

Influence of conflict resolution training on conflict handling styles of college students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of conflict resolution skills training on conflict handling styles, and conflict orientation of college students. Conflict handling styles was measured by the Thomas-Kilmann MODE instrument, while Conflict orientation was measured by conflict orientation survey instrument. A sample of 135 was used as the control group during the post-test and a sample of 133 was used as the experimental group during the post test. Conflict handling training was carried on the experimental group only. Paired sample test between the pretest and posttest indicated that conflict resolution skills training had no statistically significant impact on conflict handling styles. However, paired sample test showed statistically significant difference on conflict orientation of the participants of the study. This study recommends that any conflict training session should be designed with consideration of the audience being trained on basis of their age, life experiences, nature of the conflict and the duration of the training.

Keywords: Conflict orientation, Conflict handling styles, Pretest, Posttest, Control group, Experimental group.

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INTRODUCTION

Conflict resolution is an important aspect of daily life. The way in which one approaches situations involving conflict is recognized as one's characteristic mode of handling conflict (Moberg, 1998). Rahim (1992) suggested five modes for conflict handling which include: directly confronting it, smoothing over the difference, avoiding it, forcing one's position, and coming to a compromise.

Training disputants in conflict management skills can influence the ability to manage conflicts and come up with appropriate resolutions (Ramarajan, Bezrukova, Jehn, Euwema, & Kop, 2004). Training in conflict handling skills should be a combination of educational activities that are directed at improving individual skills in communicating with others and conflict negotiation tactics that will assist the person in handling conflict for the good of the parties involved (Fetherston, 1994; Wall & Druckman, 2002). Training in conflict handling skills can provide the individual with an improved sense of control over the conflict and the ability to reach an amicable resolution. This would reduce the individual egocentric reliance on negative responses that usually arise in conflicts (Ramarajan et al, 2004). The current study investigated the influence conflict handling skill training has on college student conflict handling styles that can be applied to establish effective conflict resolution.

Improving Conflict Resolution

It has been noted that both attachment and relationship satisfaction are closely related to the ways people tackle conflicts. Securely attached individuals are assumed to have positive security-based regulation strategies. Such security-attached individuals tend to rely more on adaptive conflict-solving strategies such as compromise and integrating the other party's point of view (Creasey & Ladd, 2005). Securely attached individuals reach out to others in a controlled and de-escalating manner in the process of establishing conflict resolution (Sierau & Herzberg, 2012). In a close relationship, anxiously attached individuals tend to use hyperactive strategies aimed at soliciting the other party's involvement, care, and support (Sierau & Herzberg, 2012). Such strategies lead to controlling behavior, which can lead to conflict escalation. Such behavior is associated with obligation behavior and the willingness to dominate conflict resolution processes (Corcoran & Mallinckrodt, 2000). Individuals who possess an avoidance attachment tend to use deactivating strategies that are aimed to inhibit the quest for support and try to handle stress alone (Sierau & Herzberg, 2012). Avoidance persons tend to distance themselves from the conflict and avoid engaging with others, and they often tend to end the conflict (Pistole & Arricale, 2003).

Conflict management has been associated with general quality of interpersonal relationships (Dumlao & Botta, 2000). Conflict is a process that starts when individuals or groups have differences regarding interests, beliefs, values, or practices that are important to them (Mukhtar & Habib, 2010). Conflicts are inevitable, and traditionally conflict is viewed as a negative and harmful phenomenon rather than a positive, natural, and useful phenomenon that can be used to improve the well-being of the relationship (Boonsathorn, 2007). Conflict occurs at all levels, and its effects depend on how an individual handles social interactions, perceives the situation, and the method that the person chooses to manage the conflict (Mukhtar & Habib, 2010).

Conflict handling styles refer to the specific behavioral patterns that people employ when dealing with conflict (Moberg, 2001). Workplace conflicts have significant influence on employee performance, productivity, job satisfaction, commitment, and organizational turnover (Jehn, 1997). Improper conflict handling styles can make the existing conflict worse and bring about additional conflicts. It is only through the application of appropriate conflict management styles that can lead to improved performance of the organization or relationship (Weiss & Hughes, 2005). Interpersonal conflict handling styles have been differentiated into two dimensions: the extent of the individual's concern for self, and the extent of the individual's concern for others (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979).

