

Conflict Resolution Skills Among Secondary School Students: Gender and Grade-Level Variations

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Abstract

This study investigated conflict resolution skills among secondary school students in Vietnam, focusing on their abilities to seek mediation and compromise during interpersonal conflicts. Given the limited empirical evidence on the characteristics and assessment of conflict resolution skills among Vietnamese adolescents, the study aimed to examine the current status of these skills and explore differences across gender and grade levels. A cross-sectional design was employed. A total of 350 secondary school students were recruited, of whom 304 valid responses were included in the final analyses after data screening. Data were collected using a structured self-report questionnaire assessing students' skills in seeking mediation and compromising with friends during interpersonal conflicts. Descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-tests, and one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to examine variations across gender and grade levels. Results indicated that students generally demonstrated relatively high levels of conflict resolution skills, particularly in compromising with friends ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 0.33$) and seeking a mediator for reconciliation ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 0.26$). Significant gender differences were found, with girls scoring higher than boys in identifying the causes of conflict ($p = .033$), agreeing on areas of compromise ($p = .017$), and empathizing with friends' thoughts and behaviors ($p = .042$). Significant grade-level differences were observed in seeking a mediator for reconciliation ($p = .003$), reporting conflicts objectively ($p < .001$), knowing counselor or therapist contact information ($p = .036$), and agreeing on areas of compromise ($p = .015$). Conflict resolution skills appear relatively well developed among Vietnamese secondary school students, although variations across gender and grade levels highlight the need for school-based interventions to strengthen interpersonal competence and emotional well-being. Future studies should include broader and more diverse samples to improve generalizability.

Keywords: conflict resolution skills, secondary school, students, compromise, empathy, Vietnam

1. Introduction

Conflicts in secondary schools arise from various interpersonal, technological, authority-related, and systemic factors. Peer conflicts are common, often triggered by competition, social dynamics, or misunderstandings, with bullying—verbal, physical, and cyberbullying—remaining a widespread issue (Shahmohammadi, 2014). The misuse of technology, particularly through social media and cyberbullying, contributes significantly to conflicts, affecting both peer and teacher-student relationships (González Sodis & Leiva Olivencia, 2022). High school students face conflicts linked to self-esteem issues, social roles, and peer group dynamics, often driven by self-affirmation and relationship management efforts (Levina, 2020). Gendered interactions sometimes escalate into harassment due to power imbalances and the enforcement of stereotypes among peers (Lahelma, 2002). Additionally, the transition from primary to secondary education introduces stressors such as heightened academic demands, competitive pressures, and adjustment challenges, leading to classroom conflicts (Engels et al., 2019).

Conflicts among secondary school students can lead to significant negative effects on emotional well-being, academic performance, and the overall school environment. Persistent conflicts may result in low self-esteem, increased anxiety, and aggression, particularly among adolescents facing identity and social pressures (Kovalchuk,

2017). In classrooms, conflicts disrupt the learning environment, reducing students' engagement and contributing to academic burnout and poor performance (Engels et al., 2019). Escalations into bullying often lead to victimization and social exclusion, particularly for students with lower social status or weak peer support, perpetuating cycles of aggression (Marengo et al., 2021). Unresolved conflicts can harm the school climate by fostering hostility, reducing trust, and undermining overall cohesion (Sánchez Vera et al., 2021). Frequent conflicts also increase the risk of maladaptive behaviors like aggression and defiance toward authority, which may persist into adulthood (Levina, 2020). Gendered conflicts or harassment reinforce harmful power dynamics and negatively impact gender relations within schools (Lahelma, 2002). Additionally, conflicts manifesting as physical fights or cyberbullying can cause immediate physical harm and long-term emotional trauma for both victims and perpetrators (González Sodis & Leiva Olivencia, 2022).

