

Relationship between Locus of Control and Conflict Resolution among Secondary School Students in Eldoret East District, Kenya

Jeniffer Kiprono

Kisii University, Department of Guidance and counseling

Abstract

Conflict is inevitable among people who live together and share a lot of things in common. Conflict is therefore neutral, natural and normal in organizations. It occurs because individuals are unique and have different opinions, convictions, desires and priorities. Pennebaker (1990) points out that, conflicts are a natural part of life and therefore a natural part of school life. Learning to deal constructively with conflict is a life-skill students need so that they can learn to resolve their own conflicts so that the atmosphere at school is more pleasant for all. Locus of control on the other hand, refers to a person's perception of personal control over their own behavior. Rotter (1996) contended that individuals with internal locus of control would continue to engage in activities that would reinforce the expectancy that their behaviors affected subsequent consequences. Essentially individual's locus of control would impact how they perceived and interacted within their surroundings. When individuals were introduced to novel experiences they would expect to react in a consistent level of cognitive processing. This paper sought to find out the relationship between conflict resolution and locus of control in secondary schools. The study focused on Schools in Eldoret district. Causal comparative (Ex-post facto) design was used in the study. From the results few students who had low levels of locus of control had low levels of conflict resolutions while those with high levels of locus of control had high levels of conflict resolution. However no significant relationship existed between locus of control and conflict resolution at least for this study.

Keywords: relationship, locus of control, conflict resolution

Introduction

Craighead and Nemeroff (2004) state that peers provide models and expectations, directions and reinforcements for learning to control ones impulses. Primarily, through interaction with ones' peers ego-centricism is lost and increased perspective taking ability is gained. It is related to ability to present and comprehend information, constructively resolve conflicts, willingly disclose personal information, help group problem solving and display positive attitudes towards others in the same situation. This supports the use of peer counselling in conflict resolution among students in secondary schools. When one experiences peer rejection one will feel loneliness and emotional distress while friendship and peer acceptance are related to social and emotional adjustment. Children adopt better to stressful situation when in presence of familiar peers.

Cohen (2002) states that conflict resolution efforts are most successful in schools in which, for lack of better expression, people feel cared for. Only when teachers and students feel valued, when they are engaged in the educational process, when their opinion are solicited and appreciated, will conflict resolution efforts have more than limited impact. From the literature, young people are uniquely suited to mediate their own conflict, and this accounts in part for peer mediation effectiveness in conflict resolution.

Newman, Murray and Lussier (2001) observe that when students are unsuccessful at resolving their conflicts with each other and their teachers, they may become aggressive. They note that students' conflicts with their peers generally stem from situations such as determining who sits where in the cafeteria, what game to play during recess, when to study and play, when to speak or listen, and who cleans up the mess in the classroom. The importance of such situations is not the existence of the conflict itself, but the ability to resolve it in a constructive manner.

Conflict is an intense interpersonal and or intrapersonal dissonance between two or more parties, based on incompatible goals, needs like the need for survival, it is the need for 'thrills' that drives them, the need for friendship or self-esteem may lie at the root of children's conflicts or conflict in the classroom, desires, values; these are cultural standards by which individual and group behaviour and thinking are judged as correct and appropriate. Values are at the heart of our deeply held beliefs and the goals that we pursue. Too many young people are caught up in conflicts every day that they do not know how to manage e.g. teasing to a process that addresses the success, jealousy, physical aggression, indirect and verbal victimization, overt anger, spreading rumors or dirty look.

There is evidence that locus of control is related to cognitive development. Locus of control orientation during childhood tends to be more external than locus of control orientation during adolescents and adulthood. Consequently locus of control during adolescence tends to be more internal than children yet, more external than Adults. Additionally, internal locus of control have been found to be related to abstract cognitive reasoning while external locus of control is related to concrete cognitive reasoning (Shute *et al.*, 1984). The development of locus of control stems from family culture, it is associated with family style and resources, cultural stability

and past experiences with effort leading to reward. Many internals have grown up with families that modeled typical beliefs. Most internals have been shown to come from families that focused on effort, education and responsibility. Parents typically gave their children rewards they had promised them.

