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## Exploring of Public Perceptions of Islamic Education's Role in Promoting Peace and Social Cohesion in Post-Conflict Afghanistan

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### Abstract

*This study examines how the public perceives the role of Islamic education in fostering peace and social cohesion in post-conflict Afghanistan. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with five carefully chosen participants, comprising educators, community leaders, and civil society representatives, utilizing a qualitative approach. Thematic analysis was conducted on the responses to uncover significant values and issues of Islamic teachings and their relevance in Afghan society. Our results show that Islamic education is fundamentally seen as moral education (that is, education that helps participants suppress violence, choose cooperation, and behave properly), based on Qur'anic principles of sulh (peace), ukhuwwah (brotherhood), and adl (justice). Participants articulated the significance of having religious leaders and educators who will provide direction for their communities. Participants evidenced alarm that religious education piece could be utilized for political exploitation and extremism. The results suggest that Islamic education could serve as an important tool to enhance the notion of peace and national unity, provided it is implemented inclusively and without ideological*

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*influences. The results provide useful guidance to educators, policy and decision makers, and religious organizations in their efforts to transform Islamic education to foster a more peaceful Afghan society.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic education, Qur'anic teachings, peacebuilding, social cohesion, Afghanistan*

## **1. Introduction**

Afghanistan, a country known for its extended war and violence, is still repairing social structure and uniting as a country. With the political instability, ethnic strife, and devastation of war, there is no longer a dispute as to the need for culturally-based, value-centric approaches to peacebuilding. In this milieu of turmoil, Islamic education can be perceived not just pedagogically, but as a potentially significant mechanism to promote peace, reconciliation and social cohesion. The Qur'anic tenets of sulh (peace), adl (justice), ukhuwwah (brotherhood) and rahmah (compassion) are central to the Islamic faith and to Afghan society.

Religion, including Islamic education, has the moral authority to influence people's thoughts and behavior because it occupies a respected institution in Afghanistan. Mosques, madrasas, and Islamic studies classes in schools have historically been sites of moral and spiritual growth; however, it must be taken seriously whether they represent a site where peaceful coexistence can be cultivated. Scholars have recognized the need for peace education to be a component of religious instruction<sup>1</sup>, but there is a lack of insight into how the Afghan people engage with these lessons or how these lessons get enacted locally.

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<sup>1</sup> Abu-Nimer, Mohammed, and Imad Nasser, "Building Peace Education in the Islamic Educational Context," *International Review of Education* 63/2 (April 2017): 153–167; Ayfer Sahin, *New Directions in Islamic Education: Pedagogy and Identity Formation*. London: Kube Publishing, 2013.

This study hopes to address that gap and examine how Afghan teachers, community members, and students understand the role of Islamic education in contributing to peace-building and social cohesion across groups. The goal is to understand the idea and practice of Islamic tenets in everyday life in terms of inter-group relations, conflict resolution, and ethical conduct. Using primary interview data and secondary sources of data (such as academic literature and institutional reports), this study contributes to the literature of culturally relevant peace-building in Muslim-majority post-conflict contexts.

In this way, the study stresses the need to connect scriptural ideals with real-life situations in the community. It also shows how religious education may go beyond only teaching rituals to become a powerful tool for ethical leadership and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

### **Research Questions:**

This paper analyzes how the public perceives Islamic education's role in fostering peace and social cohesion in post-conflict Afghanistan. The research draws on qualitative data gathered through interviews with educators, community leaders and youth, thus asking how individuals understand and utilize Islamic values like *sulh* (peace), *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood) and *adl* (justice) in community. The analysis and findings of this paper present the promise, challenges and tensions of using Islamic education to promote unity, moral conduct and reconciliation in a context marked by years of conflict and division.

The following questions are the focus of this study:

How do Afghan citizens understand and experience the role of Islamic education in shaping attitudes toward peace, tolerance, and community unity in a post-conflict society?

What Islamic values and teachings are perceived by the Afghan public as most effective in fostering social cohesion and preventing conflict in their communities?

### **Literature Review**

Education is recognized as an important part of strengthening morals and promoting peace in Islam, especially in Islamic and war-torn and damaged regions and countries. Islamic teachings are deeply rooted in the concepts of peace (salah), brotherhood (akhut), and justice (adl), and these concepts provide a strong moral foundation for rebuilding society. Research<sup>1</sup> has shown that religious education is not limited to transmitting religious information but also promotes the moral foundation, peace, and individual identities of society. However, in a country like Afghanistan, which has been at war for years, this has led to the erosion of social unity and trust.

