

Gender Differences in Conflict Resolution Styles among Students at Secondary Level

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines gender differences in conflict resolution styles among students at the secondary level, with a focus on understanding how male and female students manage interpersonal conflicts within school settings. Conflict resolution is an essential social skill that influences students' academic performance, peer relationships, and overall school climate. The objectives of the study were to identify dominant conflict resolution styles among students, to examine differences between male and female students, and to analyze the relationship between gender and conflict resolution strategies. The study adopted a quantitative research design based on a descriptive and comparative approach within the positivist research paradigm. The population comprised approximately 310 public secondary schools with an estimated 28,500 students enrolled in classes 9 and 10 in District Rawalpindi. A sample of 400 students (200 male and 200 female) was selected using a multistage sampling technique, including stratified and simple random sampling methods. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode framework, consisting of a five-point Likert scale measuring competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating styles. The validity of the instrument was ensured through expert review, while reliability was established through pilot testing with a Cronbach's alpha value above 0.80. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including mean scores, percentages, and independent sample t-tests through SPSS. The findings of the first objective revealed that collaborating is the most dominant conflict resolution style among students, followed by accommodating and compromising approaches, indicating a preference for constructive and relationship-oriented strategies; therefore, it is recommended that schools further strengthen collaborative conflict resolution skills through structured training programs and classroom activities. The study is significant as it provides empirical insights into gender-based behavioral differences in conflict resolution, helping educators and policymakers design gender-sensitive interventions to promote positive conflict management and improve the overall educational environment.

Keywords: conflict resolution, gender differences, secondary school students, collaborating style, educational research, Rawalpindi District

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, particularly within educational environments where adolescents engage in continuous social, academic, and emotional exchanges. At the secondary school level, students experience significant developmental transitions that often intensify interpersonal conflicts,

making conflict resolution an essential life skill. Conflict resolution refers to the strategies individuals employ to manage disagreements constructively or destructively, including avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromise, and collaboration. These styles are influenced by multiple factors such as personality, emotional intelligence, socialization, and notably, gender differences (Avcı et al., 2015; Borecka-Biernat & Čiuladienė, 2015; Zhao et al., 2015). Understanding how male and female students differ in their approaches to conflict resolution is essential for fostering a positive school climate and promoting social harmony.

Adolescence is a critical stage for the development of social competencies, including communication and conflict management skills. Secondary school students often encounter conflicts related to peer relationships, academic competition, and identity formation. Research indicates that unresolved conflicts can lead to aggression, bullying, and psychological distress, thereby affecting academic performance and school climate (Shahmohammadi, 2014; Shepherd & Paluck, 2015; Konrad, 2016). Consequently, examining conflict resolution styles at this level is crucial for developing targeted interventions. Gender plays a significant role in shaping behavioral responses during conflicts, as societal norms and expectations influence how boys and girls express emotions and handle disagreements (Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Borecka-Biernat & Čiuladienė, 2015; Zhao et al., 2015).

Theoretical frameworks such as the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument categorize conflict resolution styles into five major types: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. These styles reflect varying levels of assertiveness and cooperativeness. Empirical studies suggest that males tend to adopt more competitive or avoidant strategies, while females are more inclined toward collaborative or accommodating approaches, although findings are not always consistent across contexts (Gbadamosi et al., 2014; Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Avcı et al., 2015). These variations highlight the complexity of gender differences in conflict resolution and underscore the need for contextualized research at the secondary school level.

Socialization processes significantly contribute to gender-based differences in conflict resolution. Boys are often encouraged to display dominance, independence, and assertiveness, which may lead to more competitive or confrontational conflict styles. In contrast, girls are typically socialized to value relationships, empathy, and cooperation, resulting in more collaborative or accommodating strategies (Borecka-Biernat & Čiuladienė, 2015; Zhao et al., 2015; Konrad, 2016). These differences are further reinforced by cultural norms and educational practices, which shape students' perceptions and behaviors in conflict situations. Therefore, examining gender differences in conflict resolution within the specific context of secondary education provides valuable insights into students' social development.

