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**Cultivating Peace through Education: A Case Study of Social Studies in
Aceh's Junior High Schools**

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CULTIVATING PEACE THROUGH EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF SOCIAL STUDIES IN ACEH'S JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Aceh, a post-conflict region in Indonesia, continues to face challenges in fostering social cohesion and reconciliation through education. Despite its crucial role in peacebuilding, peace education remains insufficiently integrated into the formal curriculum. This study investigated the systematic incorporation of peace education within the junior high school Social Studies curriculum in Aceh through a Research and Development (R&D) design. The research consisted of three phases: (1) curriculum mapping to identify opportunities for peace-related themes, (2) development of a structured peace education module, and (3) evaluation of its effectiveness through classroom observations, focus group discussions (FGDs), interviews, and pre- and post-tests involving 70 students and 9 teachers in Pidie Regency. Findings showed that values such as tolerance, mediation, and conflict resolution are implicitly present in existing materials but lack structured pedagogical integration. The developed module, validated by experts and teachers, significantly improved students' understanding of peace concepts, empathy, and conflict resolution skills. Embedding peace education into existing curricula, rather than introducing it as a separate subject, proved more sustainable and contextually effective. The study highlighted the importance of comprehensive teacher training and supportive policy frameworks to enable large-scale implementation. By contributing to global discourse on peace education, this research supports Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 and SDG 16), advancing quality education, peace, and strong institutions. The model offers a scalable framework for integrating peace education into Social Studies curricula in other post-conflict regions.

Keywords: Peace Education; Social Studies; Junior High Schools in Aceh.

A. Introduction

Currently, the quality of education in Indonesia faces significant and pressing challenges. Despite concerted efforts to enhance the educational landscape, several fundamental issues continue to require attention and resolution (Siahaan & Meilani, 2019). One of the primary challenges is the limited access to education in remote areas, which exacerbates disparities between urban and rural regions as well as among Indonesia's many islands. Moreover, educational curricula often lag behind real-world demands and technological advancements, rendering them inadequate for contemporary needs. Additionally, traditional teaching methods, which lack interactivity, hinder students' ability to develop essential critical and creative skills (Daniela et al., 2023).

These educational challenges are even more complex in post-conflict regions, such as Aceh, where education serves a dual role: meeting standard academic needs and fostering societal recovery and reconciliation. Aceh, which endured nearly three decades of armed conflict, suffered substantial destruction of educational infrastructure, displacement of communities, and long-term psychological trauma among its population (Barron & Adam, 2008; Barron et al., 2023). Although reconstruction efforts have been undertaken, the educational system in Aceh continues to face difficulties in implementing a structured approach to peace education. Such an approach must not only promote historical reconciliation but also equip future generations with the skills required to sustain peace and social harmony. Unlike in other regions, where education primarily focuses on academic development, in Aceh, it carries the additional responsibility of healing past wounds while fostering competencies essential for peacebuilding.

Peace education plays a pivotal role in shaping a harmonious, inclusive, and resilient society, particularly in regions like Aceh, where historical grievances and social tensions persist as ongoing challenges (Andini & Boer, 2025). By fostering an appreciation of diversity, peace education encourages individuals to engage with different values, traditions, and perspectives. It also strengthens proficient communication skills—a critical tool for mitigating

tensions and fostering reconciliation. Furthermore, cultivating empathy allows students to understand the experiences and viewpoints of others, thereby promoting deeper social cohesion. However, despite its clear importance, peace education remains insufficiently integrated into the curriculum in Aceh. Many existing social studies materials touch on values such as tolerance and nationalism but lack a structured pedagogical framework for teaching reconciliation and peacebuilding in ways that resonate with students' lived experiences (Halik et al., 2023; Halik & Sabiq, 2024).

