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Correlating Peace Pedagogy and Perceived Justice: Teachers' Implementation of SDG Target 4.7 (Promotion of Peace in Schools) and SDG 16.3 (Perceived Access to Justice) in Conflict-Affected Mindanao

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Abstract

This descriptive-correlational study examined the association between teachers' reported implementation of peace education aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 4.7 and their perceptions of access to justice and school conflict-resolution mechanisms aligned with SDG Target 16.3. Fifty-four teachers from conflict-affected communities in Mindanao completed a 30-item self-report questionnaire comprising two 15-item scales. A pilot test involving 10 respondents produced a Cronbach's alpha of .895 for the full instrument. Respondents reported high implementation of peace education ($M = 4.71$, $SD = .31$) and generally favorable justice-related perceptions ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .49$). The composite scores were moderately and positively correlated, $r(52) = .623$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.43, .76]. This association does not establish that peace pedagogy causes favorable justice perceptions; rather, higher reported implementation tended to occur alongside more favorable perceptions of school and community justice mechanisms. Item-level results showed comparatively lower ratings for explicit instruction in human rights and global citizenship, confidence that local justice systems are free from bias or political influence, and perceptions of the fairness and effectiveness of community justice mechanisms. These findings identify priorities for institutional support and further research.

Keywords: BARMM, correlational analysis, SDG 4.7, SDG 16.3, peace education

Introduction

Mindanao, a region in the southern Philippines, may be described as a place where peace is both a continuing aspiration and an active social ideal. Authors agree that the region's evolution, as it continues to seek peace, has largely been shaped by cultural diversity, armed conflict, religious pluralism, and displacement (Yang, 2024; McKenna, 2023; Santos, 2010; Schiavo-Campo & Judd, 2005). These aforesaid conditions have created a fragile environment in which both governance and economic systems are constrained, and schools and student learning have become unfortunate collateral damage of conflict (Abdul, 2022; Floresta, 2021).

As schools adapt to these fragile conditions, teachers are trained to perform dual roles. Beyond teaching lessons, they are also expected to advocate for inclusion and stability. While they may also experience anxiety and uncertainty, they are nonetheless expected to promote resilience and peaceful relationships and help schools remain "safe spaces" for students (Kulidtod, 2016; Cabanes Ragandang, 2021).

To make the school a "safe space" for students, SDG 4 and SDG 16 provide clear guidelines for policy development. SDG 4 offers clear direction for creating and implementing a peace-promoting learning environment in a conflict-affected context by explicitly targeting quality education through peace, equity, and inclusivity. Further, SDG 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice, and accountable institutions, which, together with SDG 4, could provide a basis for examining how school practices related to inclusive learning, conflict resolution, and justice are perceived and experienced.

After the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law in 2019, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) was founded to initiate meaningful autonomy (Berowa, 2023). One of its meaningful reforms is the creation of a localized peace education curriculum, which allows schools to strengthen conflict-resolution skills, intercultural dialogue, and empathy and positions them to promote social cohesion, with teachers serving as curriculum implementers whose practices and perceptions allow the periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum (Chandra, 2023).

While the BARMM, through its Peace Education Curriculum, remains committed to promoting peace, two practical questions remain: Are teachers prepared to serve as agents of peace? Are local institutions capable of supporting schools and teachers in their efforts to promote peace? Rada (2020) describes peace education as extending beyond the absence of

conflict. She further argues that it should promote social justice, empowerment, solidarity, respect, and trust. Likewise, Bustamante and Viloria (2021) stress that, to promote peace, schools should uphold institutional support, student participation, transparency, community partnerships, and sustainable school practices.

Rada (2020) and Bustamante and Viloria (2021) do not generalize that these conditions are uniformly present in Mindanao schools, as local reports from conflict-affected settings describe varied implementation constraints. Mopuyang (2024) and Ndwandwe (2024) suggest the need for teachers to respond to diverse learner needs while working with limited resources, while a large-scale Dutch study identified sufficient preparation in peace education as the factor that makes integrating peace into classrooms already affected by trauma, poverty, and insecurity successful (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, 2022). These conceptions reinforce the need to measure teachers' reported practices and perceptions rather than assume that policy intentions are consistently realized.

Analytical evidence on the association between pedagogy and perceived justice is therefore needed. It contributes to scholarship on education in emergencies and provides a basis for future teacher development, curriculum review, and research in conflict-affected schools.

Statement of the Problem

This study examined whether teachers' reported implementation of peace education aligned with SDG 4.7 was significantly associated with their perceptions of school conflict-resolution, reporting, and justice mechanisms aligned with SDG 16.3 in conflict-affected areas of Mindanao.

Statement of Specific Objectives

The study pursued the following objectives:

1. To describe teachers' reported implementation of peace education aligned with SDG 4.7 in the Mindanao sample.
2. To describe the reported level of students' exposure to conflict as perceived by the teacher-respondents.
3. To describe teachers' perceptions of school conflict resolution, justice, reporting, and non-violent mechanisms aligned with SDG 16.3.
4. To determine whether teachers' reported implementation of peace education (SDG 4.7) is significantly associated with their perceptions of conflict-resolution and justice mechanisms (SDG 16.3).

Research Hypotheses

Consistent with Objective 4 and the descriptive-correlational design, the following two-tailed hypotheses were tested at $\alpha = .05$:

H_0: There is no statistically significant linear association between teachers' reported implementation of peace education aligned with SDG 4.7 and their perceptions of access to justice and conflict-resolution mechanisms aligned with SDG 16.3.