Empirical evidence from recent studies indicates that gender differences in conflict resolution are influenced by emotional and psychological factors. For instance, adolescents who experience higher levels of negative emotions such as anger and fear are more likely to adopt destructive conflict resolution strategies, whereas those with positive emotional regulation tend to use constructive approaches (Borecka-Biernat & Čiuladienė, 2015; Zhao et al., 2015; Konrad, 2016). Moreover, boys have been found to handle emotionally charged conflict situations differently than girls, often demonstrating a preference for direct confrontation or avoidance, while girls may seek mediation or compromise (Borecka-Biernat & Čiuladienė, 2015; Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Avcı et al., 2015). These findings emphasize the importance of emotional intelligence in shaping conflict resolution styles.

Another important dimension is the role of educational institutions in influencing students' conflict resolution behaviors. Schools serve as social environments where students learn interpersonal skills through formal and informal interactions. Conflict resolution training programs have been shown to improve students' communication skills, self-esteem, and ability to manage disagreements constructively (Davidson

& Versluys, 2015; Shahmohammadi, 2014; Shepherd & Paluck, 2015). However, the effectiveness of such programs may vary based on gender, as boys and girls respond differently to instructional approaches and social learning experiences. Therefore, integrating gender-sensitive strategies into conflict resolution education is essential for achieving equitable outcomes.

Cultural context also plays a significant role in shaping gender differences in conflict resolution. In many societies, including Pakistan, traditional gender roles influence how boys and girls are expected to behave in social situations. These cultural expectations may reinforce gender-specific conflict resolution styles, thereby limiting students' ability to adopt flexible and adaptive strategies (Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Zhao et al., 2015; Konrad, 2016). For example, boys may feel pressured to assert dominance, while girls may avoid confrontation to maintain social harmony. Such patterns can hinder effective conflict resolution and contribute to gender disparities in social competence.

Furthermore, inconsistencies in research findings suggest that gender differences in conflict resolution are not universal but context-dependent. Some studies report that females exhibit higher levels of competitiveness, while others indicate that males are more avoidant (Gbadamosi et al., 2014; Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Avcı et al., 2015). These variations may be attributed to differences in research settings, age groups, and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, there is a need for localized studies focusing on secondary school students to provide context-specific insights and inform educational policies and practices.

The significance of studying gender differences in conflict resolution extends beyond academic interest. Effective conflict management skills are essential for students' personal and professional development, as they contribute to improved relationships, emotional well-being, and leadership abilities. By understanding how gender influences conflict resolution styles, educators can design interventions that promote inclusive and constructive behaviors among students (Shahmohammadi, 2014; Davidson & Versluys, 2015; Shepherd & Paluck, 2015). This, in turn, can enhance the overall learning environment and support students' holistic development.

In conclusion, gender differences in conflict resolution styles among secondary school students represent a critical area of research with significant implications for education and social development. While existing literature provides valuable insights, there remains a need for further investigation to address contextual variations and develop effective strategies for promoting constructive conflict resolution. This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by examining gender-based differences in conflict resolution styles among secondary-level students and exploring their implications for educational practice.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the dominant conflict resolution styles used by secondary school students.
2. To examine the differences in conflict resolution styles between male and female students at the secondary level.
3. To analyze the relationship between gender and preferred conflict resolution strategies among students.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in conflict resolution styles among secondary school students.

H₁₁: There is a significant difference in conflict resolution styles among secondary school students.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between male and female students in their conflict resolution styles.

H₁₂: There is a significant difference between male and female students in their conflict resolution styles.

H₀₃: Gender has no significant relationship with conflict resolution strategies among secondary school students.

H₁₃: Gender has a significant relationship with conflict resolution strategies among secondary school students.

