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Role Of Students Towards The Social Media In Peace Building

Dr Sidra Kiran[1] , Dr Um E Rubab[2] , Saima Munir[3] , Muhammad Junaid Suffi[4] , Riffat Bibi[5] , Natasha Sabir[6] , Wajid Mahnaz[7]

Abstract

INTRODUCTION *The study entitled* Role of Students Towards the Social Media in Peace Building *was conducted to investigate how students, as active users of digital platforms, utilize social media for fostering harmony, tolerance, and constructive dialogue in society. The focus was on understanding their attitudes, perceptions, and actual roles in promoting peace through responsible use of social media. The objectives of the study were to examine how students' attitudes toward social media influence their perceptions of peace building, to investigate the relationship between students' attitudes toward social media and their role in promoting peace building, and to explore how students' perceptions of peace building affect their constructive role in social media. The study employed a quantitative research design with a correlational approach. A sample of 300 students was selected through proportional stratified random sampling. Data were collected through a self-developed questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS 25, applying descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation to test the hypotheses. The findings of the first objective showed a significant positive correlation between students' attitudes toward social media and their perceptions of peace building. The second finding revealed [1]a positive relationship between students' attitudes toward social media and their active role in promoting peace. The third finding indicated that students' perceptions of peace building significantly influenced their constructive use of social media for peace-oriented purposes. Hence, it is recommended that awareness programs and workshops be introduced to strengthen students' positive attitudes toward social media, that extracurricular activities and campaigns be developed to transform these attitudes into peace-promoting engagement, and that peace education and digital ethics be integrated into curricula to enhance students' perceptions and roles in peace building. The significance of the study lies in its contribution to understanding how students can be empowered as agents of peace through social media. By highlighting the relationship between attitudes, perceptions, and roles, the study provides a framework for educators, policymakers, and peace practitioners to harness the potential of students for constructive digital citizenship.*

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Alhamd Islamic University Islamabad sidra.kiran@aiu.edu.pk
[2]Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi umerubab@fjwu.edu.pk
[3]PhD Scholar, Department of Education, Muslim Youth (MY) University, Islamabad saimamunirvirk@gmail.com
[4]M.Phil Scholar, Department of Education, Alhamd Islamic University, Islamabad junaidsuffi@gmail.com
[5]M.Phil Scholar, Department of Education, Alhamd Islamic University, Islamabad riffathmeed@gmail.com
[6]PhD Scholar, Department of Education, Alhamd Islamic University, Quetta natujager@gmail.com
[7]PhD Scholar, Department of Education, Alhamd Islamic University, Islamabad wajid.mahnaz@yahoo.com

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Introduction

In the 21st century, social media has transformed into a powerful medium for communication, collaboration, and social change, significantly influencing the ways societies function and interact. Students, as some of the most active users of digital platforms, hold a crucial role in shaping how social media is used to promote harmony and peace. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and WhatsApp serve not only as entertainment tools but also as powerful channels for learning, awareness creation, civic engagement, and conflict resolution. In contexts where societies are increasingly interconnected, social media provides students with opportunities to participate in global conversations, exchange cultural values, and actively engage in peace building efforts (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Howard & Parks, 2012). The constructive engagement of students in digital spaces can significantly impact the prevention of violence, the promotion of tolerance, and the development of communities that thrive on dialogue and understanding.

Peace building, in essence, refers to efforts aimed at fostering harmony, preventing conflict, and creating structures that sustain non-violent relationships within societies (Galtung, 1996). The involvement of students in this process through social media highlights their potential as agents of positive change. Unlike traditional stakeholders such as policymakers, parents, or teachers, students engage with peers directly in online communities, thus influencing attitudes and behaviors at the grassroots level. By sharing narratives of empathy, participating in peace-promoting campaigns, and countering misinformation, students extend the reach of peace education to broader audiences. This makes their role vital in bridging gaps between theory and practice, ensuring that peace building is not limited to formal institutions but permeates the daily interactions of youth in virtual spaces (Shapiro, 2016).

Role of Students as Digital Citizens

Students represent a unique demographic group in peace building because they are both digital natives and future leaders. Their familiarity with online tools allows them to innovate and disseminate peace-promoting content more effectively than other groups. The role of students as digital citizens extends beyond consuming information—they create, evaluate, and share narratives that can either escalate or de-escalate tensions. El Tarabishi and Galal (2023) emphasized that university youth who engage actively with social media can contribute to preventing violence and building cultures of tolerance. Similarly, Hussain and Howard (2013) documented the Arab Spring, during which youth-driven online campaigns demonstrated how students can mobilize communities peacefully through digital activism. By exercising their digital citizenship responsibly, students promote values such as inclusivity, respect, and empathy, which are essential for sustaining peace in contemporary societies.

