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Exploring conflict resolution skills and the imperative for educational programs in fostering peaceful coexistence of mankind

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Abstract
This study attempts to explore the adoption of conflict resolution approaches in the 21st century, with a specific focus on promoting the development of students' diverse abilities and literacy acquisition in a constructive manner. The paper addresses the principles of skill development as well as analyses conflict resolution solutions in the context of conflicts that occur within any social and educational environment. Additionally, the study assesses the existing methods for settling disagreements among individuals within socio-economic settings, acknowledging that a hostile and disorderly atmosphere may impede the advancement of diverse skill development. To summaries, the study offers recommendations for effectively overseeing conflict resolution programs to improve students' overall skill development and literacy acquisition in an equitable way.

Keywords: Conflict, conflict resolution, skill development, educational development

Introduction
Society develops when individuals with varying backgrounds come united under shared rules. Culture, family, education, gender, and personal encounters are just a few of the factors that influence a person's viewpoint and all contribute to their uniqueness. The distinctiveness of each individual acts as both a source of variety and a possible cause of disagreement. Conflicts are an essential aspect of human interactions, being universally present but differing in their nature and intensity among individuals. Conflict arises when individuals or organisations hold contrasting views, resulting in a substantial lack of compatibility or disagreement about interests, beliefs, principles, or practices (Mukhtar & Habib, 2010) [12].

Moberg (1998) [13] identifies an individual's distinctive method of dealing with conflict, which is evident in their approach to situations that involve conflict. Sweeney and Carruthers (1996) [14] provide a concise definition of conflict resolution (CR) as "the method employed by conflicting parties to achieve a resolution" (p. 328). Blake and Mouton were early researchers in the analysis of conflict resolution, emphasising the two-fold motives of persons in interpersonal conflict: the drive to achieve personal objectives vs the inclination to preserve interpersonal connections. Conflict resolution is a process by which two or more parties actively seek a peaceful resolution to disagreements and conflicts between them. It encompasses the process of diminishing, eradicating, or ceasing all varieties and manifestations of conflict.

Conflict resolution techniques are useful tools for decreasing and resolving conflicts. The Thomas-Kilmann model, devised by psychologists Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann, demonstrates how individuals select their conflict resolution strategies. This approach presents five conflict resolution methods that provide individuals with guidance during the dispute process: contending, accommodating, avoiding, compromising, and collaborating.

- **Competing:** This approach entails advocating for one's own rights and defending what one believes to be true.
- **Accommodating:** This style involves persons willingly accepting and adopting the perspectives of others.
- **Collaborating:** Collaboration is the willingness of both parties to work and actively listen to each other in order to identify a solution that is mutually advantageous.

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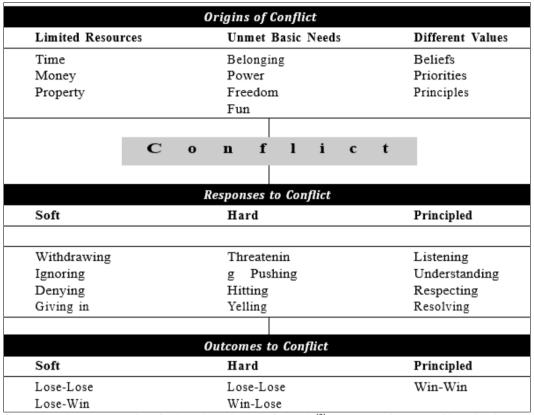Kolkata, West Bengal, India

- **Compromising:** This approach entails both parties actively seeking a mutually acceptable solution by making concessions.
- **Avoiding:** Avoidance is a passive and uncooperative strategy in which a resolution is either postponed or completely evaded. Both parties may want to postpone the situation for a more favourable moment or decide to completely avoid it.

The many forms of conflict resolution possess the capacity to enable individuals to effectively tackle problems in a positive manner. It is crucial to acknowledge that there is no intrinsically correct or incorrect dispute resolution technique. During any fight, individuals possess the capacity to select a style that seems most suitable given the circumstances. The efficacy of a conflict resolution approach frequently relies on the distinct dynamics of the circumstance and the individuals participating.