On a global scale, peace education is recognized as a fundamental human right and a key strategy for achieving sustainable peace (Djamil, 2019; Page, 2008). This is reinforced by the United Nations' designation of September 21st as the International Day of Peace (Nurcholish, 2015) and its alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). However, while the importance of peace education is widely acknowledged, its practical implementation in post-conflict settings such as Aceh remains largely underexplored (Alkhuseri et al., 2025; Zainal et al., 2021).

Although numerous studies have explored the complex relationship between education, conflict dynamics, and peace, education can either mitigate or exacerbate conflict, depending on the values it imparts (Brown, 2011; Davies, 2010; Mamoon, 2017; Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2014; Smith & Vaux, 2003; Tidwell, 2004; Zainal et al., 2019). Nevertheless, most research on peace education has focused on macro-level policy discussions, with limited examination of practical, school-level strategies for integrating peace education into curricula – especially in post-conflict regions like Aceh. The urgency for peace education in Aceh stems from its history of conflict, which has left lasting effects on its educational institutions, social cohesion, and intergroup relations.

Failure to address this gap could perpetuate intergenerational trauma, leaving future generations ill-equipped to manage social tensions constructively. Educational institutions in Aceh, therefore, bear a crucial responsibility in promoting peace, particularly among students who may not have directly

experienced the conflict but continue to live within its social and cultural consequences (Nitschke, 2011; Peace Insight, 2022; Smith & Vaux, 2003). While some aspects of peace education may already exist within the current curriculum, they are not systematically embedded as structured learning objectives, resulting in a lack of clear understanding among students regarding conflict resolution, social cohesion, and sustainable peace (Ismail et al., 2024; Halik et al., 2023; Munadi & Sari, 2022; Zainal et al., 2019).

To address these shortcomings, this study seeks to develop a structured framework for integrating peace education into the junior high school social studies curriculum in Aceh. Rather than introducing peace education as a separate subject, this research explores how peace values can be embedded within existing social studies materials, ensuring that students acquire both historical and geographical knowledge as well as essential peacebuilding skills. This approach is consistent with global best practices, which emphasize integration over isolation as the most effective method for sustainable peace education implementation (Zainal et al., 2019; Zainal et al., 2019).

Inculcating peaceful values in the younger generation requires the strategic integration of peace education within social studies, particularly in post-conflict regions such as Aceh. Beyond imparting historical and geographical knowledge, social studies serve as a platform for fostering reconciliation, promoting cultural awareness, and equipping students with peaceful dialogue skills. When embedded within social studies, peace education provides students with practical tools for conflict resolution, empathy, and mutual respect—essential for sustaining peace in a pluralistic society (Aldina et al., 2023; Salim et al., 2024). By incorporating peace education, teachers can help students critically analyze societal conflicts and historical narratives while fostering attitudes of mutual respect, tolerance, and communication skills.

Thus, this study aims to fill the identified gap by mapping the existing social studies curriculum to determine areas where peace education can be integrated, developing a comprehensive and contextually relevant peace education module, and evaluating its practical efficacy in Aceh's local

educational setting. By doing so, this research endeavors to provide a pragmatic and scalable solution to the deficiency of peace education in Aceh, contributing to the broader goal of fostering a culture of peace among future generations.

B. Method

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) design commonly used in educational research to create and evaluate innovative instructional materials (Ikhrom et al., 2023; Samsu, 2017). Its main objective was to design and integrate a peace education module into the junior high school Social Studies curriculum in Aceh. The research followed three major phases: (1) curriculum mapping to identify potential areas for integrating peace education; (2) development of a contextually relevant module tailored to the Acehnese educational context; and (3) pilot testing to examine its feasibility and effectiveness in classroom settings. This structure ensured both theoretical contribution and practical applicability in embedding peace education into formal learning.