Externals are typically associated with lower socio-economic status, because poor people frequently believe to have less control over their lives. Societies which experienced social unrest increase the expectancy of being out- of-control, so people in such societies become more external. A research by Schneewind (1995; cited in Schultz & Schultz, 2005) suggests that children in large single parent families headed by women are more likely to develop an external locus of control.

Schultz and Schultz (2005) also point out that children who develop an internal locus tend to come from families where parents have been supportive and consistent in self-discipline. Locus of control is therefore a personality trait that emerges as a stable orientation focusing on issue of how individuals attribute their successes or failure in achieving tasks. Difference in Locus of Control varies individually and across cultures for example western cultures and United States in particular tend to have strong internal locus of control; where individuals attribute success or failure to their own skills and orientations. Eastern cultures like Korea tend to have stronger external locus of control where individual attributes outcomes to chance, fate or actions by powerful other (Kurtz & Turpin, 1999). In relationships internals have been found to be more able to resolve conflict productively than externals. Internals try harder to succeed because they believe they can control the outcome of discussion and are more likely to rely on integrative, cooperative messages. Externals give up easily and withdraw taking conflict personally and resorting to more aggressive tactics when forced into conflict and resort to using more distributive, competitive messages and avoidance messages (Kurtz & Turpin, 1999) Bjorkqvist (1992) in the article on the relationship between locus of control and aggression among Finland and Italy adolescence reported that aggression-physical, victimization and indirect aggression correlated significantly with external locus of control in boys than in girls. Form the above findings and suggestions it was therefore important to investigate the relationship between an individual's locus of control and conflict resolution.

Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in Eldoret East District in Rift Valley Province, Kenya. The study focused on 41 schools in the district with a study population of 3745 students (forms 1-4). The schools were chosen using purposive sampling this was after the author visited the 41 schools personally. Questionnaires were used in data collection with a set used to seek information on how ones locus of control affects conflict resolution; it contains 20 items of rating scale with two alternatives of Yes and No.

Results and Discussion

The author used chi-square test of independence to find out whether there was any association between the highlighted variables. The tables 1 and 2 show a cross tabulations and chi-square table of independence between of locus of control and conflict resolution between students of different age brackets in secondary schools of Eldoret east.

Table 1: Cross Tabulation Table Showing Degree of Control of Personality and Level of Conflict Resolution between Students of Different Age Brackets in Secondary Schools of Eldoret East District

Count		Levels for conflict resolution		Total
		High	Low	
Degree of Control Personality	Very Strong LOC	2	2	4
	External LOC	48	30	78
	Both External & Internal LOC	98	77	175
	Internal LOC	5	3	8
Total		153	112	265

Table 2: Chi-square table showing the observed Chi-square value

Chi-Square Tests			
Statistic	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.851 ^a	3	.837
Likelihood Ratio	.854	3	.837
Linear-by-Linear Association	.200	1	.655
N of Valid Cases	265		

The Chi-square value was 0.851 and the critical value is 7.81 at 0.05 level of significance and 3 degrees of freedom. This means that the observed value lies in the acceptance region. Therefore we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant relationship between locus of control and conflict resolution among secondary school students.

Relationship between locus of Control and student's class

The author also computed the differences in level of conflict resolution among students of different classes as presented in Table 3. This was based in a null hypothesis stating that there are no significant differences in levels of conflict resolution among students from different classes. Table 4 shows the chi square test for this.