Conflict resolution skills in secondary school students are essential abilities that enable them to address disagreements constructively and non-violently, fostering positive relationships and a supportive school environment. These skills include active listening, clear expression of thoughts, and respectful dialogue, which help students articulate concerns while understanding others' perspectives (Levy, 1989). Empathy and emotional management, such as controlling anger and frustration, are crucial for de-escalating conflicts and achieving mutually agreeable solutions (Bretherton et al., 1993). Students learn to identify the root causes of conflicts and propose solutions that meet the needs of all parties. Negotiation skills, like proposing compromises, are key components of effective conflict resolution (Stevahn, 2004). Peer mediation programs, where trained students assist others in resolving conflicts, promote collaboration and teach valuable conflict management techniques (Benson & Benson, 1993). Students are encouraged to recognize their roles in conflicts, take responsibility for their actions, and work toward preventing future disputes (Roush & Hall, 1993). Anger management techniques help prevent conflicts from escalating into aggression or violence (Graves et al., 2007), while analytical skills enable students to assess the consequences of solutions to ensure fair and effective outcomes (Akgun & Araz, 2014).

Conflict resolution skills equip secondary school students with essential tools to manage disputes constructively, benefiting their academic, social, and emotional development. These skills enhance interpersonal relationships with peers, teachers, and family members, creating a more supportive social environment (Levy, 1989). Empathy and anger management techniques help students control emotional reactions, reducing escalations and supporting mental well-being (Bretherton et al., 1993). Learning negotiation and empathy decreases aggressive behaviors and bullying, fostering safer and more inclusive schools (Graves et al., 2007). By minimizing conflicts and distractions, students can focus better on learning, with studies showing a positive link between conflict resolution education and academic achievement (Stevahn, 2004). Skills such as negotiation, critical thinking, and problem-solving are crucial for personal and professional success beyond school (Akgun & Araz, 2014). Training in conflict resolution promotes a respectful, cooperative school culture, reducing violence and improving the school climate (Roush & Hall, 1993). These skills prepare students for real-world challenges in workplaces, families, and communities (Laursen, 1993). Successfully resolving conflicts builds confidence and self-efficacy, empowering students to handle difficult situations effectively (Shahmohammadi, 2014).

In Vietnam, research on conflict resolution skills in communication among secondary school students remains limited. Previous evidence among Vietnamese adolescents has shown that psychosocial factors, particularly loneliness and self-esteem, are associated with interpersonal behaviors and social adjustment, highlighting the importance of social-emotional competencies in school contexts (Nguyen-Thi et al., 2020). However, existing studies have primarily focused on proposing measures for conflict management rather than examining the specific manifestations, characteristics, and evaluation criteria of students' conflict resolution skills. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the current state of conflict resolution skills among secondary school students in Vietnam. The findings are expected to contribute to both the theoretical understanding and practical application of conflict resolution education in the Vietnamese educational context.

2. Methods

This cross-sectional study employed a convenience sampling method. The principals of two secondary schools in District 5 and Binh Chanh District, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam were contacted for approval before data collection. Data were gathered from students across all grades after providing research details to homeroom teachers and students. Participation was voluntary, requiring verbal consent from students. Only demographic information was collected, ensuring confidentiality, and students could opt out without facing any consequences.

This study strictly adhered to the American Psychological Association's (APA) Code of Conduct and the Declaration of Helsinki recommendations for research involving human participants. Verbal informed consent was secured from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation throughout the study.

A new scale was developed to meet the study's objectives, comprising 7 items categorized into two main groups: "Skills in seeking a mediator for reconciliation" and "Skills in compromising with friends." Each item includes three scenarios for students to respond to, with researchers evaluating the answers using a 3-level Likert scale: (1) Low, (2) Medium, and (3) High.

The average score on the 3-level Likert scale ranges from 1 to 3, with a maximum score of 3 and a minimum score of 1. The interval between levels is calculated as $(3-1)/3=0.67$. Based on this, skills in conflict resolution skills during communication with friends are ranked as follows:

Low level (1.00 – 1.67): This is the lowest level, where their skills are limited.