The research was carried out in three junior high schools in Pidie Regency—SMPN 2 Pidie, SMP YPPU Sigli, and SMPN 4 Pidie—selected purposively to represent geographical variation, diverse student populations, and teacher commitment to innovation. Participants included 9 Social Studies teachers, 3 principals, and 2 education supervisors, along with 70 students who participated in the pilot phase out of 90 eligible respondents. The participant selection emphasized those directly involved in teaching Social Studies and interested in integrating peace education within their instructional practices.

A mixed-methods approach was adopted to capture both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the integration process. Data collection involved classroom observations, focus group discussions



(FGDs), interviews, and pre- and post-test assessments. Observations focused on classroom interaction, students' engagement with peace-related themes, and teachers' pedagogical practices. FGDs with teachers, principals, and supervisors explored challenges and strategies for embedding peace education, while in-depth interviews gathered teachers' perceptions of its relevance and practicality. Quantitatively, pre-tests and post-tests were administered to measure changes in students' knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to peace education before and after the module implementation.

The module underwent a three-stage validation process. First, two education experts from Universitas Syiah Kuala reviewed the content for pedagogical accuracy, cultural relevance, and instructional clarity. Based on their feedback, revisions were made to improve lesson sequencing, integrate local examples, and strengthen contextual engagement. Second, teachers and education supervisors assessed the feasibility and practicality of implementation through FGDs, leading to further refinement of learning activities and assessment methods. Third, the revised module was piloted over six weeks in the three participating schools, where teachers applied its lesson plans using project-based, collaborative, and reflective learning approaches aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. Feedback from teachers and students during the pilot informed the final adjustments.

Data were analyzed using descriptive and qualitative techniques. Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data from interviews, observations, and FGDs to identify recurring patterns and teaching challenges, while descriptive statistics summarized pre- and post-test results. Triangulation of data sources enhanced the credibility and validity of findings, and inter-rater reliability was ensured through

consistent evaluation of student assessments. The integration of multiple data sources provided a comprehensive understanding of the module's effectiveness and its impact on student learning outcomes.

All research activities were conducted in accordance with ethical standards for educational research. Approval and formal permission were obtained from participating schools and local education authorities in Pidie Regency. Informed consent was secured from all teachers, students, and administrators after they were briefed on the study's objectives, procedures, and confidentiality measures. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any time without consequence. To ensure privacy, pseudonyms were used in all qualitative reports, and data were handled confidentially throughout the study. Ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and justice guided all research procedures.

C. Results and Discussion

As outlined in the previous sections, this study set out to examine how peace education can be systematically integrated into the junior high school social studies curriculum in Aceh. In the following pages, the results are presented in accordance with the three main research objectives: curriculum mapping, module development and validation, and classroom implementation. Each of these findings is described in detail to provide a clear picture of the research outcomes. Following the presentation of results, a separate discussion section further explores the meaning and broader implications of these findings, placing them in the context of existing literature and international best practices.

1. Results

a. Curriculum mapping results

The curriculum mapping phase was conducted through systematic analysis of official social studies textbooks, teacher guides, and instructional



materials used in Grades VII, VIII, and IX across three selected junior high schools in Pidie Regency, Aceh: SMPN 2 Pidie, SMP YPPU Sigli, and SMPN 4 Pidie. The analysis encompassed all chapters and subtopics from curriculum documents for the 2022–2023 academic year. In addition to document analysis, the study incorporated classroom observations and in-depth interviews with 9 Social Studies teachers, 3 school principals, and 2 education supervisors. This comprehensive approach ensured that both the intended curriculum (documented content) and the enacted curriculum (classroom practice) were thoroughly assessed.

The Grade VII curriculum covers several themes that implicitly contain peace education values. The topic “Social Interaction and Cooperation” introduces concepts such as socialization, mutual respect, and teamwork. Subtopics like “Family Early Life” and “Socialization” include learning objectives related to empathy, understanding others, and cooperation. However, there is no explicit mention of peace education, mediation, or structured conflict resolution processes. The section “Geographic Conditions and Conservation of Natural Resources” encourages appreciation for diversity but does not directly link these themes to peacebuilding or conflict management.