Understanding conflict
Different wants, drives, wishes, or demands cause conflicts. Response to conflict determines whether it is competitive, destructive, or constructive. Conflict is inevitable, therefore learning how to handle it constructively is essential. Understanding conflict and its resolution principles is the foundation of constructive conflict resolution. (Figure 1).

Understanding Conflict

Origins of Conflict		
Limited Resources	**Unmet Basic Needs**	**Different Values**
Time	Belonging	Beliefs
Money	Power	Priorities
Property	Freedom	Principles
	Fun	

C   o   n   f   l   i   c   t

Responses to Conflict		
Soft	**Hard**	**Principled**
Withdrawing	Threatenin	Listening
Ignoring	g Pushing	Understanding
Denying	Hitting	Respecting
Giving in	Yelling	Resolving

Outcomes to Conflict		
Soft	**Hard**	**Principled**
Lose-Lose	Lose-Lose	Win-Win
Lose-Win	Win-Lose	

Source: Bodine, R., D. Crawford, and F. Schrumpf. 1994 [2]. *Creating the Peaceable School: A Comprehensive Program for Teaching Conflict Resolution.* Champaign, IL: Research Press, Inc., p. 92. Reprinted with permission of the authors and Research Press.

Fig 1: Understanding conflict and its resolution principles is the foundation of constructive conflict resolution.

Origins of conflict
Almost all conflicts emerge as a result of the opposing parties' endeavours to satisfy their essential requirements. Even if a resolution is achieved on the matter under dispute, the disagreement may endure if the fundamental necessities are still unfulfilled.

Fundamental psychological requirements
Each individual is motivated by diverse needs. Dr. William Glasser has identified four essential psychological demands that have a significant impact on behaviour:
- **Belongingness:** Achieved through the experience of affection, mutual support, and collaborative efforts with others.
- **Power:** Attained through the completion of tasks, the attainment of objectives, and the reception of acknowledgement and admiration.

- **Freedom:** Achieved through the capacity to exercise one's own volition.
- **Fun:** Achieved through amusement and recreational activities.
- When two persons in a relationship have different perspectives on belonging or when one prioritizes connection-building while the other prioritizes freedom, conflicts may emerge.
- People must choose between perpetuating conflict or fixing it. Problem-solving tactics address needs and create satisfaction chances to resolve conflicts. Since most disagreements stem from psychological wants, staying in the conflict usually unfulfilled basic needs.

Taxonomies of conflict
Involvement can lead to intrapersonal, interpersonal, intra-organizational, and inter-organizational conflicts. These

varied conflict patterns are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Taxonomy of conflict

Based on scope	Based on nature	Based on sharing	Based on strategy
Substantiate Affective	Destructive, Creative, Positive Negative.	Distributive Integrative	Cooperative Competitive

Life skills are essential in effectively resolving and preventing conflicts. The ability to foster peace with others is vital in cultivating harmonious connections, which serve as the foundation for a positive reputation, trust, and social influence - crucial components for achieving success in a network-driven society. Life skills training programmes can improve the comprehension of peace building dynamics and conflict prevention for both individuals and organisations. These training programmes are based on the idea that conflict resolution and peace building may be effectively achieved by highlighting the importance of both unity and diversity. Life skills training teaches individuals a range of conflict resolution tools, enhancing their capacity to navigate and resolve conflicts with effectiveness.

1. Compete or escape
This management strategy is implemented to guarantee that it is utilised exclusively in situations where there is limited or no need for further engagement with stakeholders.

2. Cooperation
Although it acts as a strong incentive, the individuals concerned will require sufficient time to tackle the difficulties and strive towards a settlement that meets the satisfaction of all parties involved.

3. Mediation or Diplomatic Discussions
In this methodology, all participants surrender specific elements in return for a mutually acceptable resolution at a central point, which can be termed as a score draw agreement.

4. Refusal or Evasion
This strategy is beneficial as it inherently resolves itself within a specified time period. The conflict resolution module teaches life skills that help individuals effectively resolve disagreements.

