UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOLOGY OF PEACE FOR DEVELOPING HEALTHY COGNITIONS, RESOLVING CONFLICTS AND MANAGING COGNITIVE OVERLOAD

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Abstract

Psychology of peace (peace psychology) is the study of mental processes and behaviours that promote fairness, respect, and dignity for all people while also helping to heal the psychological effects of violence. It also focuses on how to prevent violence, and facilitate nonviolence. On the other hand cognitive overload is a phenomenological state where the human brain has been overwhelmed with too much information and is no longer able to effectively process anymore information into a coherent sense. Cognition works from the basic assumption that disordered behaviour is primarily due to faulty thinking (Myers, 2008). Using this cognitive assumption we can infer that some individuals appear to think and act with biases due to dysfunctional cognitive processing that resulted from early faulty learning of cognitive schemas based on violence (Ellis, 1992; Beck 1999) which leads to the overload in cognition because of the conflicts. This present study aims to understand the concept of peace psychology and it's helpfulness in developing healthy cognition. Individuals who grow up in an environment that is laden with violence and aggression tend to view the world as a hostile place in which aggression and hostility is needed to survive, to reduce these kind of thinking and schemas, we must be aware of our psychological tendencies and how to curb or control our behaviour regardless of our emotion at any given time or circumstance. We need to actively deconstruct hurtful habits or behaviours we have learned from experiences and the cognitive schemas that set us up for violent actions. Just as we learn faulty attitudes, we can learn good ones. Psychologists and educational institutions should endeavour to make peace studies an academic and clinical practice priority to create more avenues for people to learn about and embrace peace.

KEY WORDS: Peace Psychology, Cognition, Prevent Violence, Peace Education.

"Without an integrated understanding of life, our individual and collective problems will only deepen and extend. The purpose of education is not to produce mere scholars, technicians and job hunters, but integrated men and women who are free of fear; for only between such human beings can there be enduring peace."
~ J. Krishnamurti

I. INTRODUCTION

Psychology of peace is a subfield of psychology, which deals with the psychological properties of peace, conflict, violence, and war. The developing discipline of 'psychology of peace' is a product of the 1980s, throughout the 20th century, psychologists have been fascinated in theory and practice connected to social conflict and violence. Psychologists' interest was particularly high during the Cold War as well as during the "hot wars" of World War I and II. Despite decades of research, the psychology of peace is still a relatively new field of study for the larger psychological community. Several

databases show a significant increase in the amount of literature on peace psychology (Blumberg, 2007). Peace psychology seeks to "increase and apply psychological knowledge in the pursuit of peace, which includes the absence of destructive conflict as well as the creation of positive social conditions that minimise destructiveness and promote human well-being" (Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict, and Violence, 2006, para. 3). A lack of understanding of peace psychology reinforces the mistaken belief that peace is precarious, unusual, short-lived, or fragile, and that the true state of human affairs stems from deep-seated urges for aggression, which eventually lead to violence and war. Such beliefs oppose empirical evidence (Adams, Barnett, Bechtereva, & Carter, 1990; Ury, 1999) and also Increase the likelihood of violence because attempts to defend against assault are frequently misinterpreted by adversaries as aggressive behaviours (Jervis, 1989; Winter & Cava, 2006). Humans clearly have the ability to create both peace and violence. The twin issues of making peace and building it over time, which are at the forefront of social concerns in contemporary India, continue to be a major source of concern and require careful consideration. The lack of effort put into developing a systematic understanding of the psychological dynamics that underpin intergroup hostility and violence (Basu, Datta, Sarkar, Sarkar, & Sen, 1993). It has taken some time for psychological theory and research with any predictive validity to develop (Ghosh & Kumar, 1991; Hutnik, 2004). Many cultural, historical, and social-political elements exist in Asia that influence the ideas and applications of peace psychology. According to Christie, Tint, Wagner, and winter (2001), interactions between these large-scale elements result in both violence and peace. Practitioners are prevented from utilising peace psychology's insightful knowledge to advance peace in homes, businesses, communities, and between nations. Such ignorance deprives individuals and decision-makers of knowledge that may guide their approach to important issues including the most effective means of avoiding terrorism, the costs and effects of torture, and potential solutions for long-running wars.

