Original Research Article

Value- Conflict among Adolescents: A Study of Prevailing Trends

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A B S T R A C T

The present study was an attempt to explore the prevailing conflict in value system of today's young generation due to increasing confusion in role playing and multifaceted challenges. The sample consisted of 88 adolescents (19-21 years) from different colleges of Ludhiana city. The Value-Conflict Scale developed by Bharadwaj (2001) was utilized to assess assertion conflicts within the value system of adolescents. This scale evaluates six pairs of opposing value conflicts: Evasion vs. Fortitude, Dependence vs. Self-Reliance, Selfishness vs. Probity, Hate vs. Love, Fear vs. Assertion, and Pragmatism vs. Idealism. The results revealed that maximum mean value was obtained on the dimension of value-conflict 'Love Vs. Hate', which signifies that today's youth give high value to love and wants to be loved by others. As compared to hatred, the feeling of love, care and concern still prevails in the value system of our youth. The next value predominantly found in adolescents was of 'Probity' on the value-conflict dimension of 'Selfishness Vs. Probity'. This highlighted that adolescents gave more value to honest decision making and truthfulness than to selfish motives in life. Analysis of Gender differences revealed that girls tend to feel more fearful than boys. They often face fatigue, anxiety, and indecision, leading them to respond with heightened sensitivity. For boys, the lowest mean scores on the 'Pragmatism vs. Idealism' dimension suggest a stronger preference for practical actions and tangible achievements over theoretical ideals in everyday life. The current trends in value system conflicts among adolescents highlight the need to foster values such as courage, boldness, and motivation in young girls. When faced with conflict, girls often experience indecision and tend to deny or hide their fears rather than developing the ability to cope and function effectively.

Introduction

Conflict refers to a state of discord arising from opposing ideas or interests, significantly shaping human behavior and social relationships. Different circumstances can trigger conflicting emotions, needs, thoughts, or tendencies, thereby disturbing an individual's internal peace and balance. To resolve such conflicts, individuals engage in deliberate thought processes and assess various options to choose between clashing beliefs or values. People encounter a range of conflicts across diverse situations and these experiences lead to the development of particular ways of responding, which are influenced by the nature of the situation and the individual's personality traits. Over time, with increased maturity and life experience, individuals tend to develop more refined decision-making capabilities and enhanced reflective thinking. A comprehensive understanding of the

conceptual underpinnings of conflict is essential for analyzing human behavior in situations marked by discord. According to Myers (1993) conflict arises when actions and goals are perceived to be incompatible, thereby hindering or reducing the effectiveness of another activity.

Values represent individuals' beliefs and attitudes regarding how things ought to be. They serve as guiding principles that shape thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Santrock, 2007). The decisions individuals make and the actions they take are often grounded in the values they associate with personal well-being and benefit (Harre & Lamb, 1983). According to Boulding (1977), much of human progress can be attributed to constructive and accumulative behaviors that occur in the absence of conflict. Bharadwaj (2001) defines value conflicts as situations where two or more incompatible goals, motives, activities or impulses coexist, particularly in relation to ideals promoting human welfare or pro-social behavior.

Such conflicts are especially relevant in the daily behavioral interactions of youth, often manifesting through aggression, frustration or anxiety. Intrapersonal value conflicts are those occurring within the individual lie at the heart of personality-related tensions and can significantly influence the attitudes and emotional stability of adolescents. Smetana (1988) highlighted that in complex social scenarios, young individuals frequently encounter situations in which moral values are in conflict, challenging their decision-making and ethical reasoning.

Value conflict is an inherent aspect of human life and is practically unavoidable. It often arises when individuals, adolescents, groups, organizations or even nations interact, as differing values and priorities can clash. These conflicts emerge when two or more opposing goals, motives, actions or impulses are simultaneously active, particularly when they relate to desirable or socially beneficial objectives. Value conflicts typically stem from contradictions in ideologies, principles, religious beliefs, socio-political aspirations and cultural identities. Because these values are deeply embedded in personal identity, such conflicts are not easily resolved. Addressing and minimizing value conflicts becomes crucial for societal well-being as unresolved conflicts can lead to personality disintegration (Trehub 1959), hinder personal adjustment and contribute to heightened social tensions (Bhardwaj, 1991; 1994; Chauhan & Bhardwaj, 1992).

However, it is a misconception to believe that all value conflicts are harmful or dysfunctional. On the contrary, they can play a constructive role. In adolescents, a certain level of value conflict can be beneficial it helps prevent stagnation, encourages creativity, reduces stress and initiates positive change. Moreover, it fosters critical thinking, enhances group adaptability and improves both individual and collective functioning. Thus value conflicts when managed appropriately, can contribute significantly to adolescent growth and development.

Based on these considerations, the present study was undertaken to systematically examine the nature and dimensions of value conflicts experienced by adolescents and to analyze gender-based differences in the manifestation and intensity of these value conflicts.

