



CULTURE OF PEACE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

LA CULTURA DE PAZ EN EDUCACIÓN SECUNDARIA: UNA REVISIÓN SISTEMÁTICA

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Abstract

Culture of peace and education work together to shape individuals with knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors focused on harmony, tolerance, respect, inclusion, and peace. This paper presents a systematic review whose purpose was to identify the lines of study of the culture of peace in secondary education globally during the last decade (2012-2022). The study was based on the PRISMA methodology. Three hundred sixty-seven articles were collected from the databases of ERIC, Education Source, Academic Search Ultimate, Web of Science, and Redalyc. Based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, 27 articles were analyzed. The results indicate that most articles focus on the role of the peace component in the school curriculum. At the same time, scientific production has also explored the effects of the culture of peace programs. It is concluded that the study of this topic provides a deeper understanding of how education contributes to the development of citizens committed to peace.

Keywords: Culture of Peace, Secondary School, Students, Teachers.

Resumen

La cultura de paz y la educación trabajan, en conjunto, para la formación en conocimientos, actitudes y comportamientos centrados en la armonía, la tolerancia, el respeto, la inclusión y la paz. Este trabajo presenta una revisión sistemática cuyo propósito fue identificar las líneas de estudio de la cultura de paz en la educación secundaria, a nivel global, durante la última década (2012-2022). El trabajo se fundamentó en la metodología PRISMA; se recopilaron 367 artículos de las bases de datos de ERIC, *Education Source*, *Academic Search Ultimate*, *Web Of Science* y *Redalyc*. Con base en los criterios de inclusión y exclusión, se

analizaron 27 artículos. Los resultados obtenidos reflejan que la mayoría de los artículos se orientan al estudio del componente de paz en el currículo escolar, aunque también se identificó producción científica enfocada en identificar los efectos de programas de cultura de paz. Se concluye que el estudio de esta temática proporciona una comprensión más profunda de cómo la educación contribuye a la formación de ciudadanos comprometidos con la paz.

Palabras clave: cultura de paz, educación secundaria, estudiantes, profesores.

INTRODUCTION

The culture of peace is a worldwide movement involving citizens, civil society organizations, governments, non-governmental agencies, and organizations such as the United Nations (Brenes & Wessells, 2001) to address situations of armed conflict, social tensions, and power imbalances in countries. In the late 1990s, the United Nations General Assembly approved the *Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace to foster an atmosphere of equality and unity among Member States, for the benefit of all people* (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1998).

Since then, the culture of peace has been described as “the set of values, attitudes and behaviors” (Arango, 2007, p. 106) that includes elements such as peace education, sustainability, human rights, inclusion, civil society, social justice, and non-violence (Brenes & Wessells, 2001). This movement evolved from the experiences lived during the Second World War (Arango, 2007), which has led to a greater awareness of the presence of violence in society.

One of the contexts where violence manifests itself and becomes an impediment to peace-building is the school environment. In this space, diverse interactions and forms of communication between actors take place (Hernández Arteaga et al., 2017). Therefore, studies have been carried out to identify the prevalence of violence initially. These investigations reveal that compulsory secondary education is the educational stage with the highest incidence of violence, and the main people involved are usually the students (Domínguez Rodríguez et al., 2020; Giménez-Gualdo et al., 2018; Miranda & Mendieta, 2021; Sánchez et al., 2019). This is confirmed through data available in the *Global School Health Survey and the Survey on the healthy behaviors of young people in school*, showing that, globally, one in three students is a victim of bullying (Attawell, 2021).

Therefore, the culture of peace acquires relevance in the educational and research fields, since it is recognized that school is one of the main environments in which peace can be educated, but it is also a place where a culture of peace can be made visible (Fernández, 2006; Salomon, 2009). Research and studies demonstrate the importance of peace in daily life; this lays the foundation for pedagogical knowledge that allows members of educational communities to be educated in the values of a culture of peace (Fernández et al., 2019). Knowledge of this culture is essential to prevent any form of violence.

Given the importance of educational research focused on the culture of peace, there is evidence from a previous study, specifically a systematic review. This review was conducted to identify scientific texts that allow for a conceptual understanding of the culture of peace (Salazar & Tirado, 2020), to analyze trends, and establish conceptual categories. After analyzing 50 documentary sources, it was concluded that the culture of peace is addressed, in different areas, through six major trends that allow for a deep understanding of this concept. These

trends are a) sustainable development, territory, environment; b) human rights, principles, and values; c) gender, equity and equality; d) peace education and critical curriculum; e) violence, conflict transformation and culture of peace; and f) freedoms of communication and ICTs (Salazar & Tirado, 2020).