Moreover, students' digital presence allows them to challenge harmful narratives and misinformation that can fuel conflict. In times of crisis, such as political unrest or communal violence, misinformation spreads rapidly on social media platforms, often exacerbating tensions (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Students who are trained in media literacy and critical thinking are better equipped to identify and counter these harmful narratives, redirecting discussions toward peaceful solutions. Their ability to engage critically not only protects themselves but also benefits their communities by reducing the spread of divisive or extremist content (Meschoulam, 2019). This highlights the importance of fostering students' roles as digital peacebuilders through education and awareness.

Social Media as a Variable

Social media, the second key variable in the study, serves as both a risk and an opportunity in peace building. On one hand, its open and interactive nature allows harmful ideologies, hate speech, and misinformation to spread widely. Awan (2017) noted that extremist groups have strategically used online platforms to radicalize youth and propagate violence. On the other hand, social media offers unparalleled opportunities for students to create constructive spaces where dialogue, understanding, and intercultural exchange can occur (Denskus, 2019). The variable of social media thus operates as a double-edged sword: its negative impact is evident when misused, but its constructive capacity emerges when guided by principles of empathy and peace.

For students, social media is not merely a communication tool but a platform of empowerment (Akram et al., 2022; 2021). It provides opportunities for advocacy campaigns, awareness programs, and intercultural dialogues (Abdelrady et al., 2025; Ma et al., 2024). Students can organize online peace campaigns, share messages that promote tolerance, and participate in global movements for human rights and justice. For example, student-led initiatives such as online petitions, hashtags, and awareness drives have been instrumental in highlighting issues of discrimination, inequality, and conflict resolution (Canegallo et al., 2020). This variable is central to understanding peace building because the way social media is used—constructively or destructively—determines whether it contributes to harmony or division.

Peace Building as a Variable

Peace building, as the third major variable, is a multidimensional process aimed at fostering sustainable peace through dialogue, tolerance, and structural reforms. According to Galtung (1996), peace building requires addressing both direct violence and structural inequalities that perpetuate conflict. In the digital age, peace building extends into online spaces where communities engage, negotiate, and resolve disputes. For students, peace building encompasses active participation in online debates, promoting empathy-driven narratives, and countering hate speech. Their involvement in such practices transforms peace building from a theoretical concept into a lived experience shaped by everyday interactions (Bar-Tal, 2002).

Social media also democratizes peace building by lowering barriers to participation. Unlike formal peace initiatives that often involve governments and organizations, social media empowers students to contribute directly, regardless of their social or economic backgrounds (Al-Adwan et al., 2022). By creating blogs, videos, podcasts, or posts that emphasize coexistence and tolerance, students play a proactive role in shaping public opinion. As Shapiro (2016) observed, online communities can serve as catalysts for peace by amplifying constructive voices and fostering cross-cultural understanding. Thus, peace building in the digital context becomes more inclusive, participatory, and accessible to younger generations.

Interconnectedness of Variables

The interconnectedness of students, social media, and peace building is crucial for understanding their combined impact. Students act as the primary agents, social media functions as the medium, and peace building represents the outcome. When students engage with social media responsibly, the likelihood of achieving peace-oriented outcomes increases. Conversely, negative attitudes or irresponsible use can undermine peace and promote conflict. This interaction aligns with the findings of Livingstone et al. (2017), who argued that the quality of digital engagement determines whether online spaces enhance opportunities or exacerbate risks.

Empirical studies further support this interconnectedness. El Tarabishi and Galal (2023) highlighted how university students' active participation in peace campaigns online positively influenced their communities by reducing tolerance for violence. Similarly, Hussain and

Howard (2013) showed that student-driven activism during the Arab Spring demonstrated both the risks and opportunities of social media. Together, these findings underline that students' attitudes and perceptions are the determining factors that transform social media into a tool for peace building rather than conflict.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine how students' attitudes toward social media influence their perceptions of peace building.
2. To investigate how students' attitudes toward social media affect their active role in promoting peace building through online activities.
3. To explore how students' perceptions of peace building impact their role in using social media for constructive purposes.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. Students' attitudes toward social media significantly influence their perceptions of peace building.
2. Students' attitudes toward social media significantly affect their role in promoting peace building through online activities.
3. Students' perceptions of peace building significantly impact their role in using social media for constructive purposes.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it explores the role of students in shaping online spaces for peace building, tolerance, and constructive engagement. By examining how students' attitudes and perceptions influence their digital practices, the research provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and peace educators in designing interventions that promote responsible digital citizenship. It also highlights the need for strengthening students' digital literacy to counter online risks such as misinformation, hate speech, and cyberbullying, while empowering them to use social media for dialogue, empathy, and cooperation. The study contributes to the existing literature on social media, youth activism, and peace education, offering a foundation for future awareness programs, institutional policies, and student-led initiatives that leverage social media as a constructive tool for building peaceful societies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media as a Tool for Peace and Conflict

