

## **EFFECT OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS TRAINING ON INTER-PERSONAL CONFLICT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN BAUCHI METROPOLIS, NIGERIA**

**Muhammad Hamza Rogo**

Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling  
Faculty of Education  
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

And

**Ardo Maji Aliyu**

School of Early Childhood Care and Primary Education  
Aminu Sale College of Education, Azare

### **Abstract**

*This study examined the effect of conflict resolution skills training on interpersonal conflict among secondary school students in Bauchi metropolis, Nigeria. A quasi experimental design involving pre-test, post-test control group was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting 30 students. Fifteen students served as treatment group while the other 15 served as control group. The selected students were given Conflict Resolution Style Questionnaire for pre-test. The treatment group was exposed to conflict resolution skills training using negotiation and withdrawal for the period of six weeks, while the control group received no treatment. After the treatment, Conflict Resolution Style Questionnaire was re-administered to both treatment and control groups to obtain post-test data. The hypotheses were tested using ANCOVA. The findings of the study revealed that significant differential effect of negotiation conflict resolution skill does not exist between the interpersonal conflict of male and female students ( $F = 0.462, p = 0.499$ ) and significant differential effect of withdrawal conflict resolution skill does not exist on interpersonal conflict between students of 14-17 and that of 18-21 age brackets ( $F = 0.007, p = 0.933$ ). Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended among others that counsellors, psychologists and teachers be encouraged to train secondary school students with negotiation and withdrawal conflict resolution skills in order to minimize their interpersonal conflict irrespective of gender or age.*

### **Introduction**

School is a social unit established by government or members of the society as a formal agency of education where people learn about the custom, attitudes and ways of doing things in their society. Anderson and Pearson (1999) defined School in sociological context as the place where the culture of the people is transformed from one generation to another. Members of the wider society, including the operators of the educational system are governed by norms and laws that direct the affairs of an individual member. Such laws, according to Miller (2003) are meant to compel the entire members of the society to exhibit character that will conform to the societal laws and order. In order to ensure peaceful co-existence in schools, the authorities

often make rules and regulations that guide and control the behaviour of their students with a view of setting high standards of discipline conducive to the education process.

Effective administration of Nigerian secondary school system, to a large extent, depends on a cordial and cooperate working relationship among principals, teachers, proprietors, and students. The harmonious working relationship, mutual implementation of decisions, and peaceful academic environment will be jeopardized, if the school and members of the school community are often in conflict (Abanyam, 2001). Conflict is inevitable in any organization. It grows from simple to complex, from non-violent to violent depending on the gravity. Conflict is a situation where there is disagreement between two or more people. It can be intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup or intergroup. Wright (1990) believed that interpersonal conflict can be simply described as a clash between two individuals who are unwillingly or unable to fulfill expectations of each other. Interpersonal conflict refers to the representation of incompatibility, disagreement, or difference between two or more interacting individuals (Rahim, 2001). Hocker and Wilmot (as cited in Bao, Zhu, Hu & Cui, 2016, p. 542) define interpersonal conflict as “An expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals”. Interpersonal conflict is an interaction of interdependent people who sense disagreement and opposing interests, incompatibility and the possibility of interference and negative emotion from others.

Intra-personal conflict connotes conflict within a person. Larson and Mildred (2002) state that intrapersonal conflict occurs within an individual and can involve some form of goal or cognitive conflict. They argue that intrapersonal conflict occurs when a person’s behaviour results in positive and negative outcomes or incompatible outcomes.

Conflict resolution skills training on the other hand is a more comprehensive term, which implies that the deep-rooted sources of conflict are addressed and transformed. This implies that behaviour is no longer violent, attitudes are no longer hostile, and the structure of the conflict has been changed. It is difficult to avoid ambiguity, since the term is used to refer both to the process (or the intention) to bring about these changes and to the completion of the process. Conflict resolution theories address the deep-rooted sources of conflict, which are taken to be structural (and therefore, in contrast to peoples’ understanding of conflict, not discursive) and cultural. Different to conflict management where the cause of conflict is a consequence of the anarchical nature of the international system, conflict resolution theorists ‘argue that conflict has an ontological base in human needs, the denial of which causes violent conflict’ (Fetherston, 2000:2). However, the process of dealing with conflict to achieve constructive rather than destructive results is essential. This process can be pursued in a variety of ways.

