Women and culture of peace in the perspective of gender education and gender equality

Mujeres y cultura de paz en la perspectiva de la educación de género y la igualdad de género
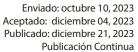
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ABSTRACT

The contribution addresses the relationship between women and peace, representing it as one of the forms of contrast to violence and inequality of power between men and women. Gender equality as a right, which is one of the most urgent challenges of our time, can have a better chance of being achieved if we aim to strengthen the contribution that women can make to society and to promote a gender culture that is based on building a culture of peace in terms of skills and attitudes capable of acting on the causes that produce the different forms of violence, removing the thought patterns that created them. A systematic review of the literature on how women contribute to building a culture of peace started with the need to deepen the relationship between women and peace. It used a rigorous methodological approach to collect, evaluate, and synthesize a body of available evidence that testifies that the role assumed by women in peace processes is closely linked to a gender culture where education seems to appear to be the main factor affecting the promotion of behaviors and attitudes capable of nurturing gender equality as a founding datum of the activation of peace processes.

Keywords: Women; peace; culture of gender; culture of peace; gender education, gender equality.

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RESUMEN

La contribución aborda la relación entre las mujeres y la paz, representándola como una de las formas de contraste a la violencia y a la desigualdad de poder entre hombres y mujeres. La igualdad de género como derecho, que es uno de los desafíos más urgentes de nuestro tiempo, puede tener más posibilidades de ser alcanzada si nos proponemos fortalecer la contribución que las mujeres pueden hacer a la sociedad y promover una cultura de género que se base en la construcción de una cultura de paz en términos de habilidades y actitudes capaces de actuar sobre las causas que producen las diferentes formas de violencia, removiendo los patrones de pensamiento que las crearon. Una revisión sistemática de la literatura sobre cómo las mujeres contribuyen a la construcción de una cultura de paz partió de la necesidad de profundizar en la relación entre las mujeres y la paz. Se utilizó un enfoque metodológico riguroso para recopilar, evaluar y sintetizar un conjunto de pruebas disponibles que atestiguan que el papel asumido por las mujeres en los procesos de paz está estrechamente vinculado a una cultura de género en la que la educación parece ser el principal factor que afecta a la promoción de comportamientos y actitudes capaces de alimentar la igualdad de género como un dato fundamental de la activación de los procesos de paz.

Palabras clave: Mujeres; paz; cultura de género, cultura de paz, educación de género, igualdad de género.

Introduction

When we talk about a culture of peace, we immediately refer to the possibility of maximizing the commitment to human rights (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; Istanbul Convention, 2011; The Agenda, 2030) within which the objective of strengthening gender equality and women's rights is a fundamental obligation to cultivate equality and democracy. However, despite the efforts made so far, the defense of women's human rights still faces many obstacles, as there is evidence that gender-related lifestyles vary from region to region around the world and are a very significant factor (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2022). This is evident in the minimum set of gender indicators, consisting of a collection of 51 quantitative indicators and 11 qualitative indicators measuring and collecting information on issues relevant to gender equality and women's empowerment, approved by the UN Statistical Commission (decision 42/102) in 2013. Regularly updated, it provides a guide for the national production and international compilation of gender statistics.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but it is a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world and a necessary factor for progress (Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; UNDP, 2018).

Investing in women's human rights equality and ensuring that gender equality progresses require a forward-looking perspective that enables society to progress in equality between men and women: cultivating peace to cultivate gender culture and the other way round (UN Women, 2015; UN Women and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division 2023, 2023; Stone, 2015). On the other hand, it is known in the literature that gender equality is one of the predictors of peace, which exceeds that of the wealth and the level of democracy of a state (Hudson et al., 2014; Weldon & Htun, 2013; UN Women, 2015; Emmett et al., 2012).

A culture of peace, in fact, implies equality between men and women and is an essential condition for gender education, which helps to decode and remove the causes of forms of violence, which are the indicators of different types of cultural and social dysfunction, which remain at the basis of conflictual relations, national rivalries, political, religious, ideological, etc., and that act at different levels depending on the elements to which it is linked. This plurality of forms and their translation into reality leads us to reflect on the reasons underlying violence and its effects in terms of concrete behaviors and attitudes.

The disparity of power between men and women (CESCR, 2005, HRC, 2000) is considered the main reason for violence against women, which can be characterized as a "structural system" and therefore not peaceful. The main problem is to identify, however, the distinct factors that intervene to determine it (Heise, 1998; Flood & Pease, 2009).

As in the culture of peace as well as in that of war, different visions of the world are aggregated, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, ways of thinking, which look at violence as a tool to solve problems, it is enough, for example, to think of the motivations that often support the use of armed force. Therefore, violence manages to permeate social attitudes, individual and group behaviors, and human relationships, ranging from the most personal to the social and institutional, grafting deeply into the human personality.

