



REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.2331(UIF)

VOLUME - 7 | ISSUE - 4 | JANUARY - 2018



GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION BEHAVIOUR OF ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine adolescents' conflict resolution behavior and the gender differences in the use of conflict resolution strategies. The study was carried out on a sample of 500 adolescent students, attending middle, secondary and higher secondary classes in Palakkad district. Adolescent Conflict Resolution Behaviour Scale (ACRBS) by Sreelatha (2015) was used for data collection. Percentage and t-test were used to analyse the data. Result revealed that a considerable proportion of adolescents used competing as their conflict resolution strategy. No significant gender difference was noted in the conflict resolution behavior of adolescents.

KEYWORDS: Adolescents, Conflict Resolution Strategies, Cooperative Strategies, Constructive Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict resolution has been defined as "the style of behavior used to resolve conflict between individuals interacting in a variety of settings" (Wilson and Gross, 1994). Conflict resolution is an important skill for every human being to cope effectively with the challenges of daily life. The differences in cultural background, capacities and potentials, need, beliefs and attitude of the students sharing the same environment may naturally cause interpersonal conflicts and disagreements which are natural and inevitable in all settings. These conflicts should be resolved in a constructive manner. Immaturity and the quest for independence and autonomy make conflict resolution difficult particularly for adolescents. As a result, adolescents may resort to violence as a means of resolving conflicts.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Adolescents experience a number of stresses associated with the tremendous developmental stages in physical, cognitive, emotional and social spheres and the consequent adjustment difficulties. The school and peer group experience, development of gender roles and assumption of new roles all become very critical at this stage.

Conflict resolution skill is very important to overcome all the adjustment difficulties for adolescents. It leads to the better interpersonal skill development. It is proven that training of conflict resolution and guidance to communicate in a proper way helps the adolescents to create a constructive conflict resolution.

Our country's success in various fields of life depends to a large extent on the proper education, guidance and training of adolescents. Adolescents around the world are facing many challenging situations and encounter conflicts by themselves as well as with classmates and family. Destructive resolution approach of adolescents towards others may be terribly affected them and may lead to violence. If they

resolve conflict situation in a healthy way, they will become matured adults. Cooperative oriented constructive and integrated strategies among the abovementioned conflict resolution strategies help individuals develop and get experienced while they are solving the interpersonal conflicts. Since other strategies lead one to behave him/herself or the opposite side destructively, they are not convenient to be used as a tool or opportunity for the one's personal development (Türnüklü & Sahin, 2004). The knowledge about how the adolescents resolve their conflicts is a need of the hour. Researchers have often suggested that preferred conflict resolution styles are related to gender, and yet clear gender differences do not always emerge (Feldman and Gowen, 1998). By reviewing the related studies, it is observed that only limited studies have been conducted in India in this area and hence the study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the conflict resolution strategies adopted by adolescents.
- To study the gender differences in the conflict resolution behaviour of adolescents.

HYPOTHESIS

1. There exists no significant difference in the mean scores of conflict resolution behaviour of adolescents with respect to their gender.

METHODOLOGY

Normative survey method was used for the study. The study was conducted on a sample of 400 adolescent students studying in 7th to 12th standards in various schools in Palakkad district. Adolescent Conflict Resolution Behaviour Scale (ACRBS) by Sreelatha (2015) was used to collect data. The data was analyzed by percentage and t-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Percentage wise Distribution of Conflict Resolution Behavior of Adolescents

Strategy Used	Count	Percentage
Competing	220	55
Avoiding	95	23.75
Accommodating	61	15.25
Compromising	72	18
Collaborating	52	13

Table-1 shows that majority of the adolescents (55%) used Competing as their conflict resolution strategy. It is followed by avoiding strategy (23.75%), compromising strategy (18%), accommodating strategy (15.25%) and collaborating strategy (13%). It is evident from the results that majority of adolescents use competing as their conflicting resolution strategy.

Table 2: Comparison of Conflict Resolution Behavior of Male and Female Adolescents

Dimensions	Gender	Mean	SD	N	t	p	Remark
Competing	Male	11.49	2.45	248	2.31	0.021	Significant
	Female	11.00	2.29	252			
Avoiding	Male	8.89	2.77	248	3.50	0.000	Significant
	Female	8.08	2.38	252			
Accommodating	Male	12.02	2.59	248	2.80	0.005	Significant
	Female	12.61	2.26	252			
Compromising	Male	11.86	2.56	248	1.20	0.229	Not Significant
	Female	12.13	2.45	252			
Collaborating	Male	11.96	2.49	248	2.33	0.020	Significant
	Female	10.08 12.47	2.41	252			
Total Conflict Resolution Behaviour	Male	56.21	8.97	248	0.13	0.894	Not Significant
	Female	56.31	7.72	252			

Table-2 depicts that there exists significant difference in the mean scores of dimensions of conflict resolution behaviour namely competing, avoiding, accommodation, and collaborating of male and female adolescent students. The mean values showed that male adolescents used competing and avoiding strategies to resolve their conflicts. But female adolescents used accommodating and collaborating strategies to resolve their conflicts. No significant difference is noted in the mean scores of compromising dimension of conflict resolution behaviour. Though gender wise difference is noted in the use of forms of conflict resolution behavior, no significant difference is noted in the total conflict resolution behavior of adolescents. This result is in agreement with the findings of Harr & Krahe (1999) and Kurdek (1987) which also indicates no gender differences in the conflict resolution behavior of adolescents. Osterman et al. (1997) indicated gender differences in the conflict resolution behavior of adolescents.

CONCLUSIONS AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The study revealed that a considerable proportion of adolescents used competing as their conflict resolution strategy. Collaboration, which is the best method of handling conflicts, is used by a small proportion of adolescents. Also it is revealed that male adolescents tend to adopt Competing and avoiding behavior to resolve their conflicts. Efforts should be made to promote constructive conflict resolution strategies like accommodating, compromising and collaborating among adolescents. For that guidance and counseling cells may be set up in schools. In schools, conflict resolution training can be organized in such way that the students will be well equipped with the knowledge of conflict resolution strategies, become aware of its causes and consequences and develop a positive attitude towards the conflict resolution. A variety of operations can be done in schools for adolescents to live a more healthy life in their adolescence and socialize in an environment of happiness. In the home also, parents can create good home environment to develop the ability of resolving conflicts in day-to-day life activities of their children and it will improve the performance of the students in their educational institutions.

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