Table 3: Table showing chi-square values for test of independence

Statistic	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.227 ^a	1	.136		
Continuity Correction^b	1.871	1	.171		
Likelihood Ratio	2.234	1	.135		
Fisher's Exact Test				.170	.086
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.219	1	.136		
N of Valid Cases^b	265				

Table 4: Chi-square statistics

Class * Levels for conflict resolution Cross tabulation

		Levels for conflict resolution		Total
form		High	Low	
Class	Form 2	77	46	123
	Form 3	76	66	142
Total		153	112	265

From the table the computed sample chi-square statistic is 2.227 while the theoretical value at level of significance 0.05 and 1 degree of freedom is 3.84. Therefore the sample statistic is smaller than the critical value. Therefore we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant relationship between class level and conflict resolution among secondary school students. This may mean that the class the student is in does not determine how one resolves conflict but it may be influenced by the conflict resolution and peer mediation skills attained by individual students. Also students come from different homes and how conflict is resolved at home affects how one resolve conflict outside home.

Relationship between locus of control and students' age

This objective sought to find if there is a relationship between locus of control and age category of the form two and three students who participated in the study.

Table 5: Cross tabulation and chi-square test statistic for this.

Count	Age 13-14 yrs	15-16 yrs	17-18 yrs	19-20 yrs	Total
Degree of Control Personality :					
Very strong LOC	1	2	1	0	4
External LOC	3	48	26	1	78
Both external and internal LOC	7	98	63	7	175
Internal LOC	0	6	1	1	8
Total	11	154	91	9	265

Table 6: Chi-square statistics on locus of control and age

Statistics	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	9.956 ^a	9	.354
Likelihood ratio	8.008	9	.533
Linear-by-linear Association	1.538	1	.215
N of Valid Cases	265		

Relationship between locus of control and conflict resolution among the secondary school students

According to Rotter (1966), individuals with locus of control would continue to engage in activities that would reinforce the expectancy that their behaviours affected subsequent consequences. Essentially individual's locus of control would impact how they perceive and interact within their environment. Most of the students in Eldoret East District believed that the levels of locus of control were low. One of the most widely held beliefs is that peer groups control the behaviour of students. Peers are prime candidates for promoting imitation in children for example; if a child sees one of their peers playing aggressively they play aggressively.

Few students who had low levels of locus of control had low levels of conflict resolutions while those

with high levels of locus of control had high levels of conflict resolution. However no significant relationship existed between locus of control and conflict resolution at least for this study. Contrary to this, Burger (2004) noted that people with an internal locus of control behave in a more self-determined fashion and thus a prerequisite for conflict resolution. Locus of control is positively related to self – esteem and feelings of personal effectiveness and internals tend to cope with stress in a more active and problem focused manner. Martison (1999), state that students with external locus of control are less likely to experience psychological maladjustments in form of depression or anxiety. Students with low levels of locus of control often use defensive strategies in problem solving and coping instead of actively pursuing solutions thus they more often fail.

Students with internal locus of control engage in activities that will improve their situation, emphasize striving for achievement, work hard to develop this knowledge, skills and abilities. However internals are too achievement oriented and this can leave people around feeling ‘trampled’ or ‘bruised’ and tendency to control everything (Mind tools, 2007). Therefore individual’s locus of control would impact on how they perceived and interacted within their surroundings (Mind Tools, 2007), thus affecting ones action and how one will look at who or where responsibility lies.

Individuals with a high internal locus of control believe that events result primarily from their own behavior and resources. This locus of control is healthier, characterized by a better overall psychological adjustment and greater success. Since internals consider themselves responsible for their outcomes, they are more active in seeking information concerning their situation. There is need to train learners in secondary school students on where their expectancies lie

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the study a conclusion can be drawn that students who had low levels of locus of control had low levels of conflict resolutions while those with high levels of locus of control had high levels of conflict resolution. However no significant relationship existed between locus of control and conflict resolution at least for this study.

The paper recommends that:

1. A study be conducted to investigate the effect of individuals’ locus of control on social adjustment in school.
2. A similar study involving conflict resolution and locus of control should be undertaken. This will enable acquisition of more information on factors influencing conflict resolution among varied groups of people in schools.

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