Social media has become a global platform with both constructive and destructive potential. Scholars such as Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) identified social media as a transformative communication tool that democratizes information and enables individuals to reach vast audiences without institutional gatekeeping. While these platforms can be exploited for spreading misinformation and hate speech (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017), they are equally capable of fostering dialogue, tolerance, and peace building when utilized responsibly. Denskus (2019) emphasized that social media can amplify peace-promoting narratives by connecting diverse groups across geographic and cultural boundaries. In the context of students, these platforms provide spaces for peer-to-peer interaction, activism, and collaborative initiatives that directly contribute to peace promotion.

The dual nature of social media has been noted in several studies. Awan (2017) found that extremist groups exploit digital platforms to radicalize young users, making them vulnerable to violent ideologies. On the other hand, Howard and Parks (2012) demonstrated that social

media has played a positive role in political change, enabling young people to voice concerns and advocate for reforms through peaceful means. This duality makes social media a crucial variable in peace building studies, especially among students who represent a demographic that is both highly active online and highly impressionable.

Students as Digital Citizens and Agents of Change

Students have emerged as a critical group in shaping the digital environment, not only as consumers but also as creators of online content. El Tarabishi and Galal (2023) emphasized that university youth actively participating in social media campaigns were instrumental in reducing violence and promoting peace in Egyptian communities. Their findings highlight students' potential as peace actors when their digital presence is directed toward constructive engagement. Similarly, Hussain and Howard (2013) documented youth-driven movements during the Arab Spring, illustrating how students mobilized through social media to demand political reforms in largely peaceful ways.

The concept of digital citizenship is central to understanding students' online engagement. According to Ribble (2015), digital citizenship involves responsible, ethical, and effective use of technology to participate in society. For students, digital citizenship extends to promoting empathy, respecting diversity, and countering divisive narratives (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023, 2025). By exercising digital citizenship, students contribute not only to their personal development but also to the broader culture of peace within online spaces. This makes their role particularly significant in sustaining peace-oriented dialogue on platforms that are otherwise vulnerable to conflict.

Theoretical Perspectives on Peace Building

Peace building as a concept has been widely discussed in the works of scholars such as Galtung (1996), who differentiated between negative peace (the absence of violence) and positive peace (the presence of justice, tolerance, and structural harmony). From this perspective, students' online engagement can be seen as part of positive peace, where social media is used to promote inclusivity, justice, and intercultural understanding. Bar-Tal (2002) further argued that peace education begins with socialization processes that nurture tolerance and dialogue. When students participate in online campaigns that spread peace-oriented messages, they effectively extend peace education beyond classrooms into digital spaces.

Theories of social learning also apply in this context. Bandura's (2001) concept of observational learning suggests that individuals replicate behaviors they observe in peers and influential figures. Students exposed to peace-promoting content on social media are likely to adopt and replicate such behaviors, reinforcing positive online interactions. This theoretical framework underscores the significance of students' role in modeling constructive online behavior for their peers.

Social Media, Student Activism, and Civic Engagement

Student activism through social media is not a new phenomenon. From climate change campaigns to human rights movements, students have used platforms such as Twitter and Instagram to mobilize global audiences. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) described this phenomenon as "connective action," where individuals use digital tools to personalize and share causes, resulting in collective mobilization without centralized leadership. Students, with their technological fluency, often lead these movements, demonstrating their ability to use social media for civic engagement and peace-oriented advocacy.

Empirical studies confirm this potential. Loader et al. (2014) found that social media enhances youth political participation by creating spaces for dialogue and activism. In contexts of

conflict, such participation translates into peace building when campaigns emphasize tolerance, dialogue, and justice. Shapiro (2016) argued that social media's ability to connect communities across cultural divides makes it a powerful platform for conflict prevention. Students, therefore, are not merely participants but catalysts in shaping how social media is used for civic and peace-oriented purposes.

Risks of Student Misuse of Social Media

Despite its potential, social media poses significant risks when misused by students. Research indicates that unsupervised or uncritical engagement with digital platforms can expose students to harmful content, cyberbullying, and extremist propaganda (Frison & Eggermont, 2015). Awan (2017) highlighted how extremist groups exploit students' digital presence to recruit and radicalize them, turning social media into a tool of division rather than peace. Such risks emphasize the need for digital literacy programs that equip students with skills to critically evaluate online content and resist harmful narratives (Chen & Ramzan, 2024; Ramzan et al., 2025, 2023, 2020).

In addition, cyberbullying among students is a growing concern. Kowalski et al. (2014) found that the anonymity of online platforms often encourages aggressive behavior, leading to psychological harm and increased conflict among peers. This misuse of social media undermines the potential for peace building and highlights the importance of fostering values such as empathy, respect, and tolerance in student communities.

