**Experiences of Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) Teachers in The Integration of Peace** **Education in The Senior High School Curriculum**

**ABSTRACT**

Peace education is a transformative approach to learning that aims to instill values of nonviolence, empathy, social justice, and mutual respect among learners. It goes beyond the absence of conflict, fostering a mindset and environment where understanding, cooperation, and compassion thrive. This qualitative study, employing a **case study design**, investigates the experiences of Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) teachers in integrating peace education in the Senior High School curriculum at Pagsanahan National High School, Division of Ilocos Norte. With five HUMSS teachers as participants, the research explores how they respond to the growing need for peace-oriented learning in a context marked by various peace and order challenges. Findings highlight common concerns in the senior high school setting, including bullying, peer conflicts, drug use, peer pressure, truancy, and lack of discipline. In addressing these issues, teachers employ diverse and human-centered strategies such as group discussions, storytelling, inclusive activities, and the use of multicultural materials to foster understanding and peaceful coexistence. However, they also face notable challenges, including a lack of clear policies and frameworks, limited time within an already overloaded curriculum, inconsistent institutional support, and student resistance influenced by external factors. Despite these obstacles, the teachers’ dedication to peace education remains strong, driven by their belief in its potential to shape socially responsible, empathetic, and peace-oriented Filipino youth. The study calls for strengthened support systems, clearer guidelines, and sustained capacity-building efforts to enhance the meaningful integration of peace education in Philippine classrooms.

Keywords: *peace education, Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), challenges of teachers, senior high school curriculum, Integration of Peace Education*

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**INTRODUCTION**

In many parts of the world today, people are affected by conflict, inequality, and cultural differences. These challenges can lead to misunderstanding, fear, and even violence. But one powerful way to bring people together and create a more peaceful world is through education**.** Peace education, defined as the process of acquiring the values, knowledge, and skills necessary to promote peace and prevent violence, plays a pivotal role in shaping responsible, empathetic citizens (Harris & Morrison, 2012). In the Philippines, the K to 12 Basic Education Program introduced by the Department of Education (DepEd) in 2012 emphasized the development of 21st-century skills, including the cultivation of ethical and socio-emotional competencies among learners (DepEd, 2016). This creates an important opportunity for integrating peace education, particularly within the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand of senior high school, which inherently addresses themes related to human behavior, ethics, and social justice.

Research on the implementation and experience of this integration by teachers is limited, despite the alignment between Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) subject matter and the objectives of peace education. Educators are pivotal in implementing curricula and are crucial for effectively integrating peace education within educational institutions. Teachers play a central role in realizing the objectives of peace education. They act not only as content deliverers but also as facilitators of dialogue, role models of peaceful behavior, and mediators of classroom dynamics (Salomon & Cairns, 2010; Bajaj, 2015). Their experiences, shaped by personal beliefs, institutional support, and access to teaching resources, offer valuable insights into both the challenges and opportunities for peace education in the classroom (Salomon & Cairns, 2010). To make teacher training, curriculum design, and policy implementation better in senior high school, we need to understand their experiences.

This study explores the experiences of HUMSS teachers in integrating peace education within the senior high school curriculum. It will try to understand and analyze the challenges faced by HUMSS teachers in the senior high school, and by identifying key challenges and providing recommendations, this study aims to contribute to the growing discourse on peace education and its practical application in the Philippine educational context. The study was conducted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the common concerns of senior high schools in relation to peace and order among learners?
2. Were there cases of bullying in your school? If there is/are, how do you help in maintaining a safe space for your learners against such threat?
3. As a HUMSS teacher, how do you integrate peace education in your senior high school curriculum?
4. What challenges do you encounter in integrating peace education in the senior high school curriculum?

**METHODOLOGY**

This study employed the descriptive research design using a case study approach to explore how Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) teachers integrate peace education into the Senior High School curriculum. Qualitative research is ideal for gaining a deep understanding of human experiences, especially in educational settings where context and personal perspectives are important (Creswell, 2013). The case study method was chosen to allow for an in-depth examination of the specific experiences of HUMSS teachers within their actual teaching environments. This approach enabled the researcher to uncover the challenges, strategies, and insights of the participants in implementing peace education, offering both depth and context to the findings

This study was conducted at Pagsanahan National High School, which is part of the Schools Division of Ilocos Norte. The school was selected because it offers the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand and has teachers actively involved in teaching peace education as part of the Senior High School curriculum. The researcher used a **convenience sampling method** to choose the participants. This means the school and teachers were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate. Convenience sampling is often used in qualitative research when access to participants is limited, allowing researchers to collect relevant and timely data (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016)

Prior to data collection, a formal **letter of request** was sent to the school principal to seek approval to conduct the study and to identify potential participants. Upon receiving permission, participants were contacted and invited to participate voluntarily. Data were collected through **structured interviews** using a standardized interview guide. The guide consisted of open-ended questions aimed at eliciting detailed responses about the teachers' experiences, challenges, strategies, and perceptions related to peace education integration.

