

# DEVELOPING THE CONFLICTOLOGICAL COMPETENCE AMONG STUDENTS OF PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL SCHOOL

**Valeriia Bondar**

Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Ukraine

**Tetiana Kharkivska**

Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University, Ukraine

**Abstract.** *Conflict is an inevitable part of any interpersonal relations. Low conflictological competence among students, large amounts of anxiety and stress, significantly affect relations between peers, especially during the martial law in Ukraine. This is particularly relevant for the professional and technical schools.*

*Inability to resolve conflicts peacefully is one of the key reasons of the increased number of conflicts among students, which leads to more cases of violence and bullying in the educational environment.*

*Promoting tolerance, respect, support, decency, etc. is essential for teaching young people the crucial strategy for harmonious communication and coexistence in society.*

*The objective of the article is to define conflictological competence and analyse, how students of professional and technical schools imagine the conflicts prevalence and management in the educational institution. The authors present the results of the survey conducted among 200 students from four professional and technical schools in Khmelnytska oblast and the city of Khmelnytsky in 2023. The survey has demonstrated the challenges related to the low conflict competence of the students and their inability to manage conflicts without using violence.*

*Based on the survey results, the authors focus on the need for the implementation of the safe educational environments program aimed at combating bullying and violence through the restorative practices, and developing conflictological competence of students of professional and technical schools.*

**Keywords:** *conflict, conflictological competence, bullying, restorative practices, professional and technical school.*

## Introduction

Conflictological competence is an important aspect of the professional training for the students of professional and technical schools. Conflict competence includes the ability to recognize, analyse and resolve conflicts in different areas of life, including work and educational environments.

The difficult situation in Ukraine, due to the full-scale invasion of Russian troops, has fundamentally changed the usual way of life of Ukrainian men and women. Increased anxiety caused by current events in the country affects the

emotional state of the population, an increased level of stress, irritability, aggressive behavior, etc. is observed (Liakh, Spirina, Klishevich, 2022).

In this regard, the topic of psychological, social and emotional support for teenagers who are experiencing stress from military events, from changing cities, schools, losing a circle of friends and loved ones, becomes even more relevant (Zhuravel, 2022).

In the present climate, an effective communication and conflict management requires the promotion of a culture of mutual understanding and tolerance in education; developing the skills and abilities to manage conflicts without violence and interact effectively with other actors of educational environment.

The conflictological competence of the students entails a number of joint actions by all actors of the educational environment, aimed at preventing and countering all forms of violence and bullying in school, finding new solutions for building a safe educational environment, through the restorative practices in particular.

*The objective of the article* is to analyse define the concept of conflictological competence and how students of professional and technical schools imagine the conflicts prevalence and management in the educational institution.

### **The problem of the research and academic orientation**

Recently, the trend of violence and manifestations of bullying (harassment) in educational institutions is increasing. This situation is associated with many factors, but the main ones are discrimination among children and aggressiveness (Bondar, 2024).

Many scholars study conflictological competence by studying the theoretical aspects of conflicts, developing methodologies for their resolution, and studying the practical aspects of communication and conflict management skills.

Conflict competence is one of the key professional competences (aside from methodological, personal, emotional and motivational, practical, communication, social interaction etc.) (Mukhina, 2019).

Foreign researchers K. Runde define conflict competence as the ability to develop and use cognitive, emotional, and behavioural skills that enhance productive outcomes of conflict while reducing the likelihood of escalation or harm (Runde, 2010).

Currently, the terms "conflict competence" and "conflictological competence" are used both in conflictology, and there are active discussions about the difference between them and the necessity to understand it. S.S. Fil in her article compared these two definitions used in the psychological literature and concluded that they are identical and very close in meaning (Fil, 2011)

I.V. Kozych believes that the concepts of conflict and conflictological competences should be distinguished, since the first one means the skills everyone

should be competent at and able to use in everyday life, while the second one appeals to the scientific background and has broader and deeper meaning (Kozych, 2008).