II. INDIAN PERSPECTIVE ON VIOLENCE AND PEACE

War, according to the Mahabharata, "begins in the mind". This start of the mental war has a number of causes, including psychological factors, socioeconomic factors, and geopolitical pressures. To address the topic of "Peace," whether at the group or individual level, it is essential to comprehend its opposite, aggressiveness or violence, and then look into how aggression may be handled so that peace may prevail, even if peace is more than the cessation of aggression or violence (Gonsalves, 2018). Notably, UNESCO approved the mission statement "Peace is more than the end of the fight" in 1989. Despite the fact that the history of India is filled with records of battles and brutal conquests, the teachings and examples of the sages, saints, and reformers who over the course of millennia helped to construct one undivided nation have contributed to make India the land of ahimsa, or nonviolence. The following is a list of a few of India's most illustrious peace educators: Lord Mahavira, who lived in the sixth or fifth century BC, stressed the importance of upholding the vows of non-violence (ahimsa), truth (satya), refraining from theft (asteya), modesty (brahmacharya), and non-attachment (aparigraha) in order to achieve peace and freedom from the shackles of this world. The Advaita Vedanta School (c. 200 BC – c. 200 AD) held that attaining knowledge (vidya) of one's real identity in the oneness of Self (Atman) and God results in freedom (Brahman).

The kind of peace education these holy men pioneered was largely founded on a quest for truth on one's own, the understanding of cosmic connection, and freedom from the illusions of attachment and ignorance. According to a quote from Mahatma Gandhi, "If we are to achieve true peace in this world and if we are to wage a real war against war, we shall have to start with children and if they will grow up in their natural innocence, we shall not have the struggle, we shall not have to pass fruitless idle resolutions, but we shall go from love to love and peace to peace, until at last all the corners of the world are covered with that peace and love for which, consciously or unconsciously, the whole world is hungering." Fighting for peace does not indicate absence of war, it suggests a constructive mind-set founded on characteristics like non-violence, honesty, humility, forgiveness, kindness, friendship, and love, among others. Without fostering these values and giving up egoism, lasting peace cannot exist. The concept of war and peace itself has to be reconsidered in the 21st century. Peace studies pursue eternal security and stability rather than working to avert war. It would be vital to concentrate on the needs of the person given the evolving nature of conflicts in the twenty-first century. In order to resolve conflicts, "mitigate real violence" and "avoid prospective violence," peace activists would need to concentrate on widening socio-economic disparities in terms of income, power, and influence. To be able to establish peaceful solutions to local, national, regional, and international conflicts in the face of profound and persisting disparities, peace advocates would need to deal with concerns of sustainable development, debt relief, and employment reforms.

III. ROLE OF COGNITION OR COGNITIVE STRUCTURE

Psychology perspective of peace as discussed by Aquilar (2011) referenced three domains posited by Zimbardo (2007) as ways of understanding some of these burning questions. These are, "the psychobiological structure of human beings, the context in which they act, and the system that determines the rules of each environment" (Aquilar & Galluccio, 2011; p. 239). Cognitive structure is based on the fundamental concept that abnormal behaviour is largely the result of poor thinking (Myers, 2008). People's disordered behaviour and emotional experiences are underpinned by dysfunctional cognitive processes. Automatic thoughts, cognitive distortions, superstitious beliefs, and irrational fear are examples of processes. It also evaluates and tracks each person's learning history in order to understand the circumstances that led to and sustained the behaviour (Aquilar & Del Castello, 1998; Aquilar, Del Castello & Esposito, 2005). We may deduce from this cognitive framework that certain people appear to think and behave with biases as a result of disordered cognitive processing caused by early improper acquisition of cognitive schemas based on violence (Ellis, 1992; Beck 1999). Individuals who grow up

in a violent and aggressive atmosphere tend to see the world as a hostile place where aggression and hostility are required to live. Simple behaviours like placing one's hand in one's pocket or waving one's hand in a certain way might be interpreted as threatening by such people. Cognitive schemas can help describe why specific kids and young men/women become bullies at home, school, and in other settings. A flawed cognitive assessment of the environment might cause a person to fail to evaluate all conceivable viewpoints of any given scenario before acting. Peace psychology is concerned with the psychological elements of conflict development, escalation, reduction, and settlement. Conflicts are unavoidable and, when handled constructively, may lead to beneficial development; nevertheless, conflict escalation and, in particular, the incidence of violence are avoidable. Information processing (attention, perception, memory, reasoning, and judgement), emotion, and motivation all have a significant impact on how a dispute is managed, particularly whether it escalates to violent episodes. Even after the violence has ceased, physical and economic rehabilitation, as well as socio-political and psycho-social interventions, are necessary to reduce the danger of escalation. These treatments seek to heal the psychosocial scars of war, to foster trust, to create a shared communal memory, to recognise past wrongdoing, and to achieve reconciliation and/or forgiveness.

