

Positive conflict resolution behaviors in psychological health: Northern Cyprus sample

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts are an inevitable part of school life, as in all areas of life, and minimizing the negative effects of conflicts and trying to develop constructive conflict resolution skills will positively contribute to human relations and mental health. The aimed of this study was to investigate the conflict resolution behaviors of secondary school students in terms of some psycho-social variables. The sample of the study was 6th, 7th and 8th grade students attending the state secondary schools of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The study was conducted with a total of 175 students of the students. The research was a descriptive study which is prepared by using quantitative research method which examines conflict resolution behaviors of secondary school students. The sample of the study was determined by non-random sampling method. In order to collect data, Conflict Resolution Behavior Determination Scale was used. In the analysis of the data; percentages, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), t-tests were used. As a result of the study, there was no significant difference according to the gender and grade level of the students. A significant difference was found according to their age, parental partnership status and success levels.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early adolescents who reported using more collaborative and less aggressive conflict resolution strategies were reported to have less personal health risk behaviors [1]. Studies show that young people have difficulty coping with conflicts due to inadequate emotional regulation or their inability to perceive the consequences of their actions [2]. Considering that aggression and violence seen in schools can negatively affect both education and training effectiveness and the mental health of the individual, preventive studies are important for students to develop positive conflict resolution behaviors [3]. School life is essential for students to acquire basic life skills. Thus, when students resolve conflicts with their own skills, they also take responsibility for their actions [4]. Interpersonal violence in schools not only prevents teaching and learning, but also causes absenteeism and students' feelings of fear [5]. While conflict is an inevitable component of interpersonal relationships, without proper conflict resolution skills, school students can experience social isolation and academic decline [6].

Conflict between students is a common problem in schools. If they are not controlled, it has negative effects on the school climate [7]. Conflicts contribute positively to the development of children, it is important to develop social and emotional abilities in childhood, middle childhood and adolescence [8]. Koruklu [9] stated that in order for children to complete development of their desired, they should be given conflict resolution and communication skills training in educational institutions. Ogelman *et al.* [10], teachers need to closely follow the dynamics of children's peer relations, observe peer choices, conflict situation and the consequences of conflicts. Teachers should establish a culture of peace in schools and present themselves as role models of peace. They must resolve any problems and conflicts among themselves and among students through dialogue [11]. Kutlu and Bedel [3] found that the conflict resolution psycho-education program applied to adolescents increased their integration and compliance scores. Conflict resolution strategies can create a positive environment for the psychological well-being of adolescents who are victims [12]. In resolving conflicts, those who recognize and notice their emotions make an effort to show appropriate behavior for each emotion [13].

Conflicts typically focus on conflicts over authority, autonomy, responsibilities, and appropriate behavior [14]. According to Demir, and Dilmaç [15], conflict is addressed as interpersonal problem, and conflict resolution as interpersonal problem solving ability. People spend a significant portion of their time and energy on processes such as problem solving and decision making [16]. Conflict resolution strategy can generally be defined as the way the individual copes with interpersonal conflict [17]. Keçicioğlu [18] defines conflict as a conflict between two or more parties that are in relation with each other, as a result of scarce resources and the mismatch of needs and interests. Showing negative behaviour students who create more conflict situations and exhibit violent behavior in schools [19]. Koruklu and Yilmaz [20] stated that the conflict resolution process started when the opponents were able to communicate their problems to each other by communicating in a conciliatory manner without blaming the other opponent.

Turk [21] conflict resolution, peace education and peer mediation training programs have a wide impact on the conflict resolution skills of others. Ateş [22] found that as a result of the conflict resolution training program, the conflict resolution skills and self-esteem levels of the students in the experimental group increased. Serin *et al.* [23] found that gifted students use constructive and positive conflict resolution strategies to resolve conflicts. Boele *et al.* [24] found that males have higher mean aggression scores than females, and females have higher mean scores for constructive problem solving than males. It was found that the male students used aggressive behavior more [25]. Bedel and Güler [26] found that there was no significant difference between male and female students in the mean scores of Coping Strategies, Bullying and Aggression Scale, according to the results of the study. Johnson and Johnson [27] in their study, they state that it would be more effective for them to participate in peer mediation practices in schools. Students should be informed and supported by school psychological counselors and school administrators in order for secondary school students to get to know themselves better and to develop themselves in a quality that will contribute to the society [28].