Average level (1.68 – 2.34): At this level, students demonstrate partial knowledge and frequent mistakes. Skill integration is limited, with no creative application.

High level (2.35 – 3.00): Students show high proficiency, minimal errors, and the ability to skillfully adapt their operations to various conditions.

3. Results

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the study participants (N = 304). Of the 350 initially recruited participants, 304 provided complete and valid responses suitable for analysis, yielding an effective response rate of 86.9%. Gender distribution shows a nearly even split, with 159 boy participants (52.3%) and 145 girl participants (47.7%). Participants were categorized by grade level, with the highest representation in Grade 6 (n = 80, 26.4%), followed by Grade 7 (n = 76, 25%), and both Grades 8 and 9 having an equal number of participants (n = 74 each, 24.3%). The participants attended two different schools, with 156 students (51.3%) from Vinh Loc B Secondary School and 148 students (48.9%) from Tran Boi Co Secondary School.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic of Participants (N = 304).

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Boy	159	52.3
Girl	145	47.7
Grade		
Grade 6	80	26.4
Grade 7	76	25
Grade 8	74	24.3
Grade 9	74	24.3
School		
Vinh Loc B secondary School	156	51.3
Tran Boi Co secondary School	148	48.9

Notes: n = number of participants, % = percentage.

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for students' skills in seeking a mediator for reconciliation. Overall, participants demonstrated a relatively high level of competence in these skills, with a total mean score of $M = 2.36$ ($SD = 0.26$), indicating generally favorable abilities in managing interpersonal conflicts through mediation-related strategies. Among the assessed dimensions, identifying the causes of conflict obtained the highest mean score ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 0.43$), suggesting that students were generally capable of recognizing the underlying reasons for interpersonal disagreements. This was followed by reporting conflicts objectively ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 0.48$) and seeking a mediator for reconciliation ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 0.42$), reflecting relatively strong competencies in communicating conflict-related issues and seeking external support when necessary. In contrast, knowing the contact information for a counselor or therapist yielded the lowest mean score ($M = 2.08$, $SD = 0.54$), indicating comparatively lower familiarity with available counseling resources despite remaining within the average-level range.

Table 2. Skills in Seeking a Mediator for Reconciliation

Item	Min	Max	M	SD
Seeking a mediator for reconciliation	1.33	3.00	2.42	0.42
Reporting conflicts objectively	1.00	3.00	2.45	0.48
Identifying the causes of conflict	1.33	3.00	2.49	0.43
Knowing the contact information for a counselor or therapist	1.00	3.00	2.08	0.54
Total	1.58	2.92	2.36	0.26

Notes: M = mean, SD = standard deviation.

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for students' skills in compromising with friends. Overall, participants demonstrated a relatively high level of competence in these skills, with a total mean score of $M = 2.50$ ($SD = 0.33$), indicating generally favorable conflict resolution abilities in peer interactions. Among the assessed dimensions, empathizing with thoughts and behaviors of friends yielded the highest mean score ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.41$), suggesting that students were generally capable of understanding and considering their peers' perspectives. This was followed by jointly developing a solution that benefits both, which also showed a relatively high mean score ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 0.42$), reflecting students' ability to engage in collaborative problem-solving during conflicts. In contrast, agreeing on areas of compromise recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 0.47$), although the score remained within the high-level range, indicating that students may experience comparatively greater difficulty in reaching mutual agreements during interpersonal disagreements.

Table 3. Skills in Compromising with Friends

Item	Min	Max	M	SD
Agreeing on areas of compromise	1.00	3.00	2.37	0.47
Empathizing with thoughts and behaviors of friends	1.33	3.00	2.61	0.41
Jointly developing a solution that benefits both	1.00	3.00	2.51	0.42
Total	1.67	3.00	2.50	0.33

Notes: M = mean, SD = standard deviation.

