A STUDY OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MADURAI DISTRICT

Dr. K. VELLAICHAMY

Assistant Professor, Department of Education
Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai

Abstract

Conflict, an inevitable aspect of human interaction, arises from differing values, beliefs, and goals. The ability to manage conflict effectively is critical for fostering harmonious relationships and productive environments. This study examines the conflict resolution strategies among high school students in the Madurai district, focusing on their conflict management levels and the influence of gender and nativity on these abilities. The research involved a random sample of 350 high school students from diverse rural and urban settings, employing tools such as Conflict Management Inventory and statistical methods like t-tests and Pearson's correlation. The findings revealed that students exhibit above-average conflict management abilities, with rural students demonstrating significantly stronger skills than their urban counterparts. However, gender was found to have no significant influence on conflict management styles.These results underscore the importance of targeted interventions to enhance conflict management skills, particularly for urban students. The study highlights the potential of incorporating structured programs in schools, such as workshops, yoga, and role-playing, to cultivate emotional intelligence and collaborative problem-solving skills. Further, fostering an environment of open communication and mutual respect in both schools and homes is pivotal in equipping students to handle personal and social conflicts constructively. This research contributes to understanding the dynamics of conflict resolution among adolescents, offering insights for educators, parents, and policymakers to nurture conflict management competencies essential for academic and personal success.

Keywords: *conflict management and high school students*

Introduction

Conflict is a disagreement, dispute, or contest arising between individuals with differing ideas, needs, goals, values, or beliefs. Conflict management refers to the strategies and processes employed to address grievances. It involves proactive measures to minimize the occurrence of conflict and effective methods for resolving disputes promptly and efficiently. While not all conflicts can be entirely resolved, conflict management aims to keep them at a productive level, preventing them from escalating to the point of impairing performance or productivity.

An individual's ability to manage conflict is often shaped by early observations of how parents or guardians handled disputes. Unresolved conflicts can lead to aggressive behavior, highlighting the importance of individuals and teams assessing their conflict management styles and making conscious efforts to improve them when necessary. Conflicts frequently arise from miscommunication or misunderstandings about opinions, beliefs, or values. Addressing these root causes requires the development of self-awareness, communication skills, and structured mechanisms for conflict resolution (Smith, 2000). Organizations and individuals vary in their approach to handling conflicts. Some confront disputes directly, while others avoid them altogether. Common causes of workplace conflict include personality differences, leadership styles, ethical concerns, substance abuse, family or personal issues, intercultural variations, scarcity of resources, and poor performance. The workplace is inherently diverse, bringing together individuals from various cultural backgrounds, which can result in misunderstandings and disagreements. Cultural differences—encompassing language, dress, nationality,

race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, abilities, gender, and political or religious beliefs—are a significant source of workplace conflict. Since culture influences human relationships, managing cultural differences effectively is essential for workplace harmony (Trompenaars, 2008). For example, conflicts may arise between hearing-impaired employees and their non-impaired colleagues due to discrimination, alienation, or lack of understanding. Management can address such situations by implementing sensitivity training to foster awareness and promote inclusivity, thereby enhancing teamwork and cohesion (Cohen, 2006). Similarly, a private university in Japan experienced conflicts between native Japanese instructors and foreign English teachers due to cultural differences. These disputes affected performance and led management to increase awareness about the value of diversity and equip staff with conflict resolution skills (Everett & Yoshitaka, 2002). To address conflicts effectively, it is crucial to tackle them early, encourage participation and cooperation from all parties, and explore various problem-solving options. By fostering an environment that values diversity and conflict management, organizations can build more harmonious and productive workplaces.

Need for the Study

Education is a tri-polar process where teachers, students, and the curriculum are intricately interconnected. Schools operate with the dual objectives of achieving educational goals and fostering citizenship qualities among students through the teaching and learning process. Achieving these goals requires the collaborative efforts of the head of the institution, teachers, students, parents, and supporting staff, all contributing through joint endeavors. Among these, teachers and their responsibilities play a pivotal role in attaining educational objectives. While teamwork is essential, the individuality of teachers significantly impacts school outcomes.