Responses to conflict
The three main conflict responses are soft, hard, and principled. In both soft and hard reactions, people take positions on the issue and negotiate them to avoid or win a battle of wills. One-sided advantages or losses might result from soft and strong negotiations. Principled disputants use conflict resolution to reach lasting "wise agreements." These agreements meet both parties' legitimate interests, settle conflicts fairly, and consider the agreement's influence on others. Friendly people often use soft responses like avoidance, accommodation, and compromise to maintain good ties or prepare for future contact. People may withdraw, ignore, or downplay confrontation to avoid it. Accommodation is when one side concedes without pursuing their own interests. To settle a conflict, parties compromise on a resolution that doesn't address their interests. Soft reactions often cause disillusionment, self-doubt, and future dread. Conflict resolution is always difficult between adversaries who want to win. These interactions entail force, threats, hostility, and fury. Hard negotiators seek concessions to retain the connection and are steadfast. They frequently seek a single solution that the other party will accept. Hard negotiators use pressure methods like bribing and withholding money, favours, or affection to win a battle of wills. Hard answers often lead to anger, bodily damage, and violence, hurting cooperation and relationships. Individuals who consider themselves as issue solvers seek sensible and peaceful solutions. Principled negotiators realise the importance of communication in establishing cooperation and actively work to build a shared understanding. Negotiators are skilled, proactive, and compassionate listeners who try to understand the situation from several perspectives. By considering both parties' interests, principled conflict resolutions can satisfy both. Principled reactions protect connections.

Outcomes of Soft, Hard, and Principled Responses
The three conflict reactions provide different results. Soft replies usually have two effects. Losses occur when people give up their positions for the connection, resulting in no one's interests being met. One party accommodating the other leads to lose-win. Avoiding confrontation by accommodating others denies their basic needs. Those who avoid conflict sometimes see themselves as victims, causing relationship problems. Hard responses usually have two outcomes. Win-lose situations occur when the stronger side wins and the weaker party loses. Harsh replies often intensify conflict because adversaries want revenge and conduct actions that hurt both parties, resulting in a lose-lose situation. When these enemies must interact, stress arises. Principled dispute resolution usually wins. Principled negotiation theory helps conflicting parties find a compromise without escalating or hurting relationships. This strategy addresses and meets the needs of all parties in the disagreement.

Principles of conflict resolution
Understanding these four concepts is essential to using conflict resolution methods like negotiation, mediation, or consensus decision-making:
- **Separate individuals from the problem**
It is important to distinguish between persons and the problem itself, as every issue involves both substantive and relational components. Separate these parts to see yourselves as collaborative problem solvers who focus on solving the problem rather than personal disagreements. Education may address misperceptions, and when emotions are strong, people can find ways to express themselves. Improve communication to resolve misunderstandings.

- **Prioritize interests over positions**
Understanding the distinction between viewpoints and interests is crucial for effective problem-solving. Interests-the motivations behind positions-express the problem. Fish and colleagues stress that compromise stances will not lead to a durable accord that meets human needs. Because the basic needs have not been addressed, agreements may be ephemeral and less likely to last without identifying these interests.

Create opportunities for mutual benefit
Focus on finding mutually beneficial ways to conflict resolution, rather than reaching a final conclusion. Brainstorming generates a variety of solutions that promote shared goals and cleverly reconcile competing interests. Brainstorming involves deferring criticism and evaluation of ideas. To widen their options, disputants consider the issue from many angles and build on the ideas presented.

▪ **Use objective criteria**
Use objective criteria to achieve a fair agreement, rather than arbitrary preferences on either side. Objective standards allow both parties to defer to an equitable settlement without yielding. These criteria are set by disputants using fair norms and procedures.

Conflict resolution research and evaluation
Early Research
In 1974, DeCecco and Richards conducted a thorough analysis of conflict in schools, leading to one of the most exhaustive studies in the topic. Their research, which involved conducting interviews with over 8,000 students and 500 faculty members from 60 junior and senior high schools in New York City, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, unveiled that over 90 percent of conflicts reported by students were perceived as either unresolved or resolved in harmful manners. Significantly, the study emphasised the complete lack of dispute negotiation.