There are also some methods that are very fundamental and emotional in Salam for Peace, such as Islamic teachings, mutual understanding between people, empathy, these are identity formation in Islamic education. And this helps individuals and society to achieve a social identity. Daun and Arjomand<sup>2</sup> have confirmed this and emphasized the role of Islamic educational institutions as places for cultivating ethical behavior and democratic values, especially when these institutions are reformed to align with contemporary peacebuilding goals.

Religious education, such as religious schools, is an important avenue for dialogue. Especially in countries like Afghanistan, which is always in conflict, and Nigeria, where it is often criticized for being rigid and exclusive. However, religious schools can also play an important role in peace and tolerance, if they are properly reformed. They focus on perspectives, criticisms, and educational values. After conflict, religious education can lead

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<sup>1</sup> Sahin, *New Directions in Islamic Education*

<sup>2</sup> Holger Daun and Reza Arjomand, eds. *Handbook of Islamic Education* (Cham: Springer, 2020).

to reconciliation and deepen divisions, according to<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, curricula should be carefully designed to emphasize inclusion, justice, and a shared identity.

Case studies from Afghanistan highlight the difficulties as well as the achievements in incorporating peacebuilding into Islamic education. Research conducted by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) shows that communities often turn to Islamic organizations and organizations as the mediators of local conflict and for purposes of reconciliation.<sup>2</sup> When the local madrasas, and the local imams, are aware of conflicts, they not only encourage dialogue, they preach about justice and develop increased trust in the community.

Likewise, research conducted by the Asia Foundation from 2019 - 2023 shows that Islam is seen as a moral authority in Afghan society. In this research, a good portion of Afghans connect religious education with moral obligations, honesty and society.<sup>3</sup> This suggests that if Islamic education adheres to principles that further peace, it could bedrock for social cohesiveness. Global viewpoints are provided by UNESCO and UNDP publications, which note that Islamic educational frameworks in nations like Indonesia have successfully incorporated civic and ethical education. Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) in Indonesia have adopted peace education initiatives that promote nonviolence

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<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Fontana, "Religious Education after Conflicts: Promoting Social Cohesion or Entrenching Existing Cleavages?" *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 46/5 (2016): 811–831.

<sup>2</sup> AREU. *Reports on Community Reconciliation and Education*. Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. <https://areu.org.af>.

<sup>3</sup> The Asia Foundation. *Survey of the Afghan People, 2019–2023*. Kabul: The Asia Foundation. <https://asiafoundation.org/where-we-work/afghanistan/>

and tolerance for differences. These initiatives show how Islamic principles align with modern ideas of democratic citizenship and cohabitation.<sup>1</sup>

The ways that Indonesian multicultural Islamic education fosters tolerance between groups and national cohesion. The study emphasizes how curriculum design, by embracing pluralism, ethics, and inclusive religion, may turn schools into venues for social cohesion. Afghan madrasas can use this concept to lessen sectarian and ethnic tensions. In Nigeria, such tactics have been used to stop the spread of extremist beliefs. The main goals of Islamic institutions that have undergone reform are interfaith communication and peaceful coexistence. These case studies show that when Islamic education is refocused on justice and inclusivity, it can greatly aid in the reconstruction of fragmented societies<sup>2</sup>.

A more thorough framework for peacebuilding that is founded on social cohesion and aligned with Islamic values of justice, solidarity, and respect for one another is presented by Cox & Sisk.<sup>3</sup> They contend that educational organizations have the ability to successfully promote reconciliation, particularly those that are premised on regional belief systems. Therefore, Islamic education should be viewed as a malleable tool that, when applied properly, has the potential to promote the long-term goal of peaceful, harmonious society.

## **Exploring Public Perceptions in Post-Conflict Afghan Communities: Core Islamic Values as Foundations of Social Harmony**

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO & UNDP. *Reports on Peace Education in Muslim Countries*. Paris: UNESCO. <https://unesco.org>

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Fahmi and others, "Multicultural Islamic Education as Strategy for Strengthening Social Cohesion in Islamic School," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8/1 (2025): 154–175.

<sup>3</sup> Fiona D. Cox and Timothy D. Sisk, "Peacebuilding: A Social Cohesion Approach." In *Peacebuilding in Deeply Divided Societies: Toward Social Cohesion?*, edited by Fiona D. Cox and Timothy D. Sisk (Cham: Springer, 2017): , 13–31.