Digital Literacy and Peace Education

The relationship between digital literacy and peace building has been highlighted by several scholars. Livingstone et al. (2017) found that digital skills reduce online risks and enhance opportunities for constructive engagement. Students who possess higher levels of digital literacy are more likely to navigate social media responsibly and engage in peace-oriented practices. Meschoulam (2019) also emphasized that media literacy is essential for fostering peace, as it equips students with the ability to critically analyze online narratives and counter misinformation.

Peace education frameworks further reinforce the role of digital literacy. According to UNESCO (2016), peace education in the digital age must include training in critical thinking, intercultural understanding, and responsible use of technology. By integrating digital literacy into peace education, institutions can empower students to become active agents of peace both online and offline.

Student-Led Online Peace Initiatives

There is growing evidence of student-led initiatives that demonstrate the positive impact of youth engagement in peace building through social media. For instance, campaigns such as #StudentsForPeace and #YouthVoices have mobilized thousands of students globally to advocate for tolerance, intercultural dialogue, and non-violence. El Tarabishi and Galal (2023) documented how Egyptian university students organized online campaigns that promoted harmony and reduced incidents of campus violence. These initiatives highlight how students, when empowered, can transform social media into a powerful peace building tool.

Moreover, students often serve as cultural bridges, using their online presence to connect local issues with global narratives. Hussain and Howard (2013) observed that youth-led movements often transcend national boundaries, inspiring solidarity across regions. By situating local peace challenges within global contexts, students contribute to building inclusive narratives that foster cooperation and understanding across cultures.

Gaps in Literature

While there is substantial research on social media and peace building, studies focusing explicitly on the role of students remain limited. Much of the literature emphasizes the role of governments, NGOs, and parents in guiding digital engagement (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Byrne et al., 2016). The agency of students themselves, as independent actors in peace building, is often underexplored. Additionally, existing research tends to highlight the risks of social media rather than its opportunities for constructive engagement. This study seeks to address these gaps by focusing on students as active participants in shaping peace through social media.

Synthesis

The literature reviewed highlights the dual nature of social media, the agency of students as digital citizens, and the importance of peace building in contemporary societies. Social media provides students with opportunities to engage in civic activism, share peace-oriented narratives, and build inclusive communities. At the same time, risks such as radicalization and cyberbullying underscore the importance of digital literacy and peace education. Theoretical frameworks such as Galtung's peace theory, Bandura's social learning theory, and Ribble's digital citizenship framework provide a foundation for understanding how students can transform online engagement into constructive peace building practices.

By synthesizing these perspectives, it becomes evident that students' role toward social media in peace building is not only crucial but also under-researched. Their potential to foster harmony, counter harmful narratives, and promote intercultural dialogue makes them vital actors in both local and global peace initiatives. This literature review underscores the need to explore how students' attitudes, perceptions, and practices shape their role in leveraging social media as a tool for peace.

Gaps in Literature

Despite the growing recognition of students as critical actors in peace building, much of the existing literature focuses on the role of parents, governments, or institutions (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Byrne et al., 2016). Fewer studies explicitly examine how students themselves perceive their role in shaping peace through social media. Furthermore, research tends to emphasize the risks of online engagement rather than the opportunities it presents for fostering harmony (Frison & Eggermont, 2015). Addressing these gaps requires shifting the focus toward empowering students as digital peacebuilders and recognizing their agency in shaping narratives of tolerance and coexistence.

In summary, the role of students toward social media in peace building represents a vital area of academic inquiry in today's interconnected world. Students, as active digital citizens, are uniquely positioned to influence narratives, counter harmful ideologies, and foster dialogue across cultural and social boundaries. Social media, while often criticized for promoting conflict, can also serve as a transformative tool when used responsibly by students to amplify voices of peace. Peace building, as the ultimate goal, requires inclusive participation, and students' contributions in digital spaces ensure that its principles are embedded in everyday interactions. By exploring the relationship among these variables, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how students can utilize social media constructively for peace building and how educational institutions can support this endeavor.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study adopted a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between students' attitudes toward social media and their role in promoting peace building. A descriptive survey method was employed to collect measurable data on students'

perceptions and practices without manipulating any variables (Creswell, 2014). This approach allowed the researcher to determine the strength and direction of relationships among students' attitudes, perceptions of peace building, and their online engagement in real-world educational contexts.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of higher secondary school and university students in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). According to official statistics, there are approximately 9,500 students enrolled across selected institutions in ICT. A representative sample of 300 students was drawn using proportional stratified random sampling, ensuring adequate representation across gender, age groups, and academic levels. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for selecting representative samples, which confirmed the adequacy of 300 respondents for the given population.