All over the world people are concerned with creating and maintaining peace, and hence understanding conflicts and how to handle them helps to sustain peaceful relations (Blumberg, 1998). Conflict resolution thus becomes an important tool that can be used to promote and sustain peace among diverse cultural groups throughout the world. It is important to note that conflict and violence exist in the world both on small and large scales and this helps us to understand the crucial role of an effective conflict resolution (Holt & DeVore, 2005).

Conflict resolutions in cultures that are more individualistic prefer conflict styles of problem solving, compromising, and forcing. Such conflict handling styles involve strong verbal communication, less internal communication, and are less concerned with the needs of others (Rahim & Buntzman, 1989). On the other hand, communal cultures emphasize the needs of one's group to be more important than those of an individual, which is reflected in their conflict handling styles. Conflict resolution handling styles that are valued highly in such relationships include smoothing and compromising; however, withdrawing can be used in these cultures in an effort to prevent embarrassment of significant others (Holt & DeVore, 2005).

Socially appropriate behavior differs among genders, and it is assumed that different genders would prefer to resolve conflicts using different styles (Shockley-Zalabak, 1981). As females have a greater value of relationships, they prefer such styles as smoothing, withdrawing, compromising, and they are typically involved in indirect-communication strategies that are directed to diffuse the conflict (Holt & DeVore, 2005). Contrariwise, males commonly use direct-communication strategies while in a conflict and they prefer styles such as forcing, problem solving, competing, and dominating that are directed toward a specific outcome rather than a relationship (Holt & DeVore, 2005). Sweeney and Carruthers (1996) noted that the philosophy of conflict resolution should have two basic assumptions: conflict is basic and inevitable, and that the resolution process can lead to different outcomes that can be either constructive or destructive. In school settings, conflict resolution strategies should be directed toward students' self-discipline practices that help them to discover and develop their own internal system of self-discipline and self-regulation. Conflict resolution skills should encourage a commitment to help and care for others, enhance perspective-taking abilities, and improve communication and problem-solving skills (Sweeney & Carruthers, 1996).

Türnüklü, Kaçmaz Gürler, Kalender, Zengin, and Sevkin, (2009) noted that schools and colleges should be places where vital life skills, such as interpersonal conflict resolution skills, are introduced and acquired. The interpersonal conflicts and acts of violence that students experience in school provide them with a natural opportunity to learn non-violent conflict resolution methods. This helps students to socialize through conflict resolution processes using various conflict resolutions and peer-mediation programs that might be initiated by the school (Farrell, Meyer, Kung, & Sullivan, 2001).

Conflict Resolution Training

Managing conflicts in a constructive manner is one of the most important competencies that students need to master. Such skills will minimize the occurrence and destruction of interpersonal conflict among students in schools and colleges (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Conflicts in schools have been characterized by physical and verbal aggression, incivility, and property damage that cost tax payers billions of dollars. School officials have responded to this destructive nature of students by creating and adopting school-based conflict resolution programs that will help students learn how to handle interpersonal conflicts constructively (Stevahn, Johnson, Johnson, & Schultz, 2002). Conflicts have an important role for adolescents as they help clarify personal identity, values, increase social status, promote personal growth, and generate interpersonal insights hence, it is an important part of growth and development among young adults and adolescents (Stevahn, et al., 2002).

Palmer and Roessler (2000), in their study of self-advocacy and conflict resolution of classroom accommodations of students with disabilities, established significant findings. First, students who went through the training were able to properly request and implement the needed classroom accommodations from their respective professors without fear or intimidation. Second, students acquired the skills to communicate their needs, and those that were directly involved with the students were well prepared to meet the accommodation requirements. This gave the service personnel time to plan and implement the accommodations as learning progressed. Finally, the students with disabilities who participated in the program were more likely to request job accommodations as an essential right established under Title 1 of the Americans with Disabilities Act as they joined the labor markets at their respective workplaces (Palmer & Roessler, 2000).