L.O. Yaroslav, in his research, concludes that the conflictological competence is a cognitive-regulatory substructure of professionalism of the individual and activity. It is a dynamic, structural-hierarchical formation, characterized by the possession of knowledge about the conflict and wide spectrum of conflict management strategies, emotional self-regulation, and personal abilities (like empathy, self-reflection etc.) (Yaroslav, 2009). Scientists argue the importance of developing the conflictological competence among students.

The main task of the employees of the educational institution, in addition to psycho-emotional support, is the development of conflict-related competences and the formation of the skills of constructive conflict resolution in the students of education (Kharkivska, 2023).

These are just few examples of scholars actively researching conflictological competence. The field of conflict studies is constantly evolving, and other scholars can make important contributions to this science.

### **Research methodology**

This article uses theoretical methods (analysis, systematization, generalization) to outline objectives, develop conflictological competence among students in challenging environment, and determine the level of conflict and types of responses to conflicts and their consequences; readiness of the students for the implementation of the safe educational environment programmes aimed at combating bullying and violence through restorative practices.

The article presents the results of the research and experimental work conducted in March 2023 by surveying students of professional and technical schools in Khmelnytskyi.

In their empirical study, the authors focused on the readiness of the students for the implementation of the safe educational environment programmes aimed at combating bullying and violence through restorative practices.

The survey covered 200 people from four professional and technical schools of the Khmelnytska oblast and the city of Khmelnytsky: Khmelnytsky Higher Professional School No. 4, Khmelnytsky Centre of Professional and Technical Education for the Service Industry, Krasilivsky Professional Lyceum, and Khmelnytsky Higher Professional School No. 25.

The survey included 15-19 years old students of selected professional and technical schools. Among them: 71 boys (35%), 129 girls (65%).

The survey took place in one oblast/region. It was important to study the atmosphere among the students in the group, the frequency of conflicts and the

consequences they cause, willingness to ask for help and interest in the implementation of programs aimed at preventing conflicts, bullying and violence through the restorative practices.

The authors used the report generation method to process the results of the survey (statistics of the answers to the selected questions).

### **Research results**

The presence of conflicts among students of professional and technical education indicates low conflictological competence and the inability to resolve conflict situations independently. In the future, this can result in more cases of violence and bullying. Based on the results of the study, the authors point out the necessity for developing the conflictological competence among students of professional and technical education.

Conflictological competence is the ability and readiness to combine theoretical knowledge of conflictology (cognitive component), practical abilities and skills to deal with the conflicts (operational component) and personal qualities that contribute to the best possible organization of productive interaction in conflict (personal component), for the conflict's prevention, regulation and resolution (Mishchenko, 2021).

The authors determine the readiness of the students for the implementation of the programs aimed at prevention of conflicts, bullying and violence in professional and technical schools.

According to the results of the above survey, conflicts most often occur between students, less often between students and the teaching staff or the school administration.

32 % of the respondents indicate that conflicts between students occur often, 41 % – sometimes, and 27 % - never occur. 22% of the respondents indicate that the conflicts between students and the teachers and/or the school administration occur often, 26% - sometimes, 52% - never.

21% of the respondents indicate that in their professional and technical school there were cases when conflicts resulted in fights or bodily injuries; 30% - insults, humiliation; 16% - isolation (ignoring) of some of the students, 23% - bullying, 10% - transfer of the student to another educational institution.

The above-mentioned results allow us to conclude that the conflicts in professional and technical schools often result in some form of violence and bullying.

