through education as politics only keeps us out of war, thus buttressing the point made by a survivor of the Rwanda Genocide who said education was the only thing he fled with when war broke out [4]. Pointedly, these worthy views replicate the essence of education in the conflict prevention efforts of the UN and the international community at large, as the concept of peace education has found space in several international legal and policy frameworks including the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [3]. Key elements within the Agenda 2030 document are the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and the building of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [5] avers that aside from promoting tolerance, education also enables the attainment of global citizenship skills which are necessary tools for peaceful and inclusive societies as contained in the SDG proposals. It is against this backdrop that Mishra [6] opines that peace education does not only respond to conflicts but also provides a proactive path to building and keeping the peace within the context of its transformational power that impacts positively on people who undergo peace education lessons. So far, many UN agencies have committed huge resources to this end including Inter-agency Network for Education Emergencies (INEE), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and UNESCO. Given the current spate of conflicts that have resulted in social, emotional, and mental torture of individuals and societies and the destruction of lives and properties formal and informal peace education within all human societies has become more necessary now than ever in human history [3]. As stated by Salomon & Nevo [7], many countries have come to incorporate formal peace education programs in their respective national educational systems, while at the same time, many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have come to collaborate with state agencies regarding the implementation of peace education programs within all levels of society.

The terminology of 'peace education' like many other concepts has received varied interpretations without necessarily losing its eminence in the conflict containment template of the UN. According to Galtung [8], the term connotes the process where knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, and behaviors are acquired in order to live in harmony with oneself, others, and the natural environment. For Harris & Synott [9], peace education is a platform where nonviolent alternatives are applied in the effective management and prevention of conflicts through skill training. In corroboration, Page [1] submits peace education engenders the commitment of an individual as an agent of peace, following lessons on the consequences of war and social injustice and the benefits of peaceful coexistence and love for one another. Overall, peace education entails the formal and informal teaching

of skills and values that inform peaceful behaviors as learners are helped to think constructively about issues, thus developing constructive attitudes towards peaceful coexistence [9].

Peace education remains a potent conflict prevention tool since lessons learned in programs motivate learners against engaging in conflicts. In the circumstances, hate gives way to love as forgiveness leads to reconciliation. Further, the concept of peace education prevents conflicts through several forms and lessons such as the granting of conflict resolution training where individuals are taught how to resolve disputes [10]. Other lessons on human rights education, democracy education, justice education, critical peace education, and transformation training; afford learners with requisite skills and knowledge to prevent conflicts within societies, thus bringing citizens closer to a peaceful global community [4,7,11,12]. The concept of peace education is not new to Africa, as the people have long practiced peace education at all levels of society though in its traditional form [3]. In Africa, violence is largely perpetuated by the youth, explaining why it is imperative to target this group in our global efforts to revitalize social values [13]. Both in the past and contemporary times, peace education seeks to provide the vulnerable group with knowledge and skills that gear towards social cohesion *via* the culture of non-violence [7]. In Ghana, for instance, traditional peace education is embedded in the culture of the people across all ethnic groups, constituting basic life lessons that children are taken through within their formative stages through to adulthood [14]. Within this context, parents and members of the community teach children to cultivate and practice such virtues as love, care for others, tolerance, forgiveness, and respect for socio-cultural diversities throughout their life span [15]. This life-long education within the traditional Ghanaian setting has largely contributed to the globally acclaimed Ghanaian peace culture today, thus attesting to the conflict prevention role of the phenomenon of peace education [3]. The objective of this study is to determine the extent to which the peace education technique in both its traditional Ghanaian and global forms has helped in shaping the values and attitudes of the Ghanaian youth toward a culture of peace, and what is more, an evaluation of the role of peace education in societal conflict prevention.

## The Nexus between Peace Education and Conflict Prevention

Peace education entails two concepts namely, education and peace, and is connected to the notion of conflict prevention (Jones, 2005, Richmond 2015) [16]. While the definition of the term education is straightforward involving the process of systematic institutionalized transmission of knowledge, skills, values, and norms within society, that of peace has a huge level of subjectivity [17,18]. However, the most acceptable definition of the term peace in our time is the one provided by the renowned peace researcher Johan Galtung [19]. Galtung [20,21] distinguishes three forms of peace—negative peace, positive peace, and structural peace. Negative peace according to Galtung [21] is the absence of large-scale violence, war, and bloodshed, whereas positive peace is the presence of positive social relationships that are characterized by friendship, solidarity, and harmony. Structural peace, on the other, is captured within the context of socio-political order where equality and justice strive amidst the overall socio-politico-economic development of societies [2,21]. In that sense, one can only talk of peace where all three elements exist, and as asserted by Barash & Webel [17], peace is a situation of the absence of war and the presence of a *positive, life-affirming, and life-enhancing social structure*. To that end, no society on earth can boast of absolute peace [3].