H_1: There is a statistically significant linear association between teachers' reported implementation of peace education aligned with SDG 4.7 and their perceptions of access to justice and conflict-resolution mechanisms aligned with SDG 16.3.

Significance of the Study

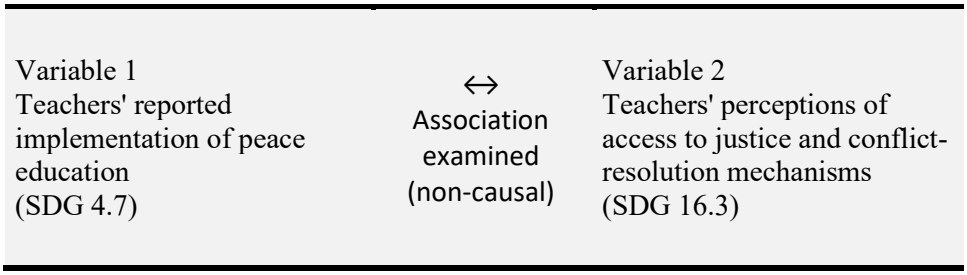
This study contributes context-specific evidence on two constructs relevant to conflict-affected schools in Mindanao: teachers' reported implementation of peace education and their perceptions of access to justice and conflict-resolution mechanisms. By estimating the association between these variables without assigning causal direction, the study provides an empirical basis for identifying areas of perceived strength and concern. This aligns with SDG 4.7, which prioritizes education for sustainable development, human rights, a culture of peace and non-violence, and global citizenship, and with SDG 16.3, which prioritizes equal access to justice (United Nations, 2015).

Conceptual Framework

This conceptual model maps the production of context-specific evidence on peace education in Mindanao using SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.3. It treats SDG 4.7 implementation and SDG 16.3 perceptions as two measured constructs and assesses their association. Because the study used a cross-sectional correlational design, which cannot establish temporal or causal direction, neither construct is treated as an input, independent variable, outcome, or dependent variable.

Figure 1.

Conceptual model of the study



Note. The small sample size (N=54) and the cross-sectional, correlational design do not establish temporal or causal direction. The (double-headed) arrow specifically implies a statistical association only and does not imply that either variable causes the other.

Theoretical Framework

Taylor (2017) and Kurnia (2021) define transformative learning theory as a process in which individuals critically examine assumptions, engage in reasoned dialogue, and revise the frames of reference that guide interpretation and action. This conception is relevant to this study because it directly captures the pedagogical processes represented in the SDG 4.7 scale: reflection, dialogue, empathy, participation, respect for difference, and non-violent engagement. These processes can create opportunities for teachers and learners to question normalized beliefs about conflict, exclusion, and fairness. The theory therefore provides a lens for interpreting peace-education practices as reflective and dialogic experiences; it does not predict that those practices will automatically produce institutional justice outcomes.

The framework is also relevant to the SDG 16.3 construct because perceptions of fairness, reporting, and conflict resolution are partly shaped by how individuals interpret experience within social and institutional settings. A positive correlation between the two scales would be consistent with, but would not prove, the proposition that reflective, participatory learning and favorable perceptions of justice may coexist. The present design measures teachers' self-reports at one point in time and cannot test transformation over time, changes in student behavior, or causal effects on school systems. This boundary guides the interpretation of all findings.

Review of Related Literature

Peace education aims to impart the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed for nonviolent conflict resolution, human rights, social justice, dialogue, and cooperative coexistence. It supports the SDG

framework, which defines peace as a positive social state grounded in dignity, participation, and justice, rather than merely the absence of violence (United Nations, 2015; Rada, 2020; Reardon & Snauwaert, 2015).

In this study, educators define peace education through reported practices that include mutual respect, empathy, dialogue, inclusion, participatory decision-making, and nonviolent communication. This literature review provides scholarly rigor and substance to the authors' interpretation of the collected data. It begins by situating the study within Maguindanao Province, a significant region in Mindanao known for its history of conflict. It then explores the conceptual and empirical foundations of peace education, teachers' roles in peacebuilding, and school justice mechanisms. Finally, it highlights the research gap: a lack of quantitative evidence on whether teachers who implement stronger peace education also perceive greater access to justice and conflict-resolution mechanisms in conflict-affected Mindanao.

Mindanao and Its History of Conflict

Maguindanao, a historically and culturally significant region in Central Mindanao, Philippines, has a long history marked by resistance, colonial intervention, dispossession, and organized separatist movements. During Spanish rule in the Philippines, the Sultanate of Maguindanao defended its Islamic identity and political autonomy through sustained battles with colonizers. Later, American administrative and land policies disrupted these gains by discrediting Indigenous systems of ownership and intensifying grievances (De Leon, 2025; Rodriguez-Rodriguez, 2024; Angeles, 2024; Brown, 2023). The most recent documented violence dates to 2009, when the Maguindanao or Ampatuan Massacre killed 58 people, including 32 journalists and media workers (Yang, 2024; Aguilar et al., 2014; Amnesty International, 2010). Although authorities convicted several perpetrators, ongoing concerns about suspects who remained at large contributed to public perceptions of unfinished justice (Buan, 2019). The massacre was believed to be driven by clan politics and severe political violence, concerns that are also shaping the histories of other regions in Mindanao alongside warlordism and impunity.