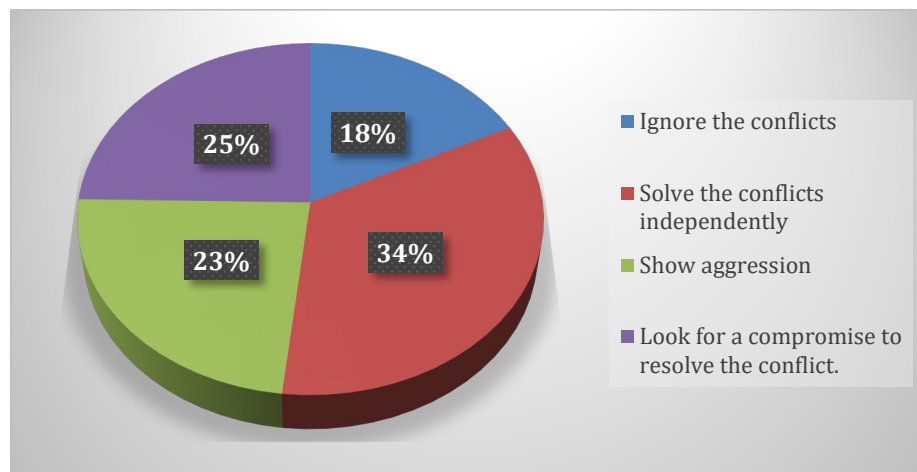
The Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Combating Bullying (harassment)" defines bullying (harassment) as actions of the actors of education environment, which include acts of psychological, physical, economic, sexual violence, including with the use of digital communication, committed against a minor or by a minor against other

actors of educational process, which resulted in causing or could result in causing damage to the mental and physical health of the victim (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2019).

Typical signs of bullying: systematic (repetitive) behaviour; presence of parties – offender (bully), victim (bullying victim), observers (if available). Bulling means actions or inaction of the offender, which resulted in harm to the mental and/or physical health, humiliation, fear, anxiety, subordination of the victim to the interests of the offender, and/or causing social isolation of the victim (Andrieienkova, Baidyk, Voitsyakh, Kalashnyk, 2020).

78% of the respondents indicate that during the conflict students face aggression and violence, 14% indicate that the conflicts lead to the destruction of relationships and 8% indicate that it contributes to the development of the relationships.

18% of respondents say that they ignore the conflicts, 34% solve the conflicts independently, 23% show aggression and 25% look for a compromise to resolve the conflict. (*Figure 1.*)

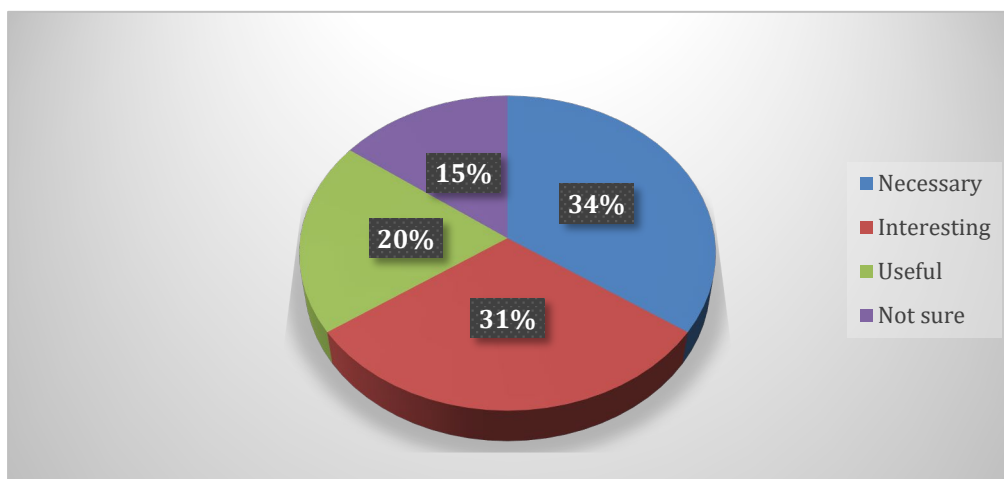


*Figure 1 Actions of students of vocational and technical education in the event of a conflict (made by authors)*

An interesting observation is that those respondents who indicated about solving the conflict situation independently also chose the option, "I can show aggression."

It was important for us to determine the level of readiness of professional and technical schools' students to the implementation of the safe educational environment programme aimed at combating bullying and violence through the restorative practices.

