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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **“Peace For P’s”: Interpersonal Conflict Management Styles of Students in Three Teacher Education Special Projects**

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**| ABSTRACT**

This descriptive research aimed to identify the varied conflict management styles among WVSU students enrolled in three teacher education special projects. The respondents were selected using the random sampling method. A Filipino-based standard questionnaire checklist developed by the Miriam College Center for Peace Education on interpersonal conflict management styles was utilized. Results revealed that ESGP-PA (4P’s granter) and the Diploma on ECE had a “problem solving” conflict management style as an entire group or when classified according to certain categories. The Associate in ECE possessed “aggression” towards their interpersonal conflict management as an entire group and when classified according to certain categories. No significant differences were noted in the respondents’ interpersonal conflict management styles when classified according to certain categories. Therefore, the dominant style employed by the two special projects is problem-solving, and one is aggression. As a recommendation, there is a need to propose a Peace Education Program that places more emphasis on the effective problem-solving process in facing conflicts with peers, future co-workers, and other people for better interpersonal relationships.

**| KEYWORDS**

Interpersonal conflict management styles, special project, survey, teacher education.

**| ARTICLE DOI:** [10.32996/bjtep.2022.1.2.3](https://doi.org/10.32996/bjtep.2022.1.2.3)

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### **1. Introduction**

Many of the major dilemmas of our time relate to the issue of peace and conflict. It is therefore fitting and significant that the United Nations has proclaimed the present decade, 2001 – 2010, as the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. Indeed, the first decade of our new century has been full of horrors of war and other forms of violence.

Now, as we begin the 21st century, we are challenged to replace the culture of violence with a culture of peace thus, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) #16 of the United Nations center on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institution (United Nation).

Attaining a global culture of peace is a process that needs a more intentional and systematic peace education. Consequently, attaining the latter requires that school managers, who are at the heart of the educational process, be prepared to educate for peace, starting from the intrapersonal to the interpersonal level. In the Philippines, Executive Order No. 570 of President Arroyo urged CHED and DepEd to Institutionalize Peace Education in both teacher and basic education to deescalate conflict and promote peaceable living (Malacañang Records Office, Office of the President of the Philippines, 2006).

Conflict is an inescapable fact of life. It is something that we experience in our daily lives. In one way or another, all of us have probably experienced conflicts in our relationships – with our classmates, friends, peers, parents, siblings, spouses, children, teachers, colleagues at work, and neighbors, among others.

Outcomes of conflict depend on how disputants handle this conflict. In many instances, conflicts have had undesirable results. At

the global level, they have caused suffering and death for millions of people. On the personal level, relationships have deteriorated and have broken down as a result. Thus, conflict is a situation that is feared by many.

Fortunately, conflict is a situation that can be managed and resolved constructively. Remaining in a hostile situation is a choice rather than a destiny. If handled creatively, hostile parties can find opportunities to improve their situation or relationship. What is essential is the knowledge and skill of conflict management and resolution.

This study explored a survey data on the current interpersonal conflict management style of students in the three special programs of teacher education at WVSU due to the contextualization of teacher education as stipulated in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers Domain 3 on Diversity of Learners and Domain 6 which is on Community Linkages and Professional Engagement (PPST, 2017), the institutionalization of Peace Education in higher education and the current peace and security issues of the world.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 The Research Design**

This descriptive survey research aimed to identify the varied conflict management styles among special project students of teacher education at WVSU. A descriptive survey presents facts or current situations concerning the nature of a group of persons, a number of objects, or a class of events and may include the procedure of induction, analysis, classification, enumeration, or measurement (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2002).

### **2.2 The Respondents**

The respondents of this study were the education students coming from ESGP-PA, Associate in ECE, and Diploma in ECE. They were selected using the random sampling method. Twenty-five (25%) percent of the total population for each program was utilized as a sample population.

### **2.3 The Instrument**

To gather data needed for this research, a Filipino-based standard questionnaire checklist developed by the Miriam College Center for Peace Education on interpersonal conflict management styles was utilized with permission from the author.

### **2.4 Procedure**

To accomplish the research goals, the questionnaire attempted to measure the general conflict management style of students when confronted with situations of conflict. The research setting was on the WVSU main campus.

To facilitate the process, permission to conduct the study was sought from the office of the dean. The respondents were oriented and given the consent form for the research project. Instructions were given before the respondents started answering the questionnaire. Upon completion, it was carefully checked to see to it that no items were missed.