This study is important in terms of reducing the violent tendencies of adolescents studying at the secondary school level, adopting a constructive and healthy attitude in the conflicts they experience, developing peaceful friendship relations, and providing students with skills that will contribute to their social and emotional development. School atmosphere is a place where interpersonal communication is too intense. Since the life and personal characteristics of students who share this atmosphere are different from each other, it is inevitable that the interaction between individuals turns into conflict over time. It is necessary to investigate the causes of aggression and violent behaviors experienced in schools in recent years and the ways to reduce such behaviors. Conflicts are an inevitable part of school life as in every sphere of life, and aggressive behavior emerges as a tool used to resolve conflict when there is a conflict about students' interests, values, and needs. Minimizing the negative effects of conflicts and trying to develop constructive conflict resolution skills will make a positive contribution to human relations.

Examining the relevant literature reveals that there are relatively few studies examining the conflict resolution behaviors of young people attending secondary schools in Northern Cyprus, a country with diverse cultures. More research is needed to prevent violence and aggression, protect young people's mental health, and reduce interpersonal conflicts in secondary schools with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. This study's findings on the conflict resolution behaviors of secondary school students in Northern Cyprus are significant in terms of reducing young people's conflict behaviors, utilizing them constructively and peacefully in the conflicts they encounter, and protecting their social, emotional, and mental health.

To help avoid aggression and violence in the school setting, identify the variables that influence the situations in which adolescents encounter conflict, their behavioral patterns and reporting in conflict situations, and their conflict resolution behaviors. Furthermore, schools are places where students learn skills that will help them grow. When school-based psychological counseling and guidance activities are planned, this information is thought to be necessary.

- The aim of research

The purpose of this study was to examine whether there are significant differences between the conflict resolution behaviors of the students studying in secondary schools in the Northern Cyprus and some socio-demographic variables. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought. In the conflict resolution behaviors of middle school students; gender, grade level; their age; the education level of the mother and father; comitative of mother and father; is there a significant difference according to the number of siblings and their success?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research examined the conflict resolution behaviors of students studying at three state secondary schools affiliated to the Northern Cyprus Ministry of National Education in terms of different socio-economic variables. It was a descriptive study prepared using a quantitative research method that examined the conflict resolution behaviors of middle school students. This model was a method of empirical analysis used to evaluate the interactions between more than one component. It examined the interaction between variables.

2.1. Population and sample

The universe of this research was composed of students studying in secondary schools in the district center of Famagusta in the Northern Cyprus. The sample of this research was students attending public secondary schools in Famagusta district of the Northern Cyprus. The study was conducted with a total of 175 students, 76 girls (43.3%) and 99 boys (56.5%). The sample of the study consisted of the students who meet from the students studying in three secondary schools. The required sampling procedure, one of the non-random sampling techniques, was used to determine the test sample.

2.2. Data collection tools

The Scale of Determining Conflict Resolution Behavior, developed by Koruklu [29], was used in the study to collect data. Koruklu [29], the approaches that constitute the theoretical background in the study of developing the "Scale for Determining Conflict Resolution", competitive and collaborative approach; three-dimensional approach based on solution-oriented, domination and avoidance and approaches that deal with interpersonal conflicts with two basic orientations has been utilized. The Scale for Determining Conflict Resolution Behavior is a five-point Likert type scale consisting of 24 items. Reliability studies of the scale were evaluated by the test-retest technique by Koruklu [29]. According to the results of the test-retest applications, a reliability coefficient of .66 was obtained for problem solving in the Conflict Resolution Behavior Determination Scale. The internal consistency coefficients of the Scale for Determining Conflict Resolution Behavior were determined as $r=.83$ for the problem-solving dimension. Both content and construct validity were investigated for the scale's validity study. An expert opinion was obtained to ensure the validity of the content. The construct validity of the scale was determined using factor analysis. Each item's load value with its own factor was determined to be greater than .40. Item analysis was used to determine how distinct the items were in terms of conflict resolution behavior. When the item-total correlations for 24 items were examined, they were all found to be higher than .30. A high score suggests that the behavior is common.

The Conflict Resolution Behavior Scale includes items measuring conflict resolution behaviors. Example scale items: "I am offended when a classmate does not invite me to his birthday party.", "If they excluded me from the debate groups formed during the Turkish lesson, I would inquire as to why and express my desire to participate.", and "If friends attend a classroom party without informing me, I interrogate and speak with them about it."