For a long time, the emphasis of Islamic education was on these principles that lead to social justice, peace and unity, and these schools have always been a hope for society, and the people and society also believe that these schools can create a lasting peace in the country<sup>1</sup> mentioned in their research that if these religious schools want to implement religious teachings correctly, they must focus on peace, justice and kindness in society. In societies that have always been under war and misery, these beliefs and values can play a transformative role. In the Islamic circle, peace education should begin with cultivating empathy, forgiveness, cooperation and respect for differences — all of which are essential for rebuilding Afghan societies. They explain this well.

Sahin<sup>2</sup> discusses the role Islamic pedagogy can play in shaping moral conduct and moral identity. Sahin suggests Islamic education, for example, is embedding humility, honesty, forbearance, and credibility, thereby strengthening community relations. Afghan society has experienced a breakdown of relationships through conflict; therefore, reestablishing the precepts of humility, honesty, forbearance, and credibility through religious education may restore relationships in communities that have been fragmented. Al-Attas<sup>3</sup> explains that the goal of Islamic education is to create a morally sound person, which is related to moral and spiritual development and relates to adab (appropriate conduct), justice, sincerity, and responsibility. These important values can help reform the ethical base in areas affected by conflict when woven into an Afghan context. The emphasis on personal transformation and moral discipline provides a strong foundation for unity and reconciliation.

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<sup>1</sup> Abu-Nimer, Mohammed, and Imad Nasser, "Building Peace Education in the Islamic Educational Context," 153–167.

<sup>2</sup> Sahin, *New Directions in Islamic Education*.

<sup>3</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*. (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1999).

Philosopher<sup>1</sup> provides further support for the claim that Islam provides stable values for humanity, namely communal responsibility, justice, balance, and mercy. The use of these ideas can help the communities in Afghanistan move beyond cycles of revenge and violence. Communicating these spiritual ideas can assist in long-term peacebuilding, since religion can provide comfort and guidance to the Afghan people. Daun and Arjmand<sup>2</sup> maintain that Islamic education can promote democratic values and peaceful coexistence in different contexts, assuming it is organized appropriately. Islamic teachings may portray various notions similar to social responsibility, mutual respect, and agreeable dialogue that can be conveyed through both formal and informal Islamic education in Afghanistan. If based on authentic Islamic teachings, these notions can generate environments of shared intents, and reduced tensions.

According to the recent surveys conducted by The Asia Foundation (2019–2023), religion remains the most trusted institution by Afghans, with many perceiving Islam as providing a level of stability and morals for communities.<sup>3</sup> Several respondents stated that Islamic teachings are often tied to using community values such as forgiveness, respect for elders, and community togetherness, which are all greatly esteemed. Taken together, these findings imply that Islamic education can provide improved community cohesion.

The reports of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) similarly noted that communities often turn to religious leaders and Islamic values to manage conflict, and peace has certainly been highly regarded in Afghan culture. Their reports also stress the overall finding that, when reconciliation efforts use a common religious basis,

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<sup>1</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York: HarperOne, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Daun and Arjmand, eds. *Handbook of Islamic Education*.

<sup>3</sup> The Asia Foundation. *Survey of the Afghan People, 2019–2023*. Kabul: The Asia Foundation. <https://asiafoundation.org/where-we-work/afghanistan>.

people with different ethnic and political backgrounds are engaged positively. The AREU clearly shows that local peacebuilding efforts using religious narratives of dialogue and forgiveness have been very useful.<sup>1</sup>

Research the role of higher education in peacebuilding and argue that universities in Afghanistan could be venues for sharing inclusive Islamic values. They suggest that exposing youth to moderate Islamic concepts makes youth more likely to reject extremism and work toward reconciliation in their communities. Moving toward educational reform based on ethical responsibility, gender equity, and respect will create the next generation of peace builders<sup>2</sup>. The Afghan school curriculum jerks between Western and Islamic influences. He highlights an often-misguided misunderstanding by the public that develops out of an overwhelming focus on foreign values without any connection to foundational Islamic values. Given the peacebuilding processes, peacebuilding curricula that reflect both the contemporary aims of education and genuine Islamic beliefs that are most acceptable to people and teach peace<sup>3</sup>.