The collected data were analyzed using **thematic analysis.** The gathered interview data were subjected to thematic analysis, following the systematic approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process involved transcribing the interviews verbatim, reading the transcripts multiple times, and identifying significant statements and recurring themes.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Four major themes emerged from the data: (1) peace and order concerns in senior high schools, (2) strategies to address bullying and promote a safe learning environment, (3) integration of peace education in the curriculum, and (4) challenges in implementing peace education.

**Peace and Order Concerns in Senior High Schools.** Teachers reported recurring issues such as bullying, peer conflicts, drug use, peer pressure, truancy, and lack of discipline among students. These concerns reflect the broader challenges facing many Filipino schools in maintaining a safe and conducive learning environment. One of the teachers made mention:

We often see issues like students cutting classes, joining peer groups with bad influence, or even getting involved in brawls/fights within and outside school premises.

Such issues reflect a national trend. According to the **UNESCO Global School Violence and Bullying Report (2019),** the Philippines reports high levels of peer violence and bullying, which significantly affect students’ academic performance and attendance. Likewise, **Alampay and Jocson (2011)** observed that adolescent misbehavior in school settings often stems from complex psychosocial influences, including community violence and family dysfunction.

Schools often respond by enforcing rules, offering guidance counseling, and promoting behavioral interventions. However, without addressing underlying causes such as socio-economic inequality or community violence, such measures may offer only temporary solutions.

For example, Reyes et al. (2019) found that students exposed to violence in the home and community were more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior and experience lower school engagement. Their research emphasized the strong link between external stressors and disruptive classroom behavior. Similarly, the study by David, Albert, and Vizmanos (2019) on Filipino adolescents showed that mental health challenges, particularly anxiety and depression, often rooted in family dysfunction and poverty, contribute significantly to school disengagement and peer conflict. In another study, Espelage et al. (2013) found that school interventions are often limited in impact unless they address broader ecological factors such as family dynamics, peer norms, and neighborhood safety. These findings underscore the need for holistic and multi-level approaches to violence prevention in schools.

### ****Addressing Bullying and Promoting a Safe Learning Environment.**** All participants acknowledged the existence of bullying cases in their schools, although most claimed these were manageable due to **proactive policies and interventions**. This is further elaborated by ne teacher by saying:

### There are bullying cases, but our school implements the anti-bullying policies from DepEd. We also encourage students to speak up and promote kindness.

Teachers and administrators rely heavily on the **Department of Education’s (DepEd) Child Protection Policy (DO 40, s. 2012),** which mandates that schools must create a safe, inclusive environments and report incidents of abuse or harassment. The implementation of this policy has helped promote awareness, but teachers still emphasize the importance of **daily vigilance, kindness, and peer support** in fostering a secure learning environment. This reflects findings from **Olweus (2013)** who asserts that anti-bullying efforts are most effective when reinforced by whole-school approaches, consistent monitoring, and a strong classroom culture of respect and empathy.

Similarly, research conducted by Santos and Reyes (2018) assessed the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs in public high schools in the Philippines. The study revealed that schools with comprehensive anti-bullying programs, including clear policies, regular training, and active student involvement, reported lower instances of bullying and improved student behavior. The authors emphasize the importance of a whole-school approach that involves not only teachers and administrators but also students, parents, and the community.

Furthermore, a comparative study by Mendoza and Cruz (2020) analyzed the impact of different anti-bullying strategies in schools across the Philippines. The study found that schools implementing a combination of policy enforcement, peer mediation programs, and community engagement experienced a significant reduction in bullying incidents. The researchers advocate for a multi-faceted approach that addresses the root causes of bullying and promotes a culture of respect and inclusion.

**Integration of Peace Education in the Senior High School Curriculum.** HUMSS teachers demonstrated creativity and intentionality in weaving peace education themes such as **human rights, respect, empathy, cultural diversity**, and **peaceful dialogue** into their daily lessons, particularly in subjects like **Understanding Culture, Society, and Politics (UCSP).** This has been a common practice to some teachers teaching the subject and thus one teacher shared:

In my UCSP classes, I promote respect and inclusivity. I let students share their opinions and experiences so everyone feels heard.

