

Assessment of the Conflict and Conflict Resolution Attitude and Styles: The Case of High School Student Leaders in Angeles City

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Abstract

Conflict resolution techniques used by young people are important for several reasons. The ability to settle conflicts with others, particularly between peers, is one of the most crucial components of a child's or young person's social skills as they grow and progress through the adolescent stage. This descriptive quantitative study assessed the conflict and conflict resolution attitudes and styles of 363 high school student leaders enrolled across nine (9) junior high schools currently enrolled in the Department of Education in Angeles City. Results showed that the respondents, who are mostly female, class officers and grade 10 students believed that there are better ways to solve problems than fighting or physical aggression; they displayed self-control and cooperation. In terms of conflict handling styles, data suggests that respondents utilized all styles, however, problem solving style is significantly preferred. These findings collectively imply that respondents are dedicated to creating a calm, encouraging atmosphere where conflicts are resolved non-violently. Recommendations for further research, to improve conflict resolution programs for young people are discussed.

Keywords: conflict, conflict handling styles, conflict resolution, conflict resolution skills and attitude

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Introduction

In every social setting, conflict inevitably arises. One of the most important aspects of a child's and young person's social skills as they develop and go through the adolescent stage is the ability to resolve interpersonal conflicts, especially confrontations with peers (Daunic et al., 2000; Humphries, 1999; McLaughlin et al., 2013). Contrary to children and young people who employ unconstructive or aggressive techniques of conflict resolution, those who adopt and put into practice constructive ways of resolving problems are more favorably received by their peers (Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Türnüklü et al., 2009).

Children and young people's conflict resolution strategies are crucial for several reasons. In addition to having an impact on peer connections, it also has an impact on how much happiness and satisfaction are felt. Contrary to non-structural conflict resolution, which heightens feelings of discontent and raises the chance of rejection by peers, constructive conflict resolution lowers the intensity of negative emotions and promotes the growth of social and communication skills (Peuraca & Vejmelka, 2015; Stevahn et al., 2002). Additionally, using violent behavior to resolve disagreements has several unfavorable effects, therefore it's critical to promote young people's employment of positive conflict resolution strategies and to prevent the rise of violent behavior in all confrontations (Mason, 2014; Shahmohammadi, 2014).

Conflict in school settings is a major problem for educators and administrators. Arguments, fights, rumors and partner conflicts are the most common conflicts between friends. Schools face the difficult task of helping students resolve conflict nonviolently. The procedure is time-consuming because those who are involved in it may spend a lot of time on it. Teachers' and guidance counselors' engagement frequently required extra time processing the conflict that could have been employed for other academic tasks (Jorbozeh et al., 2014).

This concern brought up the need for improvement in constructive conflict resolution (Adiguzel, 2015; Smith et al., 2002). Today, when conflict resolution skills are crucial for successful communication, evaluating solutions to issues, and coexisting with others with whom one may have disputes, conflict resolution programs teach young adults. Teachers and administrators experience up to a 97% reduction in disciplinary incidences as students take responsibility for their own conflicts and arrive at agreements the majority of which are upheld months later (Thomas, 2008).

The COVID pandemic has also brought attention to the need of giving student mental health and wellbeing more consideration. In the Philippines, the existing inadequate number of guidance counselors especially in public schools may make it difficult to concentrate more on the situations when their time should be used and provided (Chi, 2023; Mangaluz, 2023). Cases involving students that can be considered serious and need careful supervision and guidance may be unintentionally neglected in the desire to cater to all concerns of the students that demand mediation. This situation may cause a silent battle among students who are really in need of help and guidance. The attention of teachers and guidance counselors may take a toll in responding positively in the student situation that calls for serious help. The need for adequate guidance counselors gave teachers extra work as they served as alternative guidance counselors in providing psychosocial support to students (Chi, 2023). This additional function of the teachers adds to their duties and responsibilities that may already drag them down, and as a result the quality of the instructors' academic performance may be compromised.

