

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Education is a process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through formal instruction, practical experience, or self-directed learning (Alotaibi & Cutting, 2016); Lamichhane (2018); (Premkumar et al., 2018). It is a lifelong journey that begins at birth and continues throughout an individual's life (Mahajan et al., 2016). The pillars of education content, methodology, assessment, learners, and environment are fundamental principles that guide and ensure the effectiveness of the educational process (Villegas, 2022). The environment, encompassing the physical, social, and emotional conditions of learning, plays a crucial role in enhancing learning and promoting academic success (Edgar-Smith & Palmer, 2015).

The legal role of education differs across jurisdictions but is generally acknowledged as a fundamental human right, safeguarded by national and international legal frameworks (De Beco et al., 2019; Veriava & Paterson, 2020). One of the primary legal responsibilities of the education system is to ensure the implementation and enforcement of compulsory education. It is a common practice in many countries to require children to attend school for a designated number of years or until they reach a certain age. This policy is implemented to guarantee that all children have access to the fundamental education needed for their personal and societal growth (Robinson et al., 2020).

Furthermore, education laws commonly establish provisions that explicitly forbid any form of discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, disability, or other protected characteristics. The non-discrimination principle is a fundamental aspect that guarantees equal access to educational opportunities for all students. This principle plays a crucial role in creating an inclusive environment that values and encourages diversity (Cornell & Kessi, 2021).

The legal framework surrounding education includes quality standards as a critical aspect. Legislation frequently establishes precise criteria for educational institutions, educators, and educational programs in order to ensure the provision of education of superior quality. The purpose of these standards is to fulfill societal

requirements and effectively equip students for upcoming obstacles, guaranteeing that educational institutions deliver a comprehensive and applicable learning experience (Superfine et al., 2018). The allocation of funds for education is a substantial legal obligation that falls under the purview of governments. Governments employ various means, such as direct support, subsidies, or grants, to ensure that all students are provided with the essential resources required for their learning. The financial support provided serves to address gaps in educational provision and mitigate the impact of resource limitations on students' educational opportunities (Handel & Hanushek, 2022; Thompson et al., 2022).

Accountability mechanisms are implemented to ensure the ongoing quality of education. The utilization of standardized testing and evaluation systems serves the purpose of ensuring schools and teachers are held accountable for the caliber of education they deliver. These mechanisms are designed to monitor and assess the progress of students. They play a crucial role in identifying areas where improvement is needed and ensuring that educational standards are consistently met (Hardy, 2020). The legal roles of education include ensuring compulsory attendance, prohibiting discrimination, setting quality standards, providing funding, and maintaining accountability. These roles collectively contribute to the establishment of a comprehensive and equitable educational system.

From the foregoing discussions, it is clear that education plays a significant role in promoting peaceful conflict resolution. By providing individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to understand and manage conflicts, education can help to reduce the likelihood of violence and promote peaceful coexistence (Harris, 2013; Yablon, 2013). Education significantly contributes to promoting peaceful conflict resolution by fostering a range of crucial skills and understanding. Firstly, it enhances communication and empathy. Through educational experiences, individuals learn to communicate effectively and understand others' perspectives. This development of empathy and communication skills is vital for resolving conflicts without resorting to violence, as it enables people to find common ground and understand the emotions and viewpoints of others. This is supported by the work of Goleman (1995b) on emotional intelligence, which highlights the importance of empathy in interpersonal interactions. Additionally, studies have

shown that peace education programs, such as those described by (Nevo & Brem, 2002), focus on enabling students to evaluate conflicts and think about peaceful resolution options, emphasizing the role of empathy in conflict resolution.

Moreover, education nurtures critical thinking abilities. By teaching individuals to analyze situations critically, education helps them identify the underlying causes of conflicts and consider various peaceful solutions. Critical thinking skills allow individuals to approach conflicts thoughtfully and systematically, reducing the likelihood of impulsive, violent reactions. This is echoed in the work of Ennis (1996) and further evidenced by the findings of a study by Roush and Hall (1993), which showed that conflict resolution lessons significantly increased students' knowledge and ability to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Education also promotes intercultural understanding, which is essential in a world characterized by diversity. Exposure to different cultures, beliefs, and values through education reduces stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. This intercultural understanding helps diminish the misunderstandings and biases that often lead to conflicts, fostering a more inclusive and peaceful society. (Banks, 2008) highlights the role of multicultural education in reducing prejudice and promoting social harmony. Additionally, the work of Askerov and Barakat (2021) discusses how peace education fosters a sense of mutual respect and understanding among diverse groups.