Evidence for a faith-based educational approach that will develop tolerance, dialogue, and civic responsibility can be found in UNESCO and UNDP reports on the "Islamic Education" provided within Muslim-majority societies. These sources highlight the importance of curriculum and teacher development so that Islam education supports

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<sup>1</sup> AREU. *Reports on Community Reconciliation and Education*. Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. <https://areu.org.af>.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad Sahar and Phillip Kaunert, "Higher Education as a Catalyst of Peacebuilding in Violence and Conflict-Affected Contexts: The Case of Afghanistan," *Peacebuilding* 9/1 (2021): 57–78.

<sup>3</sup> A. Mark, Jones, "Muslim and Western Influences on School Curriculum in Post-War Afghanistan," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 27/1 (2007): 27–40.

democracy and harmony. If these actions were taken in Afghanistan, they could help to restore trust in civic education and reconciliation efforts.<sup>1</sup>

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) also provides content guidelines on incorporating Islamic values into modern education systems. In their writing, they suggest that the impartation of Islamic ethics should go beyond rituals to include social justice, civic engagement, and respect for others. This approach aligns with the fundamental importance of Afghanistan fostering inclusive identities and restoring trust.<sup>2</sup>

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) reports that Islamic actors have been important to nationally led peace processes in Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup> Numerous religious leaders have participated in conflict mediation and as tolerance promoters. As influential representatives of community reconciliation, many of these leaders take advantage of teachings about peace and justice found in Islam.<sup>4</sup> argues in favor of the coexistence of Islamic laws with secular state practice while simultaneously advocating for human rights. This position is useful in Afghanistan, where attempts to reach a consensus about the potential role and scope of religion in governance are ongoing, and by advocating for moderation to improve the odds of an understanding about Islamic practice, room is created for an understanding between traditionalists and reformists.

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO & UNDP. *Reports on Peace Education in Muslim Countries*. Paris: UNESCO. <https://unesco.org>.

<sup>2</sup> International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). *Publications on Islamic Values in Education*. Herndon, VA: IIIT. <https://iiit.org/>

<sup>3</sup> United States Institute of Peace. *Reports on Islamic Actors in Afghan Peace Processes*. Washington, DC: USIP. <https://www.usip.org/>

<sup>4</sup> Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari'a* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

Esposito and DeLong-Bas<sup>1</sup> focus on how Islamic family law can encourage equality and mutual respect when interpreted fairly, and this is especially important in communities where gender is contentious. The shared value of equality is crucial for harmony and tolerance in society. By providing an education that is based on Islam, which includes a focus on equal treatment for all, it may be possible to form communities that are not fractured. Sachedina<sup>2</sup> argues that the human rights framework Islam is based on social responsibility, justice, and dignity, which provide strong ethical principles for establishing peace in Afghanistan. As these principles are taught in schools and religious contexts, they can help prepare conditions for respect and coexistence.

### **The Role of Islamic Teachings in Promoting Social Cohesion in Afghanistan: From Qur'anic Principles to Community Practice**

Islamic education, which is founded on Qur'anic principles, provides a potent framework for the restoration of social cohesion in post-conflict countries such as Afghanistan. Abu-Nimer and Nasser<sup>3</sup> emphasize that peacebuilding must commence within religious contexts by promoting mutual comprehension, forgiveness, and empathy. Their Islamic peace education model emphasizes practical methods for teaching Islamic values to address local conflicts and community fragmentation. Sahin<sup>4</sup> also emphasizes that Islamic pedagogy is critically important in the development of moral consciousness and identity. He underscores the potential of education to positively impact public attitudes and reestablish fractured community ties by instilling values such as patience, humility, respect,

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<sup>1</sup> John L Esposito, and Natana J. DeLong-Bas, *Women in Muslim Family Law*, (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Abu-Nimer, and Imad Nasser, "Building Peace Education in the Islamic Educational Context, 153–167;

<sup>4</sup> Sahin, *New Directions in Islamic Education*.

and cooperation. These teachings provide an ethical pathway forward in Afghanistan, where the conflict has eroded trust.

Characterizes Islamic education as a process of fostering good character (adab) and ensuring that individual behavior is consistent with moral and spiritual principles. His commitment to ethical responsibility, justice, and sincerity is consistent with the cultural norms of communal conduct in Afghanistan. Youth are directed toward constructive citizenship and collective rehabilitation when these principles are incorporated into the educational process<sup>1</sup>.