Considering the importance of studying the culture of peace in education and the presence of scientific articles addressing this topic, as well as a prior conceptual understanding, it is relevant to direct the review of articles toward an analysis of how the culture of peace has been researched in educational institutions. Therefore, the purpose of this systematic review is to identify the lines of study on the culture of peace—specifically in secondary education—based on the evidence that this is the level where school violence occurs most frequently.

1. METHODOLOGY

A systematic review is a method that collects and synthesizes information to understand the state of research in a subject area (Bettany-Saltivok, 2018). This paper conducts a systematic review using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses) methodology. In line with Page et al. (2021), the review explicitly states the question: What are the main international lines of study on the culture of peace in research focused on secondary education?

1.1. Data search and collection process

To develop the search strings, the UNESCO thesaurus was used to determine the appropriate use of terms and synonyms related to the topic. In constructing the search string, combinations of Spanish keywords such as “culture of peace” and “secondary education” and English keywords such as “*culture of peace*», «*secondary school*”, and “*middle school*» were used. From these initial keywords, search strings were formed, for example: «*culture of peace*» or «*peace education*», and «*secondary school*», or «*middle school*» or «*high school*».

The search for studies was carried out between March and April 2023, in closed-access databases such as ERIC, *Education Source*, *Academic Search Ultimate* (the three EBSCOHost sites), and *Web of Science*, as well as an open-access database such as Redalyc. The search constraints “2012-2022” were used in each database.

1.2. Selection of studies

From the database search, 367 articles published between 2012 and 2022 were identified (see Table 1). All results were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet.

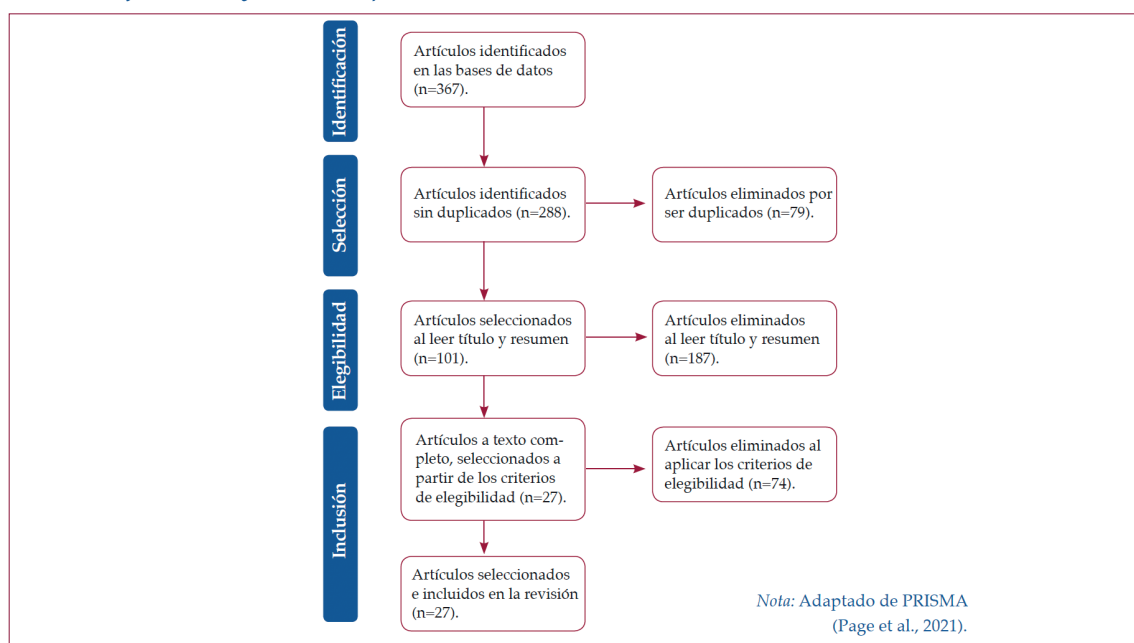
Table 1

Articles in the databases

	Identification	Selection	Eligibility	Inclusion
ERIC	52	45	29	15
Education Source	34	21	10	3
Academic Search Ultimate	108	64	34	6
Web Of Science	43	30	15	2
Redalyc	130	128	13	1
Total:	367	288	101	27

The procedure for selecting articles is represented in Figure 1. In the identification phase, articles were located in the five databases. Subsequently, in the selection phase, duplicate articles were eliminated. To achieve this, Excel’s “duplicate values” highlighting function was utilized, and duplicate articles were manually removed based on the title.