Applying the two conceptual backgrounds, the interdisciplinary concept of peace education is that area of education where both formal and non-formal approaches to teaching are used to disseminate knowledge about peace. As Mishra et al. [16] aver, peace education involves the promotion of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that bring about behavioral changes in both the young and old toward the overt and structural prevention of conflicts in societies. In the words of Harris & Morrison [22] and Smith & Neill [23] peace education is the educational system that creates conducive conditions for peaceful coexistence at all levels of society, a system that constantly averts attention to resolving intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup, national and international conflicts peacefully. Indeed, the objective of the peace education concept is to create in the human consciousness, a commitment to the ways of peace [3]. According to Mishra et al. [16], peace education is a competency-based educational system where learners in particularly children, are empowered to utilize creative and non-violent means to settle conflicts, thus leading to the social well-being of people who strive at attaining quality harmonious lifestyles. Within that context, Galtung [8] posits that peace education is a system of education where participants and students alike acquire appropriate knowledge and skills that help them resolve conflicts non-violently; thus promoting the values of peace through their active responsible actions. It is against this backdrop that Oren [2] alludes to the fact that, unlike some other conflict resolution mechanisms, the peace education tool is proactive rather than retroactive as it aims at preventing conflicts in advance, based on nonviolence, tolerance, equality, adherence to human rights, respect for cultural differences and social justice.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as well as, the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation mooted the idea of a universal acceptance of peace education as a conflict prevention tool in our time under the auspices of the United Nations. The scheme as mooted is to plan, develop and implement general changes in the educational sector to include a framework that promotes peace education within the system [6,15,24]. Today, contributions from international scholarship in the forms of theories, concepts, and underpinning principles of the subject matter, have added a lot more impetus to peace education across nations, gradually creating a culture of peace at global and local levels [3]. Additionally, agencies of the UN, state actors, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and other non-state actors have rolled out many peace education programs in many countries at the school and community levels with measurable successes [15]. Moreover, many countries have come to incorporate peace education into the school curriculum as either separate programs or regular school subjects, while CSOs have reached out informally to communities using workshops, seminars, *etcetera* [25]. Within this context, learners who acquire skills and knowledge enhance their personal growth and development leading to the promotion of their self-esteem and respect for others [3,11].

The strategies or forms for peace education which Harris [10] and Smentana [26] have come to describe as lessons of history, art, cultural heritage, literature on minority groups, psychological, sociological, scientific *inter* alia, within formal and informal educational curriculums are immense though convergent. Indeed, peace education has come to represent a broad spectrum of focal themes such as anti-nuclearism, international understanding, environmentalism, appropriate communication skills, nonviolence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, diversity tolerance, coexistence, and gender equality, amongst others [27,28]. As intimated earlier, one basic objective of the peace education concept in addition to the creation of a culture of peace within societies is the prevention of conflicts. Within the template of the UN conflict containment agenda, conflict prevention occupies a privileged position. In the main, conflict prevention is a diplomatic or subtle approach that encompasses a variety of activities and strategies within the field of peacebuilding as deployed to prompt and subsequently neutralize potential triggers to wide-scope violence [29]. The concept that is attributable to a former UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld has strived in diplomatic circles, thus causing a shift from a culture of reaction to one of prevention in the approach of the international community to violent conflict [8]. A number of factors including moral, economic, diplomatic, and political imperatives have accelerated the preventive approach, which Galtung [8] claims are motivated by deep human suffering, loss of lives, destruction of property, and economic downturns, resulting from violent conflicts. Preventive diplomacy finds space within two broad spectrums from which peace education drives its strength---direct operational prevention measures that are short-term reactive interventions such as mediation and structural prevention measures known for their long-term nature and their ability to create sustainable peace within societies such as development assistance [30]. The peace education concept usually adopts the structural prevention method that involves grassroots changes as designed to create sustainable peace amidst the addressing of underlying causes of communal violence [12].

Overall, peace education tends to provide an upstream community-based approach by way of knowledge and skill dissemination, which is an important need in polarized societies [31]. The notion of conflict prevention includes numerous activities including notably conflict avoidance and conflict resolution, as premised on three phases---the prevention of disputes from arising between parties, prevention of the escalation of violence, and post-conflict prevention [32]. In that respect, the potency of peace education in conflict prevention can be guaranteed through the dissemination of knowledge about peace in the following terms: First through conflict resolution training lessons where the focus is on social-behavioral symptoms of individuals as they are taken through the techniques of negotiation and mediation and other Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (ADRs) [33]. Second, participants are given human rights education using lessons that are skewed toward human rights awareness and the promotion of policies that bring citizens closer to a peaceful global community [11,34]. Third, lessons on democratic values expose learners to the positive rudiments of participatory democratic good governance and decision-making, thus enhancing the ability of participants to prevent and resolve communal clashes [7,35]. Fourth, education on the tenets of justice that includes lessons on rule of law, crime prevention, ethics assimilation in virtues such as honesty, truthfulness, a culture of lawfulness, and the transmitting of norms and values; eventually leads to a culture of peace [12,36]. Fifth, worldview transformation training broadens the minds of participants where the peace theory is evaluated within political, moral, psychosocial, and spiritual dimensions. As participants mature in human consciousness through the transformation of their individual and collective worldview, they tend to focus and appreciate peace and would, thereby prevent societal conflicts [29,37]. Lastly, when participants are afforded lessons on critical peace education where emancipatory educational processes are interwoven with goals and social justice through critical pedagogy, communal violence is minimized [4,38,39].

## Peace Education within the Ghanaian Traditional Setting

Africa's history is replete with rich cultural values that are embedded in the traditional ties of kinship, which Nyamanjoh [40] describes as the bedrock of African identity. Wiredu [41] and Boahen [42] submit that peaceful neighbourliness, trust, solidarity, and love form the cream of the African culture, explaining why the average Ghanaian in his/her quest for peace will be ready to bend backward to accommodate and forgive the wrongs of a neighbour, regardless of the circumstances. At the very early stages of life, Ghanaian parents and society teach upcoming generations about peace and the virtues of love, friendliness, hospitality, tolerance, and forgiveness, among others [3]. The *early training of children within indigenous Ghanaian societies goes to buttress the saying, "Train a child the right way so that when he/she grows, he/she will not depart from it".* Of all the actors, **Mishra (2011) explains that mothers play the most crucial of roles** in bringing up children the right way for the reason that children tend to be closest to their mothers at formative stages. To that point, peace education is seen more as the role of women, while the drawing of swords becomes a manly task [3].