Mercy, justice, and spiritual equilibrium as enduring Islamic values. Societies that are in the process of recuperating from violence must adhere to these principles. The transition from division to unity in Afghanistan can be facilitated by the invocation of these values in both formal and informal education settings. Nasr's human-centered approach is profoundly resonant with communities where faith continues to be a fundamental social resource<sup>2</sup>.

Islamic institutions have evolved to foster democratic engagement and coexistence in various countries. They propose that madrasas can promote peaceful coexistence and combat extremism by reforming and reorienting them toward social integration. These teachings can be applied to the diverse ethnic and sectarian communities of Afghanistan through comparative strategies that integrate inclusive pedagogy with tradition<sup>3</sup>. The pivotal role religion plays in Afghan society is further emphasized by survey data from The

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*.

<sup>2</sup> Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*.

<sup>3</sup> Daun and Arjmand, eds. *Handbook of Islamic Education*.

Asia Foundation (2019–2023).<sup>1</sup> The results underscore the widespread support for values such as reconciliation, solidarity, and respect, as well as the widespread trust in Islamic institutions. These insights confirm that Islamic teachings continue to influence public behavior and are considered indispensable instruments for promoting harmony.

The AREU (Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit) reports provide additional evidence of the active use of Islamic principles by communities to resolve local disputes and mediate ethnic tensions. In order to encourage dialogue and collective reconciliation, community leaders frequently employ Islamic principles of *sulh* (peace) and *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood).<sup>2</sup> These practical applications serve as a conduit between sacred teachings and everyday life. Sahar and Kaunert<sup>3</sup> underscore the significance of higher education in the promotion of moderate Islamic values and social responsibility. In Afghanistan, where youth engagement is essential for sustainable peace, universities that incorporate ethical Islamic teachings can promote inclusivity and critical thinking, thereby combating both apathy and radicalism.

### **The equilibrium between Islamic traditions and Western educational models in Afghan curricula.**

The legitimacy of the curriculum is enhanced by integration rather than imposition. Schools can foster the values of civic participation, justice, and coexistence by integrating Qur'anic principles with global standards. UNESCO and UNDP reports confirm that

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<sup>1</sup> The Asia Foundation. *Survey of the Afghan People, 2019–2023*. Kabul: The Asia Foundation. <https://asiafoundation.org/where-we-work/afghanistan>.

<sup>2</sup> AREU. *Reports on Community Reconciliation and Education*. Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. <https://areu.org.af>.

<sup>3</sup> Sahar, Ahmad, and Phillip Kaunert. "Higher Education as a Catalyst of Peacebuilding in Violence and Conflict-Affected Contexts: The Case of Afghanistan," 57–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2020.1864957>

Islamic education can foster peace when curricula are developed to prioritize diversity, dialogue, and shared civic values. These reports suggest that instructors be trained to become peace educators and that school materials be developed to emphasize justice and compassion, which are both fundamental components of Islamic ethics.<sup>1</sup>

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) prioritizes comprehensive Islamic education that integrates intellectual, spiritual, and ethical growth. Their resources are in favor of curricula that are values-based and incorporate themes such as social equity, environmental responsibility, and community solidarity—all of which are highly pertinent to the process of peacebuilding in Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup>

The reconciliation processes in Afghanistan are significantly influenced by Islamic actors, as confirmed by USIP reports.<sup>3</sup> Often, peace initiatives are framed within Islamic teachings by imams and scholars, who are trusted by local populations and play mediating roles. Their involvement fortifies grassroots reconciliation and improves legitimacy.

The compatibility of Islamic law with secular governance and human rights. His argument is in favor of educational strategies that prioritize religious tolerance while simultaneously preserving individual liberties, a particularly critical equilibrium in Afghanistan's multifaceted society.

Esposito and DeLong-Bas<sup>4</sup> underscore the importance of gender equity in Islamic family law. Inclusive education and the mitigation of gender-based tensions are essential

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO & UNDP. *Reports on Peace Education in Muslim Countries*. Paris: UNESCO. <https://unesco.org>.

<sup>2</sup> International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). *Publications on Islamic Values in Education*. Herndon, VA: IIIT. <https://iiit.org/>

<sup>3</sup> United States Institute of Peace. *Reports on Islamic Actors in Afghan Peace Processes*. Washington, DC: USIP. <https://www.usip.org/>

<sup>4</sup> Esposito, and Natana J. DeLong-Bas, *Women in Muslim Family Law*.

components of sustainable peace, and the promotion of these interpretations can facilitate these objectives<sup>1</sup>.