In cases where the participants missed some items, they were requested to answer such. The researchers then scored all the questionnaires and placed the individual scores on the tally sheet. The result of each group determined their conflict management styles. The data were tallied, computed, processed, analyzed, and interpreted using the CPE-ICMSQs. (Center for Peace Education-Interpersonal Conflict Management Styles Questionnaire scoring)

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the ESGPPA Teacher Education Grantees**

Data in Table 1 showed that as an entire group ( $M = 2.54$ ,  $SD = .27$ ) and when classified according to sex, sibling rank, and place of residence, the ESGPPA Teacher Education Grantees' interpersonal conflict management style was "problem solving". This was revealed by the obtained mean scores, which fell within the 2.35 – 3.00 range.

The standard deviations, which ranged from .18 - .45, revealed the narrow dispersion of the means, indicating the students' homogeneity in terms of their interpersonal conflict management style when they were grouped and when classified according to sex, sibling rank, and place of residence.

The following were the findings of the study:

When taken as an entire group, ESGP-PA students have employed a "Problem-solving" interpersonal conflict management style. Problem-solving can produce the best possible outcome but must be based on sufficient information (Noorani, 2014). The study

by Sumitha S. & Jose R. (2016) concluded that problem solving skills are essential in managing life with courage. The same reality occurs in the university life of students.

Table 1: *Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the ESGPPA Teacher Education Grantees*

Variable	N	M	Description	SD
Entire Group	16	2.54	Problem Solving	.27
Sex				
Male	8	2.54	Problem Solving	.33
Female	8	2.53	Problem Solving	.22
Sibling Rank				
First Child	3	2.44	Problem Solving	.18
Second Child	4	2.62	Problem Solving	.45
Third Child	4	2.47	Problem Solving	.18
Fourth Child	5	2.58	Problem Solving	.27
Place of Residence				
Urban	3	2.62	Problem Solving	.37
Rural	13	2.52	Problem Solving	.26

Note: 1.00 – 1.67=avoidance; 1.68 – 2.34 =aggression; 2.35 – 3.00=problem solving

*Differences in the Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the ESGPPA Teacher Education Grantees When They Were Classified According to Sex, and Place of Residence*

The t-test results in Table 2 revealed that the students did not differ significantly in terms of their interpersonal conflict management style when they were classified according to sex,  $t(14) = .115, p > .05$ , and place of residence,  $t(14) = .607, p > .05$ .

There is no significant difference in the interpersonal conflict management style of the students when classified according to sex, sibling rank, and place of residence. Conflict happens all the time, and for the ESGGPA Teacher Education Grantees, there are opportunities to improve themselves and their relationships with others.

This conforms with Hicks' contention that people are born as problem solvers. Thus, regardless of sex, sibling rank, and place of residence, the ESGGPA would opt to overcome the challenges by finding constructive ways to search for solutions.

However, the study of Jose and Thomas (2011) seems to contradict the current findings of the study. The said study of Jose and Thomas (2011) has indicated that there existed a significant difference in the problem solving ability of secondary school learners with respect to gender, locality, and type of school.

That is, the boys had higher problem solving abilities than the girls, and the problem solving ability of rural school students was greater than their counterparts in the urban schools. Moreover, private school students had significantly higher problem solving abilities when compared to government school students.

Table 2: *t*-test Results on the Differences in the Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the ESGPPA Teacher Education Grantees When They Were Classified According to Sex and Place of Residence

Variable	N	M	df	t	Sig
Sex					
Male	8	2.54	14	.115	.252
Female	8	2.53			
Place of Residence					
Urban	3	2.62	14	.607	.598
Rural	13	2.52			

*Differences in the Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the ESGPPA Teacher Education Grantees When They Were Classified According to Sibling Rank*

The One-Way Analysis of Variance (One-Way ANOVA) in Table 3 showed that the students did not differ significantly in terms of their interpersonal conflict management style when classified according to sibling rank,  $F(3, 12) = .319$ ,  $p > .05$ .

Table 3: *One-Way ANOVA Results on the Differences in the Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the ESGPPA Teacher Education Grantees When They Were Classified According to Sibling Rank*

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	.081	3	.027	.319	.811
Within Groups	1.011	12	.084		
Total	1.092	15			

*Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the Associate in Early Childhood Education Students*

Generally, the students' interpersonal conflict management style was "aggression" ( $M = 2.20$ ,  $SD = .39$ ). This was also true among students who were males ( $M = 1.79$ ,  $SD = .25$ ), first child ( $M = 2.12$ ,  $SD = .25$ ), second child ( $M = 2.21$ ,  $SD = .43$ ), sixth child ( $M = 1.72$ ,  $SD = .40$ ), and those whose place of residence was rural ( $M = 2.17$ ,  $SD = .38$ ).