In addition, education builds peacebuilding skills such as negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution. These skills are fundamental for resolving conflicts peacefully and are often integrated into educational curriculums and activities. Learning and practicing these skills prepare individuals to handle disputes constructively and amicably in various contexts. Cardozo Andrade (2023) describes how collaborative learning and conflict resolution training in schools can cultivate these essential skills. Moreover, Waldon-Johnson (2015) demonstrates the effectiveness of peer mediation programs in creating peaceful school cultures. The impact of education on peaceful conflict resolution is therefore profound. As we equip individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes, education empowers them to manage and resolve conflicts effectively and peacefully. This

approach to conflict resolution underscores the essential role of education in fostering a more harmonious and understanding society. As highlighted by multiple studies, including those by Johnson and Johnson (2006) and Jones (2004), peace education not only addresses immediate conflicts but also contributes to the long-term goal of building a culture of peace.

Globally, conflict and violence have led to significant casualties. In 2011, an estimated 1.37 million people died due to various forms of violence, including deaths from protests and riots. However, Ghana remains one of the few African countries that has not experienced large-scale slaughter or civil conflict (Bansah, 2022). Rubinstein (1969) noted that student demonstrations do not garner universal support or opposition, as people take varied stances on conflict and its casualties. Hailu and Sarubbi (2021) emphasize that student conflicts reflect the social climate in schools, with student activists possessing the power to influence school leadership and government attitudes, potentially driving significant social changes.

Following George Floyd's killing by police on May 25, 2020, protests erupted globally, highlighting systemic racism and police brutality. A review of 6,626 medical records found that 1.3% of people were injured by chemical irritants and 15.5% by projectiles, leading to permanent disabilities. Injuries were caused by rubber bullets, tear gas canisters, beanbags, and other projectiles, with many injuries to the head, neck, or face (Kaske et al., 2021). Hung et al. (2019) confirm the widespread use of brutish force, chemical irritants, projectiles, rubber bullets, and tear gas by police in crowd control globally.

Conflicts have also had significant consequences globally, affecting social development, health, and the environment. Armed conflicts, for example, have both short-term and long-term effects that hinder opportunities for growth. Asamoah (2014) discusses the Alavanyo-Nkonya conflict, highlighting how conflicts destroy environmental, social, economic, human capital, and livelihoods. Ethnic conflicts, in particular, erode social cohesion and impede community governance. The displacement of people is a major social and economic cost, both during and after conflicts. Since 1960, wars and ethnic conflicts in Africa have directly or indirectly killed over eight million people.

In Ghana, Marfo et al. (2019) note that both inter- and intra-chieftaincy and ethnic conflicts have adversely impacted local development. For instance, the Dagbon chieftaincy succession conflict in Yendi in 2002 led to the deaths of the overlord Ya-Na Yakubu Andani II and about 28 others. Conflicts have substantial social and economic effects on their locales. The annual average drop in agricultural production in conflict areas in Ghana is 12.3%. In 2012, the actual amount of crops grown was 43% less than in 2011 due to farmers and farm workers fearing attacks.

Student conflicts are a global phenomenon, with protests occurring for various reasons. In Great Britain, tens of thousands of university students protested against tuition fee increases in 2011, highlighting the violence of a minority of protestors (Gokay & Shain, 2011). In South Africa, student protests between 2015 and 2017 focused on exclusion based on socioeconomic, epistemological, and cultural grounds, as well as the lack of post-apartheid social transformation and insufficient funding for higher education (Czerniewicz et al., 2019; Oxlund, 2016). In Latin America, more than 570 protests involving college students were recorded in 2011 across 28 countries, compared to 143 protests for free and public education in Chile in 1994. The frequency of these protests varies due to economic and political factors (Disi Pavlic, 2020).