Research Tool

A self-developed questionnaire was used as the primary data collection tool. The questionnaire was structured into three sections: (a) demographic information of students (age, gender, level of education, and residence), (b) students' attitudes toward social media, and (c) perceptions of peace building and their own role in online engagement. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The final instrument contained 34 items, with 12 items on social media attitudes, 15 on peace building perceptions, and 7 items measuring the students' role in peace-promoting online practices.

Validity and Reliability

The instrument's content validity was established through expert review by five senior faculty members in education, peace studies, and media research. Suggestions regarding clarity, relevance, and alignment with study objectives were incorporated before finalization. A pilot study was conducted with 30 students who were not part of the main sample. Reliability analysis yielded Cronbach's alpha of 0.86, indicating high internal consistency and reliability of the instrument.

Sampling Technique

The study employed proportional stratified random sampling to ensure representation of students from different institutions, genders, and academic backgrounds. This method minimized sampling bias and enhanced the generalizability of the findings. The strata were defined based on educational level (higher secondary and university) and gender (male/female), and random selection within each stratum ensured fairness.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through printed questionnaires distributed in classrooms and online survey forms shared via institutional WhatsApp groups and student forums. Respondents were provided with clear instructions, and their voluntary participation was emphasized. Confidentiality was ensured by avoiding collection of identifying details, and students were assured that their responses would be used only for academic purposes. A total of 300 completed questionnaires were returned, achieving a 95% response rate.

Data Analysis Method

The collected data were coded and entered into SPSS version 25 for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize demographic variables and responses to the questionnaire items. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was computed to assess the strength and direction of relationships between students' attitudes toward social media, their perceptions of peace building, and their

active role in peace-promoting online practices. The significance level for testing hypotheses was set at $p < 0.05$.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	160	53.3%
Female	140	46.7%
Total	**300**	**100%**

Table 1 indicates that the sample consisted of 160 male students (53.3%) and 140 female students (46.7%). The data reflect a nearly balanced distribution of gender among the respondents, ensuring that both male and female perspectives are adequately represented in the study. This balanced representation strengthens the reliability of the results, as peace building and social media engagement may differ based on gendered experiences. By including both male and female students in significant proportions, the study provides a holistic view of students' roles toward social media in peace building.

Table 2: Age of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
16–20 years	120	40.0%
21–25 years	150	50.0%
26+ years	30	10.0%
Total	**300**	**100%**

Table 2 shows that most respondents were aged between 21–25 years (50%), followed by 16–20 years (40%), while only 10% were 26 years and above. The findings suggest that the majority of participants were young adults, which is consistent with the fact that youth form the largest group of active social media users. Younger students are often more engaged in online discussions and activism, making their participation crucial for understanding peace building efforts through digital platforms. The presence of older students, although smaller, adds diversity by incorporating perspectives of more mature respondents.

Table 3: Education Level of Respondents

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Higher Secondary	140	46.7%
University (UG)	110	36.7%
University (PG)	50	16.6%
Total	**300**	**100%**

Table 3 presents the educational distribution of respondents, where 46.7% were higher secondary students, 36.7% were undergraduates, and 16.6% were postgraduates. This distribution reveals that the study includes participants at different academic levels, ensuring diverse academic exposure and experiences. Higher secondary students represent the younger cohort, while undergraduate and postgraduate students bring broader perspectives shaped by higher education. The inclusion of all three groups provides an opportunity to compare how

peace building perceptions vary across different academic stages, making the analysis more comprehensive.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
Students' Attitudes toward Social Media	300	3.80	3.82	0.65
Students' Perceptions of Peace Building	300	3.95	3.96	0.70
Students' Role in Peace Building	300	3.90	3.91	0.68

Table 4 provides the descriptive statistics of the main study variables. The mean values, ranging between 3.80 and 3.95, indicate that students generally hold positive attitudes toward social media and acknowledge its potential role in peace building. The medians are very close to the mean values, suggesting a normal distribution of responses. The standard deviations (between 0.65 and 0.70) reflect moderate variability, showing that while there is general agreement, differences exist in individual perceptions. This suggests that most students use social media positively, though some variation remains in how strongly they perceive its peace building potential.

Objective 1: To examine how students' attitudes toward social media influence their perceptions of peace building

Table 5: Correlations between Students' Attitudes toward Social Media and Perceptions of Peace Building

	Students' Attitudes toward Social Media	**Students' Perceptions of Peace Building**
Students' Attitudes toward Social Media	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	300
Students' Perceptions of Peace Building	Pearson Correlation	.610**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	300

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows a positive and significant correlation ($r = .61$, $p < 0.01$) between students' attitudes toward social media and their perceptions of peace building. This implies that students who hold favorable attitudes toward social media are more likely to recognize its value in fostering harmony and conflict resolution. The result highlights that the way students view social media shapes their understanding of its peace-promoting potential. Therefore, students' digital attitudes are an essential predictor of their peace-oriented perceptions, which can influence their online behaviors and contributions to digital harmony.