Conflict management has continued to receive significant attention in college courses, in management training sessions, and in academics (Rahim, 2000). The growth in organizational interdependence, shift to collaborative team-based structures, increased diversity, and environmental uncertainty are all factors that can lead to higher degrees of organizational conflict (Callanan & Perri, 2006). Conflict can help in calling attention to search for solutions and improvement that can cause fundamental changes for the welfare of the organization or the parties involved (Pondy, 2002). It has been noted that individuals can have preferences for particular conflict handling styles depending on the nature and the context of the disagreement (Callanan & Perri, 2002). It is assumed that collaborating, or integrating, styles is a better method for responding to conflict, and individuals should be trained to strive for collaboration when confronted by a conflicting situation (Weingart & Jehn, 2000). Research findings have come up with evidence that violence is largely learned and subsequently can be prevented through teaching alternatives to violence. It has also been acknowledged that factors contributing to violence are varied, and no one factor is the sole cause of violence (Eron, Gentry, & Schlegel, 1994). The core premise and skill essential to conflict resolution is the acknowledgement that conflict is inevitable and destructive only when it is handled inappropriately. The goal of conflict resolution strategies is to obtain a solution to the conflict whereby both parties involved in the conflict get what they want and avoid violence in the process (Breulin, Bryant-Edwards, & Hetherington, 2002).

Breulin, et al., (2002) discussed a conflict resolution skills-training program that offered an alternative to out-of-school suspension of high school youths involved in physical violence in the school. A statistically significant difference was observed between pre- and post-intervention

in regard to school expulsions. The group of students who went through the program received no expulsion thereafter. Several other interesting trends were noted on the study. At post-intervention, all students who completed the program were four times less likely to receive another out-of-school suspension for fighting. Those students also received fewer post-intervention disciplinary actions from the school than those who did not complete the program. Learning to avoid and resolve conflicts is an important part of becoming a productive member of society. Goldsworthy, Schwartz, Barab, and Landa (2007) noted that conflict resolution curricula should provide opportunities for learners to apply skills in a variety of settings and enable ongoing reflection. This will enable the learners to appreciate the value of the acquired conflict resolution skills. Programs addressing conflict resolution and violence prevention should be integrated into classrooms and schools as a whole (Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, Mitchell, & Fredrickson, 1997).

Stevahn, Johnson, Johnson, and Scultz (2002) examined the effectiveness of conflict resolution and peer-mediation training among two groups of students. One group received five weeks of conflict resolution and peer-mediation training that was incorporated into the curriculum. The other used the same curriculum without conflict and mediation training. The findings of the study discovered two outstanding issues about conflict resolution and peer-mediation training. First, students trained in these methodologies learned negotiation and peer-mediation better, applied them in their normal lives, choosing integrative over a disruptive approach to negotiation, and they developed a more positive attitude toward conflicts (Stevahn, et al., 2002). Second, the training program had a major impact on students' academic achievement. The integrated conflict resolution and peer-mediation that had been infused into the curriculum led to higher academic achievement, greater long-term retention of content learned, and helped in the transfer of academic learning to other subject areas (Stevahn, et al., 2002).

Conflict resolution should be directed at changing the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of those parties that conflict with the goal to promote understanding and trust among each other (Kriesberg, 1997). A change in attitude can take place through consultative meetings, problem-solving workshops, conflict resolution training at communal levels, and developing dispute resolution systems that are applicable when considering the cultures and norms of the parties involved (Babbitt, 2006). Problem-solving workshop training by a third party can be used to establish conflict resolution. Such workshops can be directed at ethnic, racial, or religious groups who are in hostile relationships, exploring ways to establish and cooperate in decision making (Kriesberg, 1997).

One of the developmental tasks of traditional undergraduate students is learning to explore and cope with a range of emotional states as one is learning to live as an emotionally autonomous person (Allen & Land, 1999). In addition, serious conflict management problems at this stage may undermine students' psychological and academic potential, and lessons learned during conflicts may have implications for future relationships (Zimmer-Gembeck, 2002). College students who exhibit confidence in their ability to control negative moods are usually skillful at conflict handling (Creasey & Hesson-McInnis, 2001). Studies have shown that college students with secure attachment socially display better conflict handling behaviors or problem-solving abilities than those who are insecure (Greasey & Ladd, 2004). The secure college students have learned to effectively regulate negative emotions on their own, and they report high confidence regarding negative mood regulation, which translates to healthy psychological adjustments (Creasey, 2002). Insecure youths display unattractive conflict handling behavior that is accompanied by contempt and domineering behavior in relationships (Greasey & Ladd, 2004).