(Lertchoosakul, 2021) reported that Thai high school students used cartoon characters in a series of rallies against the military administration in July and August of 2020. Students adopted the three-finger salute to protest an ancient ritual that conservatives held sacrosanct for demonstrating respect to the nation, Buddhism, and the monarchy. Protesters' primary grievances centered on the country's autocratic, unaccountable, and repressive educational system and political structures, most notably its monarchy. This movement is part of a long history of student activism in Thailand, which began in the early 1970s in response to political and socioeconomic concerns, drawing inspiration from anti-war and communist organizations worldwide (Lertchoosakul, 2021).

Student conflicts have also gained notoriety in secondary schools and universities in Ghana. Strikes, protests, riots, and demonstrations have become the most common approaches used by organized groups to drive home their demands. Successive governments have yielded to such pressures on the labor front, and

students have begun using these methods to be heard. Some protests and riots have turned violent, with incidents of people lighting fires, throwing Molotov cocktails, and setting off fireworks, leading to injuries and deaths (Czerniewicz et al., 2019; Kasper, 2019; Oxlund, 2016). In Ghana, police corruption and misconduct have often exacerbated tensions during student protests. Boateng (2015) noted that police corruption takes many forms, including beating suspects during arrest and interrogation and manhandling innocent citizens, especially students, during demonstrations. The Media Foundation of West Africa criticized a recent report from Ghana, where about 25 students and some policemen were taken to the hospital for injuries sustained during a student protest. The foundation criticized the police's harsh response to the students' peaceful protest, citing a near-stampede and the violation of the victims' rights (Ateku & Bawa, 2024; Boateng, 2015).

The 2022 Global Peace Index ranked Ghana as the second most peaceful country in sub-Saharan Africa and fortieth in the world. However, in the domain of societal safety and security, Ghana scored 2.026, indicating internal situations that are not entirely peaceful. Internal conflict situations are a concern that needs early attention (IEP, 2022). According to Vannice et al. (2022), political violence in Ghana has increased dramatically since 2017. Although Ghana is one of West Africa's least violent countries, recent internal developments raise concerns about the government's ability to control violence. Riots and protests around the country have fueled this rise in political violence. The ruling party NPP's youth violence has spread from Ashanti to neighboring regions and the north. There were reports of the youth burning buildings and besieging a police station in Bimbilla after a chieftaincy-related murder (Pinaud, 2021).

Aboagye et al. (2021) report that violence directed at adolescents has developed into a global health problem. In 2015 alone, 51,000 deaths of adolescents were attributed to interpersonal violence globally. Using data from the 2012 Ghana's Global School-based Health Survey (GSHS) to examine the prevalence of violence among in-school adolescents in Ghana, they found that the overall rate of interpersonal violence among teenagers was 55.7%, with 38.2% involved in physical fights and 41.5% attacked physically. The study also reported that key

factors leading to interpersonal violence included alcohol consumption, injuries, bullying, absenteeism, and suicide attempts.

Various approaches have been used in Ghana for handling conflicts and reconciling disagreements. According to (Akudugu & Mahama, 2011), indigenous, exogenous, and endogenous approaches are used in Ghana, involving talking to someone before resorting to force, negotiating, mediating, arbitrating, and adjudicating. Individuals select one of these approaches depending on factors such as personal preference, knowledge of available alternatives, confidence in the strategy's efficacy, familiarity with the adversary, and the nature of the conflict. Ghana has also established policies and procedures to address the threat of terrorism and violent extremism. Key stakeholders in some border towns have received training from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the National Peace Council. This training has educated participants on important guidelines for early warning of conflict situations and how to report them (Tanguay, 2023).