While many programmes aimed at reducing aggressive and disruptive behaviours feature conflict resolution strategies, Garrand and Lipsey (2007) indicate that conflict resolution education programmes per se are designed to specifically facilitate constructive resolution of interpersonal conflicts. According to Rahim

(2001), interpersonal conflicts can be resolved using the conflict resolution techniques such as avoidance, give and take, problem-solving, collaboration and negotiation. It is based on this that the researchers examined the effects of negotiation and withdrawal conflict resolution skills training on interpersonal conflict among secondary school students in Bauchi metropolis.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Interpersonal conflict is conflict that occurs between two or more individuals that work together in groups or teams. This is a conflict that occurs between two or more individuals. Many individual differences lead to interpersonal conflict, including personalities, culture, attitudes, values, perceptions, and the other differences. Conflict arises due to a variety of factors. Individual differences in goals, expectations, values, proposed courses of action, and suggestions about how to best handle a situation are unavoidable. This can happen in secondary schools between students in the senior and that of the junior classes. It can also be among students of the same class. This can cause unnecessary punishments to be meted out to younger students and even make some of them to drop out of the school. It can also cause significant emotional and physical harm and can lead to aggressive behaviours when youth lack the social skills necessary to cope with their frustrations and finally affects their academic performance. Therefore, it is important to identify students who engage in interpersonal conflict and employ some positive conflict resolution skills training for them in order to promote healthy living in the school.

Resolution is an act of finding a solution to problems or a conflict. Conflict Resolution Skills Training is therefore, a method desired to develop peaceful means of amicably ending a state of conflict. Since conflicts are inevitable, learning to deal with them in a healthy way is crucial. When this type of conflict (interpersonal) is mismanaged, it can harm relationships. But when handled in a respectful and positive way, it can provide an opportunity for growth and ultimately strengthening the bond between two people. By learning the skills needed for successful conflict resolution, one can keep his personal and professional relationships strong and growing. That is why the researchers employed conflict resolution skills training (negotiation and withdrawal) to observe their effects on interpersonal conflict among secondary school students in Bauchi metropolis according to their age and gender.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To find out the effect of negotiation conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict among male and female secondary school students in Bauchi metropolis.
2. To find out the effect of withdrawal conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict among secondary school students of different age brackets in Bauchi metropolis.

### **Research Questions**

In line with the stated objectives, the following are the research questions:

1. What is the effect of negotiation conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict among male and female secondary school students in Bauchi metropolis?
2. What is the effect of withdrawal conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict among secondary school students of different age brackets in Bauchi metropolis?

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses guided the study:

1. There is no significant effect of negotiation conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict among male and female secondary school students in Bauchi metropolis.
2. There is no significant effect of withdrawal conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict among secondary school students of different age brackets in Bauchi metropolis.

### **Methodology**

This study employed quasi-experimental design involving pre-test post-test control group. Kolo (2003) indicated that quasi-experimental design involves the manipulation of one or more independent variables but there is no random assignment to conditions. The researchers under controlled conditions manipulated the independent variable which is conflict resolution skills training and observed its effect on interpersonal conflict among secondary school students in Bauchi metropolis.

The population of this study comprised all public secondary school students in Bauchi metropolis with the total number of (35965), of which (18962) are females while (17003) are males.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select sample of the study because the characteristics exhibited by students engaged in interpersonal conflict are not possessed by others who are of the same level. Purposive sampling technique according to Dolisca, McDaniel and Teeter (2007) is applied in research when the researcher is testing the feasibility of a proposed study, and when the sample to be used in the study possess specific types of knowledge, skills and or characteristics not possessed by the general members of the population. Based on this, the researchers purposively hand-picked a total of thirty (30) respondents on the basis of having high mean scores after responding to Conflict Style Questionnaire.

Two instruments were used for this study. The first instrument was a Conflict Style Questionnaire adapted from Kraybill, (2005) to identify students who engaged in conflict. It consists of 35 items. While, the second instrument used is Conflict Resolution Style Questionnaire developed by center for multiparty democracy (2012). The instrument is divided into two sections (A and B). Section A seeks for demographic data of the respondents while section B contains fifteen (15) items.

Items 1, 6 and 7 are Authoritative/Competitive. Items 8, 10 and 13 are Problem Solving. Items 3, 5 and 9 is Compromising. Items 4, 11 and 14 is Avoiding and Items 2, 12 and 15 is Smoothing. The instrument was used as the first step to collect data (before and after the treatment sessions) by the researcher.

The face validity of the adapted instruments was established by three lecturers in the department of educational psychology and counseling, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. It is based on their recommendations that the instruments were used for pilot testing.

A total number of thirty participants who are not part of this study were used for the pilot testing. This helped the researchers to establish reliability of the instruments.

The reliability of the instruments was established using test-retest method of determining the reliability coefficient. After an interval of two weeks from the first administration, the same instruments were re-administered to the same respondents. The scores of the first and the second administrations were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). Conflict Style Questionnaire has the reliability coefficient of 0.78 while Conflict Resolution Style Questionnaire has 0.65 respectively.

Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) latest version to retain or reject the formulated hypotheses. The Analysis of Covariance statistics was used because the data has pre-test and post-test and also a control and treatment groups indicating two factors of (Tests and Groupings), hence the appropriate statistics to be used to determine the effect of conflict resolution skills training on interpersonal conflict was the ANCOVA statistics.

### **Treatment Procedure**

Participants for the study were purposively assigned into two groups; treatment and control groups. The participants in the treatment group were exposed to conflict resolution skills training using negotiation and withdrawal conflict resolution skills to reduce their interpersonal conflicts. The treatment was conducted for a period of six weeks making a total of twelve counseling sessions. Each treatment lasted between 30-35 minutes. However, students in the control group did not receive any treatment. The researchers were only visiting them to discuss issues related to their relationships with peers and teachers. Both the treatment and control groups were post-tested after the treatment.