Objective 2: To investigate how students' attitudes toward social media affect their active role in promoting peace building through online activities

Table 6: Correlations between Students' Attitudes toward Social Media and Students' Role in Peace Building

	Students' Attitudes toward Social Media	**Students' Role in Peace Building**
Students' Attitudes toward Social Media	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	300
Students' Role in Peace Building	Pearson Correlation	.570**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	300

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 indicates a positive and significant correlation ($r = .57$, $p < 0.01$) between students' attitudes toward social media and their actual role in peace building. This demonstrates that students with positive views of social media are more likely to actively engage in constructive practices such as online campaigns, awareness drives, and conflict-prevention discussions. The finding confirms that attitudes directly influence students' behaviors in digital spaces. As a result, enhancing students' positive attitudes toward social media can encourage them to use it more effectively for promoting peace.

Objective 3: To explore how students' perceptions of peace building impact their role in using social media for constructive purposes

Table 7: Correlations between Students' Perceptions of Peace Building and Students' Role in Peace Building

	Students' Perceptions of Peace Building	**Students' Role in Peace Building**
Students' Perceptions of Peace Building	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	300
Students' Role in Peace Building	Pearson Correlation	.690**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	300

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 reveals a strong positive and significant correlation ($r = .69$, $p < 0.01$) between students' perceptions of peace building and their actual role in peace-promoting activities on social media. This finding suggests that students who highly value peace building are more likely to engage in constructive use of digital platforms, including spreading tolerance, supporting intercultural dialogue, and resisting hate speech. It underscores the importance of cultivating peace-oriented perceptions among students, as these perceptions translate directly into active participation in online peace building initiatives.

Summary of the Study

The study entitled Role of Students Towards the Social Media in Peace Building sought to investigate how students, as one of the most active users of digital platforms, engage with social media in ways that can foster harmony, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. Social media platforms have emerged as powerful communication tools in the 21st century, especially among young people who use them for networking, academic purposes, and civic activism. However, the same platforms are also associated with misinformation, online hate, and radicalization. This dual nature of social media makes it imperative to examine how students—equipped with digital literacy and exposed to multiple online environments—use these spaces for peace building. The introductory section highlighted that students can serve as change agents who bridge gaps between communities, promote intercultural dialogue, and reduce hostilities through responsible engagement on platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter. By focusing on their attitudes, perceptions, and roles in digital engagement, the study underscored the centrality of students in harnessing social media for constructive purposes.

The objectives of the research were threefold: first, to examine how students' attitudes toward social media influence their perceptions of peace building; second, to investigate how these attitudes affect their active roles in promoting peace through online activities; and third, to explore how students' perceptions of peace building shape their practical engagement with digital platforms for constructive ends. From these objectives, three hypotheses were developed. It was hypothesized that students' attitudes toward social media significantly influence their perceptions of peace building, that such attitudes significantly affect their role in promoting peace building through online engagement, and that students' perceptions of peace building significantly impact their constructive role in digital spaces. These hypotheses provided the basis for analyzing the relationship among the three core variables of the study: attitudes, perceptions, and roles.

The literature review expanded on theoretical perspectives and empirical studies connecting social media, youth activism, and peace education. The review highlighted that social media has become an indispensable tool for young people to voice their concerns and mobilize support for peace-related initiatives. Prior studies revealed both the constructive and destructive roles of social media. While some research emphasized its use in fostering political polarization and hate speech, others found evidence of youth-driven peace campaigns and intercultural understanding facilitated by platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. The review also explored the psychological dimensions of students' attitudes, explaining how positive orientations toward digital platforms often translate into peace-promoting behaviors. Furthermore, peace education theories were examined to show how students' perceptions of peace building reflect deeper values of empathy, tolerance, and dialogue. By synthesizing these strands of literature, the study positioned itself at the intersection of digital media research, youth studies, and peace education.

The research methodology was designed to test the stated hypotheses through quantitative analysis. A correlational research design was employed, allowing the researcher to examine the strength and direction of relationships among the variables. The population of the study included higher secondary and university students in Islamabad Capital Territory. A sample of 300 students was drawn using proportional stratified random sampling to ensure fair representation across gender, academic level, and age groups. Data were collected through a self-developed questionnaire consisting of three sections: demographic information, students' attitudes toward social media, and their perceptions and roles in peace building. Items were measured on a five-point Likert scale. Validity of the instrument was established through expert review, while reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86, showing high internal consistency. Data were collected both in printed form and online survey forms circulated via

student forums, achieving a 95% response rate. For analysis, the data were entered into SPSS 25, where descriptive statistics summarized the responses and Pearson's correlation was used to test hypotheses.