Two significant institutions according to Danesh [18] that influence children's concept of love and hate are families and schools. Feminism in today's context depicts women as occupants of moral high grounds who provide blueprints for a morally upright and peaceful society [43]. This Cook [44] asserts is achievable through both formal and informal peace education. In Ghana, women give first lessons to children about peace, to the extent that when children are locked in brawls they are taught to show tolerance and love in times of provocations (Field Work, 2022/2023). As they grow, they tend to hate violence within the context of their peaceful disposition. Paraphrasing the assertions of Adada [14], Ghanaian children learn the principles of peace education including equality, justice, integrity, security for all, non-violence, environmental friendliness, cultural diversity, sustainable development, and shared responsibility that build them into great parents and members of the society. Traditional peace educational practices permeate all communities of Ghana, where adults are seen rebuking and correcting the youth when they engage in brawls, teaching them to tolerate the shortfalls and the divergent views of one another, and at the same time embracing peaceful coexistence within societies [41]. Occasionally, as clans and community groups meet to deliberate on developmental issues, emphasis is placed on the importance of peaceful coexistence and good neighbourliness; and as a way of deterrence from indulging in disputes, traditional rulers and their elders would often place heavy fines on trouble makers and conflicting parties that are brought before traditional courts [3]. As stipulated under the 1992 Fourth Republican Ghana Constitution, National and Regional Houses of Chiefs and Traditional Councils in the country play major roles in resolving and preventing chieftaincy disputes as well as conflicts arising from cultural diversities [45]. More so, religion plays a key role within the traditional settings as congregants are taken through several lessons that replicate the essence of peace, forgiveness, tolerance, and giving. These teachings manifested in the teachings and practices of the three dominant religions in Ghana namely, Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion [46].

In earnest, therefore, the usual Ghanaian hospitality to strangers and their continual love of peace in the face of unbearable provocations emanates from traditional peace education lessons taught at home, schools, and the community. The new wave of involvement of government, CSOs, and UN agencies such as UNESCO in the promotion and funding of both formal and informal peace education activities, have further crafted in the average Ghanaian, a great sense of peace-lovingness, thereby preventing numerous conflicts that would have occurred but for the education [3]. In recent times, WANEP a CSO collaborates with the Ministry of Education of Ghana in the area of peace education through the provision of kits and programs to learners at both formal and informal centers. WANEP currently works with teachers from pilot schools with the aim of revising the syllabuses of basic schools in 5 subject areas namely; Religious and Moral Studies, Social Studies, Civic Education, Guidance and Counselling, and Moral and Ethics Education [47]. Indeed, the sustainability of the program is taking root as the government and society are gradually assuming ownership following the integration of peace education policies as proposed by UNESCO (2001). However, in spite of the insistence of Ghanaian educational authorities that a peaceful environment is created for schools to embark on the peace education curriculum, take-off processes are 'nothing to write home about' [47].

The Africa Centre for Peace Building (AFCOPB) embarks on projects that apply justice education in ensuring peace and security within Ghanaian communities. On its part, the Movement for Youth, Peace, and Development (MYPD) mainly aims at improving the well-being of the Ghanaian youth and the needy through counselling, and guidance on educational reforms including peace education, campaigns on non-violence among the youth in political parties, human rights advocacy and environmental campaigns. Finally, the West Africa Centre for Peace Foundation (WACPF) and the Peaceful Character Education Foundation (PCEF) engage children and the youth in schools and communities in areas such as human rights awareness, leadership training, and peacebuilding; thus moulding them into useful personalities in society.

## The Theoretical Underpinning of the Study

According to Najjuma [15], no one specific theoretical framework adequately underpins peace education, as it is a novel concept. Dugan & Carey [48] observe that this state of affairs is attributed to peace education being a diverse field of study that incorporates varied disciplines and therefore varied theoretical and research backgrounds. That notwithstanding, this study is guided by the 'Contact Hypothesis theory which Gordon Allport [49] is credited with and has become the most widely accepted underpinning theoretical framework. The theory postulates that for intergroup contact to accomplish positive changes in attitudes and behavior, four basic conditions are required. Salomen & Nevo [7] list these conditions as follows: The contact group must attain equal status, be personal and manifold, interdependent and work towards a superordinate goal, and finally must have institutional support. While corroborating this viewpoint, Tajfel & Turner [50] conclude that in the situation, where learners are taken through lessons that throw light on the cultural similarities and differences of other groups, culturally generated prejudices, and conflicts stand to be reduced or eliminated.

The theory nevertheless has received criticism based on its major cognitive, affective, and behavioral shifts that occur as representatives of conflicting groups meet (Slaven 1990) [50]. Moreover, Sidanius & Pratto [51] aver that the pivotal issue of peace education has to do with how positive attitudes can be transferred from an identifiable group to the other rather than the attainment of equal status as postulated by the 'contact hypothesis theory'. For instance, a child who learns about peace in safe and protected environments such as schools and workshops stands to lose virtues when that child subsequently comes to reside within a wider environment of injustice, discrimination, hierarchical structure, asymmetry of power, and xenophobia, where he is not taught lessons on how to resist majority shortfalls. To address the shortfalls of the 'contact hypothesis theory' stipulations, Staub [52] suggests that people who share attitudes should be encouraged to freely express their views within a receptive society. Irrespective of its shortfalls, the 'contact hypothesis theory', has triggered the evolution of several applicable techniques that are in use as general teaching and learning methods, thus improving relations among groups. Among them is the cooperative learning technique in which smaller groups undertake face-to-face interactions, thereby enabling learners to accomplish major tasks as used in both higher and lower grades of elementary schools. To that extent, Deutch [53] suggests that such lessons not only create conducive atmospheres for studies in the classroom but also reinforce relationships among learners that enhance intergroup friendships.