After Philippine independence from colonial rule, which brought autonomy in governance, unresolved marginalization persisted in Mindanao and is believed to have greatly contributed to the emergence of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and, later, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Their rise as separatist groups is often discussed in association with the 1968 Jabidah Massacre and the broader experience of

exclusion among Muslim Filipinos (Taniguchi, 2025; Abubakar & Helsing, 2024).

Efforts to end armed conflict and address exclusion among Muslim Filipinos followed. Initially, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) was established in 1989 as an attempt at institutional accommodation amid persisting poverty, governance problems, and recurring hostilities (Langco, 2025). In 1996, under President Fidel V. Ramos, the government and the MNLF signed the Final Peace Agreement, mediated by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and referencing the earlier 1976 Tripoli Agreement (Åkebo, 2021). Nur Misuari was appointed the first ARMM governor, but implementation was difficult, and ongoing internal conflicts contributed to the MILF's emergence as a breakaway group of the MNLF and the dominant insurgent force (Langco, 2025).

In 2018, the Bangsamoro Organic Law was ratified, leading to the establishment of BARMM. This transition created a renewed opportunity for autonomy and inclusive governance (OPAPP, 2019). However, private armed groups, clan rivalries, and episodic violence slowed and complicated institutional reforms, showing that while political reform and lasting peace are related, they are distinct processes and that progress is complex, challenging, and uneven in a conflict-affected context (Abuza & Lischin, 2020).

Amid armed conflicts and displacement, classes were disrupted, with facilities damaged and learning resources constrained. Parents' concern for their children's safety increased, leading to delays or deprioritization of learning. The effects extend beyond physical disruption, as unequal access, interrupted curricula, insecurity, and political pressure shape what students can learn and how communities respond to conflict in school settings. These consequences provide an important context for interpreting teachers' reports, which is the objective of this study. Acknowledging these events in Mindanao as historically marked is essential to the study's cultural context. The analysis explains why peace education, reporting mechanisms, institutional trust, and equal protection are salient concerns in Mindanao while also underscoring the need to avoid conclusions that extend beyond the variables measured.

Peace Education: Conceptualization, Empirical Basis, and Research Gap

Peace education draws on complementary traditions but should remain distinct from the broader philosophies of Humanism, Constructivism, and Critical Pedagogy. Kumari (2024) defines Humanistic education as emphasizing dignity, personal growth, empathy, and learner

agency, while Nurhasnah et al. (2024) describe constructivism as learning through dialogue, social interaction, and experience. Critical pedagogy, by contrast, requires learners to examine power, injustice, and exclusion (Luitel et al., 2022). These traditions help explain certain features of peace education. In this study, the constructs measured were narrower: teachers′ reported use of practices intended to support mutual respect, inclusion, participation, empathy, dialogue, and nonviolent conflict resolution.

Empirical studies provide cautious, informed bases for analyzing peace-oriented teaching alongside perceptions of fairness and conflict resolution. Jamshaid et al. (2024) describe teacher educators as agents of peacebuilding, while Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) associate restorative approaches with more favorable outcomes in school climate. Likewise, Salazar and López (2025) acknowledge the importance of restorative justice and recognition in vulnerable school contexts. These studies collectively examined pedagogical and justice-related constructs within a single inquiry, but differences in design, setting, and respondents preclude causal generalization to Mindanao teachers.

For conflict-affected settings, peace education is especially relevant because teachers may simultaneously experience the effects of conflict and influence how learners discuss difference, harm, and reconciliation. Cabanes Ragandang (2021) emphasizes inclusive participation in Mindanao peacebuilding, and Jabor (2024) presents schools as potential zones of peace in which beliefs, roles, and practices interact. Arts-based and child-rights-oriented studies further show how learners may express and examine ideas about peace, empathy, diversity, dignity, and equality (Anderson & Nesterova, 2024; Manion & Jones, 2020). These studies clarify the educational processes of interest but do not establish that classroom practice changes formal justice institutions.

The literature therefore leaves a specific gap. Existing discussions frequently describe teacher agency, curriculum ideals, or qualitative experiences, yet provide limited quantitative evidence on the association between teachers' reported peace-education practices and their perceptions of school and community justice mechanisms in conflict-affected Mindanao. The present study addresses that gap through correlational analysis. Its contribution is an estimate of association between two self-reported constructs, not evidence that one construct causes or reinforces the other.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive-correlational, cross-sectional design to estimate the association between teachers' reported implementation of peace education and their perceptions of access to justice and conflict-resolution mechanisms. No condition was manipulated, respondents were not randomly assigned, and both constructs were measured through the same self-report questionnaire. Accordingly, the analysis supports description and association, not causal inference.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Descriptive statistics summarized respondent characteristics and item- and scale-level responses. Frequencies and percentages described the sample and the distribution of respondents' composite categories. Item means, sample standard deviations, rank orders, and composite means and standard deviations described the central tendency and dispersion of the SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.3 responses. Each respondent's composite score was the arithmetic mean of the 15 items in the corresponding scale. To retain the meaning of the five response anchors, composite means were interpreted using nearest-category intervals: 4.50-5.00 = Always, 3.50-4.49 = Often, 2.50-3.49 = Sometimes, 1.50-2.49 = Rarely, and 1.00-1.49 = Never. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (r) estimated the direction and strength of the linear association between the two composite scores. Statistical significance was evaluated at $p < .05$, and the 95% confidence interval for r was calculated using Fisher's z transformation.

Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained before survey completion, and respondents' identities were kept confidential. Google Forms, a web application for conducting online surveys, was used to collect data. These safeguards were intended to protect privacy and respect the teachers who contributed their time and perspectives.