Conflict Handling Styles

Dincyurek and Civelek (2008) noted that conflicts are normal segments of daily life; however, many conflicts may be considered to have negative effects as they cause disagreements, stress, social chaos, and violence. The positive view of conflict is that it helps the individuals to know themselves, enhances their awareness of others, encourages change, increases energy, and they are motivated to be better problem solvers (Stevahn, 2004). People in conflict display diverse behavioral patterns to solve their conflicts. Thomas (1976) defined five styles that are exhibited by people in a conflict as they try to handle it.

First, the style of forcing can be exhibited by both or one of the parties that is in the conflict. Forcing is demonstrated when one group dominates the other party with no intention of preserving the relationship. This style is motivated by selfish ambitions in the interest of the superior party's needs. This style of handling conflict is common between two parties that are not equal when one group values satisfaction of its own interests at the expense of the other party. There is very little concern for the less-powerful party in a relationship where this style of conflict handling is practiced. Forcing as a conflict handling style may lead to animosity and hurt feelings for the parties involved (Thomas, 1976).

Another style of conflict handling is avoidance. The individual parties that use this style do not confront one another to try and come up with a resolution to the conflict (Thomas, 1976). Sometimes parties that value each other's interests use this style of avoiding the conflict or ignoring it (Karip, 1999). This is not an appropriate style for a workplace dispute as it does not deal with the core of the conflict. The parties that use this style assumes that the conflict will disappear when it is avoided (Stevahn, 2004).

Accommodation is a style that is used frequently in the sharing of differences that may exist among parties involved in a conflict (Dincyurek & Civelek, 2008). This conflict handling style is very appropriate when opposite parties consider the interests and needs of each other. One party ignores its own desires in order to fulfill the desires of the other party (Karip, 1999).

Compromise is another strategy where either of the parties abandons their initial desires, interests, and needs to seek a common ground that is agreeable to all those involved (Dincyurek & Civelek, 2008). In this style, parties seek a compromise where the parties forego certain issues to settle and achieve a resolution that will please all those involved. Collaboration is another conflict handling style used to seek a resolution (Karip, 1999). Parties in conflict use this style to solve problems by considering the needs of all the parties involved. The parties work together to establish a resolution that will be agreed upon by all those involved. This style of conflict handling is commonly used to settle conflicts since parties consider the interests and needs of all those concerned (Karip, 1999).

Interpersonal conflict handling styles have primarily been defined using two main dimensions, assertiveness and cooperation (Thomas, 1977). Assertiveness involves the concern for self, and cooperation is the concern for others. People who demonstrate high concern for self are more interested in fulfilling their own needs as opposed to those who have a high concern for others. Their main interest is to fulfill the needs of the other party (Rahim, 2000). Rahim (1992) developed a model of various characteristics of individuals using different conflict handling styles. Those that use collaboration styles interact with others in a win-win situation. People using this style assertively speaks their needs, are open, and exchange information to examine the differences so as to reach a solution acceptable to all parties involved (Antonioni, 1998). Individuals using accommodating styles overlook their needs to satisfy the needs of the other

party. This leads to a lose-win situation and is considered a self-sacrificial style as one overlooks his own needs to meet the needs of the other party. This style is used by parties that have very close relationships, such as family members.

The competing styles produce a win-lose outcome as the parties involved are aggressive and only want to ensure that their needs are met. It is commonly used by parties that are not interested in preserving the relationship. The goal of the dominant party in the conflict is to win at all costs regardless of the hurt feelings the other party may incur in the process. The avoiding conflict handling style results in a lose-lose situation as both parties refrain from communicating their needs, and thus no needs are met for either party. It is associated with withdrawal from the conflict (Rahim, 1992). The core cause of the conflict is not dealt with whenever this conflict handling style is used. The probability of the conflict to resurface is very high when this handling style is used unless the parties involved purposely terminate their common-involvement activities henceforth (Rahim, 1992).

The compromise style produces win/no-lose results. The parties involved agree on a mutually acceptable solution, and not all the needs of the parties involved are met (Antonioni, 1998). The parties involved propose to yield some ground to the other party to ensure that a compromise is realized. Both parties get a little of what they wanted whenever a compromise is established. It helps to maintain relationships, and this style is common in settling workplace disputes between employers and employees.