In Ghana, the use of formal and informal intercultural training programs has enhanced the prevention of conflicts both within and without traditional settings, thus reinforcing the eminence of the 'contact hypothesis theory' in peace education, and to that end, guides a study that evaluates the potency of the peace education tool in the field of conflict prevention. Stephen & Stephan [54] have observed that *via* intercultural training, conflicts have been prevented in societies as learners come to appreciate and embrace the values, customs, cultures, and practices of others; as prejudices, negative stereotyping, and tensions among the people are eventually reduced.

## Methodology of the Study

This study investigates the conflict prevention role of traditional peace education in Ghana. The study of a four-month duration spanned from 11 December 2022 to 25 March 2023 across all sixteen regions of the country. Ghana's Statistical Service puts the population of the country at 30.8 million, people consisting of 50.7 % females and 49.3% males [55]. The study covered all administrative regions of the country namely; Upper West, Upper East, North East, Savannah, Northern, Bono, Ahafo, Bono East, Ashanti, Eastern, Volta, Oti, Greater Accra, Central, Western North, and Western Regions.

## Research Design

The study employed an exploratory case study design of Ghana that enhanced a clearer in-depth picture of the technique of conflict prevention that also entails a comprehensive interpretative worldview of respondents and participants alike [56,57].

## Research Approach/Sample Size/Sampling techniques and Research Instruments

A sequential exploratory mixed method approach was adopted to ascertain the conflict prevention role of traditional peace education in Ghana. Thirty (30) participants based on their knowledge of the subject were initially conveniently engaged using open-ended interview guides, observations, and discussion groups to generate qualitative data from which an in-depth structured questionnaire instrument was designed to gather the views of the larger population as advised by Creswell's [58] and Maarouf's [59]. The participants included traditional leaders, the clergy, parents, children, conflict resolution experts, members of the academia, civil society organizations, professionals, government officials, and UN staff in Ghana. Participants were interviewed, audio–recorded,

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transcribed verbatim, and coded under themes [60]. As stated earlier, findings from the qualitative study were used to build a research questionnaire for quantitative purposes since it involved a larger population [61,62]. One Thousand Four Hundred and Fifty-Six (1,456) willing respondents answered a closed-ended questionnaire instrument, requiring them to indicate whether they strongly agree, or agree, or strongly disagree or disagree with the statements contained in the instrument. The sampled population purposefully included people from all 'walks of life' and age groups, drawn from both rural and urban settings across the country for the purposes of fair representation of Ghana's population [63]. Earlier, a peace study expert at the University of Education, Winneba, of the Centre for Conflict, Human Rights and Peace Study, affirmed the instruments' content validity with a reliability coefficient value of 0.83.

## Data Analysis

The purposive multi-stage stratified questionnaire, adopted a propositional procedure as recommended by Shimizu [64], with a response rate of 95 percentage points acknowledged by Babbie [65] as adequate for analysis and reportage. Data as systematically collected was analyzed thematically in line with the research questions as contained in both the interview guide and questionnaire [66]. Data was subsequently subjected to the 22 version of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to ensure the data's validity, authenticity, and reliability [67,68]. Principle Component Analysis (PCA) as recommended by Stevens [69] was used by the researcher to summarize and re-orient variables that capture veritable information from the original variables, which information was effectively presented in textual, graphical, and tabular forms, per the recommendations of Haas [70] and In & Lee [71].

## Ethical considerations

Before the conduct of the study, ethical approval was obtained by the researcher from the Academic Board of the Centre for Conflict, Human Rights and Peace Studies of the University of Education, Winneba. Additionally, expressed verbal consent was sought from all participants (qualitative) leading to the start of the interviews; while only willing respondents (quantitative) were given the questionnaires to answer. In line with ethical demands, the researcher throughout the survey strictly adopted responsive practices as guided by the principles of consent, confidentiality, anonymity, safety, choice, collaboration, trust, and empowerment [72].

## Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents and Participants

### Qualitative study

**Gender distribution:** Twenty (20) participants constituting 66.7% of the 30 participants are males, while 10 participants (33.3%) are females (See Table 1).

**Age distribution:** Ages 10-30 years (23.3%); 31-40 years (26.7%); 41-60 (33.3%); 61 years and above (16.7%) (See Table 2).

**Educational background:** No formal education (10%); basic education (13.3%); secondary education (26.7%); and tertiary education (50.0%) (See Table 3 & Table 4).