Violence and inequality can be said to be two sides of the same coin, whose relationship legitimizes the pursuit of social and political goals considered inevitable. In this direction, gender roles are modelled on these assumptions and beliefs, sometimes being negative or wrong, even with courses of action that appear unusual or unexpected. Thus emerges the need to identify interpretative keys of violent phenomena trying to understand which variables influence more than others in generating them (age, sex, educational qualification, working condition, etc.). In this interpretation, the ideology underlying the concept of "gender apartheid" (Handrahan, 2001) is suggestive, evoking images of oppressed women living in repressive Islamic regimes, such as Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran (Handrahan, 2001; 2004; Hunter, 1999) or who are victims of a humanitarian crisis, as in Yemen, where they see the social stigma against them worsen day by day and on which the responsibility for the supply of food and family needs weighs, since the male population has been constantly engaged in war since 2015, as also documented by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International reports.

Although it is then incontrovertibly recognized that serious violations of human rights occur in such realities, the phenomenon of the systematic denial of those of women and the consequent effects produced by it is not attributable solely to any culture, religion or historical epoch (Ertürk, 2007; 2008), since its different forms have manifested themselves over time in almost all societies and, In some cases, they have been accepted and tolerated throughout history so much so that they are generally conceived as an integral part of the scenes of everyday life. This daily nature of violence against women must lead us to ask questions to prevent people from getting used to it and ending up considering it ordinary, customary, or even repressing it exclusively with legalized acts of force without thinking of countering it instead with organized and systemic interventions.

Laws relating to violence against women, specifically those related to domestic violence, are very recent. Countries such as Italy have taken incisive measures to combat gender-based violence, such as Law no. 69 of 2019 ("red code"), which strengthened the procedural protections of victims of violent crimes, with reference to crimes of sexual and domestic violence. An extension of the protections for victims of domestic and gender-based violence was provided for by the subsequent Law no. 134 of 2021–Delegation to the Government for the efficiency of the criminal process as well as in the field of restorative justice and provisions for the rapid definition of judicial proceedings., while Law no. 53 of 2022 has enhanced the collection of statistical data on gender violence. Finally, the provisions concerning the provisions in favour of orphans for domestic crimes are also noted, such as Law no. 4 of 2018 amending the Civil Code, the Criminal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and Law no. 69 of 19 July 2019 concerning the protection of victims of domestic and gender-based violence, as well as the Decree of 21 May 2020, n. 71–Regulation on the provision of support measures to orphans of domestic crimes and gender crimes and foster families.

Despite countries like Italy taking such important measures, acts and violations continue to rage and remain an emerging problem in societies globally. The need then emerges not only to identify forms and actions to combat gender violence and respect for gender plurality, but also to consider women as one of the main resources for achieving a peaceful culture; This is because through their mutual relations they can be peacebuilding.

As members of society, the role of women in educating young people in peace, mutual understanding and respect for human rights can therefore be considered vital, even if many women are still subjugated and oppressed with little power of action. However, the house cannot always be said to be a haven for them, unlike what has been read and written for decades. These are forms of oppression, even symbolic, that often have ancient legacies and ancestral roots, such as those linked to the practices of infibulation, which are bloody and disrespectful of girls and women, and which bring with them serious psychological, physical, social consequences that trample on the dignity of those who suffer them. This is all the truer in relation to all those forms of injustice and inequality that are often supported by certain legal and social norms that are used by the man or husband to punish or punish the one who "makes mistakes" or rather who believes is "wrong".

However, since violence against women is the result of gender inequality and socially developing discrimination, women end up being victimized because they belong to a class and are subjugated by a violent action that seem to be the prerogative of men. As a result of learning pressing social models and the result of different specificities, violence is certainly the product of diverse types of influences (social, environmental, etc.) with which a subject reacts with aggressive responses to precise conditions. It is therefore possible to interpret violence against women as the result of intersecting factors (culture, ethnicity, illiteracy, etc.) and that appear deeply rooted in the violent system and cultures. In this direction, studies on the culture of peace invite us to examine the ways in which it is expressed, the gender roles and all kinds of human inequality imbued in the fabric of the very characters of violence, today hardly recognizable and elusive to univocal interpretations. Wars reinforce and exploit gender stereotypes and exacerbate or even encourage violence against women (as in the case of rape). In such circumstances, entrenched inequalities

are amplified, social relations and community support mechanisms are weakened, causing women more suffering in post-conflict situations, and making them more vulnerable to abuse and extreme exploitation.

The fragility and instability that often characterize post-conflict contexts have negative repercussions on the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society, including girls, boys, girls, and women. Just think of the social and economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has made the situation even more difficult. Progress lags far behind in many areas, including time spent on unpaid care and domestic work, decision-making on sexual and reproductive health and gender-sensitive budgeting.

When conflict ends, women remain at greater risk of sexual violence, exploitation, and trafficking, especially if they have been forced to migrate as a result, as in the case of the war in Ukraine. It is also often the case that women do not have access to shelter, education, health care and health and judicial services, and this compromises their survival and equity. As a result of disruption and conflicts, they are often affected by limited access to public services, livelihood insecurity and domestic violence.

