Gender and Age Differences in Conflict Resolution: A Case of Public Diploma Teacher Training Colleges in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties.

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ABSTRACT
Background: According to Deutsch et al., (2000),conflictsdevelopamong people indifferent social settings and human relationships (Fisher et al., 2000). It is an unavoidable part of life, and maneuvering through a relational conflict is a competence that everyone must learn (Scott, 2008).The purpose of this study was todetermine the gender and age disparitiesinacquisition of conflict resolution competences among teacher trainees in public diploma teacher training colleges in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties.
Materials and Methods: Target population for this study consisted of 6659 trainees from three public diploma teacher training colleges in the two Counties.The researcher selected 362 respondents from the target population, using stratified random sampling technique. The study applied Descriptive research design and was guided by the Social cognitive theory developed by Bandura. Data were collected using a standard psychometric scale developed by Dindigal, Vijayalaxmi and Aminabhavi (2007).A Psychosocial Competence Scale questionnaire was administered to the sampled trainees andthe results analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of a computer programme SPSS version 20.0.
Results: Analyzed data revealed that overall, female teacher trainees did better in resolving conflicts ($\bar{x}$ = 3.45) compared to their male counterparts ($\bar{x}$ =3.39). However,statistical analysis showed that there was no significant difference in the acquisition of conflict resolution skills between the two genders.Results also revealed that there is a statistically significant difference in the levels of conflict resolution between teacher trainees aged over 24 years ($\bar{x}$=3.45) and those of (21-24) years ($\bar{x}$=3.25). Hence age was found to be an important factor in acquisition of conflict resolution skills.
Conclusion: This researcher recommends that the tertiary institutions should allocate more time and resources into equipping especially the incoming students with conflict resolution and other life skills to help them manage the transition. They also need to sensitize the male trainees more on how to resolve conflictsamicably, while the females need more sensitization on assertiveness skills.
Key words: Gender; Conflict Resolution; Age; Disparities; Acquisition; Socialization

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I.   INTRODUCTION

Conflicts arise when people disagree on different issues. It is unavoidable in places of work since individuals have different personalities(Mc Namara, 2013). When properly managed, conflict contributes toinvaluable learning experiencesGhaffar, 2009). According to Fisher et al., (2000), conflict occurs when two or more people's goals or values are irreconcilable.It is characterized by attempts to manipulate each otherthrough aggression or anger. Though conflicts may insinuate a drawback, there are a number ofadvantages that could be drawn from the process. Conflict stimulates an awareness that there could be a problem.Deliberating through conflicting views could yield better solutions and managethe conflictmore efficiently (William & Joyce 1998).Thus acquisition of conflict resolution skills is essential.

Teacher training colleges consist of large numbers of students admitted from all parts of the country and with different beliefs, perceptions, backgrounds and ideologies. Thus, chances that conflicts may occur due to their different outlook on issues cannot be ruled out. When conflicts are handled correctly, it provides an opportunity for growth and strengthening the bond between the people involved. Since it is impossible to

eradicate conflicts completely, learning how to deal with it is importantin order to maintain healthy relationships. Thus, it is important to understand whether there are gender differences in conflict management among the teacher trainees. This understanding will assist institutions of higher learning in training and organizing programmes that will benefit students in dealing with conflicts amongst themselves.

Research on whethermen and women resolve conflicts differentlyhas yielded mixed results over the years. This maybe because "history, to a large extent has had the tendency to view theworld as opposites". This has led to the division of behavioral norms and roles accordingto sex. To start with, men are seen as being strong willed, forceful,bold and assertive, whilewomen are said to bevulnerable, passive,sentimental, nurturing andco-operative (Borisoff and Victor, 1998).In addition, women have been socialized to define their self-worth within relationship, and cultured to disregard personal pursuits for the benefit of others. Men on the other hand are trained to define themselves on the basis of control and domination and aresocialized to be assertive, aggressive and independent (Gilligan, 1982; Eagly andKarau 1991)