### Quantitative study

**Table 1:** Gender distribution.

| Gender | Frequency (N=30) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 20 | 66.7 |
| Female | 10 | 33.3 |
| Total | 30 | 100 |

**Table 2:** Age distribution of respondents.

| Age Range | Frequency(N=30) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 10-30 | 7 | 23.3 |
| 31-40 | 8 | 26.7 |
| 41-60 | 10 | 33.3 |
| 61 years and above | 5 | 19.3 |
| Total | 30 | 100 |

**Table 3:** Educational background of participants.

| Education | Frequency (N=15) | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| No formal education | 3 | 10.0 |
| Basic | 4 | 13.3 |
| Secondary | 8 | 26.7 |
| Tertiary | 15 | 50.0 |
| Total | 30 | 100 |

**Table 4:** Occupational/professional profiles of participants.

| Category | Number Interviewed | Gender | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Male | Female |
| Parents | 5 (16.8%) | 2 | 3 |
| Academia | 3 (10%) | 2 | 1 |
| Educationist | 2 (6.7%) | 1 | 1 |
| Traditional leaders | 2(6.7%) | 1 | 1 |
| Clergy | 2(6.7%) | 2 | 0 |
| Journalist | 1 (3.3%) | 0 | 1 |
| Conflict resolution expert | 2 (6.7%) | 2 | 0 |
| Representative of Civil Society Organizations | 1 (3.3%) | 1 | 0 |
| Representative of UNDP | 1(3.3%) | 0 | 1 |
| Professionals | 4 (13.3%) | 2 | 2 |
| Children/students | 4(13.3%) | 2 | 2 |
| Officials from the Ministry of Education | 3 (10%) | 2 | 1 |
| **Total** | **30 (100%)** | **17(56.7%)** | **13(43.3%)** |

**Table 5:** Gender distribution.

| Gender | Frequency (N=1456) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 1226 | 84.2 |
| Female | 230 | 15.8 |
| Total | 1456 | 100 |

**Gender distribution:** One Thousand Two-Hundred and Twenty-Six (1,226) respondents constituting 84.2% of the 1,456 participants are males, while 230 (15.8%) are females (See Table 5).

**Age distribution:** Ages 10-30 years (20.5%); 31-40 years (25.8%); 41-60 (40.4%); 61 years and above (13.3%) (See Table 6).

**Educational background:** No formal education (1.8%); basic education (20%); secondary education (38.9%); and tertiary education (39.3) (See Table 7 & Table 8).

## Discussions of Results

### Research objectives

The study was guided by two main objectives: To determine the conflict-preventive role of traditional peace education in respect of Ghanaian experiences, identify factors that account for the peace-loving nature of the Ghanaians, and to ascertain how the peace education technique has helped in shaping the values and attitudes of the Ghanaian youth towards a culture of peace.

### Major findings

A. The peace education technique is an effective conflict prevention tool. More than 63.3% of the 30 participants interviewed peace education is an effective conflict prevention tool [11].

B. There is a connection between the peace-loving nature of Ghanaians and practices of the traditional concept of peace education. It was revealed in the study that the

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**Table 6:** Distribution.

| Age Range | Frequency(N=1456) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 18-30 | 298 | 20.5 |
| 31-40 | 376 | 25.8 |
| 41-60 | 588 | 40.4 |
| 61 years and above | 194 | 13.3 |
| Total | 1456 | 100 |

**Table 7:** Educational background of participants.

| Education | Frequency (N=15) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| No formal education | 26 | 1.8 |
| Basic | 291 | 20 |
| Secondary | 566 | 38.9 |
| Tertiary | 573 | 39.3 |
| Total | 1456 | 100 |

**Table 8:** Occupational distribution of respondents.

| Occupation | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Student | 313 | 21.5 |
| Teacher | 272 | 18.7 |
| Paramedic | 5 | 0.4 |
| National Security Services | 34 | 2.3 |
| Minister of state | 2 | 0.1 |
| Member of Parliament | 15 | 1.0 |
| Member of the Judiciary arm of the state | 4 | 0.3 |
| Military | 8 | 0.6 |
| Journalist/Media Practitioners | 32 | 2.2 |
| Conflict resolution expert | 4 | 0.3 |
| Farmer | 27 | 1.9 |
| Public Servant | 56 | 3.8 |
| Clergy | 35 | 2.4 |
| Anthropologist | 2 | 0.1 |
| Academia | 31 | 2.1 |
| Trade Unionist | 7 | 0.5 |
| Traditional ruler | 28 | 1.9 |
| Educationist | 33 | 2.3 |
| Other professions | 47 | 3.2 |
| Diplomat | 1 | 0.1 |
| Politician | 45 | 3.1 |
| Member of the Council of State | 4 | 0.3 |
| Social Worker | 16 | 1.1 |
| Lawyer | 13 | 0.9 |
| District/Municipal/Metropolitan Chief Executive | 17 | 1.2 |
| Medical Doctor | 5 | 0.4 |
| Historian | 3 | 0.2 |
| None | 287 | 19.7 |
| Unemployed | 110 | 7.5 |
| Total | 1456 | 100 |

majority of Ghanaians believe Ghanaians are peace-loving people, confirming Asare's [73] survey that Ghanaians are peace-loving people. This assertion is deduced from the study where all 30 participants (100%) have agreed that Ghanaians are peace-loving people.

C. Peace education enhances the lifestyles of individuals toward a culture of peace as

affirmed by 83.3% of participants and therefore the Ghanaian population [18]. Only 16.7 % of participants either thought peace education had nothing to do with peace education.

Three main questions as generated from the research objectives underpinned the survey.

a) To what extent has peace education shaped the lifestyles of individuals within indigenous Ghanaian settings?

b) How relevant is the practice of peace education to conflict prevention within societies?

c) Does the peace-loving nature of Ghanaians have anything to do with practices of the traditional African concept of peace education?