In Grade VIII, “Pluralism in Indonesian Society” addresses multiculturalism, religious tolerance, and mutual assistance. “Cultural Interaction during the Islamic Empire” provides historical narratives illustrating peaceful coexistence, but the integration of these historical examples into contemporary peace and reconciliation skills is not made explicit. Other subtopics introduce “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” (Unity in Diversity) and social integration, but these are not clearly linked to peace education objectives. For example, “Handling Social Conflict” discusses mediation as a pathway to harmony but does not offer structured pedagogical activities.

Grade IX textbooks include “Humans and Change” (modernization and social transformation) and “Local Wisdom” (traditional values supporting harmony and justice). “Community Empowerment” discusses coexistence amid diversity and social issues like gender equality and justice, but again, the materials do not provide structured opportunities for conflict resolution practice.

Across all grades, the mapping identified learning objectives and content that align with peace education values—such as tolerance, empathy, cooperation, justice, and respect for diversity—but without explicit, systematic guidance for teachers to facilitate peace-related activities or develop peacebuilding skills. No dedicated modules or outcomes specifically target peace education.

Classroom observations in all three schools showed that teachers often referred to values like mutual respect, but there was no consistent pedagogical approach for integrating these as peace education. For example, a teacher from SMPN 2 Pidie stated, *“When we discuss the diversity in our community, students begin to appreciate different cultures and practices, which fosters tolerance and mutual respect”* (Interview with Ms. DW, Oct 2023).

In discussions of family and social interaction, students showed active engagement, indicating potential for introducing peace education themes. One student from SMP YPPU Sigli reflected, *“Understanding social inequalities helps us see the importance of fairness and peace in society”* (Interview with Grade VIII student, Oct 2023). During interviews, several teachers expressed the need for more concrete lesson plans and teaching materials, explaining that, *“Discussions on cultural diversity or social problems frequently arise, but are generally tied to textbook content without deeper engagement in mediation or conflict management practices”* (Interview with Mr. H, Oct 2023).

Table 1. Summary of peace education opportunities in Aceh's social studies curriculum

Grade	Theme	Peace Values Present
VII	Social Interaction and Cooperation	Empathy, teamwork, respect
	Family Early Life, Socialization	Understanding, cooperation
VIII	Pluralism in Indonesian Society	Tolerance, religious respect
	Cultural Interaction during Islamic Era	Harmony, coexistence
IX	Humans and Change, Local Wisdom	Justice, harmony, fairness
	Community Empowerment	Social justice, equality

Source: Fieldwork data, 2023.



The curriculum mapping process confirmed that while there are substantial opportunities to embed peace education within the Social Studies curriculum, these opportunities remain largely unstructured and implicit, highlighting the necessity for a more explicit, systematic approach in Aceh's junior high schools.

b. Module development and validation results

The second phase focused on developing and validating a peace education module tailored to Aceh's junior high school context, based on findings from the curriculum mapping. The module integrated key peace values—including tolerance, empathy, cooperation, mediation, conflict resolution, and respect for diversity—into the curriculum.

The module consists of twelve thematic units, reflecting the twelve fundamental values of peace education as outlined by Peace Generation Indonesia (Lincoln & Amalee, 2010): respecting differences, empathy, tolerance, effective communication, cooperation, mediation, emotional management, conflict management, creativity, positive leadership, decision-making, and responsibility. Each unit was structured to fit existing social studies topics for contextual relevance.

Expert validation involved two education specialists from Universitas Syiah Kuala, who reviewed content accuracy, pedagogical soundness, cultural relevance, instructional clarity, and alignment with national standards. Their feedback led to refinements in lesson sequencing and the use of Acehnese case studies. Subsequently, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 9 teachers, 3 principals, and 2 supervisors from participating schools assessed the feasibility of integrating the module into lesson plans, the clarity of objectives, and the suitability of the proposed activities. Participants provided feedback on practical challenges, such as time constraints and the need for flexible assessment strategies. Teachers highlighted the module's strength in offering structured plans and classroom activities, while also requesting greater adaptability, (Interview with Mr. H, Nov 2023).