As shown in Table 4, an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to examine gender differences in skills related to seeking a mediator for reconciliation. The results indicated no statistically significant gender differences in seeking a mediator for reconciliation, with boys and girls reporting identical mean scores ($M = 2.42$ for both groups, $p = .985$). Similarly, no significant differences were found in reporting conflicts objectively, although girls demonstrated a slightly higher mean score ($M = 2.49$) than boys ($M = 2.41$), $p = .175$. However, a statistically significant gender difference emerged in identifying the causes of conflict, with girls scoring significantly higher ($M = 2.54$) than boys ($M = 2.44$), $p = .033$. No significant gender difference was observed in knowing the contact information for a counselor or therapist, as both boys and girls reported the same mean score ($M = 2.10$, $p = .992$).

Table 4. Comparison Test between Gender and Skills in Seeking a Mediator for Reconciliation

Variable	Boy (Mean)	Girl (Mean)	p-value
Seeking a mediator for reconciliation	2.42	2.42	0.985
Reporting conflicts objectively	2.41	2.49	0.175
Identifying the causes of conflict	2.44	2.54	0.033
Knowing the contact information for a counselor or therapist	2.10	2.10	0.992

As shown in Table 5, an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to examine gender differences in skills related to compromising with friends. The results revealed a statistically significant gender difference in *agreeing on areas of compromise*, with girls reporting higher mean scores ($M = 2.44$) than boys ($M = 2.31$), $p = .017$. Similarly, a significant difference was observed in *empathizing with thoughts and behaviors of friends*, where girls scored significantly higher ($M = 2.66$) than boys ($M = 2.57$), $p = .042$. However, no statistically significant gender difference was found in *jointly developing a solution that benefits both*, although girls reported a slightly higher mean score ($M = 2.55$) than boys ($M = 2.48$), $p = .136$.

Table 5. Comparison Test between Gender and Skills in Compromising with Friends

Variable	Boy (Mean)	Girl (Mean)	p-value
Agreeing on areas of compromise	2.31	2.44	0.017
Empathizing with thoughts and behaviors of friends	2.57	2.66	0.042
Jointly developing a solution that benefits both	2.48	2.55	0.136

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine grade-level differences in skills related to seeking a mediator for reconciliation. The results indicated statistically significant differences across grade levels in seeking a mediator for reconciliation, $p = .003$, with Grade 7 students reporting the highest mean score ($M = 2.49$), followed closely by Grades 6 and 9 ($M = 2.46$ for both groups), whereas Grade 8 students reported the lowest score ($M = 2.27$). Similarly, significant grade-level differences were observed in reporting conflicts objectively, $p < .001$, with Grade 7 students again demonstrating the highest mean score ($M = 2.62$), followed by Grade 8 ($M = 2.49$), Grade 9 ($M = 2.36$), and Grade 6 ($M = 2.33$). In contrast, no statistically significant grade-level difference was found in identifying the causes of conflict, although Grade 8 ($M = 2.55$) and Grade 7 ($M = 2.54$) students reported slightly higher mean scores than Grade 9 ($M = 2.47$) and Grade 6 students ($M = 2.39$), $p = .087$. A statistically significant difference was also identified in knowing the contact information for a counselor or therapist, $p = .036$, with Grade 7 students reporting the highest mean score ($M = 2.14$), followed closely by Grade 9 ($M = 2.13$) and Grade 6 ($M = 2.12$), while Grade 8 students showed the lowest mean score ($M = 1.92$).