Musah (2018) asserts that how a conflict is handled depends on various factors, including the context in which the conflict occurs, the differences between the parties, the level or intensity of the conflict, and the resources available to resolve it. Mediation, negotiation, and arbitration are some of the most well-known conflict resolution methods. In many conflict-prone areas in Ghana, the government has deployed police and military camps. However, security interventions can only reduce or stop violence temporarily and do not address the root causes of conflicts. Despite several studies investigating students' attitudes towards conflict resolution and the development of a peaceful culture in children, there has been no known scientific publication targeted at using the peace pedagogy model to develop students' conflict resolution skills. Currently, few school-level interventions focus on reducing violence by teachers against students that have been scientifically evaluated, and these interventions primarily target changing teachers' attitudes toward violence and equipping them with non-violent discipline strategies (Scharpf et al., 2021).

## 1.2 The Statement of the Problem

The work of (Eliasa et al., 2019) on the Pedagogy of Peacefulness as an Effort of Peaceful Education at School and (Setiadi et al., 2017) on a peace pedagogy model for the development of peace culture in an education setting aimed at constructing a peace pedagogy model to foster a culture of peace in any educational institution. However, these studies vary in approach and methodology from the current study. While the current study tests peace pedagogy as a model directly on students' conflict resolution skills development, Eliasa et al. (2019) worked only on a theoretical concept, proposing that schools need to develop an educational approach in the curriculum in synergy with the goals of education. Setiadi et al. (2017) provide the framework for testing the model on students' conflict resolution skills development. This study, therefore, bridges knowledge and a methodological gap in the existing literature by experimenting with the use of the peace pedagogy model to develop the conflict resolution skills of students in Ghana. Additionally, this study is novel in applying the peace pedagogy model directly to students' conflict resolution skills development.

School climate refers to the general atmosphere of an educational institution, which is shaped by numerous factors such as norms, values, rules, and structures (Cohen et al., 2009; Reaves et al., 2018; VanLone et al., 2019; Varela et al., 2019). This structure has been extensively analyzed in educational research, emphasizing its importance in establishing the learning environment and influencing student results. Wang and Degol (2016) propose that school climate can be categorized into four main domains: academic, community, safety, and institutional environment. The combined impact of these factors on student success and behavior highlights the need of a nurturing and optimistic school environment. The study conducted by Maxwell and Ross Thomas (1991) presents school climate as the outermost layer of the wider construct of school culture, encompassing underlying elements such as beliefs, values, norms, and actions.

An essential element of school climate is its influence on the physical and mental health of both students and teachers. An affirmative educational environment promotes the advancement of students, their acquisition of knowledge, and their emotional welfare, all of which are crucial for achieving academic



achievement and personal development (Cohen et al., 2009). Rudasill et al. (2018) introduced the Systems View of School Climate (SVSC), a framework that combines ecological systems theory to elucidate the functioning of school climate across many levels of the educational setting. This paradigm emphasizes the interconnectedness of how individuals perceive social interactions, relationships, values, and beliefs within a school community. It underscores the significance of having a unified and nurturing school environment. Moreover, the assessment and appraisal of school atmosphere have been topics of thorough investigation. Grazia and Molinari (2021) performed a comprehensive analysis of existing research to tackle the complex nature and difficulties in measuring school climate. Researchers discovered that although there is agreement on the fact that school climate has multiple dimensions, it is challenging to accurately measure its complexity through empirical methods. This review highlights the need of having strong measurement techniques that can precisely capture the many aspects of school climate. These tools are essential for developing effective interventions to enhance school climate.

The correlation between the atmosphere of a school and the academic achievements of students has been extensively studied and recorded in academic literature. Research has shown that positive school climates are linked to improved academic performance, enhanced student conduct, and greater teacher contentment (Choudhari & Kaur, 2022). Farooqi et al. (2015) investigated the influence of organizational climate on teachers' job happiness, emphasizing that a supportive and positive school climate enhances job performance and overall satisfaction among educators. This discovery supports the idea that the atmosphere within a school is a crucial element in the effective operation of educational establishments, impacting the experiences of both students and teachers.

Furthermore, school atmosphere not only directly affects student outcomes, but also has a pivotal influence on the social and emotional growth of students. Conderman et al. (2013) conducted a study on the views of school environment among students and teachers. They discovered that a positive climate in schools promotes a feeling of belonging and active participation among students. The presence of a strong community and support system is crucial for the social and

emotional well-being of students, which subsequently impacts their academic achievement and overall school experience.