Conflict handling refers to the resolution of the conflict. It involves the aspect of approach to conflict, behavior carried out to resolve the conflict, the propensity to handle conflict, and the relationship between individuals involved in the conflict (Janeja, 2011). Canary, et al., (1995) noted many strategies, tactics, and styles in handling conflicts. Strategies are the approaches used to handle conflicts and can be integrative when parties work together, distributive when parties work against each other, and avoidant when a group works in opposition to another party. Conflict styles are, “individual tendencies to manage conflict episodes in a particular way” (Canary, et al., 1995). Curall, Friedman, Tidd, and Tsai (2000) noted that conflict styles tend to be predominant at a period of time and there is a specific situation in which a person uses a style that the situation demands.

Conflict resolution practitioners must be prepared to deal with many problems and a diverse body of people in conflict resolution. Numerous studies have shown that Americans from diverse racial and ethnic groups experience conflict differently from each other and from members of other groups (Bresnahan, Donohue, Shearman, & Guan, 2009). For example, African Americans show preference towards the highly expressive, affect-laden conflict style (Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau, 2003). Asian Americans prefer avoidance and a use of trusted go-betweens to seek conflict resolution (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005). Native Americans have been shown to prefer restraints and use of a third-party elder for conflict orientation (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005).

The approaches' individual uses to resolve interpersonal conflicts can be due to different factors such as personality traits; family origins, which would imply a social learning theory; and power inequalities (Bandura, 1986; Weitzman & Weitzman, 2006). However, studies have indicated that certain trait-like tendencies are more reliable in predicting how individuals will attempt to control a conflict, look for a solution, or avoid the conflict all together (Moberg, 2001; Noore, 2006). College-educated people in their 20s and 30s have reported feeling unskilled in dealing with interpersonal conflicts (Gardner & Lambert, 1992). Weitzman and Weitzman (2006) indicated effective conflict resolution by young people requires them to integrate their

emotions, cognition, and personal skills. Hence, these findings are important for scholars, schools, and employers to recognize the social skills and try to connect them with the intellectual and relational growth of young people (Taylor, 2010). Rubin (1993) showed that typically conflict strategies try to achieve at least one of the following: maximize one's outcomes and minimize another's outcome (competing), attempt to reach a win-win solution (compromise, collaboration), attempt to minimize differences (accommodating, obliging), or attempt to avoid conflict (avoidance).

Conflict Orientation

It is understood that while conflict is natural, it does not have to be destructive, and its roots are often the result of cultural and societal injustice (Mattingly, 2009). Each person has the power to participate in their own communities to bring about positive change. Help Increase the Peace Programs (HIPP) are workshops that help people to look deeply at societal and cultural roots of both conflict and violence and intentionally seek ways of transforming the conflict from its genesis (Mattingly, 2009). Morrison, et al., (2011) reviewed training programs that were likely to utilize constructive responses to conflict and demonstrate problem-solving behaviors that would replace destructive or conflict-escalating behaviors among students. Students who participated in the workshops seemed to be more positive about their ability to create change for themselves and the world around them. At the heart of every conflict can be misunderstandings, differing perceptions, wants and needs, and therefore conflict can be an opportunity for growth and problem solving among all those who are concerned (Morrison, et al., 2011).

Beyers (1997) noted that conflict may be handled in such a way as to create a positive outcome. Johnson (1994) proposed that conflict is inevitable and it is important to encourage constructive conflict and try to resolve negative conflict in an amicable manner. "Conflict resolution implies that it is possible to resolve conflict with no carry-over of hard feelings and with everyone agreeing that the matter has been resolved" (Simerly, 1998). On the other hand, conflict handling implies that one can learn to manage conflicts with productive results. The reality is that situations of conflict may remain and influence our ability to overcome future conflicts. Educational settings should attempt to establish effective ways to help conflicting parties learn to manage their conflicts and come up with productive outcomes for all those concerned (Simerly, 1998).

The main goal of conflict resolution would be to improve the quality of decisions, stimulate creativity, and provide the medium through which problems are solved. These contribute to the constructive conflict outcome (Robbins, 1988). On the other hand, a dysfunctional outcome of conflict may lead to a reduction of individual or group effectiveness, reduced cohesiveness, and increased fighting among the members. This has a negative impact on the individual and group's ability to realize their objective of amicable conflict resolution for the good of all the parties involved (Robbins, 1988). Bush and Floger (1994) noted that one's orientation toward conflict has a direct correlation to how it is handled and its general outcome. An individual orientation toward conflict gives him/her a sense of what conflict entails, enables one to explain, and identifies the process of seeking a resolution. Second, it gives the person concerned the view of what the ideal response to the conflict should be and prescribes how to reach a successful conflict resolution (Bush & Floger, 1994).