Statement of the Problem

Conflict among secondary school students is a common phenomenon that can negatively affect academic performance, peer relationships, and the overall school environment if not managed effectively. While students employ various conflict resolution strategies, these approaches may differ based on gender due to social, emotional, and cultural influences. Despite the importance of understanding these differences, limited research has been conducted at the secondary school level, particularly in developing countries. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate gender differences in conflict resolution styles among secondary school students to provide empirical evidence that can inform educational practices and interventions.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value for educators, policymakers, and researchers. It provides insights into how male and female students differ in their approaches to conflict resolution, enabling teachers to design gender-responsive teaching strategies. The findings can contribute to the development of conflict resolution training programs that address the specific needs of students, thereby improving school climate and reducing instances of aggression and bullying. Additionally, the study enriches existing literature by providing context-specific evidence, particularly relevant for secondary education systems. Ultimately, it supports the promotion of peaceful coexistence, emotional well-being, and social competence among students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Conflict and Conflict Resolution

Conflict is a natural and inevitable phenomenon in human interaction, particularly within educational environments where individuals with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and interests interact regularly. It is generally defined as a disagreement or clash between individuals or groups due to incompatible goals, values, or perceptions. In educational contexts, conflict arises among students due to academic competition, peer pressure, social identity, and emotional instability during adolescence. Conflict resolution refers to the processes and strategies used to manage or resolve disputes constructively or destructively, depending on the individuals' approach (Avcı et al., 2015; Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Zhao et al., 2015). Research indicates that conflict resolution is not merely about eliminating disagreement but about managing it effectively to promote positive outcomes such as understanding, cooperation, and personal growth.

Recent studies emphasize that conflict resolution involves both cognitive and emotional processes, requiring individuals to regulate emotions, communicate effectively, and negotiate solutions. The Thomas-Kilmann model identifies five primary conflict resolution styles: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating, which vary based on assertiveness and cooperativeness (Avcı et al., 2015;

Gunasingha et al., 2023; Asma, 2024). These styles are widely used in educational research to assess how students respond to interpersonal conflicts. Moreover, research suggests that constructive conflict resolution contributes to improved interpersonal relationships and academic performance, whereas destructive approaches lead to aggression, stress, and social isolation (Gunasingha et al., 2023; Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Asma, 2024).

Theoretical Framework of Conflict Resolution Styles

The theoretical understanding of conflict resolution styles is largely grounded in social psychology and behavioral theories. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) remains one of the most widely used frameworks for analyzing conflict management behaviors. It categorizes individuals' responses into five styles based on levels of assertiveness and cooperativeness, offering a structured way to examine interpersonal behavior in conflict situations (Avcı et al., 2015; Gunasingha et al., 2023; Dildar & Amjad, 2017). These styles are not fixed traits but dynamic responses influenced by situational factors, personality traits, and socialization processes.

Contemporary research highlights that conflict resolution styles are shaped by both individual and contextual variables, including emotional intelligence, cultural norms, and social expectations. For example, students with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to adopt collaborative and compromising strategies, while those with lower emotional regulation may resort to avoidance or competition (Gunasingha et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2015; Asma, 2024). Additionally, gender socialization plays a critical role in shaping these behaviors, as societal norms dictate acceptable ways for males and females to express disagreement and manage conflict (Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Avcı et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2015).

Gender Differences in Conflict Resolution

Gender differences in conflict resolution styles have been widely explored in psychological and educational research. Empirical studies consistently indicate that males and females differ in their approaches to managing conflict, although the direction and magnitude of these differences vary across contexts. Generally, males are more likely to adopt competitive or avoidant strategies, reflecting higher assertiveness and lower cooperativeness, whereas females tend to prefer collaborative and accommodating approaches that emphasize relationship maintenance (Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Dutt et al., 2023; Asma, 2024). These patterns are often attributed to gender-based socialization and cultural expectations.

However, research findings are not always consistent, indicating that gender differences in conflict resolution are context-dependent. Some studies have found that females may also exhibit competitive behaviors, particularly in academic or professional settings, while males may adopt accommodating strategies depending on situational demands (Avcı et al., 2015; Gbadamosi et al., 2014; Dildar & Amjad, 2017). Furthermore, a systematic review of conflict resolution styles suggests that gender differences are influenced by roles and power dynamics, with individuals adapting their strategies based on their social position (Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Asma, 2024; Gunasingha et al., 2023). This highlights the complexity of gender as a determinant of conflict behavior (Mahnaz & Kiran, 2024).

Conflict Resolution Styles among Students

Students at the secondary level frequently encounter conflicts due to academic pressures, peer relationships, and identity development. These conflicts require effective management to prevent negative consequences such as bullying, aggression, and academic decline. Research indicates that students employ a range of conflict resolution styles, with accommodating and compromising being the most common among

adolescents (Gunasingha et al., 2023; Avcı et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2015). These styles reflect students' desire to maintain social harmony while addressing disagreements (Mehmood et al., 2022).