However, the following groups of students had "problem solving" as their interpersonal conflict management style: female ( $M = 2.36$ ,  $SD = .33$ ), fourth child ( $M = 2.50$ ,  $SD = .31$ ), and those who came from urban ( $M = 2.37$ ,  $SD = .60$ ).

As a whole, aggression is the conflict management style of the students in the model class. They consider competition as a strategy for imposing or forcing a solution to a conflict using authority (Sarenson, 1999). As portrayed by Thomas and Kilman, maker of the Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument, cited by Eidermann (2006), competition is a power-driven mode that is high in assertiveness and low in cooperativeness. The parties involved are placed in a win/lose relationship where one attempts to achieve his/her goals at the expense of another.

Generally, highly assertive personalities often fall back on competition as a conflict management strategy, according to Dontigney (2018) in his article, Five Conflict Management Strategies. These people use this strategy to make quick decisions, especially during an emergency, on important issues when unpopular courses of action need implementation like enforcing unpopular rules or imposing discipline and when there is a need to protect oneself from people who take advantage of noncompetitive behavior. (<http://www.civilservice.louisiana.gov/files/divisions/training/manuals/>)

The researchers observed that the members of the class are leaders in school and community organizations. Some are officers of the West Visayas State University (WVSU) Student Council (USC), others of the College of Education (COE) Education Student Council (ESC), still others of the homeroom organization, while others are officers of the Sanggunian Kabataan (SK) in their

community or barangay. As leaders, one of their characteristics is being assertive decision-makers (Plowman 1981 cited by Davis and Rimm 1994). Because of this nature, they are perceived to be aggressive. They do what is necessary to get the job done, said Deb Ingino (2015) in the article the Aggressive Leader.

The result that the male students use aggression as a conflict management style is confirmed by Owens, 1996 as cited by Shute and Charlton, 2017 stating that “overt anger includes aggressive behavior and argument, and verbal attacks on the other party.” Such behaviors are consonant with male stereotypes and have been consistently shown by aggression research to be displayed more by boys than girls. Based on the exploratory study conducted by Havenga, the males or the masculine individuals use the dominant (competitive) conflict-handling style to settle conflicts. In this study, the dominating behavior appears consistent with a masculine gender role.

Most siblings use aggression as a conflict resolution strategy. This destructive way is used when children escalate oppositional tactics and reciprocate one another’s hurtful actions (Katz, Kramer, & Gottman, 1992; Perlman & Ross, 2005; Phinney, 1986; Vuchhinich, 1987, as cited by Shalash. In the same study conducted by Shalash, Ross, Ross, Stein, and Trabasso, 2006, it was found that opposition and using hostile actions while attempting to resolve conflicts risk harming sibling relationships.

Students who hail from rural areas use aggression as a conflict resolution technique. The greater probability of this adoption is the fact that the rural area is characterized by primary group relations and interactions. The community here is described as intimate, private, and exclusive living and familistick. Members are bound to the community and work for its interests. There is a high degree of conformity with the norms, values, moral ideas, and other expectations of the group. Competition is also present. (Almeda, Bilbao, Cabag, Delfin, Handa, Prizas, Solis, Tan 2002)

On the other hand, the females and the 4<sup>th</sup> child chose problem solving as a conflict resolution technique. Girls are described by Balliao and Loreiga (2004) to be more delicate, more fine-featured, softer, and smaller, and they bring this nature into adulthood. Because of this, a popular stereotype of women is that they are more cooperative and pleasant in negotiations than men, explained Robbins and Judge (2010). In the study, Gender and Age Differences in Conflict. Management Within Small Business by Havenga, it is stated that females use specifically obliging and avoiding conflict-handling styles.

According to Almeda et al., 2002, Students from urban communities are characterized by a homogeneity of cultures and a high degree of specialization and interdependence. Because of this, problem-solving strategy is used by them to resolve conflicts.

The data are shown in Table 4.

*Table 4: Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the Associate in Early Childhood Education Students*

Variable	N	M	Description	SD
Entire Group	14	2.20	Aggression	.39
Sex				
Male	4	1.79	Aggression	.25
Female	10	2.36	Problem Solving	.33
Sibling Rank				
First Child	4	2.12	Aggression	.25
Second Child	4	2.21	Aggression	.43
Fourth Child	4	2.50	Problem Solving	.31
Sixth Child	2	1.72	Aggression	.40
Place of Residence				
Urban	2	2.37	Problem Solving	.60
Rural	12	2.17	Aggression	.38

Note: 1.00 – 1.67= avoidance; 1.68 – 2.34=aggression; 2.35 – 3.00 =problem solving

*Differences in the Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the Associate in Early Childhood Education Students When They Were Classified According to Sex and Place of Residence*

The *t*-test results in Table 5 revealed that the students did not differ significantly in terms of their interpersonal conflict management style when they were classified according to sex,  $t(12) = 3.068$ ,  $p > .05$ , and place of residence,  $t(12) = .662$ ,  $p > .05$ . The study by Salleh & Safarali (2013), entitled *An Analysis of Interpersonal Conflict Management Styles Practiced by Academic Administrators at Islamic Higher Education Institution in Malaysia*, revealed that there is no significant difference in practicing five interpersonal conflict management styles by academic administrators in terms of sex, age, job position, academic status, and work experience.