Teachers use **group discussions, storytelling, inclusive activities**, and **multicultural materials** to cultivate values aligned with peace education. According to **Harris and Morrison (2013),** peace education aims to instill skills such as empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution, objectives that were evident in teachers’ accounts. This also aligns with **UNESCO’s (2015)** emphasis on global citizenship education, which encourages teaching students about peace, tolerance, diversity, and sustainability.

Supporting these approaches, a study in Nigeria piloted a game jam to support empathy and compassion, highlighting the potential of interactive activities in promoting peace education (Schrier et al., 2021). In Costa Rica, research on conflict management in secondary education classrooms revealed that teachers' use of mutually friendly solutions and empathy with conflicting parties activated positive behaviors such as perspective-taking and prosocial actions, underscoring the effectiveness of interpersonal strategies in peace education (Bonilla et al., 2023).

These studies collectively underscore the importance of diverse pedagogical approaches in cultivating peace education, emphasizing the need for empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution skills in fostering a peaceful and inclusive educational environment.

### ****Challenges in Implementing Peace Education.**** Despite their commitment, teachers reported multiple challenges in integrating peace education, including l**ack of clear policies and frameworks, limited time and overloaded curriculum, inconsistent institutional support and student resistance and external influences.**

At first, integrating peace education is a good idea but initially, was confusing. There were no structured strategies, no defined competencies, and no clear guidelines.

Teachers thought that peace education is a good idea, but it does not always have clear goals or enough resources, which means that it is not always used the same way in all schools. This concern is echoed by **Tibbits (2006),** who noted that peace education programs often fail due to a lack of systemic integration and teacher training. Additionally, teachers struggle with **time constraints,** given the already-packed Senior High School curriculum. Without adequate training, materials, and policy clarity, their efforts remain fragmented and largely informal.

These concerns are echoed globally. For instance, González-Moreno and Tijerina-Revilla (2022) reported that in Mexico, peace education often depends on individual teacher initiative, with minimal formal support or alignment with national educational frameworks. In South Africa, Marutla (2019) identified financial constraints, overcrowded curricula, and lack of community engagement as major barriers to peace education in secondary schools. Similarly, Mishra (2021) found that in Odisha, India, while teachers supported the inclusion of peace education as a compulsory subject, its implementation was obstructed by overloaded syllabi, insufficient training, and the absence of structured guidelines. Collectively, these studies highlight the pressing need for systemic support, comprehensive teacher preparation, and coherent policy frameworks to ensure the meaningful integration of peace education in schools.

**CONCLUSION**

This study explored the lived experiences of HUMSS teachers in integrating peace education into the Senior High School curriculum. Through structured interviews, four key themes emerged: the prevailing peace and order concerns in schools, strategies to address bullying, approaches to integrating peace education, and the challenges teachers face in doing so.

The findings reflect the difficult realities that educators navigate every day. Issues such as bullying, peer pressure, drug use, and lack of discipline continue to affect student well-being and academic performance. These are not isolated incidents, but part of broader social challenges that extend into the classroom. Teachers are often the first line of response, using their roles not only to teach academic content but also to guide learners toward empathy, discipline, and respect.

However, their efforts are often challenged by systemic issues, limited instructional time, lack of clear policy frameworks, insufficient resources, and minimal institutional support. Teachers often rely on personal initiative and creativity to carry out peace education, leading to inconsistencies and difficulties in implementation.

The study affirms the important role teachers play in shaping peaceful, inclusive school environments. Yet, for peace education to truly take root, it must be supported by clear policies, adequate training, and systemic integration across all levels of the educational system.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

In light of the findings and conclusions of the research study, the following are recommended:

1. **Develop Clear Policy Frameworks**

The Department of Education should craft detailed guidelines and define core competencies for peace education to guide and standardize its implementation.

1. **Provide Teacher Training and Capacity Building**

Conduct regular workshops and seminars focused on peace education, conflict resolution, and inclusive teaching strategies, especially within the context of HUMSS subjects.

1. **Ensure Availability of Teaching Resources**

Supply schools with adequate instructional materials, modules, and activity guides to support the effective integration of peace education in classroom teaching.

1. **Integrate Peace Education Across All Subjects**

Embed peace education principles not only in HUMSS but across all subject areas to cultivate a school-wide culture of peace, respect, and empathy.

1. **Strengthen Anti-Bullying Programs**

Reinforce the implementation of existing DepEd anti-bullying policies by enhancing awareness, establishing peer support systems, and improving intervention mechanisms.

1. **Promote Community and Parental Involvement**

Encourage the active participation of parents and the community in promoting peace education to reinforce peace values both in school and at home.

**Ethical Approval:**

As per international standards or university standards written ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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