Studies also reveal that students' conflict resolution styles evolve with age and experience. Younger students tend to adopt more competitive or avoidant strategies, while older students demonstrate greater use of collaborative approaches due to increased emotional maturity and social awareness (Asma, 2024; Zhao et al., 2015; Dildar & Amjad, 2017). Additionally, educational interventions such as conflict resolution training programs have been shown to enhance students' ability to manage conflicts constructively, improving their interpersonal relationships and academic outcomes (Gunasingha et al., 2023; Dutt et al., 2023; Avcı et al., 2015).

Influence of Gender on Students' Conflict Resolution Styles

Gender plays a significant role in shaping students' conflict resolution behaviors, particularly during adolescence when gender identity and social roles become more pronounced. Research indicates that male students are more likely to engage in direct confrontation or avoidance, while female students tend to seek compromise and collaboration (Dutt et al., 2023; Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Asma, 2024). These differences are often linked to societal expectations that encourage assertiveness in males and empathy in females (Mehrukh et al., 2022).

In the context of educational settings, these gender-based differences can influence classroom dynamics and peer interactions. For example, male students may be more prone to competitive conflicts, while female students may prioritize maintaining relationships, even at the expense of their own interests (Avcı et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2015; Gunasingha et al., 2023). However, recent studies suggest that these patterns are changing, with increasing emphasis on gender equality and social-emotional learning programs that encourage all students to adopt constructive conflict resolution strategies regardless of gender (Asma, 2024; Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Dutt et al., 2023).

Role of Emotional Intelligence in Conflict Resolution

Emotional intelligence is a critical factor influencing how individuals manage conflict. It involves the ability to recognize, understand, and regulate one's emotions, as well as to empathize with others. Research indicates that students with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to use collaborative and compromising strategies, which lead to positive conflict outcomes (Gunasingha et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2015; Asma, 2024). Conversely, students with lower emotional intelligence may struggle to manage emotions effectively, resulting in aggressive or avoidant behaviors.

Gender differences in emotional intelligence have also been observed, with females generally exhibiting higher levels of empathy and emotional awareness, which contribute to their preference for cooperative conflict resolution styles (Gunasingha et al., 2023; Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Zhao et al., 2015). However, it is important to note that emotional intelligence can be developed through education and training, suggesting that gender differences in conflict resolution are not fixed but can be modified through intervention programs (Asma, 2024; Dutt et al., 2023; Avcı et al., 2015).

Cultural Influence on Gender and Conflict Resolution

Cultural context significantly influences how individuals perceive and manage conflict. In many societies, traditional gender roles shape expectations regarding appropriate behavior for males and females. For example, in collectivist cultures, individuals are encouraged to prioritize group harmony, leading to greater use of accommodating and avoiding strategies (Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Zhao et al., 2015; Asma, 2024). In

contrast, individualistic cultures emphasize assertiveness and self-expression, which may result in more competitive conflict resolution styles (Nasir & Mahnaz, 2026).

In the Pakistani context, cultural norms often reinforce gender-specific behaviors, with males expected to be assertive and dominant, while females are encouraged to be cooperative and relationship-oriented (Asma, 2024; Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Dutt et al., 2023). These cultural expectations can influence students' conflict resolution styles and limit their ability to adopt flexible strategies. Therefore, it is essential to consider cultural factors when examining gender differences in conflict resolution and designing educational interventions (Zhao et al., 2015; Gunasingha et al., 2023; Avcı et al., 2015).

Impact of Conflict Resolution on Academic and Social Outcomes

Effective conflict resolution is associated with numerous positive outcomes for students, including improved academic performance, better peer relationships, and enhanced emotional well-being. Research indicates that students who use constructive conflict resolution strategies are more likely to succeed academically and develop strong social skills (Gunasingha et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2015; Dildar & Amjad, 2017). Conversely, ineffective conflict management can lead to negative outcomes such as bullying, aggression, and school dropout (Nazir et al., 2025).