## Discussions of Qualitative Data

**a)** **To what extent has traditional or westernized peace education shaped the lifestyles of individuals within indigenous Ghanaian settings?**

Twenty participants representing 83.3 percent of the participants affirmed that peace education has shaped the lifestyles of individuals in varied ways, 3 participants representing 10 percent thought peace education has no bearing in the reshaping of lifestyles, while 2 participants representing 6.7 percent were undecided. This revelation goes to confirm Danesh's [18] assertion that peace education brings changes in people's attitudes through the attainment of a culture of peace.

Participant C7 in affirming her position had this to say,

'*My son attends one of the pilot schools where peace education is part of their curriculum. He used to be very intolerant and rough until now. He has become so obedient and caring. When I asked him what has been the magic, he readily admitted that lessons on love for country and society have changed his world outlook*'.

Participant C23 who claimed that his lifestyle bears testimony to the lessons he received from his parents in childhood gave the following narrative,

'*I grew up with my grandparents in the village after many years of cosmopolitan life in the city. You know, I used to hang out with friends in the city who exhibited terrible lifestyles. Unable to change my own terrible lifestyle of drinking, smoking, and fighting through a constant beating by my dad, I was sent to the village to meet the rough weather. However, things turned out terrifically when through lessons from my grandparents on the need to live peacefully with neighbours, I began to appreciate the shortfalls of others thereby having a forgiving heart. A year after, my parents visited us in the village and to their surprise John was a changed person. So yes, peace education shapes lifestyles of individuals giving them a disposition of peaceful coexistence within society*".

On the other hand, Participant C3 who disagrees noted that if peace education changed the lifestyles of individuals then the rate of crime in Ghanaian society would have reduced drastically. '*The number of criminals roaming our streets is uncountable in spite of the fact that each Ghanaian child goes through peace education at home and in society*'.

As deduced from the discovery, an overwhelming majority of Ghanaians agree their lifestyles have been influenced by the traditional peace education they received from their parents and society. The participants listed traditional peace education lessons to include peaceful coexistence, love, trust, tolerance, forgiveness, and reconciliation, amongst others, which they received at home and in school, which enhanced their lifestyles. **In keeping with the assertions of Harris [36], 66.7 percent of participants affirmed that peace education** creates a commitment to the ways of peace in the human consciousness. Twenty-three participants (76.7%) of participants said the relevance of peace education in society is multifaceted. Most of their responses are in tandem with Mishra's [6] assertion that the youth after acquiring knowledge and skills through peace education tend to adhere to the fundamental human rights of neighbours, prevent societal conflicts, promote conflict resolution, and create conditions conducive toward the realization of communal peace.

**b)** **How relevant is the practice of peace education to conflict prevention within societies?**

An overwhelming majority of 28 participants (93.3%) affirmed the relevance of peace education in the field of conflict prevention. Only 2 participants (6.7%) think peace education has no relevance and what is more, cannot prevent societal conflicts. From this discovery, it is deduced that the relevance of peace education in the arena of conflict prevention cannot be downplayed, as the majority of the Ghanaian population believes that traditional peace education is a key factor when it comes to conflict prevention in

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Ghana. Participant C21 asserts,

*'Before a Ghanaian child gets to know between good and bad, he/she must have undergone training that gives them a lasting lust for peaceful coexistence. As a parent and as well a teacher, I teach my children the relevance and the potency of peace education in the prevention of conflicts'.*

When the question regarding the potency of peace education as a conflict prevention tool was asked, 19 participants (63.3%) said peace education is an effective conflict preventive tool, thus confirming Danesh & Clarke-Habibi's [11] submission that among the numerous conflict prevention mechanisms, peace education stands tall. Eight participants (26.7%) disagree that peace education is a potent conflict prevention tool, while 3 participants (10%) were undecided. From the study, only a slim majority believe in the potency of peace education as a conflict prevention tool. Participant C6 who disagreed during a group discussion intimated,

*'There is no evidence that peace education has ever prevented societal conflicts not, here nor any other place in the world. Can the good professor show me the evidence?'*

**c) Does the peace-loving nature of Ghanaians have anything to do with practices of the traditional African concept of peace education?**

It was revealed in the study that the majority of Ghanaians believe Ghanaians are peace-loving people, confirming Asare's [73] survey that Ghanaians are peace-loving people since all the participants (100%) believe Ghanaians are peace-loving people. In response to the question as to whether Ghanaians are peace-loving, an aged participant exclaimed,

*'Why not? If we were not peace-loving by now this country would have been in tatters, following the thievery and nonsense of this incompetent government and the hardship the President is putting us through resulting from his reckless management of the state resources'.* Another participant, C11 lamented,

*'The peace-loving nature of Ghanaians in certain respects is a disincentive. Somebody does you wrong and they say just leave it to God. That is how we've been trained. The other day, a neighbour's son stole my farm products, which he has been doing for a long time. When he run out of luck, I arrested and brought him before the chief who said I should leave him in the name of peace. He was never even sanctioned apart from the warning he received from the elders. How can we possibly continue like this?'*

In contrast, the majority of the participants were of the view that the peace-loving nature of Ghanaians has been inured to the benefit of people. The international image on the score of being one of the most peaceful countries in the world is very high. Foreigners many of whom are tourists and investors, troop into Ghana on an hourly basis. The peaceful environment in which we live as a people enhances the socio-politico-economic development of Ghana. On the question of whether the peace-loving nature of Ghanaians is linked to traditional peace education lessons received at home, 53.3% of participants answered in the affirmative, while 46.7% answered in the negative. Participants attributed the peace-loving nature of Ghanaians to other factors including our love for peace, religious factors, and the fear of God [3]. Participant C15 said,

*'Though traditional peace education practices over the years have contributed towards this achievement, other factors including religion and the fear of the Almighty God resides in us. To that extent, many people deem it unfit to harm another person, except hard-core criminals'.*

## Discussions of quantitative data

Respondents answered close-ended questions from the options of strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, or disagree.