Operationalization and Instrumentation

Peace-education implementation (SDG 4.7) was operationalized as the composite of 15 self-report items concerning practices such as inclusion, mutual respect, empathy, dialogue, participatory decision-making, and non-violent conflict resolution. Further, perceived access to justice (SDG 16.3) was operationalized as a composite of 15 items concerning awareness of reporting mechanisms, the existence and perceived fairness of school policies, confidence in conflict resolution, institutional trust, and equal

protection. Higher composite scores indicated more frequent reported implementation or more favorable reported perceptions, respectively.

The 30-item questionnaire was developed by aligning the two 15-item parts with the study objectives and relevant SDG indicators. Three expert validators in educational leadership reviewed the items for content relevance, clarity, and alignment before administration. The instrument was then pilot-tested with 10 respondents from the available pilot dataset. Cronbach's alpha was .895 for the full 30-item instrument, indicating good internal consistency. Pilot estimates for the SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.3 subscales were 0.776 and 0.922, respectively. The 0.776 value for SDG 4.7 suggests acceptable internal consistency, while the 0.922 value for the SDG 16.3 subscale indicates excellent internal consistency. Because only 10 pilot respondents were used to test the instrument's internal consistency, the coefficients should be interpreted with caution rather than treated as definitive evidence of measurement quality.

Objective 2 was addressed quantitatively through a structured profile item asking teacher-respondents to estimate the proportion of students in their school or teaching context who came from conflict-affected households. Responses were summarized using frequencies and percentages across the categories 0–25%, 26–50%, 51–75%, 76–100%, and "No estimate/No idea." The item served as a descriptive contextual measure rather than a qualitative outcome or an independently verified measure of household conflict exposure. Open-ended responses were not used to determine Objective 2; they were used only to contextualize the recommendations.

Population and Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling was used to select teacher respondents. Ahmad and Wilkins (2024) define purposive sampling as a non-probability technique in which participants are selected because their experience is relevant to the research topic. Eligible respondents were public- or private-school teachers in Mindanao who were willing to report how they integrated peace-related practices and perceived conflict-resolution and justice mechanisms. Limited snowball recruitment supplemented purposive sampling by allowing participants to refer other eligible teachers (Vincent & Thompson, 2022).

Scope and Limitations

Several methodological limitations define the scope of the analysis. First, the sample was small (N = 54) and recruited through purposive and

limited snowball sampling. It is not statistically representative of all teachers in Mindanao or BARMM, and geographic and occupational groups were unevenly represented. Free-text profile responses required limited standardization, and some location entries remained ambiguous. Because data collection was conducted online and respondents remained anonymous, follow-up or requests for clarification of ambiguous data were difficult.

Second, both constructs were measured via self-report in the same questionnaire. Social-desirability effects, recall limitations, acquiescence, upper-end ceiling effects, and common-method variance may have shaped the item means, composite means, and the observed correlation. The study used no classroom observations, student reports, administrative records, or independent assessments of justice mechanisms.

Third, a cross-sectional correlational design was used in the study, which limits the study's inferences to some extent. It cannot establish temporal sequence or causation. It is also not capable of determining whether peace-education practices influence justice perceptions, whether justice contexts influence teaching practices, or whether unmeasured school, leadership, or community factors contribute to both constructs.

Fourth, the pilot reliability analysis included only ten respondents. Although the full-instrument alpha of .895 was favorable, alpha estimates from such a small pilot can be unstable, and the SDG 4.7 subscale estimate (.776) was acceptable rather than excellent. Reliability and construct validity should therefore be confirmed in a larger, independent sample using scale-specific and factor-analytic evidence.

Fifth, teachers estimated student conflict exposure rather than measuring it from household or administrative data, and 14 respondents could not provide an estimate. The open-ended responses were used only to contextualize recommendations and were not analyzed through a formal qualitative protocol. These limitations are stated in the methodology so the design boundaries are clear before interpreting the findings.

Findings

Fifty-four educators completed all 30 closed-ended items; consequently, no item-level values were missing from the statistical analysis. The sample included public- and private-school teachers, Alternative Learning System or Community Learning Center instructors, and one school head. Table 1 presents selected respondent and school

profile variables derived from the collected data. For years of service and school location, free-text entries were standardized conservatively: service entries were expressed in months or, for pre-service, classified as up to five years, and school names were grouped by locality only when the locality could be identified from the entry. As noted earlier, because data collection was conducted online and respondents remained anonymous, follow-up or requests for clarification of ambiguous data were difficult and were not carried out by the authors.

Table 1.

Summary Profile of the teacher-respondents (N = 54)

Profile variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Role/position	Public-school classroom teacher	22	40.74
	Private-school classroom teacher	10	18.52
	ALS/CLC instructor	21	38.89
	School head/principal	1	1.85
Educational attainment	Bachelor's degree	40	74.07
	Master's degree	12	22.22
	Doctoral degree	1	1.85
	Senior high school	1	1.85
Years of service	Up to 5 years	38	70.37
	6-10 years	9	16.67
	11 years or more	7	12.96

Table 1.