Figure 1
Fluchart of the study selection process



In the eligibility phase, titles and abstracts were read to identify empirical studies that mentioned the culture of peace. Finally, in the inclusion phase, each article was read in its entirety, applying the eligibility criteria (see Table 2). A total of 27 articles that met the criteria were included for analysis and information extraction. The data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet, which included information such as title, year, authors, journal, geographic location, abstract, study objective, type of study, sample used, results, and conclusions.

Table 2
Eligibility criteria

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Type of document	Articles of works of research (empirical).	Non-empirical articles.
Years	Articles on the culture of peace published between 2012 and 2023.	Articles on the culture of peace published before 2012.
Language	Articles on the culture of peace published in English and Spanish.	Articles on the culture of peace published in languages other than English and Spanish.
Population	Articles on peace culture that target students and teachers as their primary target audience.	Articles on peace culture that do not include students and/or teachers as participants.
Context	Articles on the culture of peace developed in the context of secondary education.	Articles on the culture of peace developed in contexts other than secondary education.

2. RESULTS

This section presents the main findings of the 27 selected studies. First, the data and general characteristics of the studies are presented, followed by the main lines of research on the culture of peace.

2.1. Description of bibliometric data

Of the selected articles, 89% (n = 24) were published in English and 11% (n = 3) in Spanish (see Figure 2). That is, most of the production on the topic of the culture of peace is predominantly in English.

Figure 2

Language of the articles

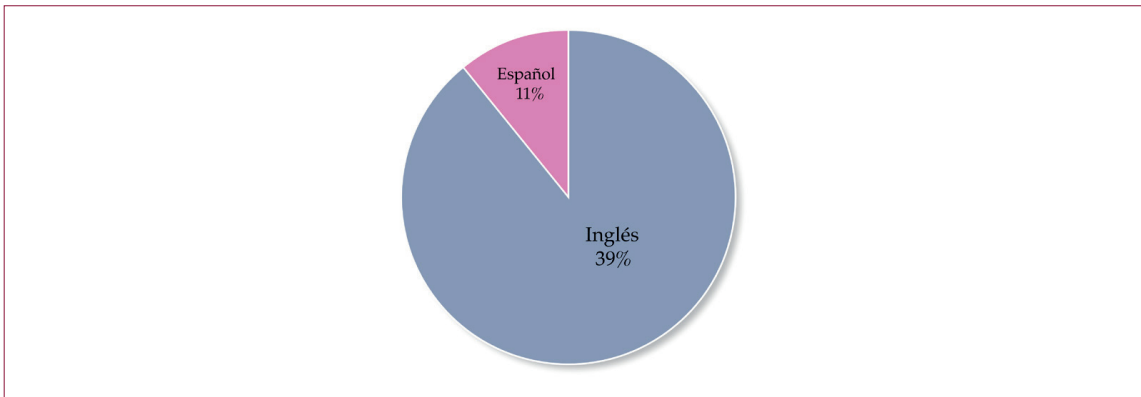
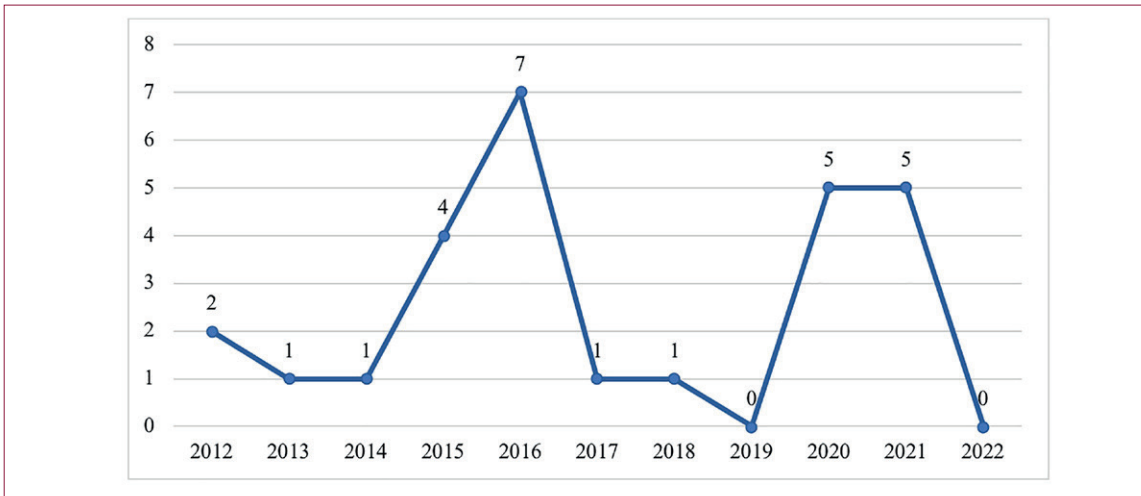