The study of Haar and Krahe, 1999; Kurdek, 1987 cited by Shute and Charlton (2006), with the title *Anger or Compromise? Adolescents' Conflict Resolution to Gender and Type of Peer Relationship* showed that there are no reported gender differences in conflict resolution between girls and boys. One possible reason for these mixed results is that the way in which adolescents resolve conflicts with peers is influenced by the particular type of peer relationship.

Table 5: *t*-test Results on the Differences in the Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the Associate in Early Childhood Education Students When They Were Classified According to Sex and Place of Residence

Variable	N	M	df	<i>t</i>	Sig
Sex					
Male	4	1.79	12	3.068	.620
Female	10	2.35			
Place of Residence					
Urban	2	2.37	12	.662	.453
Rural	12	2.17			

#### *Differences in the Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the Associate in Early Childhood Education Students When They Were Classified According to Sibling Rank*

The One-Way Analysis of Variance (One-Way ANOVA) in Table 6 showed that the students did not differ significantly in terms of their interpersonal conflict management style when classified according to sibling rank,  $F(3, 10) = 2.380$ ,  $p > .05$ .

Cohen, as cited by Philpoff in the article, *How to Manage Conflict Between Your Siblings*, seemed to contradict this result by saying that gender, birth order, and personality are factors that lead to rivalry and conflict between siblings.

Table 6: *One-Way ANOVA Results on the Differences in the Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the Associate in Early Childhood Education Students When They Were Classified According to Sibling Rank*

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig
Between Groups	.854	3	.285	2.380	.131
Within Groups	1.196	10	.120		
Total	2.049	13			

### **3.2 Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the Diploma in Early Childhood Education Students**

#### *Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the Diploma in Early Childhood Education Grantees*

Data in Table 6 showed that as an entire group ( $M = 2.53$ ,  $SD = .32$ ) and when classified according to sex, sibling rank, and place of residence, the Diploma in Early Childhood Education Students interpersonal conflict management style was "problem solving". This was revealed by the obtained mean scores, which fell within the 2.35 – 3.00 range.

The standard deviations, which ranged from .21 - .41, revealed the narrow dispersion of the means, indicating the students' homogeneity in terms of their interpersonal conflict management style when they were grouped as a whole and when classified according to sex, sibling rank, and place of residence.

The following were the findings of the study:

When taken as an entire group, students in Diploma in ECE employed a "Problem-solving" interpersonal conflict management style. This can be supported by Eben (2000), which shows that problem solving approaches to conflict resolution generate more agreements, more win-win outcomes, more outcome satisfaction in the short and long terms, and more durable solutions. Research also shows that problem solving approaches are more likely to be used by people in fair and cohesive organizations that recognize success and are open to innovation. Problem solving is more likely when parties are concerned for the other's welfare, as well as their own.

When grouped according to sex, place of residence, and sibling rank, "problem-solving" style in dealing with interpersonal conflicts; Research also shows that problem solving approaches are more likely to be used by people in fair and cohesive organizations that recognize success and are open to innovation. Problem solving is more likely when parties are concerned for the welfare of others, as well as their own. This is true because all the participants are working in an organization which is the school.

In addition, interpersonal conflict is a conflict that occurs between two or more individuals that work together in groups or teams (Wood et al., 2003 in Beheshtifar & Zare, 2013). This is a conflict that occurs between two or more individuals. Many individual differences lead to interpersonal conflict, including personalities, culture, attitudes, values, perceptions, and other differences (Elsayed-Elkhoully, 1996).

In Galace (2006), problem solving is having the inclination to find constructive ways to search for solutions to conflict. This style is often used when both the issue and the relationship are highly important to the person.