Black (1994) noted that gender differences existed in conflict resolution tasks between adolescents and their best friends. Females scored lower in withdrawal but higher in support-validation and communication abilities than males. Miller, Danaher and Forbes (1986) also observed that during play sessions, males were more inclined to using intimidation or physical force to resolve strife whereas females found it more feasible to use a mitigating approach, including proposing a compromise, changing the topic, clarifying the other person's emotions or leaving the situation. Males on the other hand have been observed to exhibit more candid, physical aggression while females have been said to inflict indirect, psychological discomfort on other people. Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz and Kaukianen (1992) suggest that a feasible explanation for these findings is that females generally develop faster than males in social and verbal skills which are essential for indirect aggression. Bjorkqvist (1994) also noted that girls had a tendency to use both constructive conflict settlement and third-party mediations than males. The current researcher sought to investigate if these findings will be confirmed in the responses to the different items of the questionnaire.

Lindsay (2019) adds his voice to the same argument. He observed that males and females handle conflicts differently at work as is expected by the society. He reckons that the way males resolve conflictis more goal oriented and candid. The researcher specifiesthat male managers are more debatable in their exchange with the employees. In addition, they are more focused on the job that is to be accomplished and tend to use authoritative terms when discussing the conflicts. The researcher sums up that male managers are less likely to play diplomatic roles but instead concentrate on how to resolve the strife. On the other hand, women resolve rivalry in a more process-oriented style.Additionally, they are said to be more democratic and mentor their employees on how to do the job than regulating them. This is especially evident whenthere are gender conflicts in the places of work.Moreover, they are more concernedabout the relationships and do all that they can to resolve the conflict.

However, Sorenson (1993) contradicts the above findings which assume that men are naturally competitive and women are accommodative and cooperative. Unlike the above findings, Sorenson's study suggests that some differences exist especially for managers who are experienced. When faced with the same situation, both experienced female and male managers, choose similar approaches in resolving a conflict. The researcher offers the following explanations. To start with, cultural norms have evolved where women are more accepted as managers. He also adds that women have come to terms with the fact that they have to perform just like men. Thus, though their psychological differences may recline them to act in a less combative manner when faced with conflict, they may have no choice but to assume the same aggressionas the situation demands. Thus the researcher concludes that in conflict management, little difference if any exists between the two genders. The current study sought to confirm if there are any gender differences in conflict resolution among teacher trainees.

However, Lampros (2008) advances yet another view to the above argument. He asserts that gender differences in conflict resolution cannot be generalized. Men and women will apply the style that is appropriate for a particular situation. He observed that in the patterns of withdrawing, forcing and confronting, there was no significant difference between the two genders. Statistical tests revealed that there was no relationship between gender and conflict resolution and that the two are independent. However, statistical analysis on compromising indicated that a significant difference exists between men (mean=3.20) and women (mean=3.45). Thus according to this researcher, other than compromising, all the other styles of conflict resolution are not influenced by gender.The current researcher therefore sought to establish if there are any gender differences in conflict resolution among the teacher trainees.

With respect to whether age influences conflict resolution styles, researchers have come up with mixed findings. Wafa (1997), in his researchobserved that age significantlyinfluences conflict resolution strategies. He states that as onegrows older, the age impacts on the roles he or she is supposed to play and significantlycontrols admissible behavior patterns. The researcher found that older Malaysians were less likely to withdraw from or avoid conflicting situations. There was however no significant difference in the use ofcollaborating and competing for all the age groups.Kiprono (2013) on the other hand established that there was no significant

relationship between acquisition of conflict resolution skills and age. In his research, he found thatamong the 15-16 year-old, 52.3% had a high score, 40.7% of those between 17-18 also had a high score while only 11.1% of those aged between 19-20 years had a high score. This means that for the older group of 19-20 years, 88.9% scored low compared to 47.7% of thosebetween 15-16 years. The current researcher endeavored to confirm or deny if age has a significant influence in the way teacher trainees resolved conflicts.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS
This research was carried out among teacher trainees from three public diploma teacher training colleges in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties from March 2021 to July 2021. A total of 362 trainees (both male and female) were involved in the study.