Figure 3 shows the trend from 2012 to 2022, during which articles focusing on the culture of peace in secondary education have been published. The highest scientific production occurred in 2016 (n = 7), followed by 2020 and 2021 (n = 5 each). It can also be noted that no empirical research was recovered from 2019 or 2022. The following figure shows peaks indicating higher research production in some years and lower output in others.

Figure 3

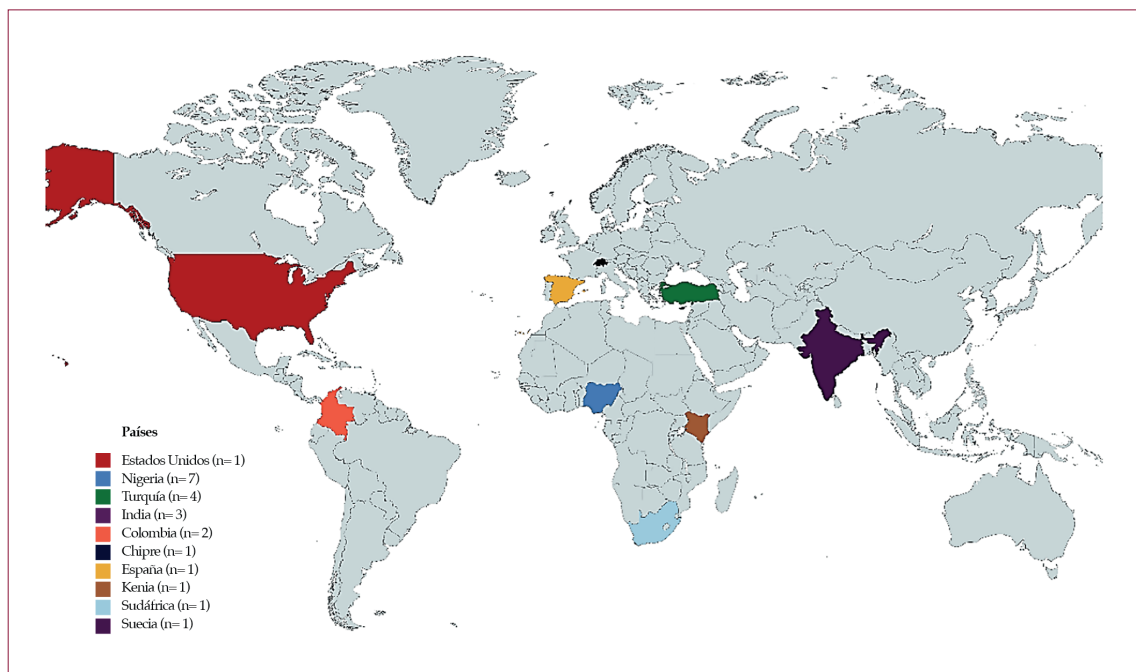
Years of publication



Below are the countries where the culture of peace has been studied (see Figure 4). Nigeria and the United States have the highest production, with seven articles each (25%); Turkey, four publications (15%); India, three published articles (13%); then Colombia with two (7%); and finally Cyprus, Spain, Kenya, South Africa, and Sweden with just one work in each country (3%).