For this reason, adopting a systemic approach that is able to express a culture of peace and that acts synergistically at different levels requires first of all a genuine reflection on the causes that arise in the context regarding these inequalities, on the relationships between men and women in different cultural realities and a profound exploration of the evolving relations between genders, Starting from the deconstruction of prejudices and stereotypes to go towards an examination of the effective role that women play today in civic spaces and public policies, up to analyzing the nature of violent cultures and the potential contribution that education can give to the identification of strategies that allow to build a solid and lasting culture of peace.

Educating people to identify suitable strategies and instruments to create peace is an essential task of education, which is a place and space for building the conditions for a positive culture of both gender and peace.

In this direction, the aim of the article is to show the role of women in building peaceful processes and the interdependence between gender equality and the culture of peace, starting from the function that training plays in the pursuit of gender equality and the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in effective peacekeeping.

Women, training, and peace

Literature focusing on peace education from a gender perspective is increasing (see Reardon, 1988; 1993; 2001; Brock-Utne, 1985) the other way round. Within the educational institutions in Italy and internationally, the bodies that deal with the protection of women and gender issues are growing progressively, but also principals that deal with promoting peace, where peace and gender appear as themes and actions that are combined. This is the case of RUniPace, the Network

of Italian Universities for Peace promoted by the Conference of Rectors of Italian Universities, which can be joined by public and private universities that inspire their action to the fundamental principles of the Constitution, the Charter of the United Nations, the founding treaties of the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe. It directs its actions keeping in mind some fundamental shared principles (the repudiation of war, dialogue, and international cooperation; respect for and promotion of fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person, the fight against poverty and inequality as a prerequisite for peace among peoples, the promotion of social justice, cultural and environmental etc.). Among the objectives of RUniPace, both inside and outside the university community, there are those of promoting reflection on the social responsibility of all disciplines and attention to the construction of peace as a constitutive element of the University and as a pivot of research, training and social sharing of knowledge activities and support and develop teaching and research for Peace, interdisciplinary and transformative key of reality, promoting programs of education for peace, human rights, nonviolence, non-discrimination and global citizenship. In this sense, RUniPace dedicates a section to the work Women and Peace, aimed precisely at the relationship between gender issues and the construction of peaceful processes. This shows how the relationship between peace and gender is extremely interesting and imbued with positive content, such as the restoration of relationships, the creation of social systems useful to meet the needs of the entire population and the constructive resolution of conflicts, all of which are components associated with many other characteristics considered socially desirable, including expectations about the growth of economic performance, measures of well-being and levels of inclusiveness. This is also because the social cost of gender inequalities is very high and discriminatory social institutions not only hinder the achievement of gender equality, but also economic growth, so much so that it has been argued that the gradual reduction of discrimination could lead to an increase in the growth rate of world GDP from 0.03 to 0.6 percentage points by 2030 (OECD, 2016). In this sense, the fight against discriminatory social institutions should be integrated into the process of national strategic development lines that fall within comprehensive development approaches, as shown by the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) of the OECD Development Centre which measures discrimination against women in social institutions in 180 countries, considering laws, social norms and practices (OECD, 2019; Ferrant & Nowacka, 2015).

SIGI captures the drivers of gender inequality with the aim of providing the data needed for transformative policy change and is one of the official data sources for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where indicator 5.1.1 indicates whether there are legal frameworks to promote, apply and monitor equality and non-discrimination based on sex.

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) of the EFA Global Monitoring Report, born in 2006, which annually measures the relationship between female and male value and the global evolution of gender equality with respect to economic participation and opportunities, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment goes in the same direction. On June 20, 2023, in the latest Global Gender Gap Report 2023, from data collected by the World Economic Forum, the general position of Italy went from 63rd place in 2022 to 79th place out of 146 coun-

tries in 2023, for the weight linked to the participation and representation of women in politics, to 64th place (compared to 40th last year) with a very low percentage (of 24.1%). A slight improvement was recorded, however, with regard to participation and economic opportunities, where Italy rose from position 110 to 104; the position in access to education remains almost unchanged (60th place compared to 59th in the previous year), while the area that has undergone the most significant increase is that of health, which has earned our country 95th place compared to 108th last year, with a growth rate of 96.7%.

Figure 1. The Global Gender Gap Index 2023 rankings.