Solutions to address the growing concern and need of schools who are lacking guidance counselors and teachers who are already burdened with workload have been put in place by the Department of Education (DEPED) like partnering with different organizations, teacher training for counseling students and putting up hotlines in an online platform (Magsambol & Chi, 2020). One of the responses in view of the realization of the need to call for conflict resolution programs (e.g., peer mediation program) in different schools is the need to train student leaders who will serve as other alternative mediators where conflicts within their capacity and training can be resolved. Peer mediation enables students to resolve minor conflicts without adult support (McLean, 2020; Rita et al., 2007). This will also strengthen the essential life-skills of the students in being able to communicate effectively (Avivar-Caceres et al., 2022; Johnson & Johnson, 2005). The fundamental role of peer mediation programs is to teach students peaceful communication and non-violent conflict resolution methods. The success of the peer mediation program will lead to non-violent resolution and a healthy learning environment among students.

Conflict resolution and peace education in schools now face additional challenges because of the COVID pandemic (Reyes-Guerra et al., 2021). Empirical evidence has underscored the importance of student leadership in fostering a culture of peace within school settings (Alomair, 2016; Eke, 2022; Felice & Wisler, 2007; Ozcelik et al., 2021). Engaging student leaders could eventually influence a school's culture and result in a positive school climate (Galloway, 2023). Student leaders may be very helpful in advancing the peace promotion program because they are an integral part of the school community. In addition to setting an example for peaceful conflict resolution, they can serve as role models for the values of empathy, inclusion, and critical thinking. Also, they can support initiatives for peace education throughout the entire school and help to foster a positive school climate (Eke, 2022).

Additionally, this study can provide suggestions on how school counselors and teachers might evaluate training programs incorporating conflict resolution skills and provide more useful tools for dealing with young adolescents on nonviolent conflict resolution.

Method

Descriptive quantitative research design was employed since the study aims to identify and describe the respondents' profile, conflict knowledge, attitude towards conflict, and conflict resolution skills. The study was conducted among the 363 Junior High School leaders from the nine (9) public secondary schools in the DEPED Division of Angeles City, Pampanga with four survey instruments – instrument developed by Lam in 1989 (Dahlberg et al., 2005) for assessing attitude towards conflict, questionnaire for the Conflict Resolution-Protective Individual Profile and on conflict resolution developed by Philips and Springer (1992) and a checklist for conflict resolution developed by The Dutch Test for Conflict Handling (DUTCH).

Data collection activities were administered face to face during the respondents' vacant time inside the school premises. The data were scored and tallied accordingly before being entered into the Microsoft Excel program. An expert in the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) application software was sought to process the collected data. The mean and standard deviation, which are required to display the descriptive statistics of the respondents' attitude, and skills on conflict and conflict resolution, were derived using the software.

Results

Based on the 363 respondents, there are 255 or 70.25% female student leaders and 107 or 29.50% male student leaders while one (1) or .27% did not respond. As per their grade level, 140 or 38.57% are Grades 10, 86 or 23.69% are Grades 8, 79 or 21.76% are Grade 9 and 58 or 15.98% are Grade 7. Most of the respondents are class officers with 233 or 68.83%, 49 or 13.50% are both class and club officers and 19 or 5.20% are club officers; 17 or 4.70% are student council/supreme officers; 16 or 4.4% are class and student council/supreme officers; 10 or 2.8% are class and club officers & student council/supreme officers and the remaining 19 or 5.20% are either class and club Officer & student council/supreme officers & others. Two (2) or .60% of the respondents did not answer the question.

Table 1 describes the respondents' attitudes to conflict. It is reflected on the table that respondents strongly agreed on the following statements: *There are better ways to solve problems than fighting* (m = 3.84); *I try to talk out a problem instead of fighting* (m = 3.64), *When my friends fight, I try to get them to stop* (m = 3.58) and *Even if other kids would think I'm weird I would try to stop a fight* (m = 3.28). The respondents' response to the abovementioned statements clearly reflects their attitude to conflict and that conflict can be resolved by talking about problems and stopping a fight.

They strongly disagreed with the following statements: *It's O.K. for me to hit someone to get them to do what I want* (m = 1.25) and *If people do something to make me mad, they deserve to be beaten up* (m = 1.35). Their disagreement with the use of violence is evident in their responses to the two (2) statements.