Figure 4

Países en los que se ha estudiado la cultura de paz



On the other hand, the research identified that 45% of the studies used a quantitative approach (n = 12); 33% used a qualitative approach (n = 9); and 22% used a mixed approach (n = 6). Therefore, the study of the culture of peace in secondary education primarily employs the quantitative method (see Figure 5). Regarding data collection methods and techniques, the use of survey-type techniques through questionnaires was highlighted in the quantitative methodology; in the qualitative context, techniques such as interviews, focus groups, participant observation, documentary analysis, and narrative analysis were used; in the case of the mixed method, interviews and surveys were mainly used (see Table 3).

Figure 5
Methodology used in the studies

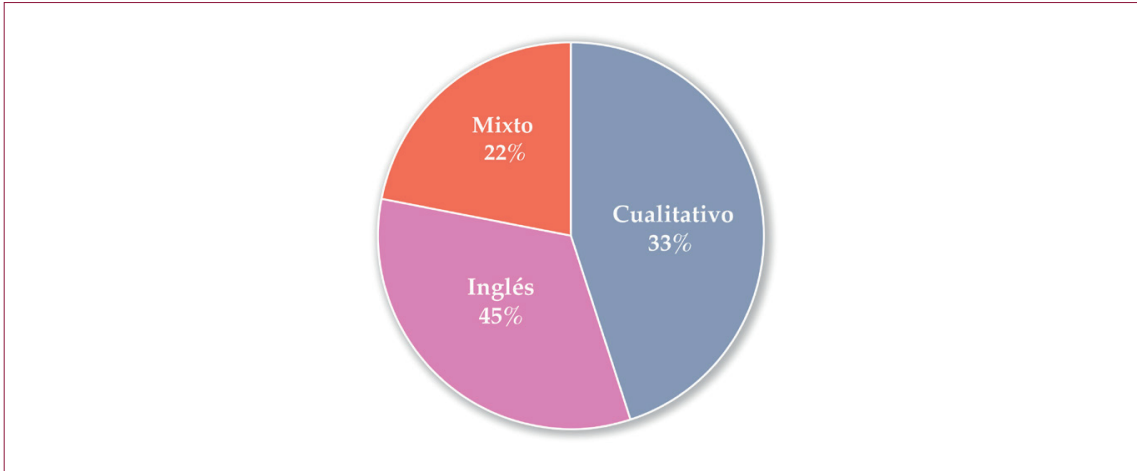


Table 3
Técnicas e instrumentos en las investigaciones

Methodology	Techniques	Instruments	Authors
Quantitative.	Survey.	Questionnaires.	Akande (2018); The Winner (2016); Bedir and Arslan (2013); Chiriswa y Thinguri (2015); Kabasakal et al. (2015); Mustapha et al. (2016); Okafor (2016); Money (2016); Ocanlawan et al. (2017); Ortega-Churches and Valencia Mirror (2021); Poverty (2016); Uko et al. (2015).
Qualitative.	Interviews Observations Analysis documentary Analysis narrative.	Field diaries Guide to questions.	Bradley-Levine and Zainulabdin (2020); Duckworth et al. (2012); Gursel Bilgin and Flinders (2020); Jones et al. (2014); Miralay (2020); Mishra (2015); Munter et al. (2012); Velez et al. (2021); Zembylas and Loukaidis (2021).
Mixed.	Interviews. Survey.	Question guide Questionnaires.	Acosta Oidor et al. (2021); Cots and Gálvez (2016); Mishra (2021); Mishra et al. (2020); Nygren et al. (2020); Sagkal et al. (2016).

2.2. Main lines of research

From the analysis of the 27 articles, four lines of research were identified: 1) perceptions of educational stakeholders; 2) education programs for a culture of peace; 3) inclusion of a culture of peace in the curriculum; and 4) a culture of peace and the environment (see Table 4). The corresponding information is presented below, along with the most representative findings.