METHOD

This study used a pre-test and post-test design with a control group to measure the potential effects of the training session (intervention) on students to determine conflict handling styles participants use to establish a resolution. The pre-test was carried out on both groups to establish conflict handling styles that participants use on interpersonal and organizational conflict resolution. Then intervention in the form of training session was carried out on the experimental group. The post-test was carried out to measure the effects of the training session on participant's conflict handling styles and conflict orientation. Due to training, it was hoped that the experimental group would use higher ordered, positive, and more constructive conflict handling styles than the control group.

Data was collected in the Mid-Western public university in the USA. A sample of 135 was used as the control group during the post-test and a sample of 133 was used as the experimental group during the post test. Conflict handling training was carried on the experimental group only.

The mean age of the participants was 20 years with the youngest being 17 and the oldest being 58 years. On participant's year of study, sophomores formed 33% in both groups followed by juniors with 24 % and seniors with 11% on both groups. Caucasians formed about 73% of the participants in both groups followed by African American who formed 16% of the participants. Most of the participants were from the Criminal Justice major with about 22% followed by Nursing with 11% of the participants. About 20% of the participants did not declare their major of study in both groups.

Research Questions

RQ1. Is there a statistically significant difference in conflict handling styles as measured by Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode instrument between experimental and control groups as reflected by the pre-test and post-test for conflict resolution after training on conflict handling?

RQ2. Is there a statistically significant difference in conflict orientation as measured by conflict orientation survey instrument between the experimental and control groups as reflected by the pre-tests and post-tests for conflict orientation after training on conflict handling?

Instrumentation

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE instrument measures conflict handling styles of individuals. The MODE instrument allocates individuals into two dimensions – assertiveness and cooperativeness in assessing conflict (Thomas, 1977). Assertiveness attempts to satisfy one's own concerns, while cooperativeness attempts to satisfy the concern of others. Five modes on managing differences to satisfy one's and others were identified and located on the assertiveness and cooperativeness axes (Womack, 1988). The five modes of managing conflict that the instrument use includes the following:

- I. Collaborating: Assertive and cooperative, people using this mode try mutual problem solving to satisfy both parties.

- II. Compromising: Individual using this mode is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperation. They try to exchange concessions to resolve conflict.
- III. Competing: Persons using this mode are assertive and uncooperative and they to win their own position.
- IV. Accommodating: Individuals who use this mode are unassertive and cooperative; they try to satisfy other's people goals.
- V. Avoiding: People using this mode are unassertive and uncooperative. They usually postpone or avoid any unpleasant issues when dealing with others.

The MODE instrument consists of 30 paired items, which makes a total of 60 statements. Participants are asked to choose the response from each pair that statement that best describes the way one usually behave in conflict situations (Womack, 1988).

Conflict Orientation Instrument

The instrument has both a pre- and a post-test survey section included. Both pre and posttest surveys asks the same questions but in a different order. The pre-test survey was administered before the training of conflict resolution is conducted. Post-test survey was administered right at the end of training. All the values for the twelve (12) items are added together to create a sum score for the each participant. The highest score possible is 60 and the lowest score possible is 12. Both the pre- and post- surveys should be added to obtain the sum of each. The pre-test average score is subtracted from the post-test average score with the assumption that pre-test scores will be lower than post-test scores. The difference between the two scores can therefore be attributed to the training.

The results provide an understanding of how conflict management trainers may approach conflict. The results are useful for evaluating the effectiveness of training with respect to attitude change about conflict situations (Warters, 1999). It is also useful for the selection of the training materials in a conflict resolution situation (Warters, 1999).