2.3. Data analysis and application

For the purposes of the study in the analysis of the data; Percentage breakdown, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), t-test techniques were used. The significance level was taken as .05 in the study. Before using the Data Collection Tools, the students were informed that these Data Collection Tools included volunteering. All of the students in all classes where the application was made declared their voluntariness. Then, the students were demonstrated on how to use and answer the Data Collection Tools. It took approximately 20 minutes for students to use and answer the Data Collection Tools. A total of 210 secondary school students participated. In the end, 35 of the Data Collection Tools were excluded from the study due to the answers being left blank around 10% or more in each tool.

3. RESULTS

The findings obtained for the questions determined in line with the purpose of this research are presented below. As seen in Table 1, the mean score of the male students on the conflict resolution scale was found to be 85.64, while the average score of the female students was 89.03. There was no significant difference between these two averages ($p > .05$). In Table 2, no significant difference was found between the conflict resolution behaviors of the students and their grade level scores in terms of conflict resolution.

Table 1. Conflict resolution behavior score average analysis of participants according to gender

Gender	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	df	t	p	Significance level
Male	99	85.64	16.278	173	.730	.198	$p > .05$
Female	76	89.03	18.311				

Table 2. Conflict resolution behavior score average of participants by grade levels ANOVA results

	Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	p	Significance level
Between groups	763.701	2	381.851	1.292	.277	$p > .05$
In groups	50847.236	172	295.623			
Total	51610.937	174				

In Table 3, the difference between the mean scores for conflict solving behaviors of the students according to their ages was found to be significant ($F_{(4,170)} = 2.596$, $p < .05$). Accordingly, the age that students had the best score in terms of conflict resolution behaviors was found to be 15; a significant difference was found between the ages of 15 and especially between the ages of 12-13 in terms of conflict resolution behaviors. As seen in Table 4, the mean score of the students whose parents are together on the conflict resolution scale was found to be 88.29, while the average of the students whose parents were separate was 81.14 [$t = 2.063$, $p < .05$]. It can be said that students whose mothers and fathers are together are more prone to conflict resolution than students whose parents are not together. As seen in Table 5, a significant difference was found between the average scores of conflict solving behaviours according to the number of siblings of the students ($F_{(4,170)} = 5.704$, $p < .05$). It was found that the mean scores of conflict resolution behaviours of students in families with children were significantly higher.

Table 3. The average conflict resolution behaviour score of the participants by age ANOVA analysis

	Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	p	Significance level
Between groups	2970.701	4	742.675	2.596	.038*	$p < .05$
In groups	48640.236	170	286.119			
Total	51610.937	174				

Table 4. Conflict resolution behavior scores of the participants according to their parent association status

ANOVA analysis							
Mother father togetherness	n	Mean	Std.Dev.	df	t	p	Significance level
Divorce	29	81.14	20.436	173	2.063	.041*	$p < .05$
Together	146	88.29	16.332				

Table 5. Conflict resolution behaviour score average ANOVA analysis according to number of siblings of participants

	Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	p	Significance level
Between group	6106.960	4	1526.740	5.704	.000*	$p < .05$
In group	45503.977	170	267.670			
Total	51610.937	174				

As seen in Table 6, a significant difference was found between the average scores of the conflict solving behaviours of the students according to their success level in the lessons ($F_{(3, 171)} = 5.925$, $p < .05$). According to the results of the Scheffe test, it was found that the average scores of the conflict resolution behaviours of the students who stated their achievement level as "very good" in the lessons were significantly higher than the students who stated the success level as "very bad" and "slightly bad" in the lessons.

Table 6. Conflict resolution behaviour score average of participants according to perceived course success level ANOVA analysis

	Sum of squares	sd	Mean of squares	F	p	Significance level
Between group	4859.702	3	1619.901			
In group	46751.235	171	273.399	5.925	.001*	p<.05
Total	51610.937	174				

4. DISCUSSION

When the findings of this study were evaluated in general, it was revealed that conflict resolution behaviors did not differ between males and females. In Mutluoğlu [30], Mutluoğlu and Serin [31] studies, a significant difference was found in conflict resolution abilities by gender, except for one dimension. Sevgi and Karakaya [32], a significant difference was found between the scores of the Conflict Resolution Behavior Scale Aggression Sub-Dimension of female and male students. According to the results of the research conducted by Erdoğan [33], it was revealed that male students used more aggressive strategies in solving their conflicts related to physical violence. In the study conducted by Semra and Demir [34], it was determined that male students behaved more aggressively than female students. It is seen that male's aggression scores are higher than females. Yavuzer *et al.* [35], Girgin and Özçelik [36], show that females scores are higher than males in terms of conflict resolution problem solving scores. Arslan, Hamarta, Arslan, and Saygin [37] found that men mostly resort to aggressive behaviors in conflict resolutions. In their study with university students, it was found that gender has no effect on conflict resolution [38]. In this study, there was no significantly difference in conflict resolution behavior between genders. The reasons for this can be explained by the multicultural structure of Northern Cyprus, the fact that both genders prefer peaceful behavior over aggression, and the fact that girls are raised with a self-confident and self-confident attitude.