Continued

Profile variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
School location	Cotabato City/identifiable city schools	26	48.15
	Maguindanao del Norte	7	12.96
	Maguindanao del Sur	7	12.96
	Sultan Kudarat	7	12.96
	Other named Mindanao locations	4	7.41
	Ambiguous/not provided	3	5.56
Estimated school population	Below 100	15	27.78
	100-500	19	35.19
	501-1000	5	9.26
	More than 1000	15	27.78
Estimated students from conflict-affected households	0-25%	20	37.04
	26-50%	13	24.07
	51-75%	5	9.26
	76-100%	2	3.70
	No estimate	14	25.93

This table summarizes the profile of respondents in this study. It shows that public-school teachers and ALS/CLC instructors made up the majority of the sample, and 70.37% reported five or fewer years of service. Most geographic entries were from Cotabato City and the provinces of Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat, though three location entries were ambiguous and could not be confidently assigned. Some respondents' estimates of conflict exposure were also uncertain, with 14 educators

(25.93%) selecting 'No idea.' Among the 40 respondents who provided an estimate, 33 (82.50%) reported that 'no more than half' or 26-50% of their students came from conflict-affected households. These figures reflect teacher perceptions and should not be taken as independently verified and valid measures of household conflict exposure. Because these are teachers' perceptions, their interpretive value lies in situating the findings within a school context where conflict, displacement, resource constraints, and interrupted schooling remain documented concerns (Floresta, 2021; Muthanna et al., 2022; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [GIZ], 2022).

Objective 1: Reported Implementation of SDG Target 4.7 in Classrooms

The succeeding table presents the item-level means, standard deviations, dense ranks, and verbal interpretations for the 15-item SDG 4.7 scale.

Table 2.

Item-specific means and standard deviations for perceptions of SDG 4.7 (Peace education) Implementation

Indicator	M	SD	Rank	Rating
1. I include peace-related themes (e.g., respect, nonviolence, empathy) in my lessons.	4.69	0.54	7	Always
2. I integrate discussions on cultural diversity and inter-faith understanding in my lessons.	4.57	0.63	10	Always

Table 2.

Continued.

Indicator	M	SD	Rank	Rating
3. I think of activities that promote tolerance and positive relationships among students.	4.76	0.47	5	Always
4. I teach concepts related to human rights and global citizenship.	4.48	0.64	12	Often
5. I promote mutual respect among ethnic or cultural groups.	4.91	0.35	1	Always
6. I use collaborative learning/ collaboration to foster cooperation and harmony.	4.69	0.54	7	Always
7. I encourage dialogue, conflict resolution, and problem-solving activities.	4.63	0.56	8	Always
8. Students are free to express their thoughts respectfully inside the class.	4.91	0.40	1	Always
9. I practice nonviolent communication in handling classroom conflicts or issues.	4.81	0.39	4	Always
10. I encourage students to participate in resolving issues, and in making decisions in school.	4.59	0.63	9	Always
11. I create a classroom environment that discourages bullying and discrimination	4.85	0.36	3	Always
12. Fairness, equality and peaceful co-existence are promoted in class.	4.87	0.39	2	Always
13. I encourage peer support, and peace initiatives and activities that are student-led.	4.69	0.61	7	Always

Table 2.

Continued.

Indicator	M	SD	Rank	Rating
14. In enforcing classroom rules, I apply restorative and non-punitive approaches.	4.50	0.61	11	Always
15. I have a positive relationship with students from diverse cultural backgrounds.	4.74	0.68	6	Always
Overall SDG 4.7 composite	**4.71**	**0.31**	**-**	**Always**

The composite mean of 4.71 (SD = 0.31) indicates that the 54 respondents′ responses were generally close to 'Always,' with relatively little between-respondent variation. The highest means were for promoting mutual respect among ethnic or cultural groups (M = 4.91, SD = 0.35) and permitting students to express their thoughts respectfully (M = 4.91, SD = 0.40). Fairness and peaceful coexistence (M = 4.87, SD = 0.39) and an anti-bullying and anti-discrimination classroom environment (M = 4.85, SD = .36) were also rated highly. Student participation in resolving issues and making school decisions was comparatively lower than most practices (M = 4.59, SD = 0.63), but it was not the lowest-rated item. The standard deviations also show that respondents varied more on human-rights instruction, participatory decision-making, restorative approaches, and relationships across diverse backgrounds than on the highest-rated respect-related practices.

The response pattern in this table suggests that relational practices, including respect, fair treatment, peaceful coexistence, and respectful expression, were more consistently reported than explicit rights-based instruction, participatory decision-making, and restorative rule enforcement. This broadly aligns with accounts of teachers as peacebuilding actors (Jamshaid et al., 2024) and with Rada's (2020) emphasis on respect, solidarity, and social justice. At the same time, the comparatively lower items matter because peace education also requires critical engagement with rights, power, participation, and nonviolent responses to harm (Reardon & Snauwaert, 2015; Luitel et al., 2022; Nicoson et al., 2024). The concentration of ratings near the top of the scale may reflect genuinely strong practice, but it may also indicate ceiling effects or socially desirable

responding; classroom observation and learner evidence would be needed to establish implementation depth.

To show how the respondent-level composite scores were classified, Table 3 presents the frequency distribution using the nearest-category intervals specified in the methodology.

Table 3.

Frequency Distribution of respondent-level SDG 4.7 composite categories

Composite category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
5 - Always	44	81.48
4 - Often	10	18.52
3 - Sometimes	0	0.00
2 - Rarely	0	0.00
1 - Never	0	0.00

Forty-four respondents (81.48%) had composite means in the 'Always' interval, while 10 (18.52%) were classified as 'Often.' None fell within the three lower intervals. This distribution confirms the high composite mean but also shows the data's restricted upper range.