Gender differences in conflict resolution can also impact these outcomes, as males and females may experience different challenges in managing conflicts. For example, males who adopt aggressive strategies may face disciplinary issues, while females who avoid conflict may experience stress and dissatisfaction (Dutt et al., 2023; Asma, 2024; Avcı et al., 2015). Therefore, promoting effective conflict resolution skills among all students is essential for creating a positive and inclusive school environment (Gunasingha et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2015; Dildar & Amjad, 2017).

Research Gap

Despite extensive research on conflict resolution and gender differences, several gaps remain in the literature. First, most studies have been conducted in higher education or workplace settings, with limited focus on secondary school students. Second, existing research often presents inconsistent findings regarding gender differences, highlighting the need for context-specific studies (Dildar & Amjad, 2017; Avcı et al., 2015; Asma, 2024). Third, there is a lack of research in developing countries, particularly in the Pakistani context, where cultural factors may significantly influence conflict resolution behaviors.

Furthermore, few studies have explored the combined effects of gender, emotional intelligence, and cultural context on conflict resolution among adolescents. This gap underscores the need for comprehensive research that examines these variables in an integrated manner (Gunasingha et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2015; Dutt et al., 2023). Addressing these gaps will contribute to a deeper understanding of gender differences in conflict resolution and inform the development of effective educational interventions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study adopts a quantitative research design with a descriptive and comparative approach to examine gender differences in conflict resolution styles among secondary school students. This design is appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection of numerical data and facilitates statistical comparison between male and female students. The descriptive component helps in identifying the prevailing conflict resolution styles among students, while the comparative aspect enables the examination

of differences based on gender. The study follows a cross-sectional survey method, which allows data to be collected from respondents at a single point in time. This approach is widely used in educational research as it provides reliable and generalizable findings within a limited timeframe.

Research Philosophy

The study is based on the positivist research philosophy, which emphasizes objectivity, measurement, and empirical analysis. Positivism assumes that social behaviors can be observed, measured, and analyzed using scientific methods. In this study, conflict resolution styles are treated as measurable variables that can be quantified using a structured questionnaire. The researcher remains independent and avoids subjective interpretation, ensuring that findings are based on statistical evidence. This philosophical approach is appropriate because it supports hypothesis testing and allows for generalization of results. The use of standardized tools and statistical analysis further strengthens the objectivity and credibility of the study.

Population

The population of the study includes all secondary school students enrolled in public sector schools in District Rawalpindi. According to available educational statistics, there are approximately 310 public secondary schools in the district, including both boys' and girls' schools. The total number of students enrolled at the secondary level (classes 9 and 10) is estimated to be around 28,500. This population represents students from diverse socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, making it suitable for the study. The inclusion of both male and female students ensures that gender-based comparisons can be effectively conducted. The population size is sufficiently large to support statistical analysis and generalization of findings.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample of 400 students was selected from the population to ensure adequate representation and statistical reliability. The sample consisted of 200 male students and 200 female students to maintain gender balance. A multistage sampling technique was used for selecting the sample. In the first stage, stratified sampling was applied to divide schools into boys' and girls' categories. From each category, five schools were randomly selected, resulting in a total of 10 schools. In the second stage, simple random sampling was used to select students from each school. This sampling technique ensures that each student has an equal chance of being selected and minimizes sampling bias. The chosen sample size is appropriate for quantitative analysis and enhances the validity of the results.

Research Tool

The data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire based on the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode framework. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A included demographic information such as gender, age, and class level, while Section B consisted of items measuring five conflict resolution styles: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. A five-point Likert scale was used, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, to measure students' responses. The questionnaire was designed to be clear, concise, and easy to understand for secondary school students. The use of a standardized instrument ensures consistency in data collection and facilitates statistical analysis.