RESULTS

Influence of conflict handling training on conflict handling styles

A paired samples T- test was conducted to compare the mean differences between the MODE. Conflict handling styles totals before and after conflict handling video training. There was a one week interval between the pre and post testing. The conflict handling video training was shown to the experimental group only, while the control group did not receive any video training. The subscale of competing indicated that the results were explicitly the same for both pre-test and post-test. For the collaborating subscale, the mean for precollaborating was 5.56 ($sd = 2.19$), and the mean for postcollaborating was 5.60 ($sd = 2.18$). No significant difference from precollaborating to postcollaborating was found ($t(130) = 1.029$, $p > .05$). For the compromising subscale, the mean for precompromising was 6.74 ($sd = 2.27$), and the mean for postcompromising was 6.70 ($sd = 2.29$). No significant difference from precompromising to postcompromising was found ($t(131) = 1.029$, $p > .05$). For the avoiding subscale, the mean for preavoiding was 6.63 ($sd = 2.32$), and the mean for postavoiding was 6.63 ($sd = 2.31$). No significant difference from preavoiding to postavoiding was found ($t(130) = .000$, $p > .05$).

For the accommodating subscale, the mean for preaccommodating was 6.30 ($sd = 2.33$), and the mean for postaccommodating was 6.30 ($sd = 2.29$). No significant difference from preaccommodating to postaccommodating was found ($t(131) = .000, p > .05$).

Another paired sample t-test was carried on the control group that had no video training. The subscale of competing indicated that the results were explicitly the same for both pre-test and post-test. For the collaborating subscale, the mean for precollaborating was 5.37 ($sd = 2.09$), and the mean for postcollaborating was 5.36 ($sd = 2.20$). No significant difference from precollaborating to postcollaborating was found ($t(134) = 0.160, p > .05$). For the compromising subscale, the mean for precompromising was 6.34 ($sd = 1.98$), and the mean for postcompromising was 6.36 ($sd = 2.01$). No significant difference from precompromising to postcompromising was found ($t(134) = 0.160, p > .05$). For the avoiding subscale, the mean for preavoiding was 6.95 ($sd = 2.06$), and the mean for postavoiding was 6.95 ($sd = 2.06$). No significant difference from preavoiding to postavoiding was found ($t(134) = .000, p > .05$). For the accommodating subscale, the mean for preaccommodating was 6.50 ($sd = 2.07$), and the mean for postaccommodating was 6.50 ($sd = 2.11$). No significant difference from preaccommodating to postaccommodating was found ($t(134) = .000, p > .05$). The results showed there is no statistically significant difference in conflict handling styles between experimental and control groups as reflected by the pre-test and post-test for conflict resolution after training on conflict handling.

Influence of conflict handling training on Conflict Orientation

A paired samples T- test was conducted to compare the mean differences between the conflict orientation totals before and after conflict handling video training. There was a one week interval between the pre and post testing. The conflict handling video training was shown to the experimental group only, while the control group did not receive any video training.

For the training pair(experimental group), the preorientation mean was 3.93 ($sd = 0.45$), and the mean for postorientation was 3.60 ($sd = 0.38$). No significant difference from preavoiding to postavoiding was found ($t(131) = 12.66, p = .000$). For the no-training pair (control group), the preorientation mean was 4.00 ($sd = 0.47$), and the mean for postorientation was 3.60 ($sd = 0.41$). No significant difference from preavoiding to postavoiding was found ($t(133) = 14.63, p = .000$). The results of paired sample t-test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in both experimental and control groups after the post-test. The mean of the experimental group decreased significantly from 3.93 during pre-test to 3.60 after post-test. The mean of the control group also decreased significantly from 4.00 during pre-test to 3.60 after Post-test. Since the decrease was in both experimental and control groups, then the decrease cannot be ascribed to the training.

DISCUSSION

The results of the paired sample t-test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference in conflict handling styles on all five subscales on Conflict MODE handling even after the training on conflict handling. The result defied other studies and the expectation of the researcher. The researcher expected the post score of the group that underwent conflict resolution to be different for the control group. The results indicated that in both the experimental and

control groups, the score for pre-test and post-test were similar in all the subscales of the conflict MODE handling styles instrument.

Several reasons can be attributed to the results of this study. First, the period between the pre-test and post-test was too short. There was only one week interval between the two tests and this might have made participants to be intelligent test takers who duplicated what they did one week ago. However, learning to avoid and resolve conflicts is an important part of becoming a productive member of society. Previous research noted that conflict resolution curricula should provide opportunities for learners to apply skills in a variety of settings and enable ongoing reflection (Waitzman & Weitzman, 2006). This will enable the learners to appreciate the value of the acquired conflict resolution skills. Programs addressing conflict resolution and violence prevention should be integrated into classrooms and schools as a whole (Johnson, Johnson, Dudley, Mitchell, & Fredrickson, 1997). Some of the goals of conflict resolution training should be to change student attitudes and foster education that will help students deal with daily challenges when confronted with conflicts (Goldsworthy, et al., 2007).