Sachedina<sup>2</sup> contends that Islamic human rights frameworks prioritize justice, pluralism, and dignity. The cultivation of respect for diversity and the promotion of a shared sense of national identity can be achieved by teaching these principles through religious education.

## **Methodology**

This study aimed to examine the degree to which Qur'anic principles and Islamic teachings foster societal cohesion in post-conflict Afghanistan. The methodology utilized was qualitative and grounded in a literature-based framework. The research focused on understanding public perceptions and lived experiences related to Islamic education and its importance in fostering moral values, unity, and peace within the various Afghan communities.

To collect primary data, I involved semi-structured interviews with individuals who had first-hand, real experience in Islamic education or community-based activities to gather information. I chose five participants wisely, who would be able to provide powerful and substantial information. These were two teachers of Islamic Studies presently working in government schools, a respected elder in the community, one university student who pursues religious studies/ courses and one civil society worker engaged in education projects and non-violence building programs. I selected these people intentionally, as each of them has significant roles in society and can comprehend how the Islamic teaching is applied in the activity of everyday life. Their diversity in background brought to my table diverse opinions which enhanced the data to be more enhanced and credible.

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<sup>1</sup> An-Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State*.

<sup>2</sup> Sachedina, *Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights*.

All the interviews took place on WhatsApp voice and text call. This method was convenient and risk-free among the respondents, more so to those in the rural communities whose proximity is a challenge. The interviews took place either in Dari or Pashto basing on individual preference of each participant. Following the interviews, all the responses were personally translated into English to be able to analyze them. They all responded to ten open questions, where they were requested to document their perception of what Islamic education entailed, Quranic concepts as well as the way the concepts could foster peace and desirable social conduct.

The research incorporated direct interviews and an extensive analysis of secondary sources to contextualize the results. The views of Abu-Nimer and Nasser, Sahin, Nasr, Al-Attas, Daun and Arjmand on Islamic pedagogy, peace education, and identity development were looked at in the context of academic literature. We also looked at publications from The Asia Foundation, AREU, UNESCO, UNDP, IIIT, and USIP to get more information and current data on how communities and religious education are working in Afghanistan.

This methodology combines participant narratives with established insights from Islamic scholarship and development research to create a culturally relevant and academically sound basis for examining the connection between Qur'anic teachings and social harmony in Afghan society.

## **Data Analysis**

Five panelists were intentionally selected for their insights on Islamic education and peacebuilding in post-conflict Afghanistan. This study employed a qualitative thematic analysis methodology to examine their responses. The data underwent human transcription, translation into English, and analysis via a multi-step coding process. The interviews were done in Dari and Pashto over WhatsApp, and the data was gathered.

Thematic analysis began with a careful look at each response to find common themes, important quotes, and patterns. We used open coding to code the responses so we could get the main ideas, then we looked at each question one by one. Through axial coding, the moral role of Islamic education, principles that promote peace and togetherness, the impact of religious leaders, and worries about politicization or extremism were all put into larger groups.

Participants often used themes such as *sulh* (peace), *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood), *adl* (justice), and *rahmah* (compassion) in their storytelling. The use of participant quotations helped with interpretive classification while keeping their perceptions true to life. Different points of view were also found. For example, most of the people who answered agreed that Islamic education promotes morality and tolerance, but a few were worried that it could be used to promote radical beliefs.

Responses were compared among participants to examine both similarities and differences, ensuring dependability and transparency. The integration of peace-oriented Islamic ideals in educational practice was endorsed by pertinent scholarly frameworks, including those by Abu-Nimer and Nasser (2017), Sahin (2013), and Daun and Arjmand (2020). This approach confirmed the themes.

The research generally showed that there was agreement that Islamic education may be a powerful tool for fostering peace, as long as it is done in a real, open way and is not influenced by extremists.

## **Finding**

This study's results highlight the main ideas that came up in the participants' answers to the question on the role of Islamic education in promoting peace and social cohesion in Afghanistan after the war. Five individuals from several professions shared their insights, which were subsequently categorized into six principal themes:

### 1. The Ethical Framework of Islamic Education

Participants described Islamic education as an all-encompassing guide to life, with religious instruction. People thought of it as a system that promotes social responsibility, spiritual awareness, and good behavior. Respondents asserted that authentic Islamic education cultivates a harmonious balance between moral duties and secular endeavors, consequently shaping persons who are caring, honest, and respectful.