Other Study
The Ohio School Conflict Management Demonstration Project, conducted from 1990 to 1993 in 17 schools, with favourable results. It resulted in altered student attitudes towards conflict, heightened comprehension of non-violent strategies for problem-solving, and improved communication abilities.
The Peace Education Foundation (PEF) introduced Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation programmes in public schools in Region II in Dade County, Florida in 1991. This endeavour entailed instructing educational personnel to execute student mediation programmes within classrooms and throughout the entire school. In addition, conflict resolution teaching was incorporated into school curricula.

Problem-solving processes
Essential methods for resolving conflicts involve negotiation, mediation, and consensus decision-making, which are all part of structured problem-solving procedures. These methodologies are founded upon the principles of integrated negotiation theory. While the terms "negotiation" and "mediation" are frequently used interchangeably in conflict resolution literature and practice, this section provides a clear distinction between the three structured problem-solving processes:
▪ **Negotiation**
Negotiation is a cooperative problem-solving procedure when the two parties involved in a disagreement, or their representatives, meet in person to independently and collaboratively discuss the issues at hand.

▪ **Mediation**
Mediation is a problem-solving procedure in which two conflicting parties or their representatives get together to address issues with the help of a neutral third party, known as the "mediator." The mediator assumes a pivotal role in directing the process of resolving conflicts.

▪ **Consensus Decision-making**
Consensus decision-making is a collaborative problem-solving approach where all parties involved in a disagreement or representatives from each party work together to resolve the conflict. The goal is to develop a strategic plan that garners consensus from all stakeholders. The method may or may not require the assistance of a neutral party to foster conversations and steer the efforts to reach a consensus.

Foundation abilities of conflict resolution
Problem-solving procedures in conflict resolution require varied attitudes, understandings, and talents to resolve issues. Conflict resolution involves people moving from face-to-face confrontation to collectively negotiating a fair and mutually beneficial accord. The four principles of conflict resolution are more successful when trained in the six core skills. These six essential skills are:
▪ **Proficiency in Orientation**
Values, beliefs, attitudes, and inclinations that support conflict resolution are orientation abilities. These skills include:
1. Nonviolence.
2. Kindness and empathy.
3. Fairness.
4. Trust.
5. Justice.
6. Tolerance.
7. Self-respect.
8. Respect others.
9. Celebration of diversity.
10. Controversy appreciation.

▪ **Perception Abilities**
Recognizing that conflict stems from individual perceptions rather than objective fact. These skills involve:
Empathising with others to understand their perspective.
Accepting personal fears.
Putting judgement and blame on hold to encourage frank discussion.

▪ **Emotion Abilities**
The ability to manage emotions such as anger, irritation, fear, and others is known as emotional capacities. These skills include:
1. Effective communication of emotions through language.
2. Non-violently expressing feelings.
3. Keeping calm when others are upset.

▪ **Communication Abilities:** Effective interchange of facts and feelings requires listening and speaking skills. These skills include:
1. Active listening for comprehension.
2. Speech for comprehension.
3. Changing emotive statements to neutral ones.

▪ **Creative Thinking Abilities:** Enables inventive problem-solving and decision-making. They include:
1. Looking at the issue from many angles.
2. Problem-solving as a shared exploration.

3. Creating, expanding, and improving choices through brainstorming.

- **Critical thinking skills:** include analysing, hypothesising, forecasting, planning, comparing/contrasting, and assessing. Abilities include:
1. Recognising and articulating existing criteria.
2. Set objective criteria.
3. Choosing selections using criteria.
4. Behaviour planning.

Conflict resolution programs that only teach these skills are not authentic conflict resolution programs, even though these foundational abilities are crucial.