TABLE 1.1 | The Global Gender Gap Index 2023 rankings

Rank	Country	Score 0–1	Score change 2022	Rank change 2022	Rank	Country	Score 0–1	Score change 2022	Rank change 2022
1	Iceland	0.912	+0.004	-	74	Thailand	0.711	+0.002	+5
2	Norway	0.879	+0.034	+1	75	Ethiopia	0.711	+0.001	-1
3	Finland	0.863	+0.003	-1	76	Georgia	0.708	-0.022	-21
4	New Zealand	0.856	+0.014	-	77	Kenya	0.708	-0.021	-20
5	Sweden	0.815	-0.007	-	78	Uganda	0.706	-0.017	-17
6	Germany	0.815	+0.014	+4	79	Italy	0.705	-0.015	-16
7	Nicaragua	0.811	+0.001	-	80	Mongolia	0.704	-0.010	-10
8	Namibia	0.802	-0.005	-	81	Dominican Republic	0.704	+0.001	+3
9	Lithuania	0.800	+0.001	+2	82	Lesotho	0.702	+0.002	+5
10	Belgium	0.796	+0.003	+4	83	Israel	0.701	-0.026	-23
11	Ireland	0.795	-0.010	-2	84	Kyrgyzstan	0.700	-	+2
12	Rwanda	0.794	-0.017	-6	85	Zambia	0.699	-0.025	-23
13	Latvia	0.794	+0.023	+13	86	Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.698	-0.012	-13
14	Costa Rica	0.793	-0.003	-2	87	Indonesia	0.697	+0.001	+5
15	United Kingdom	0.792	+0.012	+7	88	Romania	0.697	-0.001	+2
16	Philippines	0.791	+0.009	+3	89	Belize	0.696	+0.002	+6
17	Albania	0.791	+0.004	+1	90	Togo	0.696	-0.001	+1
18	Spain	0.791	+0.002	-1	91	Paraguay	0.695	-0.012	-11
19	Moldova, Republic of	0.788	-0.001	-3	92	Cambodia	0.695	+0.005	+6
20	South Africa	0.787	+0.005	-	93	Greece	0.693	+0.005	+7
21	Switzerland	0.783	-0.012	-8	94	Cameroon	0.693	-0.002	+3
22	Estonia	0.782	+0.048	+30	95	Timor-Leste	0.693	-0.037	-39
23	Denmark	0.780	+0.017	+9	96	Brunei Darussalam	0.693	+0.013	+8
24	Jamaica	0.779	+0.031	+14	97	Azerbaijan	0.692	+0.005	+4
25	Mozambique	0.778	+0.025	+9	98	Mauritius	0.689	+0.011	+7
26	Australia	0.778	+0.040	+17	99	Hungary	0.689	-0.010	-11
27	Chile	0.777	+0.041	+20	100	Ghana	0.688	+0.016	+8
28	Netherlands	0.777	+0.009	-	101	Czech Republic	0.685	-0.024	-25
29	Slovenia	0.773	+0.029	+10	102	Malaysia	0.682	+0.001	+1
30	Canada	0.770	-0.002	-5	103	Bhutan	0.682	+0.045	+23
31	Barbados	0.769	+0.005	-1	104	Senegal	0.680	+0.012	+8
32	Portugal	0.765	-0.001	-3	105	Korea, Republic of	0.680	-0.010	-6
33	Mexico	0.765	+0.001	-2	106	Cyprus	0.678	-0.018	-13
34	Peru	0.764	+0.015	+3	107	China	0.678	-0.004	-5
35	Burundi	0.763	-0.013	-11	108	Vanuatu	0.678	+0.008	+3
36	Argentina	0.762	+0.006	-3	109	Burkina Faso	0.676	+0.017	+6
37	Cabo Verde	0.761	+0.024	+8	110	Malawi	0.676	+0.044	+22
38	Serbia	0.760	-0.019	-15	111	Tajikistan	0.672	+0.009	+3
39	Liberia	0.760	+0.051	+39	112	Sierra Leone	0.667	-0.005	-3
40	France	0.756	-0.035	-25	113	Bahrain	0.666	+0.034	+18
41	Belarus	0.752	+0.002	-5	114	Comoros	0.664	+0.033	+20
42	Colombia	0.751	+0.041	+33	115	Sri Lanka	0.663	-0.007	-5
43	United States of America	0.748	-0.021	-16	116	Nepal	0.659	-0.033	-20
44	Luxembourg	0.747	+0.011	+2	117	Guatemala	0.659	-0.006	-4
45	Zimbabwe	0.746	+0.012	+5	118	Angola	0.656	+0.018	+7
46	Eswatini	0.745	+0.017	+12	119	Gambia	0.651	+0.010	+2
47	Austria	0.740	-0.041	-26	120	Kuwait	0.651	+0.018	+10
48	Tanzania, United Republic of	0.740	+0.020	+16	121	Fiji	0.650	-0.026	-14
49	Singapore	0.739	+0.005	-	122	Côte d'Ivoire	0.650	+0.018	+11
50	Ecuador	0.737	-0.005	-9	123	Myanmar	0.650	-0.027	-17
51	Madagascar	0.737	+0.002	-3	124	Maldives	0.649	+0.001	-7
52	Suriname	0.736	-0.002	-8	125	Japan	0.647	-0.002	-9
53	Honduras	0.735	+0.030	+29	126	Jordan	0.646	+0.007	-4
54	Lao People's Democratic Republic	0.733	-	-1	127	India	0.643	+0.014	+8
55	Croatia*	0.730	n/a	n/a	128	Tunisia	0.642	-0.001	-8
56	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	0.730	-0.004	-5	129	Türkiye	0.638	-0.001	-5
57	Brazil	0.726	+0.030	+37	130	Nigeria	0.637	-0.002	-7
58	Panama	0.724	-0.019	-18	131	Saudi Arabia	0.637	+0.001	-4
59	Bangladesh	0.722	+0.008	+12	132	Lebanon	0.628	-0.015	-13
60	Poland	0.722	+0.012	+17	133	Qatar	0.627	+0.011	+4
61	Armenia	0.721	+0.023	+28	134	Egypt	0.626	-0.008	-5
62	Kazakhstan	0.721	+0.003	+3	135	Niger	0.622	-0.013	-7
63	Slovakia	0.720	+0.003	+4	136	Morocco	0.621	-0.003	-
64	Botswana	0.719	-	+2	137	Guinea	0.617	-0.030	-19
65	Bulgaria	0.715	-0.025	-23	138	Benin	0.616	+0.004	-
66	Ukraine	0.714	+0.007	+15	139	Oman	0.614	+0.006	-
67	Uruguay	0.714	+0.004	+5	140	Congo, Democratic Republic of the	0.612	+0.036	+4
68	El Salvador	0.714	-0.013	-9	141	Mali	0.605	+0.003	-
69	Montenegro	0.714	-0.018	-15	142	Pakistan	0.575	+0.011	+3
70	Malta	0.713	+0.010	+15	143	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	0.575	-0.002	-
71	United Arab Emirates	0.712	-0.004	-3	144	Algeria	0.573	-0.030	-4
72	Viet Nam	0.711	+0.006	+11	145	Chad	0.570	-0.008	-3
73	North Macedonia	0.711	-0.005	-4	146	Afghanistan	0.405	-0.030	-