Table 6. Comparison Test between Grade and Skills in Seeking a Mediator for Reconciliation

Variable	Grade 6 (Mean)	Grade 7 (Mean)	Grade 8 (Mean)	Grade 9 (Mean)	p-value
Seeking a mediator for reconciliation	2.46	2.49	2.27	2.46	0.003
Reporting conflicts objectively	2.33	2.62	2.49	2.36	<0.001
Identifying the causes of conflict	2.39	2.54	2.55	2.47	0.087
Knowing the contact information for a counselor or therapist	2.12	2.14	1.92	2.13	0.036

As shown in Table 7, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine grade-level differences in skills related to compromising with friends. The results revealed a statistically significant difference in agreeing on areas of compromise, $p = .015$, with Grade 7 students reporting the highest mean score ($M = 2.50$), followed by Grade 9 ($M = 2.38$), Grade 8 ($M = 2.36$), and Grade 6 students ($M = 2.26$). In contrast, no statistically significant grade-level differences were observed in empathizing with thoughts and behaviors of friends, although Grade 7 students reported the highest mean score ($M = 2.68$), followed by Grade 6 ($M = 2.63$), Grade 9 ($M = 2.60$), and Grade 8 students ($M = 2.54$), $p = .234$. Similarly, no statistically significant difference was found in jointly developing a solution that benefits both, despite Grade 9 ($M = 2.49$) and Grade 8 ($M = 2.45$) students reporting higher mean scores than Grade 6 and Grade 7 students (both $M = 2.00$), $p = .130$.

Table 7. Comparison Test between Grade and Skills in Compromising with Friends

Variable	Grade 6 (Mean)	Grade 7 (Mean)	Grade 8 (Mean)	Grade 9 (Mean)	p-value
Agreeing on areas of compromise	2.26	2.50	2.36	2.38	0.015
Empathizing with thoughts and behaviors of friends	2.63	2.68	2.54	2.60	0.234
Jointly developing a solution that benefits both	2.48	2.55	2.45	2.49	0.130

4. Discussion

This study examined secondary school students' conflict resolution skills, revealing generally high levels among students. However, differences were observed between male and female students, as well as between students of different grades, in certain specific skills.

Research shows that secondary school students can improve conflict resolution skills through targeted educational programs. Integrating conflict resolution training into academic curricula enhances students' understanding and use

of strategies while supporting academic success (Stevahn et al., 1997; Stevahn et al., 1996). Interactive drama and role-play activities reduce aggression and build communication skills (Graves et al., 2007). Training in nonviolent strategies also strengthens problem-solving abilities and attitudes towards aggression (Bretherton et al., 1993). These programs, implemented through literature courses, standalone initiatives, or peer mediation, demonstrate effective ways to teach conflict resolution (Graves et al., 2007; Stevahn et al., 1997; Stevahn et al., 1996).

Girls in secondary schools may perform better than boys in identifying conflict causes due to various differences. Research shows that girls often have higher emotional intelligence, particularly in recognizing emotions and understanding relationships, which helps them detect conflict causes more effectively (Alarcón et al., 2018). Socialization emphasizing communication and relationships enhances their awareness of relational nuances, while boys are often encouraged to focus on action-oriented responses rather than reflection (Shahmohammadi, 2014). Girls' empathy and collaboration skills enable them to understand different perspectives and identify disagreements' root causes, whereas boys may approach conflicts more competitively (Türk & Tümnüklü, 2016). Girls also excel in verbal and analytical skills essential for understanding interpersonal issues, while boys often prioritize quick solutions, limiting deeper analysis (Alarcón et al., 2018). Additionally, educational systems and training programs may favor girls' communication styles, enhancing their skills further, while boys may struggle due to differences in behavioral and cognitive approaches (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Girls in secondary schools often perform better than boys in agreeing on areas of compromise due to various factors. Girls' empathy and relationship focus make them more willing to prioritize mutual understanding and maintain harmony through collaboration and compromise (Alarcón et al., 2018). From a young age, they are socialized to value cooperation, communication, and nurturing behaviors, fostering a mindset geared toward resolving conflicts amicably, while boys are often socialized for assertiveness and competitiveness (Türk & Tümnüklü, 2016). Girls frequently use non-confrontational strategies, focusing on dialogue and compromise instead of adversarial approaches, which improves their ability to find common ground (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Their strong verbal communication skills help them articulate perspectives clearly and listen effectively, enhancing negotiation and problem-solving abilities (Shahmohammadi, 2014). Boys may approach conflicts with a dominance-oriented mindset, seeking win-lose outcomes, whereas girls prioritize equality and fairness, fostering a win-win approach (Lindsay, 1998). Girls' sensitivity to social and emotional dynamics also enables them to identify shared goals and craft compromises that meet both parties' needs (Turnuklu et al., 2010).