The final module was piloted over six weeks in SMPN 2 Pidie, SMP YPPU Sigli, and SMPN 4 Pidie, involving 9 teachers and 70 students. Teachers implemented lessons using the provided materials and suggested activities, following project-based, collaborative, and reflective approaches aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. Both teachers and students gave feedback throughout the pilot period. Classroom observations documented increased student engagement and participation in peace-related activities, particularly during group projects and conflict resolution role-plays. Teachers reported that the module was easy to integrate and improved lesson delivery on abstract values. *"The structured activities made it easier for us to deliver lessons on sensitive topics and to encourage student reflection"* (Interview with Ms. DW, Nov 2023).

Feedback collected through student self-evaluation forms indicated improved understanding of peace concepts and greater empathy toward peers.

Table 2. Summary of module development and validation process

Stage	Activity	Participants	Key Outcomes
Expert Validation	Content and pedagogical review	2 education experts	Content and sequencing revisions
FGD with Stakeholders	Feasibility and implementation	9 teachers, 3 principals, 2 supervisors	Adaptation suggestions, local relevance
Pilot Implementation	Six-week classroom delivery and feedback	9 teachers, 70 students	Increased engagement, positive feedback

Source: Fieldwork data, 2023.

The development and validation process produced a structured, contextually relevant peace education module that was refined through expert and practitioner feedback and was well received in initial classroom trials.

c. Module implementation and effectiveness results

The module was implemented in the same three junior high schools with a total of 70 students (32 at SMP YPPU, 27 at SMPN 2, and 11 at SMPN 4).

The module's focus was on "Early Family Life," and the process involved three main learning activities: a pretest, individual and group assignments, and self-evaluation. Pretest results showed that students across the schools started with an "adequate" understanding of family history, self-awareness, and peace values, with some variation. The average pretest self-confidence score ranged from 1.55 (SMPN 4) to 1.77 (SMP YPPU); the ability to identify strengths and weaknesses ranged from 1.87 to 1.98.

During implementation, students completed both individual and group assignments. Most students improved in identifying personal strengths and weaknesses, constructing family trees, and providing constructive advice. No student was categorized as "low" in self-reflection skills: at SMP YPPU, 22 students achieved "high" self-reflection; at SMPN 2, most were "moderate" (24 out of 27); at SMPN 4, almost all were "moderate". Group assignments revealed students' ability to offer practical, nonviolent solutions and demonstrate empathy. For example, one group at SMP YPPU wrote:

"If you want to help your friends, do not use violence. Try to advise those who disturb others and help those in need" (Group worksheet, SMP YPPU, Nov 2023).

Written reflections showed that students enjoyed group activities the most, while drawing family trees was often the most challenging. Across all schools, students frequently sought help from family members when facing difficulties:

"If I find something difficult, I usually ask my brother or my mother for help" (Reflection, SMPN 2, Nov 2023).

Self-evaluation forms (using a 1–4 scale) showed clear improvement after implementation. At SMP YPPU, the average post-module self-confidence was 3.90; at SMPN 2, 3.85; and at SMPN 4, 3.45. All schools reported gains in understanding family history, respect for others, and interpersonal skills. Teachers and school leaders reported high rates of learning achievement: 84–98% at SMP YPPU, 94–100% at SMPN 2, and 90–97% at SMPN 4. Teachers

noticed increased engagement, especially among previously passive students. A summary of the core results from all three schools is presented below:

Table 3. Summary of module implementation and student learning outcomes

Aspect	SMP YPPU	SMPN 2	SMPN 4
Number of students	32	27	11
Avg. pretest self-confidence*	1.77	1.68	1.55
Avg. post-module self-confidence*	3.90	3.85	3.45
Achievement of learning objectives**	84–98%	94–100%	90–97%
High self-reflection (students)	22	3	1
Moderate self-reflection (students)	8	24	8
Most enjoyable activity	Group work	Group work	Group work
Most challenging activity	Family tree	Family tree	Family tree
Typical support when struggling	Family help	Family help	Family help

**On a 1–4 scale. **Based on teacher/principal reflections and evaluation forms.*

Source: Fieldwork data, 2023.