■ Eurasia and Central Asia   ■ East Asia and the Pacific   ■ Europe   ■ Latin America and the Caribbean   ■ Middle East and North Africa   ■ North America   ■ Southern Asia   ■ Sub-Saharan Africa

Source
World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Index, 2023.

Note
"–" indicates score or rank is unchanged from the previous year.
"n/a" indicates that the country was not covered in previous editions.
* New to index in 2023

Gender equality is, therefore, a tool for conflict reduction, since pursuing peace does not mean hoping to live in the total absence of any conflict but living in the absence of all forms of violence by evolving conflicts in a constructive way.

It is in this direction that education for peace should contribute to changing the world, leading individuals to reduce the willingness to resort to violence and to discover and eliminate its different forms in human relations, in all areas of society and at all levels (Brilling et al., 1999), as well as pursuing social justice as the basic principle of the peaceful and prosperous coexistence of countries and between countries. The principal social aims of peace education, then, can only be "the elimination of social injustice, the renunciation of violence and the abolition of war. War and all forms of violence are interrelated, as evidenced by the culture of violence that surrounds us. War is the central institution of the present global security system, the source from which flow the rationalizations and habits of violence found in it many aspects of life" (Reardon & Cabezudo, 2002, p. 17).

Starting from what has been said so far, it is possible to note how a formation oriented towards peace and gender education is necessarily built on values, attitudes and behaviours that respect life and other human beings in all environments and social, formal, informal and non-formal contexts, invests different dimensions and implies the acquisition of a set of skills and knowledge that nourish the (often fragmented) understanding of conflicts and of violence. It becomes, therefore, central to help individuals to develop an awareness of the processes and skills essential to achieve a full understanding of democratic values that.

- involves the assumption of a certain flexibility and consistency in the process of acquisition that can occur with the help of correct educational practices that lead to self-realization and self-determination.

- it brings together multiple pedagogical traditions, educational approaches, and theories, as well as international initiatives in support of the advancement of human development through learning.

For this reason, an authentic culture of peace and non-violence, based on education for gender equality and respect for fundamental human rights, must be cultivated in the family, in schools and in society. Peace education can contribute to increasing actions to combat injustice for the elimination of inequalities in order to nurture the strength of cultural and social measures that enable all women to receive a quality basic education, to acquire knowledge and skills to improve their abilities in the area of peace and to build positive attitudes about the meaning it has in human life, acting as a preventive action against the onset of conflicts and creating the conditions for peace in the world. It can be said, in fact, the process of acquiring the values, conceptions, attitudes, skills and behaviors necessary to live in harmony with oneself and with others.

This type of conceptual framework also recognizes the interconnections, synergies and complementarities between different fields, which see goal 4 – *Quality education* of the 2030 Agenda

intersect with goal no. 5 – *Gender equality* and that no. 16 – *Peace, justice and strong institutions*–in a process that necessarily involves the economic, social, political and cultural dimensions of human and human-planetary relations, which involve consistent and fundamental changes in the way we live on Earth, with a view to universality, integration and transformation.

The main resource for achieving a peaceful culture is the people themselves, mainly women, who, through their mutual relationships, are peacemakers.

From the personal, social, ecological, institutional, and political points of view, gender education and peace education contribute to the foundation of a peaceful and non-violent culture when they look not only at the cognitive understanding of the root causes of conflicts and violence in all its forms, but also at the models and ways in which one "educates" and "educates".

It is a question here of thinking of a culture of peace based on the idea that women can play a central role in this regard:

- citizens' understanding of global problems.

- the ability to resolve conflicts constructively.

- knowledge and way of life according to international human rights standards.