Girls in secondary schools often score higher than boys in empathizing with their friends' thoughts and behaviors due to various factors. Research shows that girls generally have greater emotional intelligence, including stronger empathy and awareness of others' perspectives, which enhances their ability to understand peers (Alarcón et al., 2018). Socialization encourages girls to value relationships and emotional connections from a young age, fostering their ability to consider others' feelings (Shahmohammadi, 2014). Girls typically develop verbal and interpersonal skills earlier and more deeply than boys, enabling them to engage in meaningful conversations, listen actively, and interpret emotional cues (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). They are also more attuned to non-verbal signals, such as facial expressions and tone, which are essential for empathizing with others (Türk & Tümnüklü, 2016). Female friendships often involve emotional closeness and sharing, promoting a stronger capacity for empathy, while boys' friendships may focus more on activities than emotional connection (Rutherford & Arllen, 1997). Hormonal changes during adolescence enhance emotional processing in girls, particularly in brain areas linked to empathy and social understanding (Turnuklu et al., 2010). Additionally, boys' competitive social dynamics may reduce their focus on empathy, while girls tend to prioritize collaboration and support, creating an environment that fosters empathy (Lindsay, 1998).

Differences in conflict resolution skills, particularly seeking a mediator for reconciliation, among secondary school students across grades can be attributed to various factors. Younger students may lack the emotional maturity or communication skills needed to seek mediation, while older students benefit from improved empathy, decision-making, and cognitive abilities, enabling more effective use of mediation (Bickmore, 2001). Peer mediation training significantly enhances these skills, but access to such programs often varies by grade, with trained students demonstrating higher self-efficacy and conflict resolution abilities (Türk & Yılmaz, 2020). Disparities in understanding and using mediation processes are evident, with older students typically receiving more targeted integration of conflict resolution skills into their curricula, increasing their likelihood of employing mediation strategies (Stevahn et al., 1996). Older students also tend to have stronger peer networks that normalize mediation, whereas younger students may rely more on adult intervention due to a less developed peer mediation culture (Smith et al., 2002). Despite its benefits, students across grades express a need for broader awareness and availability of mediation training in schools (García-Raga et al., 2017).

The differences in the ability to report conflicts objectively among secondary school students across grades can be explained by developmental and educational factors. Older students typically have better emotional regulation and cognitive maturity, allowing for more objective conflict reporting, which is supported by the link between moral and intellectual development and conflict resolution skills (Levy, 1989). Aggression, which can lead to biased reporting, generally decreases with age, contributing to improved objectivity in older grades (Bretherton et al., 1993). Structured conflict resolution programs, often introduced in higher grades, enhance students' understanding of conflict dynamics and improve their ability to report conflicts without bias (Johnson et al., 1994). Prosocial behavior and cognitive problem-solving skills, more developed in older students, further support accurate and unbiased conflict reporting (Battistich et al., 1989). Additionally, older students benefit from established social norms and peer mediation systems that promote objective reporting, whereas younger students may rely on authority figures, potentially introducing bias (Shahmohammadi, 2014). Peaceful conflict resolution programs are also more commonly and effectively implemented in middle and high school, fostering better skills in unbiased conflict reporting among older students (DuRant et al., 2001).