The implementation of the peace education module resulted in tangible improvements in students' self-confidence, self-reflection, empathy, and collaboration skills. Both student and teacher feedback confirmed the module's success in fostering a peaceful, supportive classroom climate and advancing key social competencies, while also identifying specific areas—such as constructing family trees—where further instructional support may be needed.

2. Discussion

This study's results reveal the deeply layered nature of integrating peace education into the junior high school Social Studies curriculum in Aceh. On the surface, the curriculum appears to embrace many values essential for peace—empathy, mutual respect, cooperation, and tolerance—yet as seen in both our mapping and broader educational research, the challenge often lies in moving beyond implicit messages to truly actionable pedagogy. This tension between what is stated in curriculum documents and what unfolds in real classrooms is a familiar theme not only in Indonesia (Hasudungan, 2020; Hasudungan & Sartika, 2020; Abd Ghani et al., 2024), but globally as well,



where peace education often remains an “aspiration in principle” rather than “practice in action” (Hantzopoulos & Bajaj, 2021; UNESCO, 2015).

What becomes particularly clear in the Acehnese context is that curriculum alone cannot guarantee meaningful peace education. In fact, as the results showed, teachers frequently expressed uncertainty about how to translate broad values into tangible learning experiences. These findings resonate with what Wahyudin (2018) and Ofojebe & Ezugoh (2020) have observed elsewhere: when peace education lacks specific pedagogical models or assessment strategies, the substance is often lost in daily routines. Interestingly, teachers’ reliance on existing textbooks—despite their awareness of peace values—seems to echo the limitations found in studies of hidden curriculum and the enduring gap between policy and classroom reality.

By developing and piloting a dedicated peace education module through a process that actively involved teachers, education experts, and school leaders, this study aimed to move past these systemic hurdles. The approach draws not only on the core principles articulated by Lincoln and Amalee (2010) and Davies (2010)—who emphasize the importance of both global frameworks and local adaptation—but also on practical lessons from other conflict-affected settings. For example, experiences from Rwanda, Mindanao, and Bosnia show that successful peace education often requires co-creation with local educators, continual feedback loops, and the flexibility to adjust to community needs (Abajyan & Vardanyan, 2023; Australian Government, 2022; Ndahinda et al., 2023; Pratiwi & Warlizasusi, 2023).

Our findings particularly highlight how constructivist and project-based pedagogies breathe life into peace education. It is in the “doing”—the group projects, role plays, and self-reflections—that students develop a more personal, applied understanding of abstract values. This echoes what Bing (1989), Rodriguez Carreon & Vozniak (2021), and Davies (2017) have long advocated: real growth in empathy and conflict resolution skills comes from meaningful engagement, not rote learning. The students’ enthusiasm for collaborative projects and the observable transformation in previously passive learners serve as a local affirmation of these broader insights.

However, peace education in Aceh was not without its challenges. Teachers' experiences of limited time, unfamiliar teaching strategies, and diverse student backgrounds reflected well-known tensions in the peace education field. Even structured, participatory modules—however promising—can only go so far without sustained professional development and collegial support, an issue underscored by Snauwaert (2019) and Küsmüş (2021). Our results reinforce the notion that reform must extend beyond classroom resources, encompassing ongoing learning communities for educators and space for adaptive experimentation.