Table 4
Lines of research focused on the culture of peace

Línea de investigación	Tema	Autores
Perceptions of educational actors.	Students' perceptions of the culture of peace.	Bedir and Arslan (2013); Nygren et al. (2020); Okanlawon et al. (2017); Ortega-Iglesias and Valencia Espejo (2021).
	Perceptions of the teachers on the culture of peace.	Akande (2018); Mishra (2015); Ubo-gu (2016).
The programs of education for a culture of peace.	Effects of peace programs from the students' perspective.	Duckworth et al. (2012); Jones et al. (2014); Kabasakal et al. (2015); Sagkal et al. (2016).
	Effects of peace programs from the teachers' perspective.	Uko et al. (2015); Velez et al. (2021).
	Teachers promoting peace.	Bradley-Levine & Zainulabdin (2020). Gursel-Bilgin and Flinders (2020); Munter et al. (2012).
The inclusion of the culture of peace in the school curriculum.	The culture of peace in the curricula.	Acosta Oidor et al. (2021); Chiriswa y Thinguri (2015); Miralay (2020); Money (2016).
	The culture of peace in the practices of the educational institution.	Akudolu y Umenyi (2016); Cots y Gálvez (2016); Mishra et al. (2020); Mishra (2021); Mustapha et al. (2016); Zembylas and Loukaidis (2021).
The culture of peace and the environment.		Okafor (2016).

2.2.1. Perceptions of educational actors

Seven studies (26%) examined the perceptions of educational stakeholders regarding the culture of peace in secondary education (Akande, 2018; Bedir & Arslan, 2013; Mishra, 2015; Nygren et al., 2020; Okafor, 2016; Ortega-Iglesias & Valencia-Espejo, 2021; Ubo-gu, 2016). These studies are divided between those focusing on students' perceptions and those focusing on teachers' perceptions.

Within the first group, it was found that students have positive attitudes and views regarding education for a culture of peace and human rights (Bedir & Arslan, 2013). It was concluded that participants have gained knowledge in the areas of peace, human rights, and sustainability through the teaching. They can define these issues and recognize strategies for conflict resolution (Nygren et al., 2020).

The research by Okanlawon et al. (2017) also focused on investigating students' opinions, but this time about the use of educational games in peace education. Among the main conclusions of this study is the positive perception of participants regarding the use of games and learning about the culture of peace.

On the other hand, a study aimed to obtain students' opinions regarding the profile of a peacebuilding teacher. From this, it was concluded that teachers who promote peace must be

respectful in their interpersonal relationships with students, as well as tolerant (Ortega-Iglesiás & Valencia-Espejo, 2021).

Regarding teachers' perceptions, they recognize the value of peace education in terms of its positive impact on students' behavior (Mishra, 2015). Similarly, they consider that aspects such as teaching responsibility, social awareness, self-management, ethical and moral values, as well as self-development, can be used as tools for building a culture of peace (Mishra, 2015; Ubogu, 2016). This demonstrates their favorable disposition to incorporate topics related to peace in their classrooms (Akande, 2018). However, teachers recognize that an obstacle to teaching peace can be the presence of sociopolitical and religious ideals with negative connotations (Akande, 2018).

2.2.2. Peace education programs

On the other hand, nine studies (33%) focused on addressing issues related to peace culture programs implemented in secondary schools (Duckworth et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2014; Kabasakal et al., 2015; Sagkal et al., 2016; Uko et al., 2015). These studies can be divided into three groups: a) studies oriented towards determining the effects of peace education programs on students from the perspective of students; b) those aimed at determining the effect of peace education on students from the teachers' perspective; c) those that explore the experiences of teacher leaders and peace promoters with program implementation.

From the students' perspective, a significant relationship was found between the programs and changes in student behavior. These programs have proved effective in reducing levels of aggression, violence, and conflict (Kabasakal et al., 2015; Sagkal et al., 2016). They have also been found to improve problem-solving skills (Kabasakal et al., 2015) and foster the acquisition of socio-emotional, cognitive, critical, strategic thinking, self-reflection, moral identity, and community engagement knowledge and skills (Duckworth et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2014). The programs also promote respectful relationships among community members, reducing teasing and fighting among students and improving positive relationships with teachers (Duckworth et al., 2012; Sagkal et al., 2016).

Along the same lines, the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the implementation of peace programs with students were investigated. It was concluded that peace education programs significantly impact student behavior by reducing aggression and conflict (Uko et al., 2015). They were also identified as having effects on students at both the individual and collective levels, as teachers observed that students began to use non-violent language, became more reflective, and demonstrated skills to resolve situations peacefully, applying learned strategies (Velez et al., 2021).

Other studies have focused on exploring the experiences of teachers implementing peace-focused programs. They found that the experiences of teachers who had faced situations of conflict and violence—as in the case of one teacher working in an insecure context near Ciudad Juárez—motivated them to develop and implement peace-building programs in the classroom (Bradley-Levine & Zainulabdin, 2020; Munter et al., 2012). Furthermore, these teachers had the support of schools and the community, and thanks to these efforts and collaborative work, the school culture became more peaceful, and positive skills were developed among students (Bradley-Levine & Zainulabdin, 2020; Gursel-Bilgin & Flinders, 2020). These examples of leaders can serve as a guide for other teachers to become promoters of building a culture of peace.