- ethnic and gender equality.

- appreciation of cultural diversity.

- respect for the integrity of the Person and the Earth.

The goal of peace campaigns is also to ensure that all education systems around the world can create cultures of peace, starting from the enhancement of gender education, which contributes to making education transformative by cultivating knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that seek to change people's behaviors by inducing them to face or counter conflicts.

The learnings concerning the sphere of peace education are holistic and allow to address the cognitive, operational and activation problems that a positive peace (Galtung, 1996) requires, that is, to provide an interpretative framework to decode, understand and face the multiple and complex challenges related to gender education that the world is facing, as a cross-cutting factor that allows individuals and governments to succeed in supporting fairer, stronger and less corrupt institutions.

Based on this established theory of peace, feminist approaches suggest that sustainable and positive peace cannot be achieved as long as violence against women remains unresolved and women fail to achieve full control over their own lives (Enloe, 1993, p. 65).

Reardon (1988), recalls how peace education has an important social purpose, namely that of transforming the current human condition by modifying the social structures and thought models that created it, and how the culture of peace (Reardon & Cabezudo, 2002) is based on an education capable of countering social injustice, of rejecting violence and inequalities. All this is so true when we think that, moreover, one of the most important factors for a "sustainable future" is linked precisely to a real change of mentality, with which women's organizations and networks of women mediators could make a positive and tangible contribution to society that would make the enhancement of their full participation tangible, fair and meaningful.

The study and the methodology used

Systematic research on women's contribution to building a culture of peace has been conducted using a rigorous scientific methodology to collect, evaluate and synthesize a body of available evidence. This methodology is often used in fields such as medicine, psychology, social sciences, education, and other disciplines to make evidence-based decisions, conduct systematic reviews or primary research based on previous studies. The systematic literature review included the following steps.

- Definition of objectives: The first step was to clearly define the objective of the systematic review, answering the questions of the study, establishing the inclusion criteria, and defining the objectives of the analysis.

- Systematization of the study: a systematic search was conducted on different database sources (EBSCO, GOOGLE SCHOLAR etc.) and exclusion of selection keywords using pre-established inclusion criteria.

- Study selection: 2843 studies were identified during the research and examined according to inclusion criteria. A total of 976 studies met the criteria and were included in the systematic review, while the remainder did not meet the criteria were excluded.

- Quality assessment: the studies included were not considered to be exhaustive.

- Data extraction: the data from each study were systematically classified and clustered based on the categories and subcategories identified, although the analysis was descriptive, as summarized below.

- Data analysis: the analysis of the collected data made it possible to answer the initial questions of the research, allowing a thematic analysis to be obtained.

- Interpretation of the results: The results show how thematic analysis made it possible to answer research questions and identify certain trends. The results and conclusions of the systematic review were presented in a written report. The results and conclusions of the systematic review have been summarized below.

The systematic search of the literature has made it possible to isolate solid evidence and to highlight gaps in existing knowledge on the topic that is not the subject of this contribution. The following reflections can only be considered as indicative of all the work that has been done and may be particularly useful as a starting point for reflecting on the findings of a wide range of studies aimed at informing research practice in the sector.

The contribution of women to building a peaceful culture

The contribution of women to peace movements and their role in promoting it even within conflicting groups has been well documented in the literature (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom–WILPF). In their approach to conflict resolution, women seem to be more peace-minded than men and present a more cautious view on issues of war (Conover & Sapiro, 1993; Tessler & Warriner, 1997; Elshtain, 1987). However, the nature of these differences and their implications for conflict resolution and peace education have not yet been the subject of deep debate. Studies, although very limited, show significant differences between genera (Caprioli & Boyer, 2000; 2001; Fite, Genest, & Wilcox, 1990) and show that women are systematically less favourable to the use of force in conflict resolution than men (Wilcox et al., 1996) and less likely to support military actions, opting for alternative forms of political mobilization (Korac, 2006). However, this body of research has often yielded mixed results, particularly with regard to concerns about the lack of recognition of women's role in society or forms of gender equality, on the one hand, and women's positive contribution to peace, on the other (Collett, 1996; Mason, 2005; Korac, 2006; Cockburn, 2004; Giles, 2004; True, 2014) capable of making a "difference" (*Anderlini, 2000).*

Women's participation is therefore now seen as essential for sustainable peace, even though in many parts of the world it is effectively excluded from political processes and peace agreements. It is not always evident, however, how their efforts could succeed in broadening the scope of peace-building processes and its culture. Such efforts, which take the form of activities in civil society, often, however, challenge complex dynamics in both the formal and informal spheres, advocating consensus building and inclusion instead of recrimination.

Inclusion processes can ensure a wide range of perspectives, including requests from marginalized groups in communities, and are determinants of sustainable peace. Women, in fact, can certainly broaden the range of substantive issues concerning aspects of "peaceful living", promoting not only their rights, but also social justice, and thus gaining legitimacy and support for those efforts that aim to address the necessary structural changes that can find broad general support in institutions, organizations and individuals.