As seen in (Table 9) and (Figure 1), 65% of the 1456 respondents either strongly agree or agree that traditional peace education practices have deep roots in indigenous Ghanaian societies, while 35% either strongly disagree or disagree on the longevity of traditional peace education practices in Ghana. In effect, the majority of Ghanaians affirm the longevity of such practices in Ghana. Second, a slim majority of Ghanaians (54.6%) per the survey agree that there are similarities between westernized and traditional peace education, while 45.4 do not share that idea. Third, 70.2% of respondents agree that peace education shapes the lifestyles of individuals, thus falling in line with findings from the qualitative study even though the percentage that agrees with the assertion is less under the quantitative survey [18]. Fourth, a slim majority of respondents (52.3%) affirmed that peace education enables people to acquire requisite knowledge and skills that promote peace [18], while 20.4% think peace education does not change lifestyles. The findings of the quantitative studies corroborate the findings of the qualitative survey. As inferred from the findings, the majority of Ghanaians believe their peace-loving nature has been

**Table 9:** Traditional/westernized peace education and the lifestyles of individuals within indigenous Ghanaian Settings.

| No. | Perception | % Frequency of Responses | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | SA | A | SD | D | |
| 1 | Traditional peace education has long been established within indigenous Ghanaian societies | 708 (48.7%) | 238 (16.3%) | 325 (22.3%) | 185 (12.7%) | 1456 (100%) |
| 2 | Westernized peace education and traditional peace education bear similar features | 453 (31.1%) | 342 (23.5%) | 416 (28.6%) | 245 (16.8%) | 1456 (100%) |
| 3 | Both sets of peace education shape the lifestyles of individuals | 767 (52.7%) | 255 (17.5%) | 231 (15.9%) | 203 (13.9%) | 1456 (100%) |
| 4 | Peace education enables people to acquire requisite knowledge and skills about peace such as love, tolerance, and moral values that inure to peaceful coexistence | 456 (31.3%) | 306 (21.0%) | 354 (24.3%) | 340 (23.4%) | 1456 (100%) |
| 5 | Peace education shapes the lifestyles of people to become productive and peace-loving individuals in society | 564 (38.7%) | 296 (20.3%) | 396 (27.2%) | 200 (13.8%) | 1456 (100%) |
| 6 | Peace education has no bearing on people's lifestyles | 684 (47.0%) | 475 (32.6%) | 184 (12.6%) | 113 (7.8%) | 1456 (100%) |
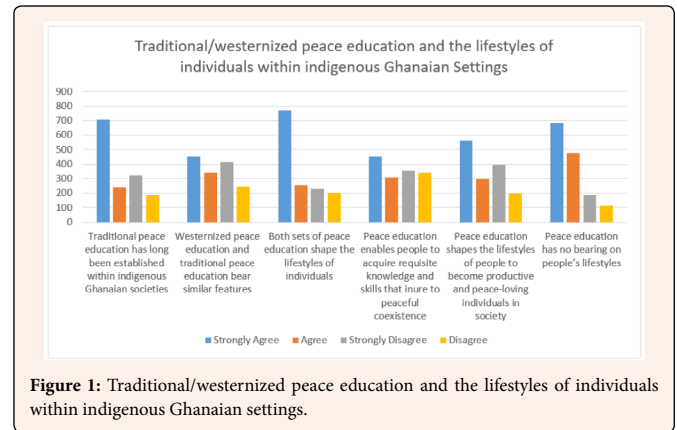


**Figure 1:** Traditional/westernized peace education and the lifestyles of individuals within indigenous Ghanaian settings.

**Table 10:** Relevance of peace education in the field of conflict prevention.

| No. | Factor | % Frequency of Responses | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | SA | A | SD | D | |
| 1 | Peace education has no relevance to conflict prevention in our time | 88 (6.0%) | 205 (14.1%) | 656 (45.1%) | 507 (34.8%) | 1456 (100%) |
| 2 | Peace education has relevance to conflict prevention | 682 (46.8%) | 234 (16.1%) | 379 (26.0%) | 161 (11.1%) | 1456 (100%) |
| 3 | Peace education in as long as it transforms individuals into peace-loving members of society aids in the prevention of societal conflicts | 450 (31.0%) | 367 (25.2%) | 383 (26.3%) | 256 (17.6%) | 1456 (100%) |
| 4 | Peace education trains learners to resolve conflicts using Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADRs) mechanisms | 344 (23.6%) | 398 (27.3%) | 455 (31.3%) | 259 (17.8%) | 1456 (100%) |
| 5 | Human rights promotion and the socio-politico-economic development of nations are enhanced under practices of peace education | 573 (39.3%) | 416 (28.6%) | 167 (11.5%) | 300 (20.6%) | 1456 (100%) |
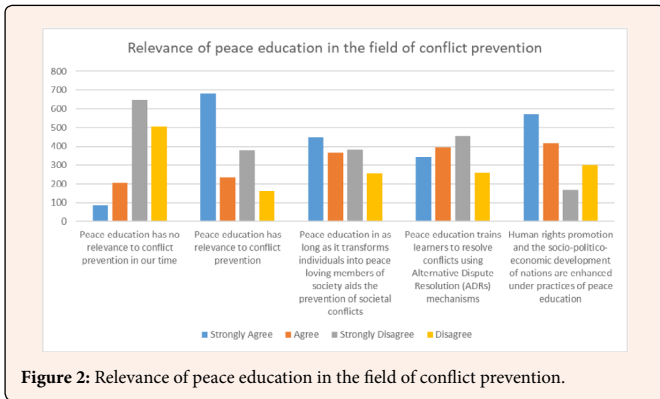
**Figure 2:** Relevance of peace education in the field of conflict prevention.