The data analysis began with demographic tables, which provided insights into the distribution of participants. Gender analysis revealed a nearly balanced sample, with 53.3% male and 46.7% female respondents, ensuring that findings reflected perspectives across genders. Age distribution showed that 50% of respondents were between 21–25 years, 40% between 16–20 years, and 10% above 26 years. This confirmed that the study mainly represented young students who are typically the most active users of social media. Education-level analysis indicated that 46.7% were higher secondary students, 36.7% were undergraduates, and 16.6% were postgraduates, thus capturing a diverse academic spectrum. These demographic details strengthened the generalizability of the findings.

Descriptive statistics for the three main variables further clarified student orientations. The mean scores of 3.80 for attitudes toward social media, 3.95 for perceptions of peace building, and 3.90 for students' role in peace building showed an overall positive inclination. Median values were nearly identical to the means, suggesting that responses were normally distributed. Standard deviations ranged between 0.65 and 0.70, reflecting moderate variation in responses but consistent patterns overall. This indicated that while some differences existed in individual perceptions, most students agreed on the constructive role of social media in peace building.

The first objective tested the relationship between students' attitudes toward social media and their perceptions of peace building. The correlation analysis revealed a significant positive correlation ($r = .61$, $p < 0.01$). This finding confirmed the hypothesis and suggested that students with favorable views of social media were more likely to perceive it as a tool for promoting peace. It also underscored the importance of fostering positive attitudes toward digital platforms, as perceptions of peace building are strongly shaped by how students view the medium itself. The result aligned with existing studies which showed that youth with positive social media attitudes engage more in civic activism and peace-promoting activities online.

The second objective focused on the relationship between students' attitudes toward social media and their active role in peace building. Correlation results showed a significant positive relationship ($r = .57$, $p < 0.01$), supporting the second hypothesis. This indicated that attitudes not only influenced perceptions but also translated into actual behaviors. Students who held constructive attitudes were more likely to participate in online campaigns, awareness drives, and digital dialogues aimed at conflict prevention and tolerance. This finding was critical because it demonstrated that shaping attitudes through education and awareness programs could lead directly to increased student involvement in peace building.

The third objective examined how students' perceptions of peace building influenced their role in using social media constructively. The results revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = .69$, $p < 0.01$), confirming the third hypothesis. Students who valued peace building were more actively engaged in positive digital practices such as countering hate speech, promoting intercultural dialogue, and sharing peace-oriented content. This result was particularly significant as it highlighted the mediating role of perceptions in shaping actual behavior. Even if students use social media frequently, their engagement becomes truly constructive only when their perceptions align with peace building values.

The overall findings of the study thus showed that students' attitudes and perceptions were both strong predictors of their role in promoting peace through social media. Positive attitudes fostered constructive perceptions, which in turn translated into meaningful engagement in online peace building activities. The findings emphasized that educational institutions and

policymakers should focus on enhancing digital literacy and peace education among students. By cultivating positive attitudes toward social media and strengthening perceptions of peace, students can be empowered to play an active role in using digital platforms as vehicles of harmony and conflict resolution.

In summary, the study contributed to existing knowledge by providing empirical evidence on how students' engagement with social media influences peace building. Starting from the introduction, it highlighted the potential of students as agents of positive change in digital spaces. Through its objectives and hypotheses, the research structured a clear path for examining the interplay between attitudes, perceptions, and roles. The literature review situated the study within global debates on social media's dual role in peace and conflict. Methodologically, the research employed a robust design with valid and reliable tools, ensuring the credibility of its findings. The data analysis confirmed significant correlations, with students' attitudes and perceptions both playing crucial roles in determining their constructive engagement. Finally, the findings underscored the need for interventions aimed at guiding students toward responsible use of social media, thereby reinforcing their position as critical stakeholders in peace building efforts.

Findings of the Study

1. A significant positive relationship was found between students' attitudes toward social media and their perceptions of peace building ($r = .61$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that favorable attitudes toward social media are directly associated with stronger recognition of its role in fostering peace.
2. A significant positive relationship was found between students' attitudes toward social media and their active role in promoting peace building through online activities ($r = .57$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that students with constructive attitudes are more likely to engage in peace-promoting practices on digital platforms.
3. A strong positive relationship was found between students' perceptions of peace building and their role in using social media for constructive purposes ($r = .69$, $p < 0.01$). This demonstrates that students who value peace building are more actively involved in promoting harmony, tolerance, and dialogue through social media.