The growing understanding of the key roles that women can also play in international efforts to improve the lives of girls, girls and women leads to reflections on the significant participation of women in decision-making processes and the importance of giving them ample space, ensuring that they are widely represented in senior positions within their own structures, also acting as mediators.

Many initiatives promoted by bilateral and multilateral agencies, governments, and civil society, aim to reduce gender inequalities, empowering women and improving their participation in decision-making processes. In this sense, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has as its specific objective precisely that of ensuring women full and effective participation, as well as equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.

While global, regional, and local commitments and initiatives have increased, the number of women involved in formal peace processes remains too low, and many agreements still lack gender provisions that adequately address women's security. and peacebuilding needs. However, these initiatives have created enough momentum to push the agenda in the direction of female leadership. If a fundamental aspect of mediation, negotiation and peace processes is the promotion of human rights, then one of the best ways to achieve this is to concretely demonstrate how it can work, challenging any stereotypes or prejudices and ensuring that women are strategically placed into leadership positions so they can serve as role models for other women.

Women*, Peace, and Security (WPS)* was first put on the agenda of the UN Security Council in 2000, with Resolution 1325, adopted unanimously on 31 October 2000, which stressed the need to increase women's participation in conflict resolution and sustainable peace, placing their role and responsibility at the heart of the international security agenda.

The UN Plan of Action recognizes a key role for women in conflict prevention and resolution and aims to engage them to provide security for all. Increasing women's full, equitable and meaningful participation in peace-making, conflict prevention and peacebuilding is, in fact, a key priority for the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). In line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and in a holistic, inclusive and integrated perspective, in Italy, the Interministerial Committee for Human Rights (CIDU) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation approved the IV National Action Plan on Women, *Peace and Security*, 2020-2024 (CIDU, 2020) on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the IV World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), and in the framework of the twentieth anniversary of the Resolution 1325 (2000) with four objectives aimed at: promoting and strengthening

Objective No.1–Strengthen – on a continuous and lasting basis–the role of women in peace processes and in all decision-making processes, also increasing synergies with civil society, in order to effectively implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325(2000) and the WPS

Objective No.2–Continue to promote a gender perspective in peace operations and enhance the presence of women, in particular the Armed Forces and Polices Forces, strengthening.

Their role in decision-making processes relating to peace-keeping missions and in peace conferences.

> Objective No.3 – Contribute to promote gender equality, empowerment and protection of women and children, especially girls and boys, as well as respect for human rights of women and children, especially girls, in conflict and post-conflict areas, increasing synergies with civil society, in order to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325(2000) and the WPS.
>
> Objective No.4 – Strengthen strategic communication and result-oriented advocacy, by bolstering the Italian participation in relevant fora, conferences and mechanisms (eg UN system, Red Cross, OSCE, NATO, EU, OECD, Council of Europe), to further support the implementation of the WPS Agenda while continuing to ensure the enhancement of information and training at all levels, on the various cross-cutting issues of UNSCR1325(2000), in particular for the personnel participating in peace operations, including by increasing synergies with civil society and universities, in order to effectively implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325(2000) and the WPS Agenda. (CIDU, 2020, p. 2)

Italy is, therefore, among the very few countries to have allocated public funding to the implementation of the National Action Plans, the latest of which aims precisely at achieving the objectives set by the Agenda, refining the tools available to prevent and respond to episodes of violence in crisis contexts, promoting women's empowerment and gender equality, increasing the participation of women in all areas of economic and social life, removing those obstacles that still stand in the way of the full realization of gender equality.

Resolution 1325 is considered a milestone in recognising the role of women and girls in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in building peace actions, thus marking the starting point for further resolutions (1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2122, 2242, 2467 and 2493), each of which addressed a particular form of protection for women and girls in conflicts and their involvement. in peace and security processes.

In most of the conflicts in which civil society is involved today, women, girls and little girls can be seen as important actors and powerful voices capable of strengthening and implementing measures for conflict prevention a

Since the recognition of the United Nations, the participation of women in mediation processes has increased to some extent, thanks to the development of gender sensitivity in peace agreements, but not enough to allow women to play a decisive role. In the same vein, the EU could play a much stronger role by encouraging Member States to improve the gender balance in the appointment of women to missions and by supporting civil society initiatives at local, national, and international level. The leadership's commitment to equality between men and women, as a greater awareness of women's significant participation in conflict resolution, needs to be strengthened by concrete international and national policies.

As highlighted by the expert group meeting hosted by (Human Rights) UN Women held in May 2018, there are still too many realities that include patriarchal systems that see gender inequalities, institutionalized discrimination and prejudice, cultural barriers and limited recognition for women's skills and lived experience persist.

What is extremely serious, are the attacks against women who defend human rights, who are much more likely than men to be subjected to sexual and gender-based violence and to suffer verbal abuse, online violence; and, when they are activists, they are targeted with smear campaigns that incite hatred and condemn their personal behavior, moral conduct, or sex life (United Nations, 2022a). Thus, in 2021 alone, women participated as negotiators or delegates of the parties to the conflict in all peace processes (co)led by the United Nations. However, female representation stood at around 19% compared to 23% in 2020 (United Nations, 2022b).