Table 1
Respondents' Attitudes on Conflict

	Mean	Verbal Description	SD
1. If I'm mad at someone, I just ignore them.	2.61	Somewhat Agree	0.899
2. Even if other kids would think I'm weird I would try to stop a fight.	3.28	Strongly Agree	0.768
3. It's O.K. for me to hit someone to get them to do what I want.	1.25	Strongly Disagree	0.533
4. Sometimes a person doesn't have any choice but to fight.	2.26	Somewhat Disagree	0.945
5. When my friends fight, I try to get them to stop.	3.58	Strongly Agree	0.673
6. There are better ways to solve problems than fighting.	3.84	Strongly Agree	0.533
7. I try to talk out a problem instead of fighting.	3.64	Strongly Agree	0.652

8. If people do something to make me mad, they deserve to be beaten up.	1.35	Strongly Disagree	0.619
Mean Average	2.72	Somewhat Agree	0.70275

N = 363

On the respondents' resolution skills on self-control, they strongly disagree on the following statements: *If I feel like it, I hit people* (m = 1.34); *Sometimes you have to physically fight to get what you want* (m = 1.38) and *Sometimes I break things on purpose* (m = 1.54) while they disagree on the following statements: *When I am mad, I yell at people* (m = 2.07); *I do whatever I feel like doing* (m = 2.28) and *I get mad easily* (m = 2.51).

The respondents' strong disagreement with the statements implies their strong self-control in using violence while their disagreement on the last three (3) statements implies that they can put their emotions under control.

With regards to cooperation skills, respondents strongly agreed on all the six (6) items with a mean range from 3.49 to 3.73 (Table 2). This only means that the respondents believe that it is important to participate in any activities that will promote harmonious relationships with others and cooperation promotes peace and teamwork.

Table 2
Respondents' Conflict Resolution Skills

A. Self-Control	Mean	Verbal Description	SD
1. Sometimes you must physically fight to get what you want.	1.38	Strongly Disagree	0.603
2. I get mad easily.	2.51	Disagree	0.795
3. I do whatever I feel like doing.	2.28	Disagree	0.733
4. When I am mad, I yell at people.	2.07	Disagree	0.843
5. Sometimes I break things on purpose.	1.54	Strongly Disagree	0.733
6. If I feel like it, I hit people.	1.34	Strongly Disagree	0.634
Mean Average	1.85	Disagree	0.623
B. Cooperation			
1. I like to help around the house.	3.49	Strongly Agree	0.596
2. Being part of a team is fun.	3.6	Strongly Agree	0.597
3. Helping others makes me feel good.	3.73	Strongly Agree	0.47

4. I always like to do my part.	3.6	Strongly Agree	0.597
5. It is important to do your part in helping at home.	3.7	Strongly Agree	0.498
6. Helping others is very satisfying.	3.71	Strongly Agree	0.55
Mean Average	3.63	Strongly Agree	0.551

N = 363

The respondents' conflict handling resolution styles are reflected in Table 3. The respondents display medium in all the styles in handling conflicts with the following scores: problem solving (a = 16.82), compromising (a = 14.49), forcing (a = 12.6), yielding (a = 12.16) and avoiding (a = 11.39). The respondents' conflict handling styles of being problem solvers confirm their attitude towards conflict and their resolution styles of having self-control and being cooperative. Being in the medium level in all the resolution styles, the respondents likely to utilize appropriate conflict handling resolution styles depending on the situations at hand. They may use problem solving style in one situation; compromising on the other, and vice versa.

Table 3
Conflict Handling Styles of Respondents

	Score	Interpretation
Yielding	12.16	Medium
Compromising	14.49	Medium
Forcing	12.6	Medium
Problem Solving	16.82	Medium
Avoiding	11.39	Medium

Discussion

This study seeks to provide a quantitative assessment of the conflict and conflict resolution styles of junior high school student leaders. The study was conducted in view of the lack of local empirical studies that would contribute to the effectiveness of conflict resolution programs in schools in Angeles City. In this study, respondents' attitudes on conflict have shown inclination towards a more cooperative, non-violent approach to conflict resolution. In terms of conflict handling styles, data indicated that respondents do not have a highly preferred or least preferred conflict handling style.

Data shows that most of the respondents in this study are female. This may suggest a growing willingness among females to assume leadership tasks. Women are frequently socialized to develop strong interpersonal skills, like empathy and teamwork (Lim & Kim, 2011). In leadership positions, these qualities are highly regarded, particularly in educational environments where understanding and cooperation are essential (Chapman, 2025; Singh et al., 2023). But these important qualities may not be enough for females to assume leadership as in

the findings of a large-scale study among children and adolescents in Turkey where the proportion of leadership willingness among females dropped because of decline of self-confidence (Alan et al., 2020).