### 2. Promotion of Peace and Social Behavior

The attendees agreed that Islamic teachings promote cooperation, justice, and peacefulness. They thought that Islamic education helps people to get along with others when it is done right, without any political bias or fanaticism. A few people stressed that true Islamic beliefs teach people to appreciate everyone, no matter their race, gender, or language.

### 3. Effect on Community Cohesion

Islamic virtues such as sulh (peace), ukhuwwah (brotherhood), and rahmah (compassion) were constantly recognized as principles that may strengthen community ties. The participants believed that education grounded on these values might facilitate the alleviation of divides and the enhancement of unity within Afghanistan's multiethnic community.

### 4. The Role of Religious Leaders and Teachers

All of the attendees stressed how important it is for imams, teachers, and religious scholars to help people find peace. They stressed that these leaders' effectiveness depends on how committed they are to teaching in an ethical and inclusive way and how well they understand Islam.

### 5. Fears About Extremism and Abuse

Most of the people who took part said they were in favor of Islamic education, but they also had some concerns. Some have noticed that religious instruction has been used for political or radical ends in some situations. They argued that this abuse could lead to division instead of unity. One participant stressed the importance of moderation and reform to ensure that Islamic education realizes its promise for peacebuilding.

## 6. Future Possibilities

Most of the people who took part said they believed that Islamic education could help make Afghanistan a more peaceful place if it were properly changed and made less political. They thought it was a long-term way to promote good citizenship and help people heal from the trauma of war, especially young people.

## Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that Islamic education significantly contributes to the promotion of peace and social cohesion within Afghan society when grounded in genuine Qur'anic ideals. Participants regarded Islamic education as a framework that imparts moral discipline, social responsibility, and respect for others—principles that foster nonviolence and collaboration. This is in line with (Al-Attas, 1999), who stressed the moral and spiritual purposes of Islamic education.

Participants cited core principles such as *sulh* (peace), *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood), and *adl* (justice), which resonate with the findings of (Sahin, 2013) and Abu-Nimer and Nasser (2017), who contend that the right application of Islamic teachings can facilitate the reconstruction of divided communities. Participants regarded these values not merely as

ideals but as pragmatic instruments for mitigating conflict and fostering harmony among Afghanistan's varied populations.

People were also worried about how Islamic education is sometimes utilized for political or radical ends. Several participants cautioned that the politicization of religious instruction may exacerbate tensions rather than promote reconciliation. This worry aligns with the perspectives of Daun and (Arjmand, 2020), who emphasize the necessity of reforming Islamic education to promote democratic and peaceful ideals.

Another significant discovery was the influence of religious leaders and educators. Participants viewed imams and teachers as significant figures capable of either leading communities towards harmony or exacerbating discord. It was stressed how important their training and moral foundation were, which is similar to what USIP reports say about the significance of religious leaders in fostering peace.

In general, the conversation illustrates that Islamic education could help bring peace to Afghanistan, but only if it is taught in a way that is devoid of extremist and political use. To make sure that Islamic education helps bring the country together, we need to change the curriculum, focus on principles like justice and kindness, and give religious leaders more power to be moral.

## **Conclusion**

This investigation explored the perceptions of Islamic education concerning peacebuilding and social cohesion in the context of post-conflict Afghanistan. Interviews conducted with educators, community leaders, and students indicate that when Islamic education is grounded in Qur'anic values like peace (sulh), justice (adl), and compassion (rahmah), it can emerge as a significant catalyst for unity and reconciliation.

Participants consistently highlighted those authentic Islamic principles advocate for ethical conduct, respect for individuals, and a commitment to nonviolence. Nonetheless,

there were expressed concerns regarding the potential exploitation of religious education for political or extremist ends, which could detract from its capacity to foster peace. The significance and influence of religious leaders and educators emerged as crucial elements shaping the societal effects of Islamic education.

To enhance its beneficial impact, Islamic education in Afghanistan should be inclusive, moderate, and devoid of ideological manipulation. Transforming curricula to prioritize values-driven education, equipping educators with peace-focused teaching methods, and fostering inter-sectarian comprehension are crucial measures. Ultimately, Islamic education has the potential to play a significant role in the reconstruction of Afghan society—if it remains true to its foundational aim: fostering morally grounded, compassionate, and socially responsible individuals.

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