Objective 2: Reported Student Exposure to Conflict

As reported in Table 1, 14 of the 54 teacher-respondents (25.93%) selected "No idea/No estimate" when asked to estimate the proportion of students from conflict-affected households. Among the 40 respondents who provided an estimate, 20 reported 0–25%, 13 reported 26–50%, 5 reported 51–75%, and 2 reported 76–100%. Thus, 33 of the 40 respondents who provided an estimate (82.50%) perceived that no more than half of their students came from conflict-affected households.

These figures describe teacher perceptions only and should not be interpreted as verified prevalence estimates of household conflict exposure. The substantial "No estimate" response and the spread across the reported categories indicate that exposure was not uniform across the sample and

that teachers differed in how much information they had about students' conflict-related circumstances. The finding therefore provides contextual information for interpreting the peace-education and justice-perception results without converting the profile item into a qualitative claim.

Objective 3: Reported Perceptions of SDG Target 16.3 Access to Justice

The table that follows shows the corresponding item-level descriptive statistics for the 15-item SDG 16.3 scale. As in Table 2, the overall standard deviation is based on respondent-level composite scores.

Table 4.

Item-specific means and standard deviations for SDG 16.3

Indicator	M	SD	Rank	Rating
1. I am aware of the community mechanisms for reporting injustices or conflicts.	4.50	0.54	4	Always
2. I believe that local justice systems (formal or traditional) are accessible to teachers.	4.43	0.72	6	Often
3. I know whom to approach when legal or conflict-related issues arise in school.	4.61	0.60	3	Always
4. Schools have clear policies for reporting abuse, violence, or discrimination.	4.63	0.56	2	Always
5. Teachers are adequately informed about existing legal support services available for them.	4.33	0.67	8	Often

Table 4.

Continued.

Indicator	M	SD	Rank	Rating
6. I believe that the justice mechanisms in the community are fair and effective.	4.31	0.75	9	Often
7. Regardless of ethnicity and background, teachers and students are treated equally and with respect.	4.78	0.42	1	Always
8. The local justice systems are free from bias or political influence.	4.22	0.79	10	Often
9. Traditional and religious dispute-resolution practices are generally fair.	4.46	0.69	5	Often
10. School-level grievance mechanisms handle complaints fairly and ethically.	4.50	0.72	4	Always
11. The school and community authorities act promptly on reported issues on abuse and injustices.	4.41	0.74	7	Often
12. Teachers feel safe when reporting incidents of violence or discrimination.	4.33	0.75	8	Often
13. Community leaders support peaceful and just resolution to conflicts.	4.50	0.67	4	Always
14. Police and local authorities protect civilians without any discrimination and bias.	4.33	0.73	8	Often
15. Students and the general community trust the justice institutions.	4.33	0.75	8	Often
Overall SDG 16.3 composite	**4.45**	**0.49**	**-**	**Often**

The SDG 16.3 composite mean was 4.45 (SD = 0.49), placing the average within the 'Often' interval and indicating greater between-respondent variability than on the SDG 4.7 scale. The highest-rated indicator was equal and respectful treatment regardless of ethnicity or background (M = 4.78, SD = 0.42), followed by clear school policies for reporting abuse, violence, or discrimination (M = 4.63, SD = 0.56) and knowing whom to approach when conflict-related issues arise (M = 4.61, SD = 0.60). Confidence that local justice systems are free from bias or political influence (M = 4.22, SD = .79) was the lowest-rated indicator, with perceived fairness and effectiveness of community justice mechanisms as the next lowest (M = 4.31, SD = 0.75). Several indicators also shared a mean of 4.33, including information about legal support, safety when reporting, nondiscriminatory civilian protection, and public trust in justice institutions. These data highlight strong perceptions of interpersonal equality and school procedures, alongside comparatively weaker confidence in formal or community justice institutions.

Perceived freedom from bias (SD = 0.79), institutional trust (SD = 0.75), reporting safety (SD = 0.75), and community fairness (SD = 0.75) have large standard deviations, indicating that respondents′ experiences or perceptions were less uniform in these areas. This variation is significant because peace-promoting institutions depend not only on the existence of rules but also on transparent implementation, equitable participation, and trusted reporting (Bustamante & Viloria, 2021). Furthermore, research on community conflict-resolution practice underscores the importance of locally credible processes alongside communication skills (Jumalon et al., 2018). Therefore, the favorable composite mean should not obscure the uneven confidence reflected in the item-level dispersions.

Table 5 presents the respondent-level distribution of the SDG 16.3 composite categories using the same predefined intervals.

Table 5.

Distribution of respondent-level SDG 16.3 composite categories (N=54)

Composite category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
5 - Always	29	53.70
4 - Often	21	38.89
3 - Sometimes	4	7.41
2 - Rarely	0	0.00
1 - Never	0	0.00

The distribution of respondent-level SDG 16.3 composite categories included 29 respondents (53.70%) classified as 'Always,' 21 (38.89%) as 'Often,' and 4 (7.41%) as 'Sometimes.' There was no respondent falling into the 'Rarely' or 'Never' intervals. In comparison with the SDG 4.7 distribution, these responses were more dispersed and had a larger proportion in the lower intervals.

To effectively compare the strongest and weakest item-level patterns, the table below summarizes the highest- and lowest-rated indicators from the two subscales.

Table 6.

Highest- and lowest-rated indicators from SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.3 sub-scales

Scale	Position	Indicator	M	SD
SDG 4.7	Highest	Mutual respect among ethnic/cultural groups	4.91	0.35
SDG 4.7	Highest	Students express thoughts respectfully	4.91	0.4

Table 6.

Continued.