The paired samples T- test was conducted to compare the mean differences between the Conflict orientation totals before and after conflict handling video training. There was a one week interval between the pre and post testing. The conflict handling training was carried out to the experimental group only, while the control group did not receive any training. A paired sample t-test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in both experimental and control groups after the post-test. The mean of both experimental group and control group decreased significantly. Both groups registered a decrease in conflict orientation that was almost the same regardless of the training. Since the decrease was in both groups, then the decrease cannot be ascribed to the training.

It appears that training related to conflict resolution needs to be planned for various levels of competence in conflict management for it to be effective (Deen, 2000). Positive conflict resolution is a skill learned only through practice and training need to be taught experientially (Drew, 1987). Experiential learning occurs when there are changes in judgments, feelings, knowledge or skills that result from involvement in an activity or event over a period of time (Deen, 2000). The training in this study was not effective because it was training that took place one time for short period of time. Secondly, the evidence of this study implies that formal training may not be the only way for adults to learn conflict resolution skills (Deen, 2000). Adults might have acquired their own conflict management skills through diverse life experiences and therefore they might not be flexible to any other form of training on conflict resolution skills.

Morrison, et al., (2011) reviewed training programs that were likely to utilize constructive responses to conflict and demonstrate problem-solving behaviors that would replace destructive or conflict-escalating behaviors among students. Students who participated in the workshops seemed to be more positive about their ability to create change for themselves and the world around them. At the heart of every conflict can be misunderstandings, differing perceptions, wants and needs, and therefore conflict can be an opportunity for growth and problem solving among all those who are concerned (Morrison, et al., 2011). Bush and Floger (1994) noted that one's orientation toward conflict has a direct correlation to how it is handled and its general outcome. An individual's orientation toward conflict gives him/her a sense of what conflict entails, enables one to explain, and identifies the process of seeking a resolution. Second, it gives the person concerned the view of what the ideal response to the conflict should be and prescribes how to reach a successful conflict resolution (Bush & Floger, 1994).

CONCLUSION

Managing conflicts in a constructive manner is one of the most important competencies that students need to master. Such skills will minimize the occurrence and destruction of interpersonal conflict among students in schools and colleges - A change in attitude can take place through consultative meetings, problem-solving workshops, conflict resolution training at communal levels, and developing dispute resolution systems that are applicable when considering the cultures and norms of the parties involved -

Conflict management has continued to receive significant attention in college courses, in management training sessions, and in academics (Rahim, 2000). The growth in organizational interdependence, shift to collaborative team-based structures, increased diversity, and environmental uncertainty are all factors that can lead to higher degrees of organizational conflict (Callanan & Perri, 2006). Conflict can help in calling attention to search for solutions and improvement that can cause fundamental changes for the welfare of the organization or the parties involved (Pondy, 2002). It has been noted that individuals can have preferences for particular conflict handling styles depending on the nature and the context of the disagreement (Callanan & Perri, 2002). It is assumed that collaborating, or integrating, styles is a better method for responding to conflict, and individuals should be trained to strive for collaboration when confronted by a conflicting situation (Weingart & Jehn, 2000).

This study would recommend that any conflict training session would be designed with consideration of the audience being trained on basis of their age, life experiences, nature of the conflict and the duration of the training. The duration of conflict handling training in this study was too short for the participants to record any statistically significant difference after the training. The researcher would recommend further study where the training session of conflict handling style would be incorporated in the course of study in school settings. Training may also be carried out over an extended period of time which would afford the researcher the opportunity to measure the significant difference among the participants.

It appears that training related to conflict resolution needs to be planned for various levels of competence in conflict management for it to be effective (Deen, 2000). Experiential learning occurs when there are changes in judgments, feelings, knowledge or skills that result from involvement in an activity or event over a period of time (Deen, 2000). The researcher would recommend further study on conflict orientation in groups that are classified according to gender, ethnicity, age and life experiences. This will give a balanced view of how different groups of people are oriented to conflict. Conflict orientation training sessions should cover an extended period of time with opportunities to practice the skills.

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