Therefore, 34% indicate that such a program is necessary in their school; 31% find it interesting; 20% say that such program seems useful, and 15% are not sure whether the programme is worth implementing in professional and technical schools. (*Figure 2.*)



*Figure 2 The opinion of students regarding the implementation of the Program for the implementation of restorative practices in their educational institution (made by authors)*

## Discussion

The results of the research presented in the article justify the need for an integrated study of conflictological competence among students of professional and technical schools.

The high conflict competence is especially important for youth, since this age group is characterized by an increased tendency to conflicts. This is caused by changes in socioeconomic status and age characteristics (Kutas, 2016).

Based on the results of the research presented in the article, we would like to point out that it is important to develop a sufficient level of conflictological competence among students of professional and technical schools, which will allow them to prevent conflicts and be able to resolve them peacefully. Moreover, the skills of peaceful conflicts resolution minimize the negative consequences of the conflicts due to non-violent resolution methods.

Since the low level of conflictological competence among students of professional and technical schools can have a negative impact on their future professional activity, it is important to promote the implementation of programs for the prevention of conflicts, violence and bullying in the first years of studying.

The ability to resolve conflicts constructively is a necessary condition and an important component of the educational process. The development of the conflictological competence of the professional and technical school students should be based on the following principles:

- better knowledge of conflict theory, psychology of communication, pedagogical psychology;
- mastering the skills of prevention, management, minimization of destructive forms of a conflict;

- development of the professional mindset, which includes ability for self-reflection, methodology, creativity, flexibility;
- strengthening personal resistance to stress in conflicts, ability to not be afraid of conflicts;
- adherence to professional ethics in conflict, high level of personal culture (Kaidalova et al., 2019).

Ability to solve conflicts peacefully requires from students to master the skills of conflictological competence.

Having analysed the existing educational programs, the authors focus their attention on the implemented programs "Peaceful conflicts resolution. Basic skills of mediation".

The purpose of the program is to create environment for the development of the civic and social competences of students, which involves development of the conflictological competence, skills and abilities to resolve conflicts peacefully, non-violent behaviour and civil position.

The programme "Peaceful conflicts resolution. Basic skills of mediation" is based on the idea that it is important to for the students to develop ability to effectively resolve conflicts, tolerate the opinions different from them owns, resist violence, bullying, discrimination in the group, take responsibility for building peace, respect equal rights for men/boys and women/girls.

Therefore, the conceptual idea of the Program involves the development of students' ability to resolve conflicts peacefully, to be guided by universal human values in communicating with others, promoting the ideas of peacebuilding and mediation (Andrieienkova, Levchenko, Matviychuk, 2018).

In the present climate of war in Ukraine, building a safe educational space based on the principles of a restorative approach has become extremely urgent. Modern educational institutions play an important role in promoting non-violent behaviour among students, particularly developing attitudes and skills essential for prevention of violence, establishing constructive communication, peaceful conflicts resolution, achieving understanding and cooperation on the way to establishing peace and its further development. (Andrieienkova et al., 2023)

It is important to note that in the educational process, mediation can be widely used not only to resolve individual interpersonal disputes, conflicts between individual participants of the educational process. (Kos'mina, Lyutyy, 2022)

The development of conflictological competences among students of professional and technical schools will contribute to increasing the effectiveness of educational activities, as well as personal and professional communication and interaction with others. The high conflictological competence of the students allows them to reduce the number of conflicts in the educational environment and resolve conflicts constructively. Improvement of the relevant skills and abilities



is very important for the development of conflictological competence of the students.

### **Conclusions and proposals**

Our study demonstrates the extreme relevance and importance of the development of conflictological competence among students of professional and technical schools for the educational process. However, the implementation of the program for the prevention of conflicts, bullying and violence needs attention and promotion in the educational institutions, specifically professional and technical schools. The actors of the educational process are aware of the importance and significance of this program, and understand that the development of conflictological competence in professional and technical schools should focus on social and state values.

The strategy for the development of the conflictological competence among students of professional and technical schools is necessary to ensure effective interaction in the group and create a safe educational environment.