Moreover, this study surfaces the unique dynamic of family and community involvement in the peace education process. Students' accounts of turning to parents or siblings when struggling with reflective tasks, and teachers' recognition of local wisdom as a teaching asset, signal a reality noted by Munadi & Sari (2022) and further exemplified in Maluku's Pela-Gandong tradition (Afdhal, 2024). Indeed, peace education—when authentically integrated into daily life—naturally blurs the boundary between school and community, as also seen in adaptations like Kelso's Choice in the US (Mariani & Silvestro, 2020).

Another key insight relates to the ongoing balancing act between standardization and local adaptation. While the peace education module provided much-needed structure, results from schools with varied student backgrounds (such as SMPN 4) revealed that uniform materials alone are not enough; teachers must continually read the room, making adjustments based on students' prior experiences and readiness. This need for flexibility is echoed throughout international research, from post-genocide Rwanda to post-accord Mindanao (Abajyan & Vardanyan, 2023; Magill, 2010; Peery Viggers, 2025).

Beyond individual and classroom impacts, the broader social significance of the Aceh initiative is notable. Improvements in learning achievement, student participation, and classroom climate directly support global ambitions for quality and inclusive education (SDG 4) and peace and strong institutions (SDG 16) (Djamil, 2019; Zainal et al., 2019; Ma`arif et al., 2024). The Aceh case illustrates that, even in settings marked by deep histories of conflict, schools can



become transformative sites—provided that reform efforts are collaborative, rooted in local realities, and connected to supportive policy.

Despite these promising outcomes, the long-term sustainability and scalability of peace education remain uncertain. As observed in successful and struggling cases alike (Davies, 2010; Galtung, 1996; Ndahinda et al., 2023), pilot projects often face difficulties in surviving past their initial momentum unless matched by policy support, resources, and institutional ownership. In Aceh, this raises ongoing questions about how to embed innovation at scale—questions that, while challenging, open valuable avenues for future research and policy dialogue. Rather than offering definitive solutions, these findings encourage ongoing experimentation and reflexivity in peace education. The Aceh experience reminds us that progress is not linear; it is a process of continuous negotiation—among teachers, students, families, and policymakers—where context, relationships, and creativity matter as much as any formal guideline or theoretical model. The dialogue with both local practice and global research is, and must remain, open-ended.

The global impact of this study lies in its contribution to rethinking how peace education can be institutionalized within formal school systems in post-conflict and developing societies. The Acehnese experience provides a concrete example of how locally developed models can inform global frameworks such as UNESCO's *Guidelines for Integrating an Education for Peace Curriculum* (2015) and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). By empirically demonstrating that peace education can be embedded within existing Social Studies curricula, this study challenges the widespread tendency to treat peace education as a temporary or extracurricular activity. Instead, it positions peace education as a systemic and sustainable reform mechanism that can be replicated in diverse contexts across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East (Ndahinda et al., 2023; Abajyan & Vardanyan, 2023; Hasanudin et al., 2024).

The Acehnese model also strengthens global understanding of how education can serve as a bridge between conflict recovery and long-term social

resilience. This resonates with Galtung's (1996) concept of *positive peace*, which emphasizes structural justice, cultural transformation, and the reconstruction of social relationships as essential conditions for sustainable peace. The success of the Acehese module underscores the potential for education to move beyond knowledge transmission toward nurturing empathy, dialogue, and collective responsibility – values urgently needed in societies grappling with division and polarization (Davies, 2017; Hantzopoulos & Bajaj, 2021). Thus, the model contributes to the global pedagogical movement advocating experiential, inclusive, and dialogical approaches that prepare students not only as learners but as peacebuilders capable of addressing global crises such as extremism, inequality, and social fragmentation (Bing, 1989; Rodríguez Carreon & Vozniak, 2021; Pratiwi & Warlizasusi, 2023).