2.2.3. The inclusion of the culture of peace in the school curriculum

On the other hand, ten investigations (37%) were oriented to know and evaluate how the culture of peace is introduced into the official and operational curriculum (Acosta Oidor et al., 2021; Akudolu & Umenyi, 2016; Cots & Gálvez, 2016; Chiriswa & Thinguri, 2015; Miralay, 2020; Mishra et al., 2020; Mishra, 2021; Mustapha et al., 2016; Olowo, 2016; Zembylas & Loukaidis, 2021).

Regarding the inclusion of peace in the curricula, participants highlighted the importance of incorporating a culture of peace into the curriculum and content of all courses, recognizing that this fosters peace awareness among young people, promotes human rights, and reduces levels of violence (Miralay, 2020; Olowo, 2016). First, it was identified that socially and humanities-oriented subjects—such as history, civics, arts, and citizenship education—include messages of peace in their objectives and content (Acosta Oidor et al., 2021; Chiriswa & Thinguri, 2015; Olowo, 2016). Among the topics studied with students were bullying prevention, life project planning, sustainable use of natural resources, peaceful conflict resolution, and human rights (Acosta Oidor et al., 2021).

Turning to the practices carried out in educational institutions to promote peace, two scenarios were identified. In the first, it was observed that schools followed peace-centered principles, such as equality, safety, justice, nonviolent practices, respect, and values education (Mishra, Lokanath et al., 2020; Mishra, 2021). In addition, school counselors addressed topics such as social responsibility, reconciliation, unity, and conflict resolution (Mustapha et al., 2016).

In contrast, teachers were found not to implement conflict resolution exercises and rarely engaged students in peace-related activities (Akudolu & Umenyi, 2016). Likewise, they found that aspects such as respect, empathy, self-discipline, tolerance, and altruism were not emphasized among students (Mishra, 2021). The use of “coexistence classrooms” as a strategy for a culture of peace resulted in students associating it with negative aspects such as punishment and correction (Cots & Gálvez, 2016). Finally, teachers recognized that the emotional complexities, dilemmas, and tensions that can arise in the peace education process generate subjectivities in implementation (Zembylas & Loukaidis, 2021).

2.2.4. The culture of peace and the environment

Finally, only one study focuses on establishing a relationship between the culture of peace and the environment (Okafor, 2016). The author recognizes the importance of providing students with an education that addresses both the environment and chemistry, allowing them to acquire knowledge and practices related to peace and caring for planet Earth. This is because, as a result of armed conflicts, the Earth is in danger and threatened.

Therefore, the research focuses on identifying the variables of the culture of peace that significantly increase students’ understanding of chemistry concepts and caring for the planet.

Okafor (2016) found that variables such as tolerance, collaboration, self-esteem, trust, equitable distribution of resources, creativity, recycling, maintenance of the earth, and cultural thinking contribute to improving the understanding of chemistry and environmental care topics.

3. DISCUSION

The systematic review yielded significant findings. First, it was observed that English predominates in publications published in the last ten years on the culture of peace in secondary education. It has been found that articles in English have a greater impact than publications in Spanish (Llorent-Bedmar & Sianes-Bautista, 2018).

Another important finding lies in the countries that have addressed the topic of the culture of peace in their studies. Through mapping, it was possible to identify Nigeria, the United States of America, Turkey, and India as the regions where this topic has been most deeply researched. This fact could be due to the armed conflicts, political and economic instability, and disruptive relationships present in these countries. According to the “Global Peace Index” (2022), the United States of America, India, Nigeria, and Turkey are among the countries with the lowest peace indices (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022). Consequently, researchers demonstrate an interest in studying how the culture of peace manifests itself in these contexts, seeking to impact this reality and contribute to conflict resolution.

This may be related to the number of years of scientific publication. Most articles ($n = 7$) were published in 2016, and of these, 70% were written in Nigeria. According to Santé Abal (2017), one of the solutions that academics implement to address the problems of violence in Nigerian society is the promotion of a culture of peace through education. Likewise, the production of the United States, India, Turkey, and Colombia is also among the years in which the greatest peaks in the study of the topic occurred. Therefore, it is determined that, in secondary school, the culture of peace has a greater emphasis in countries experiencing conflict.