Steps in problem-solving process
Authentic conflict resolution programmes consist of two essential elements: the principles of conflict resolution (which involve separating individuals from the problem, prioritising interests over positions, generating options for mutual benefit, and employing objective criteria for decision-making) and a problem-solving procedure (such as negotiation, mediation, or consensus decision-making). Conflict resolution processes encompass a sequence of deliberate actions aimed at assisting individuals involved in a dispute to recognise their own requirements and desires, and work together to discover resolutions that effectively cater to those requirements and desires. Each step offers assistance and direction to the collaborative endeavour, helping the parties to stay focused on the problem rather than each other and enabling the identification of a mutually agreeable solution. Moreover, authentic conflict resolution education programmes encompass thorough instruction and hands-on implementation of the fundamental ideas and problem-solving procedures inherent in conflict resolution.

The problem-solving method consists of six distinct steps
1. **Prepare the Setting:** Lay the foundation and establish a favourable atmosphere for open and productive discussion.
2. **Obtain Perspectives:** Acquire opinions and ideas from all people involved to obtain a thorough knowledge of the problem.
3. **Determine Interests:** Examine the core requirements and concerns of each party to identify the underlying interests involved.
4. **Generate Options:** Produce a diverse range of viable solutions and alternatives that effectively address the specified interests and encourage collaboration.
5. **Evaluate Options:** Examine and scrutinise the available choices, taking into account their practicality, efficiency, and compatibility with the parties' objectives.
6. **Generate Agreement:** Assist in the creation of a resolution that is agreeable to all parties concerned by considering the available options and ensuring that it effectively answers their interests and concerns.

Education and conflict resolution
Education is essential for imparting ideals of peace, tolerance, multicultural understanding, and civic responsibility to future generations. It is crucial to redirect education in this situation, prioritising the school curriculum and integrating a variety of educational, academic, and recreational activities into the course content. The National Curricular Framework of 2005 prioritises the development of non-violent conflict resolution skills, promoting their practical use in resolving conflicts between individuals and groups.

Education empowers students to develop self-awareness and identify their individual conflict resolution styles, allowing them to determine the most suitable technique for different situations. It enables people to recognise and value the beneficial results that might emerge from disagreements. Gaining insight into the essence of conflict enables individuals to recognise the diverse methods by which people handle or react to disputes. Acquiring knowledge about various conflict resolution strategies, such as competing, collaborating, accommodating, avoiding, and compromising, allows individuals to use these styles in an effective manner. Developing a practical and positive perspective on conflict is crucial in modern culture. Conflict resolution education involves comprehending the origins of conflict, acknowledging the impact of conflict on relationships, and effectively managing the decisions that arise during conflicts. In essence, conflict education should ultimately augment an individual's ability to find alternate solutions to challenges. By engaging in cooperative problem-solving, children can cultivate aptitudes that will be advantageous to them both in academic settings and in other aspects of their lives.

Adopting a constructive approach to resolving conflicts can enhance the quality of decision-making, foster creativity and innovation, strengthen progress towards personal objectives, and generate novel ideas, alternatives, and solutions to tackle the underlying causes of the dispute.

Establishing conflict resolution education programs
In order to design, implement, and sustain an efficient conflict resolution programme, it is crucial for participants to embrace the conviction that conflicts may be addressed in a peaceful manner. Adults in school and youth-serving contexts are familiar with and typically prefer dispute resolution approaches that rely on adult authority, following school rules, disciplinary hearings, and other administrative procedures. Shifting from these methods to one that promotes open dialogue about interests and wants, enabling cooperative resolution of problems, requires a substantial change in mind set. Understanding the beneficial possibilities of conflict resolution is essential for pupils to succeed in this undertaking. The adults' passion and dedication at the school play a crucial part in cultivating a constructive attitude towards conflict. By incorporating positive conflict resolution techniques into their classrooms, educators can observe significant outcomes that have a profound impact on their own lives, professional endeavours, as well as the lives of their students and the communities they belong to. The development of a good conflict resolution education programme is the result of a continuous process that begins with the establishment of a planning team that includes representatives from many aspects of the school community. The composition of this committee generally consists of parents, teachers, administrators, and community representatives.

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