2.0 Research Design:
Descriptive research design was employed to assess the gender differences in conflict resolution among students in public diploma teacher training colleges in Nyeri and Nairobi Counties.According to Kothari (2004), descriptive studies are intended to collect data pertaining to the prevailing status of a phenomenon and draw deductions from the data collected without manipulating the research variables. Additionally, descriptive studies permit exploration of relationships between variables and make it possible for extensive collection of data over a wide area within a short period of time using the cross- sectional design (Kothari, 2004). Descriptive design was thus found to be most appropriate for the study in view of the variables of the study that did not require manipulation.

2.1 Population and Sample:
The Target population for the study consisted of 6659 trainees from three public diploma teacher training colleges in Nairobi and Nyeri Counties namely; KAGZ, KTTY and KISX. Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling technique were used to select the respondents from the target population. Stratified sampling technique is where the entire target population is divided into different subgroups or strata. This ensured that the heterogeneity characteristics of the population was captured. In this study the population was first stratified according to the three colleges. This enabled the researcher to compare their levels of conflict resolution skills. They were also stratified according to gender. This was done to ensure equal representation according to the population. The sample size drawn from each stratum was determined using Krejice & Morgan (1970) sampling tables. According to this table, a population of 6659 teacher trainees is adequately represented by a sample of 362 respondents. Since this sample was to be proportionately distributed in the 3 teacher training colleges according to the representation of each gender, the number of teacher trainees to be drawn from each of the colleges was computed. Table 1 summarizes the distribution of the respondents by gender.

Table 1: Sample Size of Teacher Trainees by Gender.

Name of College	Males	Females	Total
KAGZ	36	18	54
KTTY	121	68	189
KISX	46	73	119
Total	**203**	**159**	**362**

2.2 Procedure and methodology:
First, the researcher obtained informed written consent from the respondents. Data was then collected using the Dindigal & Aminabhavi (2007) Psychosocial Competence Scale which was adopted and modified by the researcher. The tool consisted of a likert scale with 5 items that gathered data relating to the respondents' acquisition of conflict resolution skills. The scores obtained were used to compute a mean score which was used to rate the learners' level of conflict resolution on a scale of 1 to 5. Respondents who scored below 3.00 were said to have a low level of the skill, scores between 3.00-3.99 were considered moderate andscores above 4.00 were considered to demonstrate a high level of conflict resolution. Data was analyzed by means of descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. The results were displayed using frequency tables and charts.

III. RESULTS
The researcher first sought to investigate the gender differences in conflict resolution among the teacher trainees. The respondents were provided with 5 items in a likert scale to indicate their opinion. The scale ranged from 1-5, with 5 denoting strongly agree (SA), 4- agree (A), 3-not sure (NS), 2-disagree (D) and 1-strongly disagree (SD). The midpoint of the scale was a score of 3. The analysis of the items was collapsed into Agree, Disagree and not sure. Therefore, any score below 3 denoted that respondent disagreed with the

statement while scores above 3 signified that respondent agreed with the statement. The scores obtained were used to compute a mean score ($\bar{x}$) of conflict resolution skills of the respondents on a scale of 1 to 5. Table 2 summarizes the results.

Table no2: Gender Differences in Conflict Resolution Among Teacher Trainees in the Diploma TTCs in Nyeri (rural) and Nairobi (urban)Counties.

Statement	Gender	SD	D	NS	A	SA	N	$\bar{x}$	SD
I try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both of us.	Male	9	20	46	98	30	203	3.59	1.00
	Female	4	11	28	85	31	159	3.81	.92
I try to show the logic and benefits of my positions.	Male	10	20	28	95	50	203	3.76	1.08
	Female	6	12	24	79	38	159	3.82	1.00
I try to find a position that is intermediate between his/hers and mine.	Male	11	18	88	81	5	203	3.25	.86
	Female	6	13	58	80	2	159	3.37	.81
I sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy.	Male	7	17	87	84	8	203	3.34	.83
	Female	4	6	89	58	2	159	3.30	.68
I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.	Male	20	33	75	72	3	203	3.02	.99
	Female	17	34	54	52	2	159	2.92	1.01
Overall Mean Score Males ($\bar{x}$ =3.39, SD=.58), Females ($\bar{x}$ =3.45, SD=.46									