Regarding research lines, the integration of a culture of peace into the school curriculum has been the focus. The curriculum is one of the means by which education is realized and plays a fundamental role in building a culture of peace (Fernández, 2006; Hernández Artega et al., 2017). Research shows that peace content is primarily taught in subjects focused on social sciences and the humanities.

However, it was recognized that strengthening peace education among teachers is essential, as they were found not to promote peace practices and to encounter certain complexities during the educational process. For the construction of a culture of peace to occur adequately, the contribution of all groups is required, including citizens, politicians, parents, teachers, and civil society, among others. Therefore, it is considered important to focus attention on teachers as agents of change and to determine what is happening with the peace education they should be promoting.

Furthermore, studies focused on understanding the impact of peace culture programs implemented in schools are also presented. This issue arises from the identification of conflict and violence in educational institutions, thus recognizing the need to develop studies focused on the design and implementation of training programs (Casas, 2018). The studies concluded that peace culture programs have a positive impact on student behavior, as they reduce aggressive and violent behaviors. This demonstrates that the implementation of programs is a key strategy for cultivating knowledge focused on nonviolent behavior and conflict resolution.

Furthermore, studying the process and effects of culture of peace programs—based on the experience of peace-promoting teachers—lays the groundwork for developing and re-

plicating this approach in other contexts and populations, to continue to promote peaceful attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors. It can also serve as a guide for other teachers to become promoters of building a culture of peace.

The third line of research focuses on the perceptions of educational stakeholders. It recognizes the needs and challenges that people face in the context of a culture of peace, and identifies the knowledge they already possess. Peace education must be based on people's everyday life experiences (Hernández Artega et al., 2017). Therefore, it is important to understand the participants' thoughts. In research, this topic provides an overview of school culture, which facilitates the initiation of studies on education and peace. Likewise, identifying these issues serves as an analysis that supports the design of educational strategies, as well as the implementation of culture of peace programs and curriculum adaptations.

Finally, based on research on the culture of peace related to the environment, the topic is linked to one of the elements that make up the culture of peace: sustainability, which refers to the preservation of global resources (Wessells et al., 2001). It is recognized that the study of the culture of peace, focusing on the environment, is lacking; of the entire corpus of studies, only one focused on these issues. It is essential to emphasize that promoting peace in societies requires identifying, among the population, knowledge and attitudes focused on human rights, inclusion, sustainability, civil society, social justice, nonviolence, and, of course, peace education.

4. CONCLUSION

The systematic review aimed to identify areas of study on the culture of peace in secondary education. This work has provided insight into the state of research on this topic over the past ten years. Of the 27 articles selected for the review, the most developed research focuses on the integration of the culture of peace component into the school curriculum. Scientific production is also noted, focusing on understanding the effects of culture of peace programs and the perceptions of educational stakeholders.

Regarding the bibliometric results, it is concluded that, in 2016, most studies on the culture of peace in secondary education were conducted. The predominant language of publication was English, and the most studied countries were Nigeria, the United States, Turkey, and India. The most commonly used methodology is quantitative, using surveys.

The study of the culture of peace allows us to understand how education contributes to the development of critical, autonomous, and supportive students, capable of interacting peacefully with their peers to create more just societies. This effect is reflected, for example, in research conducted by Duckworth et al. (2012), Jones et al. (2014), Kabasakal et al. (2015), Nygren et al. (2020), Ortega-Iglesias and Valencia-Espejo (2021), Sagkal et al. (2016), and Velez et al. (2021). It is from these findings that peace education contributes to the construction of communities in which agents who seek the well-being of others are introduced.

Based on the systematic review conducted, some limitations are recognized, and future studies are proposed. The study was conducted using only four databases, both closed and open access. It would be desirable to consider other databases that contain studies from Latin America to understand the state of the culture of peace in those contexts. Another limitation is that the search focuses solely on secondary education; therefore, it is recommended to

address other educational levels to compare where the greatest number of studies are presented and with which populations. Finally, given the scarcity of publications, it is recommended that future studies focus on delving deeper into the dimensions that make up the culture of peace and how these are reflected in the attitudes, knowledge, and practices of the educational community.

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