IV. INSTITUTIONALISATION OF PEACE

The institution of peace in our individual lives, families, communities, schools, towns, religion, states and nation calls for education on the contributing factors that inhibit peace and breed violence, and those that facilitates peace. We must be aware of our psychological tendencies and how to curb or control our behaviour regardless of our emotion at any given time or circumstance. We need to actively deconstruct hurtful habits or behaviours we have learned from experiences and the cognitive schemas that set us up for violent actions. The institution of peace in our individual lives, families, communities, schools, towns, religion, states, and nation need knowledge on the variables that impede peace and produce violence, as well as those that enable peace. We must be conscious of our psychological inclinations and know how to regulate or inhibit our behaviour regardless of our feeling at any particular time or scenario. We must actively demolish harmful habits or behaviours learnt through experiences, as well as the cognitive schemas that set us up for aggressive behaviour. Psychologists can assist people in finding their road to serenity. No situation is hopeless as long as there is still the possibility of learning new behaviour. Psychologists and educational institutions should work to make peace studies a priority in their academic and therapeutic practises in order to provide more opportunities for individuals to learn about and embrace peace. UNICEF defined, education of peace as "the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour change that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level".

According to this concept, peace education is a positive approach for society to be adjusted in order to prevent conflict and promote harmony. Peace education is both a concept and a process that includes skills, attitudes, and knowledge in order to develop a safe world, a sustainable environment, and social transformation (Harris & Morrison, 2003). Peace education should be a participatory process that tries to change society's way of thinking and encourages peace learning. Education should focus on themes that may contribute to conflict, such as gender studies, nonviolent communication, and the development of healthy international relations. Peace education encompasses all of humanity's tasks and responsibilities toward making society better for everyone and living in harmony with oneself, society, and environment via collaboration, assistance, forgiveness, respect for self and others, and the development of inner peace and human compassion. To enhance racial relations, communities may seek the assistance of psychologists in analysing problems, mediating discussions, organising and conducting research, or devising and implementing intervention and preventative methods. Psychologists may assist in the formulation of suitable standards, the integration of psychosocial views, the establishment of comprehensive development plans, and the provision of psychologically informed critique of Indian operations. As a result, peace psychology may become an instrument of cultural imperialism (Dawes, 1997; Wessells, 1998), derogating indigenous culture and undermining traditions that may give a feeling of continuity and support in tough situations. The focus on human rights is critical in the transition of violent cultures into peaceful ones. Human rights are inalienable rights that apply to all people, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, language, religion, political beliefs, or socioeconomic origin (prohibition of discrimination).

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The psychology of peace is a field of study that explores how people can maintain peace, reduce conflicts and cognitive overload. It looks into the psychological factors that influence our behaviour and how we can use this knowledge to create peaceful societies. It also examines the role of education in promoting peace and understanding between different cultures, religions, countries and regions. Furthermore, it seeks to understand how we can use our psychological knowledge to create a more peaceful world by reducing violence and increasing cooperation among nations. Peace psychology investigates the psychological factors that facilitate peace, as well as those that lead to conflict, and it examines how they interact with each other. The aim of peace psychology is to foster understanding of the individual's capacity for peaceful resolution of disputes, in order to reduce cognitive overload and create a more pleasant world. It looks into the motivations, emotions and behaviours of both sides in any conflict situation in order to find ways to reduce cognitive overload, build trust and help foster dialogue between conflicting parties. This can assist to develop more effective conflict resolution solutions, ultimately

leading to more peace in our world. There can be no sustainable progress in a country rife with violence. To bring about social peace, it is vital to plant the seeds of conflict resolution in each individual. This will help to establish a culture of peace in society. India's growing young population, which has been subjected to different sorts of violence and abuse, is likely to commit acts of aggression and deception against their families and society at large, with dire implications in the years ahead. In the face of this overwhelming reality, we relied on the statement of Mahatma Gandhi that, "any social transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace needs to begin with the education of children". Peace education focuses on teaching people the skills necessary for them to maintain peaceful relationships with each other, as well as with their environment. It also aims to reduce conflicts through better communication, understanding, and empathy. By learning about the psychology of peace, we can better understand how to create an environment where everyone can live in harmony.

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