In this study, no significant difference was found between the conflict resolution behaviors of the students according to their grade levels. Sevgi and Karakaya [32] reached a conclusion similar to the results of this study that there was no difference in terms of the grade level at which students continue in problem solving in their study of 6th, 7th and 8th grades. In some studies, in which aggression is associated with grade level, it was found that students who continue their education in general secondary school [39] and students who are in their last year [25] resort to aggressive behavior more. Yavuzer, Karataş and Gündoğdu [35] found that males, 10th and 11th grade students resorted to aggression, females and 9th graders in conflict situations.

The age at which the students had the best score in terms of conflict resolution behaviors was found to be 15; As a result, a significant difference in conflict resolution behavior between the ages of 15 and especially between the ages of 12-13 developed. The findings of Tuzcuoğlu and Erdoğan [40], in their study with the 11-12 age group, that there is no significant difference between the education level of mothers and the conflict resolution behavior of children supports that study. The tendency to intervene in social conflicts between secondary schools, especially when the conflicts it involves become severe [41]. Taylor [42] found that the psychoticism level of the 15-19 age group is higher than the other age groups. Arı and Yaban [43], it is emphasized that having siblings has a positive effect in the management of peer conflicts. This finding can be explained by the fact that as adolescents progress through adolescence, more peaceful and positive problem-solving behaviors tend to increase rather than aggressive behaviors.

In this study, the conflict resolution behavior scores of the students whose parents were together were found to be significantly higher than the students whose parents were divorced. This situation shows that students whose parents are divorced more prone to conflict. The quality of Children's Perception of Inter-parental Conflict on bullying was studied, and it was found that adolescents generally thought like their parents even if they have conflicts with them [44].

One of the results of this study is that students with high levels of success are significantly higher in conflict resolution behaviors than students with low success levels. Students with high levels of success are significantly higher in conflict resolution behaviors than students with low achievement levels. It was found that there was no significant difference in the conflict resolution skills relationship according to the income level of the parents. It was found that the mean scores of conflict resolution behaviors of students with only one child were significantly higher than students in families with 3-4 children. As a result, it has been revealed that students whose parents are together are more predisposed to conflict resolution than students whose parents are not together. Girgin and Özçelik [36], in their studies, a significant difference was found according to the academic success of the students.

5. CONCLUSION

In general, when the results of the study are examined, it has been revealed that conflict resolution behaviors do not differ between males and females. In this study, the conflict resolution behaviour scores of the students whose parents were together were found to be significantly higher than the students whose parents were divorced. This situation shows that students whose parents are divorced are more prone to conflict. It has been found that conflict resolution behaviours, the grade levels of the students and. The age at which the students had the best score in terms of conflict resolution behaviours was found to be 15. As a result, a significant difference in conflict resolution behaviour between the ages of 15 and especially between the ages of 12-13 emerged. Consequently, it is an indicator that conflict resolution abilities improve as students get older. Students with high levels of success are significantly higher in conflict resolution behaviours than students with low achievement levels. The fact that school guidance services are in constant communication with low achieving students can help these students to know themselves and have self-confidence, as well as contribute to learning conflict resolution abilities.

This study was conducted with secondary school students in Famagusta district in the Northern Cyprus, so the generalization of the findings of study is limited with this sample group. In new studies about this subject, it may be suggested to work with students of different levels, different variables, and different age groups. Studies can be conducted to examine conflict resolution behaviors in private schools. There are many research findings that indicate that there is no significant difference in the conflict resolution skills of secondary school students according to the education levels of their mothers and fathers. Studies can be conducted to understand the reasons for this quite interesting situation. It is recommended that similar studies with adolescents employ qualitative methods in addition to quantitative measurements to examine conflict resolution behaviors and to conduct in-depth interviews with adolescents to discuss conflict resolution behaviors in detail.

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