### **Results**

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant differential effect of negotiation conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict among male and female secondary school students in Bauchi metropolis.

**Table 1: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) Statistics on the Effect of Negotiation Conflict Resolution Skill on Interpersonal Conflict among Male and Female Secondary school Students in Bauchi Metropolis**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
Corrected Model	344.405 <sup>a</sup>	3	114.802	4.459	.007
Intercept	69815.433	1	69815.433	2711.413	.000
TESTS	316.971	1	316.971	12.310	.001
GENDERS	5.833	1	5.833	.227	.636
TESTS * GENDERS	11.905	1	11.905	.462	.499
Error	1441.929	56	25.749		
Total	71828.000	60			
Corrected Total	1786.333	59			

Not Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Results of the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) statistics above revealed that in the Tests versus Gender analysis, the calculated p-value of 0.499 is greater than 0.05 and the computed F-value of 0.462 is less than F-critical value of 2.600 implying that there was no differential effect. In the individual factor analysis, the p-value of 0.001 in the tests showed that differential effect exists in the pre-test and post-test scores. In the Gender analysis the p value of 0.636 showed that there is no significant differences exist on the basis of their gender. In view of this therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of negotiation conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict among male and female secondary school students in Bauchi metropolis is not rejected.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant effect of give and take conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict among secondary school students of different age brackets in Bauchi metropolis.

**Table 2: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) statistics on the effect of withdrawal conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict among secondary school students of different age brackets in Bauchi metropolis**

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P
Corrected Model	337.039 <sup>a</sup>	3	112.346	4.341	.008
Intercept	69842.786	1	69842.786	2698.689	.000
TESTS	326.253	1	326.253	12.606	.002
AGES	10.186	1	10.186	.394	.533
TESTS * AGES	.186	1	.186	.007	.933

Error	1449.295	56	25.880
Total	71828.000	60	
Corrected Total	1786.333	59	

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Not Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Results of the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) statistics above revealed that there is no significant differential effect of withdrawal conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict among secondary school students of different age brackets in Bauchi metropolis. In the ANCOVAR statistics Table, in the Tests versus Gender analysis, the calculated  $p$  value of 0.933 is above the 0.05 and the computed  $F$  value of 0.007 is below the  $F$  critical value of 2.600 implying that no differential effect. In the individual factor analysis, in the Tests the  $p$  value of 0.002 showed that differential exist in the pretest and post test scores. In the Age brackets analysis the  $p$  value of 0.533 showed that there is no significant effect on the basis of their age bracket. Therefore the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of withdrawal conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict among secondary school students of different age brackets in Bauchi metropolis is not rejected.

### Discussion

The findings of this study also revealed that there is no significant differential effect of negotiation conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict among male and female secondary school students in Bauchi metropolis. This agrees with the findings of Rahim (2002) who conducted a study on the effects of Communication and Conflict Resolution Skill Training Program on sociotropy levels of university students and it was shown that the communication and conflict resolution skill training program had positive effects on the levels of sociotropy among university students of different gender. Also, Siann and Uswuegbu, (2000) who investigated the perceived CRSs (conflict resolution strategies) for the resolution of conflicts in non-government secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria believed that conflict resolution skills training was effective irrespective of gender. Miller (2003) also reported to have said "As children and adolescents develop self-understanding, they also acquire the ability to make changes both within themselves and in their transactions with others. This means that students found victim of interpersonal conflict can be taught to appreciate the differences between them. The theory of transactional analysis clearly shows that while you are satisfied, your friend may not be satisfied at the same time and vice versa. As such, learning to accommodate each other is very crucial".

It was also revealed from the findings of this study revealed that significant effect of give and take conflict resolution skill exists on interpersonal conflict among secondary school students of different age brackets in Bauchi metropolis. This is in line with the findings of Lewis, French and Steane (1997) who examined the causes, effects and remedies of organizational conflict. It was revealed that workers of different age brackets benefitted from the training in various organizations. Diez, Stetter and Albert (2006)'s study also revealed that age did not play any significant

role in the treatment with conflict resolution skills training. This means that withdrawal conflict resolution skills training is effective irrespective of person's age.

### Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it was established that conflict resolution skills training (negotiation and withdrawal) were effective on interpersonal conflict among male and female secondary school students and students of different age brackets in Bauchi metropolis. It is therefore concluded that negotiation and withdrawal conflict resolution skills training can be used on interpersonal conflicts among secondary school students irrespective of gender or age differences.

### Recommendation

1. Counsellors, psychologists and teachers should be encouraged to employ negotiation conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict irrespective of students' gender.
2. Counsellors, psychologists and teachers should also be encouraged to use negotiation conflict resolution skill on interpersonal conflict of secondary school students irrespective of age difference.

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