Varela et al. (2021) explain that during adolescence, life satisfaction is significantly influenced by school life and relationships with peers. Among various predictors of life satisfaction, bullying and school climate are two of the most critical. Numerous studies link school satisfaction and climate to both violence and life satisfaction (Reaves et al., 2018). Similarly, Hultin et al. (2021) found that fewer children reported being bullied at schools with positive climates. Students' academic performance and social interactions benefit from improvements in the school's environment, which can reduce incidents of bullying (Ferrer-Cascales et al., 2019; Hultin et al., 2021). Varela et al. (2021) advocate for school-based interventions to decrease bullying, making children feel welcome and joyful by creating a secure and trustworthy environment where students can report bullying. Such interventions should help all students, including those with low life satisfaction, feel more connected and pleased with their school.

The term "problem behavior" refers to any conduct that disrupts the normal activities of others, endangers safety, or results in material damage to people or their property, such as aggressiveness, weapon use, physical assault, stealing, or vandalism. Reaves et al. (2018) found that changes in school climate and bad behavior over time correlate with students' knowledge of and compliance with school regulations, leading to lower incidences of violence. They concluded that schools that help students learn and develop skills to keep them safe and grow socially and emotionally may reduce problem behavior over time. Like safety, social interactions, quality of instruction, and availability of adequate facilities, school climate is crucial to a successful academic experience.

Aboagye et al. (2021) studied bullying among in-school adolescents in Ghana, finding a 41.3% prevalence of bullying victimization. Being targeted by bullying can lead to profound feelings of isolation and unwantedness, associated with an increased risk of suicide attempt. Suicidal ideation and attempted suicide are common among bullied individuals due to their already low self-esteem and sense of value. These findings align with prior studies suggesting that physical violence and risk of injury can trigger or exacerbate bullying (Baiden et al., 2019;

De Cieri et al., 2019; Johnsson, 2015; Smith, 2019). Similarly, Dunne et al. (2010) explored the psychological and social effects of bullying, finding that students with more emotional difficulties were more likely to miss school, although absenteeism did not consistently rise with the severity of bullied boys' emotional issues. Bullying was also found to cause nervousness, trouble concentrating, anxiety, depression, and suicidal tendencies. It can affect the formation of gender identity, the assertion of group membership, and social exclusion.

Many studies have acknowledged the role school counselors can play in minimizing conflicts and violence by creating a more welcoming environment for students. Antiri (2017) highlighted several important implications for guidance counseling in Ghanaian high schools, noting that many bullying victims are unwilling to tell adults about their experiences, and much bullying occurs without teachers' or parents' knowledge. Bullying can lead to school dropouts and drug use among adolescents. He called for the Ghana Education Service and the Ministry of Education to develop policies on bullying to deter future incidents.

Although guidance and counseling have been implemented in many African educational systems to help learners with educational, vocational, personal-socio, and marital issues, they are generally non-functional in most African schools. Onyemachi (2017) described the lack of guidance and counseling services in African primary schools, emphasizing the need for services like orientation, information, referral, appraisal, counseling, placement, consultation, and evaluation to ensure holistic development and appropriate societal placement.

This study proposes the Peace-leadership pedagogy model as a new paradigm to curb and resolve student demonstrations and riots in Ghanaian schools. According to Setiadi et al. (2017), the Peace pedagogy model teaches individuals to make the world a better place through a transformative, process-based, participatory, relational, and sustainable approach. Despite the daily teaching of peace values in schools, peace pedagogy aims to build a culture of peace in schools, potentially preventing violent acts in communities. Setiadi et al. (2017) concluded that such learning is crucial as schools are seen as places for personal improvement.

The researcher, like many others, believes that teaching conflict resolution skills to young people prepares them for a peaceful life. Mante and Maose (2021) stated that most students in Ghana's second-cycle schools are between 13 and 18 years old, a transitional period marked by physical, social, mental, and psychological changes. Therefore, it is necessary to provide Guidance and Counseling Services to help students make healthy decisions at all life stages. Mante urged for enhanced Guidance and Counseling Services in Ghanaian schools to allow students to express concerns and seek peaceful resolutions. This call stems from the numerous reports of violence and intolerance in senior high schools in Ghana, leading to property destruction and sometimes loss of lives. The youth's increasing embrace of violence as a conflict resolution method is a national concern that must be addressed to restore sanity in schools and their communities.