In recent times, the concept of "conflict" has gained prominence in human resource management and has become a focus of research. The conflict level of individual teachers is not a trivial matter, as it can profoundly influence educational outcomes. Conflict among school staff is a natural phenomenon and an inherent part of daily school life. However, if not managed constructively, it can strain interpersonal relationships, thereby negatively affecting the overall school climate. Various approaches are employed to handle conflicts in schools, such as mediation, negotiation, avoidance, and collaboration. Acquiring practical knowledge of these conflict management strategies equips teachers and principals with the tools to address interpersonal issues in a more responsible and productive manner. This study aims to explore the existence, nature, and types of conflicts within schools and to examine the conflict resolution strategies adopted by school principals. Conflict is an integral aspect of human behavior, manifesting across various spheres of life, including the workplace. In vocational settings, individuals often encounter conflicts requiring effective management or resolution. The strategies and styles adopted by individuals in these situations play a critical role. While some approaches may facilitate constructive problem-solving, others might be less effective in overcoming conflict. The present study focuses on assessing conflict management among high school students and is titled **"A Study on Conflict Management among High School Students in Madurai District."** This research aims to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of conflict and the strategies that can foster a more harmonious school environment.

Related Studies

Ay, S. Ç., Keskin, H. K., & Akıllı, M. (2019) - "Examining the Effects of Negotiation and Peer Mediation on Students' Conflict Resolution and Problem-Solving Skills". This study focused on the impact of negotiation and peer mediation training on elementary and middle school students, highlighting improvements in certain conflict resolution behaviors while reducing avoidance and obliging tendencies.

Frolova, E. V., Rogach, O. V., Ryabov, T. M., & Zuykina, A. V. (2019) - "Factors of Conflict in the Educational Environment of Modern Schools". This research identified causative factors of school conflicts and the strategies for managing them within European schools, emphasizing the role of interpersonal and organizational factors in conflict resolution.

Oboegbulem, A., & Alfa, I. A. (2013) - "Conflict Resolution Strategies in Non-Government Secondary Schools in Benue State, Nigeria". This study examined methods such as dialogue and mediation to resolve conflicts in schools, stressing their importance for a harmonious educational environment.

Kantek, F., & Gezer, N. (2009) - "Conflict in Schools: Student Nurses' Conflict Management Styles". This study evaluated conflict management strategies used by student nurses in educational settings, identifying approaches like collaboration and compromise as more effective for long-term conflict resolution.

Makaye, J., & Ndofirepi, A. P. (2012) - "Conflict Resolution Between Heads and Teachers in Masvingo, Zimbabwe". This research provided insights into how school leadership resolves conflicts with teachers, highlighting the role of communication and mutual respect.

Terms and Definitions

Conflict Management: Conflict management involves the strategies, techniques, and processes used to handle, control, or resolve situations where one party perceives their goals, interests, or needs are being opposed or adversely impacted by another party. It aims to foster effective communication, collaboration, and problem-solving to mitigate disputes or disagreements.

High School Students: High School students, in this context, refer specifically to individuals studying in IX and X standards in the Madurai district. This group represents adolescents who are in a crucial stage of education and development, preparing for higher education and career pathways.

Variables of the Study
Dependent Variable
Conflict Management

Independent Variables
1. Gender
2. Nativity

Objectives of the Study
The specific objectives of the study are listed below:

1. To measure the level of conflict management among the high school students.
2. To find out whether there is significant differences in conflict management among the high school students in terms of select independent variables viz. gender, nativity.

Hypotheses of the Study
The following hypotheses have been formulated for verification in this study.

1. Conflict management among the high school students is above average.
2. Gender exerts a significant influence on conflict management among the high school students.
3. Nativity exerts a significant influence on conflict management among the high school students.

Methodology – in – Brief
Sample
A random sample of 350 high school students in Madurai district with due representation to the variables viz. gender, nativity.