Furthermore, this research provides practical insights for international agencies and policymakers seeking to integrate peace education into national systems. It offers evidence that locally grounded, participatory curriculum design—developed in collaboration with teachers and communities—can ensure both cultural relevance and global alignment. Such an approach supports transnational collaboration among ministries of education, NGOs, and global institutions like UNESCO and UNICEF in developing context-specific yet globally connected peace education initiatives (Page, 2008; Djamil, 2019). In this regard, the Aceh case stands as a model for other post-conflict and multicultural societies, demonstrating that peace education, when locally rooted and globally oriented, can become a powerful tool for achieving human rights, intercultural dialogue, and global citizenship education (Hantzopoulos & Bajaj, 2021; Davies, 2017; Galtung, 1996).

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was confined to three junior high schools in Pidie Regency, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts across Aceh or Indonesia. The relatively small number of participants and the specific regional focus mean that the results may not fully capture variations in teacher readiness, student characteristics, or institutional capacities in other areas. Second, the duration of the module implementation—six weeks—was too short

to assess the sustainability of behavioral and attitudinal changes among students. Third, the study relied heavily on qualitative methods such as observations, interviews, and self-assessment forms, which, while providing rich insights, are inherently subject to researcher interpretation and participant bias. Finally, the absence of a longitudinal or comparative design restricted the ability to evaluate the long-term and systemic effects of peace education on broader educational and social outcomes. Recognizing these limitations is important to interpret the findings within their contextual boundaries and to inform more comprehensive future evaluations.

D. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that integrating peace education into the junior high school Social Studies curriculum in Aceh is both feasible and impactful in enhancing students' understanding of peace-related values and competencies. The curriculum mapping revealed that while elements of tolerance, empathy, and social cooperation already exist, they lack structured pedagogical implementation. Through the development and validation of a contextualized peace education module—aligned with the *Merdeka Curriculum* and tested in three schools—the study found that students showed significant improvement in empathy, conflict resolution, and collaborative learning skills. Teachers and education supervisors reported that the module provided clarity, structure, and meaningful engagement, proving that peace education can be effectively mainstreamed within existing curricular systems.

Theoretically, this research strengthens the discourse on peace education by providing an empirically grounded model that operationalizes Galtung's concept of *positive peace* through participatory pedagogy and experiential learning. It advances previous studies by demonstrating how local wisdom, contextual adaptation, and inclusive collaboration can serve as foundational principles in post-conflict education reform. Practically, the study contributes a replicable and scalable framework for embedding peace values within the Social Studies curriculum, emphasizing sustainable policy implementation, continuous teacher professional development, and culturally

responsive instructional design. The novelty of this research lies in its synthesis of global peace education frameworks – such as UNESCO's (2015) guidelines and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 and SDG 16) – with the Acehnese socio-cultural context, offering a hybrid model that connects local practices with international standards of peacebuilding education.

Given the limitations identified, future studies should expand the scope of implementation to include more diverse educational settings across different regions of Indonesia and beyond. Longitudinal research is needed to evaluate the lasting effects of peace education on students' behavioral transformation, civic engagement, and intercultural tolerance. Comparative studies between regions or countries could also provide deeper insights into how cultural, political, and institutional factors influence the success of peace education integration. Moreover, mixed-method or quasi-experimental designs may offer stronger empirical evidence regarding the causal relationship between peace education interventions and measurable outcomes in character formation and social cohesion. These future directions are essential to validate and refine the model presented in this study for broader policy adoption and global academic advancement.

This study underscores that peace education is not merely a pedagogical innovation but a moral and structural commitment to building a more just and empathetic society. The Acehnese experience demonstrates that when education systems prioritize peace as a core value, schools can become transformative spaces that heal divisions, nurture compassion, and cultivate responsible global citizens. By bridging the gap between local wisdom and global frameworks, this study affirms that education remains humanity's most powerful instrument for sustaining peace, justice, and collective harmony in an increasingly fragmented world.

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