The results indicated that overall, female teacher trainees performed better in resolving conflicts($\bar{x}$ = 3.45) than their male counterparts ($\bar{x}$ =3.39).The researcher noted that 128(63.05%) of the males and 116(72.96%) of their female counterparts agree they would try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both parties in resolving a conflict. Also, 145(71.43%) of the male trainees and 117(73.58%) of the females indicated that they would try to show the logic of their positions in a conflict situation. 86(42.36%) men and 82(51.57%) women would try to find a position that is intermediate between both parties. 92(45.32%) of the men and 60(37.74%) of the women would avoid taking positions that would create controversy. Finally, 75(36.95%) men and 54(33.96%) women would attempt to bring all concerns and issues immediately out in the open. These results show that women scored highly in trying to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both parties, show the logic and benefit of their position and also trying to find an intermediate position between them. However, they scored low in attempting to get all issues and concerns immediately in the open. This may imply that they are unable to assert themselves.

T-test Results

An independent sample t-test was then computed to establish whether there was a statistically significant difference in the mean levels of conflict resolution between males (Mean=3.39) and females (Mean=3.45). The difference is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). If the value in the Sig. (2-tailed) column is (p ≤ .05), then there is a statistically significant difference in the two means being compared. If the value in the Sig. (2-tailed) column is (p>.05), there is no statistically significant difference in the two means.The results are presented in Table 3.

Table no3: Comparison of Mean Levels of Conflict Resolution between male and female Teacher Trainees

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Conflict Resolution	Equal variances assumed	7.409	.007	-.911	360	.363	-.05119	.05621	-.16174	.05935
	Equal variances not assumed			-.936	359.923	.350	-.05119	.05468	-.15873	.05634

The findings indicated that the level of significance (p=.350) is more than the alpha value (α=.05). There is therefore no statistically significant difference in the levels of conflict resolution between the male and

female teacher trainees. The researcher thus concluded that the levels of conflict resolution between the males (Mean=3.39) and females (Mean=3.45) was largely the same.

Age Differences

The researcher also computed the differences in level of conflict resolution among teacher trainees of different age groups. The results are displayed in table 4

Table no4: Age Factor in Levels of Conflict Resolution Among the Teacher Trainees

Statement	Age Category	SD	D	NS	A	SA	n	x̄	SD
I try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both of us.	17-20	0	1	1	0	0	2	2.50	.71
	21-24	5	7	15	28	12	67	3.52	1.13
	Above 24	8	23	58	155	49	293	3.73	.92
I try to show the logic and benefits of my positions.	17-20	0	0	0	2	0	2	4.00	.00
	21-24	8	8	15	26	10	67	3.33	1.22
	Above 24	8	24	37	146	78	293	3.89	.98
I try to find a position that is intermediate between his/hers and mine.	17-20	0	1	0	1	0	2	3.00	1.41
	21-24	7	4	23	32	1	67	3.24	.99
	Above 24	10	26	123	128	6	293	3.32	.80
I sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy.	17-20	0	0	0	2	0	2	4.00	.00
	21-24	2	6	32	27	0	67	3.25	.75
	Above 24	9	17	144	113	10	293	3.33	.77
I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.	17-20	0	1	0	1	0	2	3.00	1.41
	21-24	8	12	26	19	2	67	2.93	1.03
	Above 24	29	54	103	104	3	293	2.99	.99
Overall Mean Scores (21-24) x̄ = 3. 25, (>24) x̄ =3.45									

The results indicated that overall, teacher trainees who were above 24 years of age performed better in resolving conflicts (x̄ = 3.45) than their counterparts in the (21-24) years of age group (x̄ =3.25). The implication could be that age influences how one resolves conflicts. It could also mean that as one grows older, age impacts on the responsibilitiesthat a person is supposed to perform and significantly regulates admissible behavior patterns.