In 2021, the UN Human Rights Office protects and defends the full range of Human Rights & freedoms (OHCHR) verified 29 cases of killings of women who stood up for human rights and journalists and trade unionists in eight conflict-affected countries. However, killings or attacks against women human rights defenders are extremely underestimated or anonymized in official statistics.

The emergence of peace movements, catalyzed by UNESCO'*s Towards a Culture of Peace project which, in 1995,* after the first International Forum on the Culture of Peace in San Salvador, introduced the concept of "culture of peace in the medium-term strategy" for the five-year period 1996-2001, has seen the rise of NGOs, associations, young people and adults, national and local media and religious leaders active in favors of peace, of non-violence and tolerance, which, committed to spreading a culture of peace throughout the world in many global campaigns and initiatives, have placed gender equality at the heart of their action.

The process of "gender mainstreaming" that is taking place in relation to these first attempts and those of the United Nations is manifesting itself in different ways in different parts of the world, in constantly changing conditions and in different cultural contexts. Within this overall framework, peace education appears to be an essential tool for the implementation of this process, whether it takes place in the family, in places of worship, in community organizations, in the workplace or at school. It is a primary means by which culture is systematically transmitted, constructed, and promoted, and by which social goals are clarified.

Results and conclusions

Although United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women's Peace and Security (WPS) was the first resolution to recognize the central role of women as agents of change in contributing to international peace and security, the literature emphasizes the importance of placing women at the center of building and sustaining a culture of peace. The results of the analysis of the evidence show that there are different priority areas for this development, from political to social commitment, from economic to educational commitment, since different gender skills must be guaranteed through adequate training, which is essential to advance the culture of peace and the culture of gender.

The meta-analysis succeeded in developing a conceptual framework capable of providing concrete indications for a more effective translation of policies into practice. The studies in the Women and Culture of Peace report directly or indirectly recalled the fundamental role of skills and gender in ensuring peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations, and the need for peace education that takes due account of gender education to ensure adequate skills and knowledge for all peacemakers. The studies identify two categories that relate to the goal of ensuring that women are at the center of peace and security decision-making at all levels. The two categories relate to the tools and ways of addressing issues of gendered social, cultural, and political barriers and protective factors that limit women's full participation in achieving and sustaining peace. Among the protective factors, education is privileged.

A culture of peace that is positively combined with that of gender can only be achieved if those who lead educational institutions and processes are able to intentionally commit themselves to educating for peace also from a gender perspective, preparing teachers to guide students to translate it into action through cognitive paths that pause to consider how it is indispensable for the survival of human civilization and how the construction of certain attitudes, values, behaviors in individuals and institutions are necessary to achieve it. Education elevates socialization to the political culture of the community, which is pursued in a more intentional and systematic way, making schools essential institutions for education to a culture of peace in a gender perspective.

Teachers are the most responsible, influential, and significant agents of the educational process, which, although adaptable, is designed to imbue gender education with a peaceful culture, which must leverage an innovative design of the "human community", where innovation focuses on protagonists, participation, and social co-creation (Nosari & Milani, 2022). In this perspective, the greatest challenge lies in considering social innovation as a social practice (Milani, 2022, p. 46), also linked to that ability of "pedagogical science" to find "possibilities, unpublished and openings, but also stumbles and risks for which a solid reflection and some epistemic plot is necessary with attention to the political and ethical meanings of doing research, experimentation and innovation" (Milani, 2022, p. 40), with a view to accompanying the development of peaceful and gender educational processes, with the specific intention of "building and rebuilding the social,

urban, community or institutional fabric, to promote dynamic projects that give a new shape to desires, hopes, needs and questions of the different actors involved (boys and girls, boys and girls, young people, teachers, educators, parents…) seen as subjects of their change and of society itself" (Milani & Nosari, 2022, p. 8), or as architects of the change itself.

This is a vision of innovation that is reconciled with a perspective of peace and gender that is, at the same time, reflective and critical aimed at "analysing not only the declination of sustainable, inclusive, participatory development, but also decidedly alternative visions such as those of buen vivir and degrowth" (Gozzelino, 2020, p. 2), which look at global change in the direction of recognition of the ownership of rights attributed to individuals and communities, to peoples and collectives, "for a new ethical simplicity in harmony with nature and with the different peoples of the world" (Gozzolino, 2022, p. 74).

When UNESCO embarked on the task of promoting the concept and goal of a culture of peace, it affirmed the aspirations of a human society for a life that was not trapped by a culture of war and violence, proclaiming that this aspiration could also be achievable through gender equality.

The path along which most members of the "human family" can make their way is that of realizing a transformative vision of a global future proper to gender education nurtured by a culture of positive peace.

In conclusion, gender equality nurtured by a culture of peace must be supported through the implementation of evidence-based policies and legislation on gender equality and actions to raise awareness of the progress and challenges in the implementation of such policies for the promotion of equity (UNESCO, 2000).

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Statement