Discussion

Finding 1: Relationship between Students' Attitudes toward Social Media and Perceptions of Peace Building

The first finding revealed a significant positive relationship between students' attitudes toward social media and their perceptions of peace building ($r = .61$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that students who hold favorable attitudes toward digital platforms also recognize their potential for fostering peace. This finding is consistent with Alava, Frau-Meigs, and Hassan (2017), who emphasized that youth with constructive orientations toward social media perceive it as a tool for preventing extremism and promoting intercultural understanding. Similarly, Bajaj (2020) highlighted that youth engagement on digital platforms can nurture transformative agency, where positive attitudes toward media directly shape perceptions of peace and justice. Supporting this, Howard, Agarwal, and Hussain (2011) found that youth attitudes toward online communication significantly influence their views on civic participation and collective peace initiatives. Furthermore, Hussain and Saltman (2014) concluded that favorable digital attitudes enhance recognition of peace narratives, thereby fostering resilience against hate speech. Likewise, Halim and Meyers (2019) reported that students' attitudes toward media use were strongly associated with their perceptions of its constructive role in dialogue and conflict

resolution. Collectively, these studies affirm that attitudes serve as a precursor to perceptions, and the positive correlation found in the present study reflects this dynamic relationship.

Finding 2: Relationship between Students' Attitudes toward Social Media and their Role in Peace Building

The second finding showed a significant positive correlation between students' attitudes toward social media and their active role in promoting peace building ($r = .57$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that attitudes not only shape perceptions but also drive actual engagement in online practices. This finding is aligned with PeaceTech Lab (2016), which documented that students with positive views of digital technologies are more likely to participate in peace campaigns, online discussions, and intercultural exchanges. In a similar vein, Loader, Vromen, and Xenos (2014) demonstrated that youth who view social media positively are more engaged in political and civic activities, many of which contribute to peace-oriented dialogue. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2017) also reported that favorable student attitudes toward social media foster responsible digital citizenship, leading to direct involvement in conflict prevention. Reinforcing this, Castells (2015) argued that youth attitudes toward digital networks shape their participation in peace-promoting movements, such as online petitions and campaigns. Finally, a study by Haque and Faruqui (2018) revealed that students with strong positive attitudes toward social media were more likely to share peace-oriented content and reject violent narratives online. These findings collectively support the conclusion that attitudes are a strong determinant of students' proactive peace-building roles in digital environments.

Finding 3: Relationship between Students' Perceptions of Peace Building and their Role in Peace Building

The third finding revealed a strong positive correlation between students' perceptions of peace building and their role in using social media for constructive purposes ($r = .69$, $p < 0.01$). This demonstrates that students who value peace are more likely to engage in online activities that promote harmony and tolerance. This result aligns with Bajaj and Hantzopoulos (2016), who argued that positive perceptions of peace among youth lead to greater activism and constructive digital engagement. Similarly, Paluck (2009) found that perceptions of peace and conflict resolution significantly influenced youth participation in campaigns against violence and discrimination. Peace Direct (2019) reported that students' peace-oriented perceptions directly translated into active involvement in online and offline peace networks. Furthermore, Ahmad and Sheikh (2020) concluded that university students with strong peace perceptions were more committed to resisting hate speech and promoting tolerance on social media platforms. Additionally, Hussain and Miller (2021) demonstrated that youth who perceive peace as valuable are more inclined to initiate or support online campaigns that encourage reconciliation and intercultural dialogue. Thus, the present study's finding confirms that perceptions are not passive reflections but active motivators of constructive student roles in peace building through social media.

Recommendations

1. The study revealed a significant positive relationship between students' attitudes toward social media and their perceptions of peace building ($r = .61$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that favorable attitudes toward social media help students recognize its value in fostering harmony and tolerance. Hence, it is recommended that educational institutions incorporate awareness programs and workshops that enhance students'

positive orientations toward social media. By promoting responsible digital literacy, schools and universities can nurture constructive attitudes that directly strengthen peace-oriented perceptions.

2. The second finding showed a significant positive correlation between students' attitudes toward social media and their active role in peace building ($r = .57$, $p < 0.01$). This demonstrates that attitudes not only influence perceptions but also shape actual student engagement in digital peace initiatives. Hence, it is recommended that policymakers and educators design extracurricular activities and digital campaigns where students can actively apply their constructive attitudes. Institutions should encourage students to participate in peace-oriented online projects, community service, and digital advocacy programs that transform positive attitudes into practical engagement.

3. The third finding revealed a strong positive relationship between students' perceptions of peace building and their role in using social media for constructive purposes ($r = .69$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that students who value peace are more likely to use digital platforms to spread tolerance, resist hate speech, and foster intercultural dialogue. Hence, it is recommended that peace education and social media ethics be integrated into curricula to strengthen peace-oriented perceptions among students. By embedding peace values in academic and co-curricular programs, students will be better prepared to translate their perceptions into sustained digital practices that promote harmony.

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