T-test Results

An independent sample t-test was then computed to establish whether there was a statistically significant difference in the mean levels of conflict resolution between teacher trainees in the (21-24) years age bracket (x̄=3.25) and those in the (>24) years age category (x̄=3.45). The results are displayed in Table 5

Table no5: Comparison of Mean Levels of Conflict Resolution by age among Teacher Trainees

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Conflict Resolution	Equal variances assumed	1.260	.262	-2.817	358	.005	-.20088	.07130	-.34110	-.06065
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.633	91.883	.010	-.20088	.07629	-.35239	-.04936

The findings indicated that the level of significance (p=.005) is less than the alpha value (α=.05). There is therefore a statistically significant difference in the levels of conflict resolution between the two age groups of teacher trainees. The researcher thus concluded that age is an important factor in acquisition of conflict resolution skills and that older teacher trainees (>24) years have a higher level of conflict resolution (x̄=3.45)than their younger colleagues (21-24) years (x̄=3.25).

IV. DISCUSSION

Results of the study found that females had a higher score in conflict resolution ($\bar{x}$ =3.45) compared the males ($\bar{x}$ =3.39). These findings compare with thoseof Kiprono (2013) who found that 64.40% of males had low levels of conflict resolution implying that only 35.60% had high levels. He also observed that 52.10% of the females had low levels against 49.90% who had a high level of conflict resolution. Statistical tests established that there was a significant difference between the males and the females. The implication is that generally, males have a lower level of conflict resolution skills than females. When males lack enough conflict resolution skills, they result to other means to sort out issues which may not yield the best results. Conflict resolution has been rated as one of the high order skills. Johnson and Johnson (1995) noted thatstudents need to be taught how to manage conflicts peacefully. This is in order to make learning institutions, safer places to live in, improve the quality and creativeness of problem solving and ensure that future generations are well prepared to manage conflicts in a constructive way.

The researcher then computed the levels of conflict resolution for trainees of different age groups. Results established that trainees above 24 of age had a higher level ($\bar{x}$=3.45) than those between 21-24 years ($\bar{x}$=3.39). The researcher left out the results for those between 17-20 years because they were only 2 in number. The probable implication is that age is a factor in acquisition of life skills. It could also mean that due to the length of stay in the college, the older students had a longer time to interact with life skills education, thus the higher levels.

This contradicts Kiprono's findings. He observed that age was not significant in conflict resolution. In his study, the researcher found that among the 15-16 year-old, 52.3% had a high score, 40.7% of those between 17-18 also hada high score while only 11.1% of those between 19-20 years had a high score.This means that for the older group of 19-20 years, 88.9% scored low compared to 47.7% of those between 15-16 years.

The implication for the institutions of higher learning is that more time and resources could be allocated to equipping the first-year students with life skills. This would help themacquaint themselves with the skills early enough to be better prepared to manage the transition successfully before making mistakes that would disrupt their studies. However, on the issue of 'immediately getting all concerns in the open', the score for the female trainees was low ($\bar{x}$ =2.92). This may mean that women are not as assertive as men when faced with conflict. The probable reason is that women are socialized to be submissive and not aggressive. This is an area of concern. Assertiveness should be taught and modelled especially to the girl child. Many women go through gender-based violence and they are socialized not to 'ask questions' and to be submissive. Thus assertiveness training may need to be prioritized among the trainees and especially the women as they will need them to go through college and as they settle in relationships.

V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine age and gender differences in conflict resolution among teacher trainees. The results indicate that gender differences exist and that females performed better in conflict resolution ($\bar{x}$ =3.45) compared to the men ($\bar{x}$ =3.39). However, the women admitted that they are not comfortable with immediately bringing out issues and concerns in the open for discussion. This could put into question their assertiveness skills. The implication is that the GC department may need to organize and train women on assertiveness skills especially from year-one to enable them to handle relationships.

The findings for the men are also worth noting. Their conflict resolution skills were lower than for women ($\bar{x}$ =3.39). When men lack negotiation skills in conflict resolution, they usually turn to violence. The department may need to prioritize training on conflict resolution skills for the men.

The study also found that age is significant in acquisition of conflict resolution skills. This information would be useful to the curriculum developers and the GC teachers as they plan for the GC programmes.

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