Scale	Position	Indicator	M	SD
SDG 4.7	Lowest	Human rights and global citizenship instruction	4.48	0.64
SDG 16.3	Highest	Equal and respectful treatment regardless of background	4.78	0.42
SDG 16.3	Lowest	Local justice systems free from bias/political influence	4.22	0.79
SDG 16.3	Next lowest	Community justice mechanisms are fair and effective	4.31	0.75

The comparison indicates that respondents expressed their strongest agreement with interpersonal respect and equal treatment, while their comparatively weaker ratings concerned explicit curricular treatment of human rights and confidence in the impartiality and effectiveness of justice mechanisms. This pattern aligns with the distinction between cultivating peaceful relationships and confronting the institutional dimensions of justice. Galtung's (2008) account of positive peace and Rada's (2020) Philippine peace framework both imply that sustainable peace requires more than harmonious interaction; it also depends on social arrangements that are experienced as fair and trustworthy. The table therefore points to a gap between highly endorsed relational values and more qualified perceptions of rights-based pedagogy and institutional justice, although the survey did not independently verify either practice or institutional performance.

Objective 4: Pearson Correlation between Reported SDG 4.7 Implementation and SDG 16.3 Perceptions

Table 7 presents the Pearson correlation between the two respondent-level composite scores. The analysis used all 54 complete cases, giving 52 degrees of freedom.

Table 7.

Correlation of the SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.3 composite scores

Paired variables	r	df	p	95% CI for r	Interpretation
SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.3 composites	0.623	52	< .001	[0.43, 0.76]	Moderate positive association

Pearson's correlation showed a statistically significant, moderate positive association, $r(52) = 0.623$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.43, 0.76]. Within this sample, educators who reported higher implementation of peace-education practices also tended to report more favorable perceptions of justice and conflict-resolution mechanisms. The direction of the association is conceptually compatible with literature that places dialogue, recognition, restorative practice, and fair relationships within a common peacebuilding ecology (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Salazar & López, 2025). The confidence interval nevertheless shows that the population association could plausibly range from moderate to relatively strong, and the estimate remains specific to this non-probability sample.

The coefficient establishes covariation, not direction, mechanism, or causation. It does not show that peace pedagogy produces justice, that justice mechanisms increase peace-education implementation, or that either construct reinforces the other. Transformative Learning Theory helps explain why reflection and dialogue may matter for how educators interpret conflict and fairness (Taylor, 2017; Kurnia, 2021), but transformation itself was not measured. Because both scales were administered to the same respondents at one time and were subject to upper-end response concentration, the observed association may also reflect shared school conditions, leadership support, response style, social desirability, or common-method variance.

Discussion

Peace-Education Implementation—Relational Strengths and Practice Gaps

The SDG 4.7 results present a strong relational foundation for peace education. Respondents most consistently reported promoting mutual respect across ethnic or cultural groups, allowing respectful expression, fostering fairness and peaceful coexistence, and maintaining anti-bullying and anti-discrimination environments. These emphases correspond with Rada's (2020) view that peace education encompasses respect, solidarity, social justice, and trust, and with Reardon and Snauwaert's (2015) integration of peace and human rights education. They are also compatible with Tanyel and Kıralp's (2021) evidence that peace education can be associated with tolerance and human values. In conflict-affected schools, such relational practices are not peripheral: they help establish the interpersonal conditions for expressing disagreement without reproducing hostility or exclusion.

However, the lower-rated SDG 4.7 items suggest that a positive classroom climate does not equal comprehensive peace pedagogy. Explicit human-rights and global-citizenship instruction, restorative and non-punitive rule enforcement, and learner participation in resolving issues or making decisions were less consistent and more variable. Luitel et al. (2022) and Nicoson et al. (2024)′s critical-pedagogical accounts argue that peace education must enable learners to examine power and injustice rather than merely encourage harmonious behavior. Similarly, child-rights education requires empowerment and agency, not merely protection or compliance (Manion & Jones, 2020). Thus, the findings suggest a developmental priority: schools may build on strong respect-oriented routines while deepening the explicit, participatory, and restorative dimensions of practice.

Student Exposure to Conflict - Context for Interpreting the Findings

The teacher-estimated conflict-exposure data add an important contextual layer to the study. One quarter of respondents could not provide an estimate, while the 40 who did reported varying levels of student exposure. Among those 40, most perceived that no more than half of their students came from conflict-affected households. This pattern should not be read as a population estimate, because exposure was neither verified at the household level nor measured directly from students. Rather, it shows heterogeneity in teachers' perceived classroom contexts and a notable degree of uncertainty about students' conflict-related circumstances.

This uncertainty is relevant in conflict-affected Mindanao, where displacement, interrupted schooling, limited resources, and the educational consequences of armed conflict are documented concerns (Floresta, 2021; Muthanna et al., 2022; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [GIZ], 2022). The result strengthens the case for interpreting peace-education practices within their local context and for improving future measurement of student exposure through multiple, ethically appropriate data sources. It does not establish that conflict exposure caused the SDG 4.7 or SDG 16.3 response patterns observed in this study.

Justice Perceptions - Accessible School Procedures and Uneven Institutional Trust

The SDG 16.3 findings reveal a related distinction between accessible school-level practices and confidence in broader institutions. Equal and respectful treatment, clear reporting policies, and knowledge of whom to approach received the strongest ratings. This pattern supports the importance that Bustamante and Viloria (2021) assign to transparency, participation, institutional support, and community partnership. It also resonates with restorative approaches that treat relationships, voice, accountability, and repair as central to school climate (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Salazar & López, 2025). In practical terms, respondents appeared more confident in visible interpersonal norms and school procedures than in systems whose operation may be less immediate or less observable to them.