With regards to grade level and leadership roles, the student leaders are mostly grade 10 and mostly class officers. This may be attributed to the fact that younger student leaders, such as those in grades 7, 8 and 9, may still be developing their conflict resolution skills. They might rely more on authority figures and exhibit more avoidance or accommodation styles due to less experience and confidence while high school or college student leaders typically have more developed social and emotional skills. They are more likely to adopt collaborative or compromising styles, showing a greater ability to negotiate and find mutually beneficial solutions (Ayub, 2024). Student leaders, such as class representatives/officers or club presidents, often develop advanced conflict resolution skills. They tend to use collaborative and integrative approaches to manage conflicts, aiming to maintain group cohesion and productivity (Feirsen & Weitzman, 2023; Rashid, 2005).

Majority of respondents do not agree that responding to conflict through physical altercation. Respondents strongly agreed that there are better ways to solve problems than fighting; they try to talk about a problem instead of fighting. It implies several positive attributes. These student leaders likely have a strong sense of respect for others and understand the importance of treating people with dignity. They prefer non-violent methods for resolving conflicts and influencing others, which is crucial for maintaining a peaceful and cooperative environment. This attitude could also reflect ethical leadership qualities, as they recognize that using force or violence is not an acceptable way to achieve goals. These leaders can serve as positive role models, promoting values of empathy, respect, and constructive problem-solving among their peers.

Not only do the respondents disagree with physical altercation, but data also suggests that respondents look for ways to stop when conflict escalates. This further implies several positive qualities. These student leaders likely possess strong peacemaking skills and are proactive in resolving conflicts among their peers. They show empathy and care for their friends, wanting to maintain harmony and prevent further escalation of conflicts (Pye et al, 2022). This attitude reflects a sense of responsibility and leadership, as they take it upon themselves to intervene and help their friends find peaceful solutions. This lends support to a qualitative study conducted by Kumar (2024) using youth participatory approach which revealed that young people's visions of peace inspire them to consider how they might live as peaceful beings who coexist peacefully with the environment, with one another, and within themselves.

On the respondents' resolution skills, they display strong self-control. Students who learned how to manage anger and emotions can enhance their interpersonal relationships and improve their academic and social environments (Pollack, 2025). This finding is supported by Johnson and Johnson (2005) where students who can control and manage their emotions in conflict situations guarantee that they take positive action may have a developmental advantage over people who cannot control their emotions.

With regards to cooperation skills, respondents strongly agreed on all the six (6) items which mean that respondents are willing to cooperate to promote harmony. Having these skills are important for working well with others and achieving a common goal. It also means building relationships with your team, resolving conflicts, and creating a work environment where everyone feels included and respected (Moseley, 2025). Moreover, when students collaborate,

they do not only engage in active dialogue, but also exchange ideas, and offer constructive feedback to one another. but also promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By working together, students can tackle complex problems from multiple angles, leading to more comprehensive solutions (Kamepalli, 2024).

Respondents utilized all conflict handling styles. This may suggest a balanced approach, where respondents may use this style in some situations but not others. Just like the findings in the study of conflict management styles among students at Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia which identified all conflict management styles (Bazezew & Neka, 2017). It is noteworthy, though, that among the conflict handling styles, the problem-solving style figured the highest in the results. This may indicate that respondents equate conflict resolution with problem solving. Conflict resolution and problem solving are related but not the same. Conflict resolution can be seen as a specialized form of problem solving that focuses on interpersonal or group dynamics (Ay et al., 2019; Turk, 2017).

More so, the respondents' preferred conflict handling style is contrary to findings from other countries. In Tatarstan, Russia, 13–15 adolescents' conflict handling strategies were investigated and compromising conflict strategy was a choice of the majority while cooperation strategy is least preferred (Parfilova & Karimova, 2019). In Estonia, among 14-year-old adolescents studied, negotiation was the most frequently suggested strategy. In the same study, it was found out that in every conflict situation, girls are said to have more disagreements and are advised to negotiate more than boys (Tamm et al., 2018). Research among high school and college students in Bosnia and Herzegovina indicated a very low awareness and participation in education for peace that is responsible for promoting a non-conflict resolution. The paper highlighted the critical need for the implementation of a program that will foster a culture of peace and tolerance in a multicultural society (Mulalić, 2023). Given the cultural differences, it underscores the need for localization and contextualization of peace education and promotion of non-conflict resolution serves as a building block in promoting social skills that are pertinent in carrying out non-conflict resolution.