We strongly believe, that the development of conflictological competence should focus on basic theory of conflictological study; introduction of the basic principles of peacebuilding and the concept of "violence", its types; mastering skills for resisting and combating bullying; promoting the importance of the students participation in the peacebuilding and peaceful conflicts resolution.

The topic of conflictological competence among students of professional and technical schools requires further study.

### **Acknowledgement**

The authors are sincerely grateful to the teaching staff of the Khmelnytsky Higher Professional School No. 4, Khmelnytsky Centre of Professional and Technical Education for the Service Industry, Krasilivsky Professional Lyceum, Khmelnytsky Higher Professional School No. 25 for their help in conducting the survey and to their students for participation.

### **References**

- Andrieienkova, V., Baydyk, V., Voytsyakh, T. (2023). *Implementation of a restorative approach, mediation, mediation and the practice of the functioning of reconciliation services in educational institutions* Kyiv : Agency "Ukraine" LLC.
- Andrieienkova, V., Levchenko, K., Lunchenko, N. (2018). *Set of educational programs "Peaceful resolution of conflicts. Basic mediation skills"* Kyiv : Agency "Ukraine" LLC.
- Bondar, V. (2024, January, 31). Foreign experience of bullying prevention. *Vvichlyvist. Humanitas*, 5, 3–11. doi: <https://doi.org/10.32782/humanitas/2023.5.1>
- Fil, S.S. (2011). Definition, content and structure of conflict-related competence of students - future specialists of socio-economic professions, *Scientific notes of NaUKMA*, 123, 20-24.



- Kaidalova, L. G., Alokhina, N. V., Shvarp, N. V. (2019) Improvement of conflictological competence of professors of high school in the system of training, *Scientific journal of the M.P. Drahomanov NPU*, 102-107.
- Kharkivska, T. (2023). Destructive conflicts as an actual problem of modern school youth *Vvichlyvist. Humanitas*, 2, 179–183. doi: <https://doi.org/10.32782/humanitas/2023.2.26>
- Kos'mina, M. M., Lyutyy, V. P. (2022). School mediation programs in Ukraine *Visnyk International Scientific Journal "Grail of Science"*, 22, 77-81.
- Yaroslav, L. O. (2009) Conflictological competence as a subject of psychological research *Visnyk NTUU «KPI» Philosophy. Psychology. Pedagogy: a collection of scientific papers*, 1(25), 116–119.
- Kozych, I.V. (2008). Formation of the conflict-related competence of the social teacher in the conditions of the master's degree, [Candidate's thesis] 254.
- Kutas, M.S. (2016) The possibility of developing assertiveness as a component of the teacher's conflict-related competence, *Law Bulletin of "KROK" University*, 24, 261-266.
- Liakh, T., Spirina, T., & Klishevych, N. (2022). Social Prevention of Family Dysfunction in the Local Community *Social Work and Education*, 9(2), 245–255.
- Mishchenko, O.O. (2021). Development of conflict logical competence in students of higher educational institutions [Bachelor work, National University "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy] Open. <https://ekmair.ukma.edu.ua/server/api/core/bitstreams/d6880d31-367a-479c-bdb1-07ee3b81790e/content>
- Mukhina, L.M. (2019). Psychological features of the development of conflict-related competence of future teachers (Publication No 159.964.21:378) [Dissertation of the candidate of psychological sciences, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University] Open. Retrieved from: <https://bitly.ws/3fn7f>
- Runde, C. (2010). *Developing Your Conflict Competence A Hands-On Guide for Leaders, Managers, Fasilitators, and Teams*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass., 280.
- Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (2018). Zakon Ukrainy «Pro vnesennia zmin do deiakyykh zakonodavchykh aktiv Ukrainy shchodo protydii bulinhu (tskuvanniu)» [Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Combating Bullying], 33.
- Zhuravel, T. (Ed.). (2022). *Prevention of Destructive Behavior in Adolescents*, Kyiv: Publishing house FO-P Buriia O. D. C., 144.