Salgong et al. (2016) argue that lack of counseling contributes to school indiscipline, with students engaging in hostile conduct due to feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, and inadequate socialization. These recent calls underscore the need for developing a peaceful youth culture in Ghanaian schools. However, instead of relying solely on guidance and counseling, this study advocates for peace culture re-orientation through teaching. Evidence from Asia and elsewhere supports peace culture orientation among the youth, preventing violent approaches to tackling obstacles and problems.

### **1.3 Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to develop the peace-leadership pedagogy model as a new paradigm for enhancing students' conflict resolution skills in high schools in Ghana. This model integrates principles of peace education, leadership training, and effective pedagogical practices to equip students with essential skills for peaceful conflict resolution and leadership. The implementation strategy includes curriculum integration, teacher training, and student engagement in experiential learning activities, aiming to create a positive and inclusive school climate that supports academic achievement and personal growth.

### 1.3.1 Specific Objectives of the Study

Specifically,

1. To identify the types of student conflicts and their respective sources, including prevalence and gender-related differences in conflict experiences and resolution strategies.
2. To evaluate the impact of conflict on the teaching-learning process, considering the influence of Ghanaian traditional culture and emotional intelligence on conflict resolution abilities and skills.
3. To investigate how students respond to conflicts in schools, highlighting the role of guidance and counseling in students' conflict management.
4. To identify the strategies teachers and school authorities use to resolve student conflicts and assess their competencies in handling and managing student conflicts.
5. To develop a theoretical model of the Peace-Leadership Pedagogy Model for improving students' conflict resolution skills.
6. To develop a program for teacher capacity building to effectively implement the Peace-Leadership Pedagogy Model.

### 1.3.2 Research Questions

1. What types of conflicts do students experience in secondary schools, and what are the respective sources of these conflicts?
2. How does conflict impact the teaching-learning process in secondary schools, particularly in the context of Ghanaian traditional culture and emotional intelligence?
3. How do students typically respond to conflicts in schools, and what role does guidance and counseling play in managing these conflicts?
4. What strategies do teachers and school authorities use to resolve student conflicts, and how competent are they in handling and managing these conflicts?
5. What is the theoretical model of the Peace-Leadership Pedagogy Model, and how can it improve students' conflict resolution skills?

6. What kind of programs can be developed to build teacher capacity for effectively implementing the Peace-Leadership Pedagogy Model?

#### **1.4 The Benefits/Significance of the Study**

This work would provide a great resource for policy-makers, the Ministry of Education, the Ghana Education Service, and advocacy groups working for the interest of students and peaceful school climates. This study is also expected to provide a lot of information for developing students' conflict resolution skills and creating a peaceful school culture. It would become a resource book for implementing the peace pedagogy model. At the school level, teachers and counselors use this resource materials and the model to develop the peaceful conflict resolution skills of students in order to develop and maintain peaceful school culture.

#### **1.5 The organizational structure of the Study**

The study contents of each chapter are organized as follows:

Chapter 1: The chapter is organized around the background, Problems Statement, Research Purpose & Questions, and clarification of the research gap & novelty. Through the description and theoretical background of conflicts, student conflicts to the need for the current study.

Chapter 2: Review of theoretical foundations literature, review of previous studies, Study paradigm, and Conceptual Framework. Based on research problems, systematically combing and reviewing existing research results in the field of the core variables, theories, and development of the conceptual framework.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology. On the basis of systematically reviewing issues on conflicts, peace-leadership pedagogy, and conflict resolution skills, the methodology is constructed. Analysis of the research design, instrument, and procedures used in the study of variables are considered.

Chapter 4: Research Results, and Discussion. The results of the data collected in both the survey and experimental studies are presented and discussed in relation to the reviewed literature and the objectives of the current study.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations. To explain the significance of the research conclusions for academic research and practice, and look forward to the direction of further research in the future.