Comparing the conflict resolution styles of Filipinos to other nationalities, Filipinos prefer collaborating, and their alternatives are either accommodating or compromising (Jamora et al., 2020). The competing style is more favored by members of American cultures; Australians show a preference for collaborative and compromising styles. The members of Asian countries show an opposite pattern to Americans. In India the most preferred style to resolve the conflict is accommodating followed by Avoiding. Koreans resolve their conflicts mostly by Compromising and avoiding style. Chinese prefer compromising and avoiding again. Japanese prefer Avoiding and Accommodating styles in comparison to Malaysian who prefer integrating and compromising styles. No extensive study was found on conflict resolution on a variety of cultures at one platform (Asia, America and Australia), though fragmented source of information exists on different countries (Saravanakumar & Shandru, 2023).

Conclusion

Based on the results, the respondents are mostly female, class officers and belong to Grade 10. The respondents prefer non-violent solutions in resolving conflicts such as talking out problems and intervening in fights. They have strong self-control and adhere to cooperation to promote peace, and they utilize all conflict handling styles- problem solving, compromising, yielding, forcing and avoiding.

Recommendations

Given that the respondents are mostly female, class officers, and in Grade 10, schools can develop leadership and peer mediation programs. These programs can empower students to take active roles in conflict resolution and promote a culture of peace.

Since respondents prefer non-violent solutions, schools should encourage open communication through workshops and activities that teach effective communication skills. This can help students feel more confident in talking about problems and intervening in conflicts.

To build on respondents' strong self-control and cooperative attitudes, schools can implement activities that focus on emotional regulation and teamwork. This can include mindfulness exercises, cooperative games, and group projects that require collaboration.

Since respondents utilize various conflict handling styles, it would be beneficial to provide training on when and how to use each style effectively. Workshops on problem-solving, compromising, yielding, forcing, and avoiding can help students understand the appropriate contexts for each approach.

Schools should create a supportive environment where students feel safe to express their feelings and seek help when needed. This can include establishing a peer support system, having accessible counselors, and promoting a zero-tolerance policy for bullying and violence.

Many of the findings here also merit further investigation that should delve into the daily experiences of the students' leaders; thus, a qualitative study is recommended. Not only will this provide program organizers of conflict resolution a more nuanced understanding, but further qualitative studies will also allow cross checking of the quantitative results for triangulation.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The authors declare that no AI or AI-assisted technologies have been used to generate, refine, or correct the content in the manuscript. The ideas, design, procedures, findings, analyses, and discussion are originally written and derived from careful and systematic conduct of the research.

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5. <i>It is important to do your part in helping at home.</i>				
6. <i>Helping others is very satisfying.</i>				

Part IV. Self-Assessment: Dutch Test for Conflict Handling

Purpose: This self-assessment is designed to help you identify your preferred conflict-management style.

Instructions: Read each of the statements below and circle the response that you believe best reflects your position regarding each statement.

When I have a conflict at work or school, I do the following:		Not at all	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1.	<i>I give in to the wishes of the other party.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
2.	<i>I try to realize a middle-of-the-road solution.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
3.	<i>I push my own point of view.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
4.	<i>I examine issues until I find a solution that really satisfies me and the other party.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
5.	<i>I avoid confrontation about our differences.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
6.	<i>I concur with the other party.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
7.	<i>I emphasize that we have to find a compromise solution.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
8.	<i>I search for gains.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
9.	<i>I stand for my own and other's goals and interests.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
10.	<i>I avoid differences of opinion as much as possible.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
11.	<i>I try to accommodate the other party.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
12.	<i>I insist that we both give in a little.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
13.	<i>I fight for a good outcome for myself.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
14.	<i>I examine ideas from both sides to find a mutually optimal solution.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
15.	<i>I try to make differences seem less severe.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
16.	<i>I adapt to the parties' goals and interests.</i>	1	2	3	4	5

17.	<i>I strive whenever possible toward a 50-50 compromise.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
18.	<i>I do everything to win.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
19.	<i>I work out a solution that serves my own and the other's interests as well as possible.</i>	1	2	3	4	5
20.	<i>I try to avoid a confrontation with the other.</i>	1	2	3	4	5