Tools used
The tools used for data collection were as follows:
1. General Information sheet structured by the investigator.
2. Conflict management Inventory by Easwaran, R. (2015).

Statistical Treatment
1. Significance of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation.
2. 't'- test for finding out the significance of difference between the means of large sub-groups of independent samples.

Data Analysis
Hypothesis 1: Conflict management among the high school students is above average.
:Male/Female
: Rural / Urban

The average score of the Conflict management among the high school students is found to be 42.60, while the theoretical average is 30. This shows that the Conflict

management among the high school students is above the average level. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: Gender exerts a significant influence on conflict management among the high school students.

Table 1 Statistical Measures and Results of Test of Significance of Difference between the Means Score of Conflict Management among The High School Students: Gender-Wise

Variable	Sub-category	N	M	S.D.	't'-value	Significance at 0.05 level
Gender	Male	135	43.73	4.03	1.758	Not Significant
	Female	215	42.35	5.36		

It is evident from table 4.1, that the obtained 't' value 1.758 is lower than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is no significant difference between the male and female students in terms of conflict management among the high school students. Further, it is observed that Gender does not influence on conflict management among the high school students. **Hence the hypothesis is rejected.**

Hypothesis 3: Nativity exerts a significant influence on conflict management among the high school students.

Table 2 Statistical Measures and Results of Test of Significance of Difference between the Means Score of Conflict Management among the High School Students: Nativity -Wise

Variable	Sub-category	N	M	S.D.	't'-value	Significance at 0.05 level
Nativity	Rural	252	44.02	3.61	2.718	Significant
	Urban	98	42.16	5.49		

It is evident from table 4.2, that the obtained 't' value 2.718 is higher than the table value 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is a significant difference between the rural and urban students in terms of conflict management among the high school students. Further, it is observed that rural students possess more conflict management than urban students. **Hence the hypothesis is accepted.**

Conclusions

The major conclusions arrived at from the study are listed below:

1. Conflict management among the high school students is found high.
2. Conflict management among the high school students is found dependent upon-
   ➤ Nativity
3. Conflict management among the high school students is found independent upon-
   ➤ Gender

Educational Implications

The findings of the present study indicate that high school students demonstrate above-average levels of conflict management styles. However, there is a need to further develop and refine these skills to ensure the effective use of appropriate conflict management strategies when addressing personal, familial, institutional, and social challenges. Cultivating these skills can contribute significantly to students' overall emotional intelligence and problem-solving abilities.

The study also highlights a notable difference between rural and urban students in conflict management abilities. Rural students tend to exhibit stronger conflict management styles compared to their urban counterparts. This disparity may be attributed to environmental and cultural factors inherent to rural settings, which may provide students with more opportunities to navigate interpersonal conflicts from an early age.

To address this gap, it is essential to implement targeted interventions to enhance conflict management skills among urban students. These interventions could include incorporating practices such as yoga, meditation, and physical exercises into their daily routines. These activities have been shown to reduce stress, improve focus, and foster emotional resilience, which are critical components of effective conflict management.

Schools and educators play a pivotal role in fostering these skills. Incorporating structured programs on conflict resolution into the curriculum can provide students with practical tools and techniques for handling disputes constructively. Workshops, role-playing activities, and group discussions on conflict scenarios can help students

understand different perspectives and develop collaborative problem-solving abilities.

Furthermore, creating a school environment that encourages open communication and mutual respect can significantly impact students' ability to manage conflicts. Teachers and school counselors can act as role models by demonstrating effective conflict resolution strategies and guiding students through their interpersonal challenges.

Parents also have an important role in nurturing these skills at home. By modeling positive conflict resolution behaviors and encouraging open dialogue, parents can help their children develop the confidence and competence to handle conflicts in various aspects of life.

In conclusion, the development of conflict management skills is vital for high school students to navigate the complexities of modern life successfully. Rural and urban students alike can benefit from tailored interventions that address their unique needs and challenges. By fostering these skills through educational initiatives, extracurricular activities, and parental involvement, we can empower students to manage conflicts effectively and contribute positively to their personal and social environments.

References

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