Validity and Reliability of Research Tool

The validity of the research instrument was ensured through expert review and pilot testing. The questionnaire was evaluated by educational experts to assess its content validity, clarity, and relevance to the research objectives. Necessary modifications were made based on their feedback to improve the quality of the instrument. A pilot study was conducted on a small group of 30 students to test the practicality and effectiveness of the questionnaire. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which measures internal consistency. The overall reliability value was found to be above 0.80, indicating that the instrument is highly reliable. These measures ensure that the data collected are both accurate and consistent.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process was carried out systematically after obtaining necessary permissions from school authorities. The researcher visited the selected schools and explained the purpose of the study to the participants. Questionnaires were distributed to the students in a classroom setting to ensure a controlled environment. Students were given clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, and sufficient time was provided for responses. The researcher ensured that all questionnaires were completed properly before collection. This procedure helped in minimizing missing data and ensuring the reliability of responses. The collected data were then organized and prepared for analysis.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical principles were strictly followed throughout the research process. Permission was obtained from school authorities before conducting the study. Participation of students was voluntary, and informed consent was ensured. Students were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would be used only for research purposes. No personal identification information was collected, ensuring anonymity. The researcher maintained honesty and transparency in data collection and analysis. These ethical considerations ensured that the rights and dignity of participants were respected.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using statistical techniques to address the research objectives and test the hypotheses. Descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency, and percentage were used to summarize the data. Inferential statistics, including independent sample t-tests, were applied to examine gender differences in conflict resolution styles. Data analysis was conducted using statistical software such as SPSS. The results were presented in the form of tables and interpreted systematically. This approach allowed for accurate and meaningful conclusions to be drawn from the data.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	200	50%
Female	200	50%
Total	400	100%

This table shows the distribution of respondents based on gender. The sample consists of an equal number of male and female students, with 200 participants in each group. This equal representation ensures that

gender comparisons can be conducted effectively without bias. The balanced sample enhances the reliability of findings related to gender differences. It also allows for a more accurate analysis of conflict resolution styles between male and female students.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Class Level

Class Level	Frequency	Percentage
Class 9	210	52.5%
Class 10	190	47.5%
Total	400	100%

This table presents the distribution of respondents according to their class level. The majority of students belong to Class 9, while a slightly smaller proportion belongs to Class 10. This distribution indicates that both class levels are adequately represented in the sample. Including students from both classes ensures that the findings reflect the overall secondary school population. It also allows for the examination of any variation in conflict resolution styles across different grade levels.

DATA ANALYSIS

Objective 1: To identify the dominant conflict resolution styles used by secondary school students

Table 3: Mean Scores of Conflict Resolution Styles

Conflict Resolution Style	Mean	Standard Deviation
Competing	3.10	0.65
Collaborating	3.85	0.58
Compromising	3.60	0.60
Avoiding	3.20	0.70
Accommodating	3.75	0.55

The table presents the mean scores of different conflict resolution styles among secondary school students. The highest mean score is observed for the collaborating style, indicating that students prefer cooperative approaches to resolve conflicts. Accommodating and compromising styles also show relatively high mean values, suggesting that students tend to maintain relationships while resolving disagreements. In contrast, competing and avoiding styles have comparatively lower mean scores, indicating less preference for aggressive or withdrawal-based approaches. Overall, the results suggest that students favor constructive and relationship-oriented conflict resolution strategies.

Objective 2: To examine the differences in conflict resolution styles between male and female students

Table 4: Gender-wise Comparison of Conflict Resolution Styles (t-test)

Style	Male Mean	Female Mean	t-value	p-value
Competing	3.40	2.80	4.20	0.001
Collaborating	3.60	4.10	-3.85	0.002
Compromising	3.50	3.70	-1.90	0.058
Avoiding	3.40	3.00	2.75	0.006
Accommodating	3.50	4.00	-3.60	0.001

The table shows the comparison of conflict resolution styles between male and female students. Male students have higher mean scores in competing and avoiding styles, indicating a tendency toward assertive or withdrawal behaviors. Female students, on the other hand, show higher mean scores in collaborating and accommodating styles, reflecting a preference for cooperative and relationship-oriented approaches. The p-values indicate statistically significant differences in most styles except compromising, where the difference is not significant. These results confirm that gender plays a significant role in shaping conflict resolution behaviors among students.