*Table 7: Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the Diploma in Early Childhood Education Students*

Variable	N	M	Description	SD
Entire Group	84	2.53	Problem Solving	.32
Sex				
Male	9	2.52	Problem Solving	.25
Female	75	2.53	Problem Solving	.33
Sibling Rank				
First Child	19	2.59	Problem Solving	.21
Second Child	25	2.50	Problem Solving	.38
Third Child	9	2.54	Problem Solving	.26
Fourth Child	16	2.54	Problem Solving	.37
Fifth Child	5	2.44	Problem Solving	.41
Sixth Child & Up	10	2.51	Problem Solving	.33
Place of Residence				
Urban	2	2.55	Problem Solving	.33
Rural	12	2.37	Problem Solving	.20

Note: 1.00 – 1.67= avoidance; 1.68 – 2.34= aggression; 2.35 – 3.00= problem solving  
*Differences in the Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the Diploma in Early Childhood Education Grantees When They Were Classified According to Sex and Place of Residence*

The *t*-test results in Table 7 revealed that the students' did not differ significantly in terms of their interpersonal conflict management style when they were classified according to sex, *t* (82) = .068, *p* > .05, and place of residence, *t* (82) = 1.639, *p* > .05.

There is no significant difference in the interpersonal conflict management style of the students when classified according to sex, sibling rank, and place of residence. The aforementioned findings did not jibe with the contention of Harper (2004) that individuals differ in the choice of interpersonal management conflict styles when sex, sibling rank, and place of residence are considered.

Table 8: *t*-test Results on the Differences in the Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the Diploma in Early Childhood Education Students When They Were Classified According to Sex and Place of Residence

Variable	N	M	df	t	Sig
Sex					
Male	4	1.79	82	.068	.273
Female	10	2.35			
Place of Residence					
Urban	2	2.37	82	1.639	.267
Rural	12	2.17			

*Differences in the Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the Diploma in Early Childhood Education Grantees When They Were Classified According to Sibling Rank*

The One-Way Analysis of Variance (One-Way ANOVA) in Table 9 showed that the students did not differ significantly in terms of their interpersonal conflict management style when classified according to sibling rank,  $F(5, 78) = .247, p > .05$ .

Table 9: *One-Way ANOVA Results on the Differences in the Interpersonal Conflict Management Style of the Diploma in Early Childhood Education Students When They Were Classified According to Sibling Rank*

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	.133	5	.027	.247	.940
Within Groups	8.372	78	.107		
Total	8.504	83			

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were deduced. The dominant style employed by the ESG-PPA Teacher Education Grantees is "Problem-solving". It is important to note that the findings of this study suggest that students have the inclination to find positive ways to settle disputes. Knowing that they are more mature in age and economically disadvantaged, they could not afford to give more problems to their parents and siblings. Thus, they opted to be more tolerant and respectful towards others and the environment.

Sex, sibling rank, and place of residence are not the factors that affect the interpersonal personal conflict management styles of the ESG-PPA Teacher Education Grantees. This finding has gained support so that they are more or less adjusted and flexible in their daily dealings, as evidenced by the fact that some had already worked before they continued their college education. The dominant style employed by the Diploma in Early Childhood Education (DIECE) students is "Problem-solving". This style is often used when both issues and relationships are important to the person. This is due to the fact that students in this program are all professionals and grown-ups who are exposed to the everyday challenges at home, church-based organizations, and school. Thus, they are inclined to find constructive ways of problem solving.

Sex, sibling rank, and place of residence did not influence the interpersonal personal conflict management styles of the Diploma in Early Childhood Education students. It can be said, therefore, that a DIECE student employs varied interpersonal conflict



management styles not because of gender, rank among siblings, or place of residence but because they are tolerant persons. This is evidenced by their involvement in NGOs and Church-based movements where good human relations are upheld.

The Associate in ECE Model Class had "aggression" as their interpersonal conflict management style. This can be deduced that they are more assertive since this style is defined as the tendency to compel others to yield (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). As the younger group among the three special projects, they have a strong need to control situations, and they tend to be overbearing and idealistic, as seen in their involvement in co-curricular work. They use this style when the issue is more important than the relationship with the adversary, when it is not really bad but needs to be tuned up and refined.

## **5. Recommendations**

The following are the recommendations.

First, conduct a Peace Education Program that places more emphasis on the effective problem-solving process in facing conflicts with peers, co-workers, and other people.

Second, studies may be conducted but will employ other variables such as looking into the family dynamics and emotional intelligence of students as a major contributing factor in managing conflicts.

Third, similar studies can be replicated in other teacher education institutions to determine the interpersonal conflict management styles of its stakeholders and then create a suitable project for healthy relationships.

And fourth, work out with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for the integration of Peace Education into other disciplines such as Criminal Justice, Journalism, Communication, and Marine/ Nautical Studies. Believing in the diversity of learners, we need to share with other disciplines Education for Peace to learn from it.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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