Differences in secondary school students' knowledge of counselor or therapist contact information across grades can be attributed to developmental, educational, and institutional factors. Older students typically have greater access to counseling services as schools prioritize these resources during critical milestones like college preparation and career planning (Bryant & Nicolas, 2011). High school counselors often engage in direct, individualized guidance, making their contact information more familiar to older students, while younger students may rely on general announcements or indirect communication about these services (Akos et al., 2009). Cognitive and emotional maturity in older students enhances their self-advocacy skills and understanding of available resources, including how to contact counselors (Brown et al., 1990). Mental health awareness and conflict resolution programs are more commonly integrated into curricula for upper grades, further increasing older students' awareness of counselors and their roles (Poynton et al., 2021). Additionally, older students often view counselors as key resources for critical life decisions, fostering a proactive approach to seeking support, while younger students may see counselors as less relevant to their immediate needs (Gelso & Karl, 1974).

Differences in the ability to agree on areas of compromise during conflict resolution among secondary school students across grades can be attributed to developmental, experiential, and educational factors. Older students generally demonstrate more advanced perspective-taking and moral reasoning, enabling them to identify and agree on compromises more effectively than younger students (Levy, 1989). Structured conflict resolution programs, more common in middle and high school, improve students' negotiation skills, teaching them strategies to maximize mutual benefits through compromise (Johnson et al., 1997). Greater experience with peer relationships and conflicts in higher grades also enhances older students' understanding of compromise as a key strategy for maintaining relationships (Owens et al., 2005). Conflict resolution curricula are often more prevalent in upper grades, providing students with tools for finding common ground and making trade-offs (Roush & Hall, 1993). Social expectations and peer modeling further encourage collaborative strategies like compromise, with these tendencies becoming stronger as students mature (Hatun & Serin, 2021). Additionally, peer mediation programs, frequently introduced in later grades, emphasize cooperative problem-solving and have been shown to enhance students' ability to resolve conflicts constructively (Johnson et al., 1995).

Studying and applying conflict resolution skills among secondary school students benefits both the students and the broader educational community. Understanding these skills enables educators to design interventions that foster positive peer relationships, reduce bullying, and promote harmony (Johnson et al., 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Enhanced conflict resolution abilities help create a supportive learning environment, reducing disruptions and improving academic outcomes (Crosnoe et al., 2010). These skills also prepare students for personal and professional success by teaching negotiation, empathy, and collaboration (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Additionally, conflict resolution education reduces physical and verbal aggression, contributing to a safer and more inclusive school environment (Roush & Hall, 1993).

This study has several limitations. As a cross-sectional study, it cannot establish causality, which future research should aim to address. Additionally, the study focused on a fixed sample of secondary school students. Future studies could improve upon this by including larger and more diverse sample populations for comparison.

5. Conclusion

This study offers valuable insights into the conflict resolution skills of secondary school students in Vietnam, focusing on their abilities to seek mediation and compromise in interpersonal conflicts. Findings show that students

generally demonstrate moderate to high proficiency in these skills, with differences observed by gender and grade level. Female students exhibited stronger abilities in identifying conflict causes, empathizing, and agreeing on compromises, likely due to socialization patterns and higher emotional intelligence. Older students showed greater proficiency, benefiting from emotional maturity and exposure to structured conflict resolution training. The results highlight the importance of integrating conflict resolution education into school curricula to enhance negotiation, empathy, and communication skills. Such programs not only improve the school environment but also support academic achievement and emotional well-being. However, the study's cross-sectional design and specific demographic limit the generalizability of its findings. Future research should employ longitudinal methods and include broader, more diverse samples to deepen understanding of these skills. The study also underscores the importance of conflict resolution education in fostering harmonious relationships and equipping students with essential life skills to manage social and academic challenges effectively.

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Authors contributions

L.H.M. conceived and designed the study. P.T.T.N. coordinated the data collection and contributed to data acquisition. L.H.M., P.T.T.N., H.T.N.N. performed the data analysis and drafted the manuscript. All authors contributed to the interpretation of the findings, critically revised the manuscript, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Obtained.

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