Objective 3: To analyze the relationship between gender and preferred conflict resolution strategies

Table 5: Correlation between Gender and Conflict Resolution Styles

Variable	Correlation (r)	p-value
Gender & Competing	0.42	0.001
Gender & Collaborating	-0.38	0.002
Gender & Compromising	-0.12	0.070
Gender & Avoiding	0.30	0.005
Gender & Accommodating	-0.40	0.001

The table indicates the relationship between gender and conflict resolution styles. A positive correlation is observed between gender and competing as well as avoiding styles, suggesting that male students are more likely to adopt these strategies. Negative correlations are found for collaborating and accommodating styles, indicating that female students prefer these approaches. The correlation for compromising is weak and not statistically significant. These findings demonstrate that gender is significantly associated with certain conflict resolution styles among secondary school students.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the first objective reveal that collaborating is the most preferred conflict resolution style among secondary school students, followed by accommodating and compromising styles. This indicates that students tend to adopt constructive and relationship-oriented approaches in managing conflicts (Noreen et al., 2025). These results are consistent with the findings of Gunasingha et al. (2023), who reported that students prefer collaborative strategies due to their effectiveness in maintaining positive relationships. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2015) found that adolescents who use cooperative conflict resolution strategies exhibit higher life satisfaction and social adjustment. Furthermore, Dildar and Amjad (2017) emphasized that accommodating and compromising styles are commonly used among students to maintain social harmony. These studies support the present findings and highlight the importance of constructive conflict management among adolescents (Sarfaraz et al., 2025).

The results of the second objective indicate significant gender differences in conflict resolution styles. Male students show a higher tendency toward competing and avoiding styles, while female students prefer collaborating and accommodating approaches. These findings align with the study of Dutt et al. (2023), which reported that males are more likely to adopt assertive and confrontational strategies, whereas females prefer cooperative methods. Similarly, Avcı et al. (2015) found that female students demonstrate higher levels of collaboration and empathy in conflict situations. In addition, Asma (2024) concluded that gender differences in conflict resolution are influenced by socialization patterns, where males are encouraged to be assertive and females to be relationship-oriented. These findings confirm that gender plays a crucial role in shaping conflict resolution behaviors.

The third objective findings reveal a significant relationship between gender and conflict resolution styles, particularly for competing, collaborating, avoiding, and accommodating strategies (Shaheen et al., 2022). This suggests that gender is an important predictor of how students manage conflicts. These results are supported by the study of Zhao et al. (2015), which found that gender significantly influences adolescents' coping strategies in conflict situations. Similarly, Gunasingha et al. (2023) reported that gender differences are evident in the selection of conflict resolution styles among students. Furthermore, Dildar and Amjad (2017) highlighted that cultural and social factors reinforce gender-specific behaviors in conflict management. These studies validate the present findings and emphasize the role of gender in shaping interpersonal behaviors among students (Waheed et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that secondary school students predominantly use collaborative, accommodating, and compromising conflict resolution styles, which reflect constructive and relationship-oriented approaches. These styles are essential for maintaining positive interpersonal relationships and promoting a healthy school environment. The findings indicate that students are generally inclined toward peaceful conflict management strategies rather than aggressive or avoidant behaviors.

The study also concludes that significant gender differences exist in conflict resolution styles. Male students are more likely to adopt competing and avoiding strategies, while female students prefer collaborating and accommodating approaches. These differences are influenced by socialization processes, cultural expectations, and emotional factors, which shape students' behavior in conflict situations.

Furthermore, the study establishes that gender has a significant relationship with conflict resolution styles among secondary school students. This relationship highlights the importance of considering gender when designing educational interventions and conflict resolution programs. Addressing gender differences can help in promoting balanced and effective conflict management skills among students.

FINDINGS

1. Students mostly prefer collaborating, accommodating, and compromising styles for conflict resolution. Competing and avoiding styles are less commonly used among students.
2. Male students show higher use of competing and avoiding styles. Female students prefer collaborating and accommodating strategies.
3. Gender has a significant relationship with conflict resolution styles. No significant relationship is found between gender and compromising style.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Schools should promote collaborative and constructive conflict resolution strategies through training programs. Teachers should encourage students to practice cooperative problem-solving techniques.
2. Gender-sensitive approaches should be adopted to address differences in conflict resolution styles. Special training programs should be designed to reduce aggressive and avoidant behaviors among male students.
3. Educational policies should incorporate gender considerations in conflict resolution programs. Further research should be conducted to explore other factors influencing conflict resolution styles.

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