Materials and Methods

The present study included a sample of 88 adolescents selected from various colleges in Ludhiana city, comprising 56 girls and 32 boys chosen through random sampling. To assess value conflicts among adolescents, the Value Conflict Scale developed by Bharadwaj (2001) was employed. This scale contains 24 items designed to evaluate value conflicts across six pairs of opposing value dimensions encountered in everyday life. These dimensions are: (A) Evasion vs. Fortitude, (B) Dependence vs. Self-Reliance, (C) Selfishness vs. Probity, (D) Hate vs. Love, (E) Fear vs. Assertion and (F) Pragmatism vs. Idealism. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale. For statistical analysis, the data were processed using measures such as mean, standard deviation (SD) and t-test.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 represents the mean scores of value-conflicts among adolescents. The results presented in the table show that boys have a higher mean score (6.0) than girls (5.63) in the value conflict between evasion and fortitude. This conflict represents the struggle between avoiding or minimizing the importance of significant events and courageously standing by ethical principles, which may require changes in one's beliefs and ways of coping. When a person feels uncertain about whether to choose evasion or fortitude, it reflects a clash between these opposing values. Similarly, boys scored higher (5.63) than girls (5.18) in the conflict between dependence and self-reliance. This value conflict

involves the tension between making decisions with the support of others versus relying on one's own independent judgment. The indecision about whether to depend on others or to be self-reliant creates an internal conflict that can be quite distressing.

Regarding the conflict between achieving success through moral or immoral methods, boys recorded a higher mean score of 6.38. The value conflict of selfishness versus probity reflects a dilemma in which a person struggles with the choice of whether to obtain benefits by ethical or unethical means.

Turner and Barrett (1998) also discovered that the intensity of conflict between parents was a significant predictor of adolescents' internalizing and externalizing adjustment difficulties. The value conflict involving emotional extremes in relationships showed nearly similar levels for boys (6.84) and girls (6.25). The hate versus love conflict describes relationships characterized by fluctuating emotional extremes or the simultaneous presence of both feelings.

Asghari and Besharat (2011) found that parental acceptance is positively linked to emotional skills such as the healthy expression and regulation of emotions, the capacity to manage challenging emotions, and the promotion of positive feelings. The conflict between attempting to suppress fears and learning to cope despite them was observed to be higher in boys (5.63) than in girls (4.71). The fear versus assertion value conflict describes a state of uncertainty where individuals struggle between denying or hiding their fears and developing the ability to act confidently despite those fears.

Table.1 Mean scores of value conflicts among adolescents

Factors or Description	Girls N=56		Boys N=32		t value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Evasion Vs Fortitude	5.63	1.32	6.0	0.9	**1.438**
Dependence Vs Self reliance	5.18	1.35	5.63	1.1	**1.581**
Selfishness Vs Probity	6.07	1.43	6.38	1.1	**1.033**
Hate Vs Love	6.25	1.25	6.84	0.9	**2.340***
Fear Vs Assertion	4.71	1.42	5.63	1.5	**2.818***
Pragmatism Vs Idealism	5.68	0.97	5.38	1.3	**1.224**

*Significant at 5% level

Table.2 Gender Difference and Total Values of Value Conflict

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Girls	56	5.59	1.40	**3.184***

The girls scored higher (5.68) than boys (5.38) in the value conflict between pragmatism and idealism. This value conflict reflects the uncertainty experienced when deciding between practical realities and idealistic principles while making everyday decisions.

Table 2 represents a comparative analysis of value conflict between adolescent girls and boys. The mean score for boys (M = 5.97, SD = 1.26) is slightly higher than that of girls (M = 5.59, SD = 1.40), indicating that boys tend to experience more value conflict than girls. The independent sample t-test reveals a statistically significant difference between the two groups (t = 3.184, $p < 0.05$), confirming that gender plays a meaningful role in the experience of value conflict among adolescents. This gender-based variation aligns with findings by Rani and Sinha (2013), who noted that adolescent boys often experience higher levels of internal value conflict due to greater societal expectations and conflicting role demands. Similarly, Sharma (2017) observed that boys may face stronger pressures to conform to traditional gender norms, which can lead to internal dissonance when personal beliefs diverge from social expectations.

In conclusion, the present study highlights that value conflict is an important psychological experience during adolescence and varies significantly across gender. The findings reveal that adolescent boys experience a comparatively higher level of overall value conflict than girls, particularly in areas related to emotional regulation, fear, assertion, and interpersonal relationships, whereas girls show slightly higher conflict when balancing practical needs with idealistic beliefs. These differences may be influenced by social expectations, cultural norms, and differing role demands placed on boys and girls during adolescence. The presence of such conflicts reflects the ongoing process of moral reasoning, identity development, and emotional maturity in this age group. Understanding these value conflicts is essential for parents, educators, and mental health professionals to provide appropriate guidance and support, helping adolescents resolve inner dilemmas constructively and develop a stable value system that contributes to healthy emotional and social development.

Recommendations

1.The findings of this study provide valuable insights for school authorities to foster a positive school environment that promotes better student adjustment, comprehensive development and active engagement with values.

2.Teachers and parents can collaboratively identify the underlying causes of increased value conflicts and levels of value involvement. Therefore, regular meetings and discussions should be organized within schools to address these issues.

Authors contributions

Ritu Mahal: Investigation, analysis, writing original draft. Mehakdeep Kaur: Methodology, investigation, writing-reviewing.

Declarations

Ethical Approval Not applicable.

Consent to Participate Not applicable.

Consent to Publish Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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