The weaker, more dispersed ratings for freedom from bias or political influence, community-level fairness, reporting safety, legal-support information, and institutional trust complicate the favorable composite result. These concerns about impartiality and trust may reflect Mindanao's complex history of exclusion, political violence, and uneven implementation of peace arrangements (Schiavo-Campo & Judd, 2005; Yang, 2024; Amnesty International, 2010; Abuza & Lischin, 2020). While local conflict-resolution mechanisms matter, their legitimacy still depends on communication competence, procedural fairness, and community confidence (Jumalon et al., 2018). These contextual parallels do not explain why individual respondents selected particular ratings; they show that institutional trust should be analyzed as a substantive dimension rather than treated as equivalent to the mere presence of policies.

Association between SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.3

The observed moderate positive correlation between SDG 4.7 and

SDG 16.3 indicates that peace-education implementation and favorable justice perceptions coexist in this sample. This relationship is theoretically plausible, as dialogue, recognition, participation, non-violence, and fair treatment appear across both peace-education and restorative-justice scholarship (Rada, 2020; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Salazar & López, 2025). Guided by Transformative Learning Theory, the association between these two constructs highlights the interconnected features of a broader school-community environment rather than treating them as unrelated institutional commitments (Taylor, 2017; Kurnia, 2021).

This interpretation is non-causal, as the cross-sectional data cannot determine whether peace-oriented teaching contributes to favorable justice perceptions, whether more supportive and trusted institutions enable teachers to implement peace pedagogy, or whether leadership, organizational climate, community partnerships, or general response tendencies influence both scales. Because a single self-report questionnaire was the sole data source, a plausible common-method explanation may account for some of the covariance. The deduced correlation indicates a meaningful empirical association between SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.3 that warrants further longitudinal, multilevel, and mixed-methods investigation.

Conclusion

This study yielded four key findings. First, SDG 4.7 practices were implemented at a high level ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 0.31$), particularly in mutual respect and respectful expression, whereas explicit human rights and global citizenship instruction, restorative rule enforcement, and participatory decision-making were comparatively lower. Second, teacher estimates of student exposure to conflict were heterogeneous: 14 respondents (25.93%) could not provide an estimate, while among the 40 who did, 33 (82.50%) perceived that no more than half of their students came from conflict-affected households. These estimates reflect contextual perceptions, not independently verified prevalence measures. Third, respondents reported generally favorable perceptions of SDG 16.3 ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.49$), with strong ratings for equal treatment and school reporting procedures but weaker confidence that local justice systems are free from bias or political influence and consistently fair and effective. Fourth, the two SDG composite scores were moderately and positively associated, $r(52) = 0.623$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.43, 0.76], leading to rejection of the null hypothesis for Objective 4 while still supporting only a non-causal interpretation.

These results are bounded within the study's measures and design.

Specifically, they embody the perceptions of 54 non-probability sampled teachers and do not, in any way, demonstrate effects on student behavior, independently verify justice mechanisms, or establish that peace education changes institutions. When triangulated with the reviewed literature, they indicate that peace-oriented education involves at least two connected but distinct constructs: relational and pedagogical practices within classrooms and confidence in fair, accessible, and trusted mechanisms beyond them. Transformative Learning Theory magnifies the relevance of reflection and dialogue to the first domain, while peace and restorative-justice scholarship clarifies why participation, rights, accountability, and institutional trust also matter.

The study therefore contributed a context-specific estimate of the association between SDG 4.7 and SDG 16.3 in Mindanao, a conflict-affected region in the Philippines, along with item-level evidence identifying where reported strengths are most established and where further institutional support and more research are needed.

Recommendations

Because the student conflict-exposure measure relied on teacher estimates and 25.93% of respondents could not provide an estimate, schools and future researchers should strengthen ethically appropriate, confidential ways to document conflict-related disruption and displacement at an aggregate level. Such information can help contextualize peace-education planning and support decisions without labeling individual learners. Future studies should triangulate teacher estimates with student or family perspectives and appropriate school or community records, subject to ethical and privacy safeguards, rather than relying on a single teacher-reported profile item.

Further, restorative methods need to be adapted thoughtfully to the local context and assessed for fairness, voice, accountability, and repair, rather than adopted as mere labels. For SDG 16.3, schools and local partners should evaluate not only whether policies and reporting mechanisms exist but also their accessibility, impartiality, safety, transparency, and trustworthiness. Particular attention should focus on perceptions of political bias, community justice, legal support information, safety when reporting, nondiscriminatory protections, and institutional trust. This review could include confidential feedback, case-processing data, referral records, and

stakeholder consultations to gauge perceived legitimacy alongside formal presence.

Moreover, the results suggest school-community collaborations involving families, youth groups, tribal and religious leaders, local governments, justice institutions, and NGOs. Open-ended feedback from the sample indicates interest in teacher training, curriculum integration, community workshops, peace clubs, and interfaith and intercultural dialogue. Participation alone does not guarantee better outcomes; therefore, any proposed initiative should have clear implementation indicators and independent evaluations.

Lastly, future research should use larger, more representative samples and include a larger sample for independent pilot testing. Longitudinal and mixed-method designs can track changes over time, while observations, interviews, student feedback, and institutional records can minimize reliance on a single self-report. Stratified or multistage sampling will support comparisons between conflict-affected and less-affected areas.

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