**Table 11:** The nexus between the peace-loving nature of Ghanaians and traditional peace education practices within indigenous Ghanaian societies.

| No. | Factors | % Frequency of Responses | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | SA | A | SD | D | |
| 1 | Ghanaians are peace-loving people | 878 (60.3%) | 366 (25.1%) | 48 (3.3%) | 164 (11.3%) | 1456 (100%) |
| 2 | Traditional peace education practices impact positively on individuals, thus making them peace-loving | 614 (42.1%) | 232 (16.0%) | 244 (16.8%) | 366 (25.1%) | 1456 (100%) |
| 3 | There is no linkage between peace education and the peace-loving nature of Ghanaians | 77 (5.3%) | 258 (17.7%) | 461 (31.6%) | 705 (48.4%) | 1456 (100%) |
| 4 | The peace-loving nature of Ghanaians to a huge extent is owed to practices of peace education in Ghanaian societies | 576 (39.6%) | 289 (19.8%) | 425 (29.2%) | 166 (11.4%) | 1456 (100%) |
| 5 | Outside of peace education, other factors such as religion, the love for peace, and the fear of God influence the peace-loving nature of Ghanaians | 386 (26.5%) | 512 (35.2%) | 379 (26.0%) | 179 (12.3%) | 1456 (100%) |
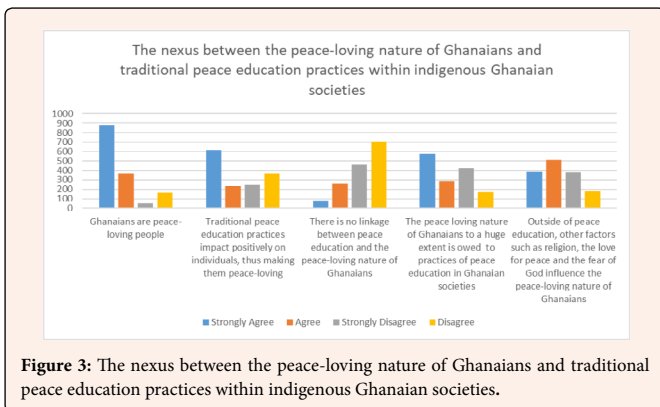


**Figure 3:** The nexus between the peace-loving nature of Ghanaians and traditional peace education practices within indigenous Ghanaian societies.

influenced by peace education lessons received at home and within society, as asserted by Mishra [6].

First, as indicated in Table 10 above and Figure 2 below, an overwhelming majority of respondents (79.9%) disagree that peace education has no relevance in our time when it comes to the prevention of societal conflicts, while 62.9 think it has relevance. Again, findings under the quantitative study corroborate the results of the qualitative study, further affirming the assertion of Danesh and Clarke-Habibi [11] that peace education is among the most relevant conflict prevention mechanisms. Second, 56.2% affirm the transforming power of peace education that aids the prevention of societal conflicts. Further, the study reveals that learners are trained under peace education programs to resolve conflicts via ADRs as 50.9 of respondents confirm. Lastly, 67.9% of respondents agree that human rights promotion and the socio-economic development of nations are enhanced under peace education practices. As inferred, the majority of Ghanaians believe peace education promotes development since development strives under peaceful circumstances [8].

Results as shown in Table 11 and Figure 3 affirm that Ghanaians are generally peace-loving people, corroborating findings under the qualitative survey [73]. Indeed, it is inferred from the study that 85.4% of Ghanaians believe they are peace-loving people and that traditional peace education impacts positively their lives. Again, it is deduced from the survey that 59.4% of Ghanaians hugely attribute their peace-lovingness to practices of traditional peace education. However, 61.7% acknowledge that other factors such as religion, love for peace, and the fear of God also account for the average Ghanaian peace-lovingness.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The underlying objective of the concept of peace education is to impart values such as love, equality, togetherness, trust, fairness, shared responsibility, and non-violence in humanity [38]. Indigenous Ghanaian societies have long embraced the concept of peace education in the country, though in its traditional form, thus transforming the lifestyles of individuals that have hugely contributed to the peace-loving nature of Ghanaians. Additionally, traditional peace education just as its westernized form has proven to be an effective conflict prevention tool, thus explaining why the UN and the international community have turned their attention to the evolving phenomenon. To that end, Galtung's [8] submission that peace education is one of the surest ways of creating a culture of peace in our conflict-ridden world, has long fallen in place with the typical Ghanaian attitude of peaceful coexistence. Current interventions from the government, CSOs, and UN agencies in Ghana regarding both formal and informal peace education, have further enhanced the tenets of peace in Ghana. That notwithstanding, the incorporation of peace education programs in the formal school curriculum is faced with challenges of implementation and funding. It is against this backdrop that the paper advocates for the prompt incorporation of the program in the curriculums of basic schools, which will eventually translate to institutions of higher learning to guarantee its sustainability [11,14]. As stated by Barash & Webel [17], to prevent conflicts at the local level, there is a need to build the capacities of communities with regard to knowledge about peace, and skills in respect of conflict management [74].

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