

Exploratory Study on Impact of Empathy for Conflict Resolution Skills

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Introduction

Conflicts, fights and arguments are common to lives of human beings in every family, social units, organizations and countries in human interactions. Those can create negative consequences as well as positive outcomes for the people who engage in the conflict or the ones who are around them; physically, socially, emotionally as well as psychologically. According to the Cambridge dictionary, a very basic definition of conflict is: an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles. Conflict resolution is the process by which two or more parties engage in a disagreement, dispute or debate in order to reach an agreement resolving it. Avoidance, negotiation, arbitration, litigation and mediation, enhancing the accuracy of communication are few examples for strategies used by people to resolve conflicts. Empathy is the experience of understanding another person's thoughts, feelings, and condition from his or her point of view, rather than from one's own. According to Hodges and Myers in the Encyclopedia of Social Psychology, "Empathy is often defined as understanding another person's experience by imagining oneself in that other person's situation. In order to find a solution to any problem, to resolve any conflict, one must have empathy, one must seek an understanding of the 'others' perspective and be compelled to act. Here I'm going to see whether there is a relationship between empathy and conflict resolution ability in a person. Objectives of the research paper would be:

- exploring whether people who have higher empathy poses conflict resolution ability in them?
- To see whether empathy has a relationship with ones gender
- To see whether having conflict resolution skills depend on one's gender
- Conducting a program to aware about empathy and increase empathy in the sample

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Methodology

Qualitative research design will be used

Convenient sampling method will be used to collect the sample

Sample size will be 20 (n=20) adults in the age of 20 to 40 years including 10 males and 10 females.

Two separate Questionnaires will be used to measure Empathy and conflict resolution ability respectively.

Thematic data analysis method will be used under the themes of empathy and conflict resolution, gender and empathy, gender and conflict resolution ability.

Results

I wish to find whether the people who have higher empathy also poses good conflict resolving skills and the people who do not have high amount of empathy also get lower ability in conflict resolution . at the same time I wish to find whether there are relationships between ones gender and his or her empathy level and conflict resolution ability.

Discussion

Empathy is the experience of understanding another person's thoughts , feelings and conditions from his or her own point of view rather than from ones own. Empathy comes from within without being forced so that people behave in a more compassionate manner. In a conflict having empathy can create a healthy environment. when one can think and understand why the other person is behaving or talking in a certain way he or she can avoid or stop the conflict with that awareness through understanding.

Without empathy we are clueless about someone else's inner self and feel like we are just strangers. So it can create conflicts easily or develop the existing conflicts further. Through empathy we can become aware of the pain we are causing to others so it encourages us to resolve conflicts without continuing the pain further to the other party. Psychologists jean Decety and Claus Lamm suggests that empathy consist not just emotional understanding but executive control to regulate and modulate the experience. The narcissistic people do not have empathy create more fights and conflicts with others. Empathy is a tool to resolve conflicts while promoting mutual understanding. When we consider the characteristics which belongs to empathy we can clearly understand most of them are conflict resolution skills too. For example we can take respecting others, having patience, active listening, good communication skills, apologizing and forgiving, compassion, disliking of violence as conflicts resolution skills and characteristics

of empathy. Many researches have provided the evidences to show that people with antisocial personality and narcissistic personality are lack of empathy . Meanwhile the researches shows people with antisocial and narcissistic personalities make conflicts with others easily. So it shows kind of a relationship between empathy and conflict management.

When we consider about the methods which are used by people to resolve conflicts we can clearly understand that having empathy is really important for those methods which resolve conflicts in a healthy manner to both parties. Avoiding a conflict is such a method. If someone has empathy they will try to stop the pain to the other party as well as to him or herself by avoiding the conflict. Mediation and arbitration are two ways that we use to resolve a conflict by involving a third party as a mediator. There the mediator must have empathy to listen both the parties carefully and arrive at a conclusion which is favorable to both the parties. Collaborative method is also a good way that resolve conflicts. Assertiveness and cooperation are musts in collaborative method which are characters of empathy too.

According to ones gender empathy can vary. It is proven in researches that women are more empathic than men. There is a biological reason behind that in relation to brain's structure. But we can also derive at a decision by considering the cultural factors which effect men and women in a society. Normally cultures put a more weight on women to be kind, compassionate and nurturing than men. Men should be more strong and tolerable normally in a culture. So that can impact for a woman to have more empathy automatically. Not only that holding a role of a mother can give a woman empathy and compassion. By acting a role of a mother empathy characteristics may come to the personality of a woman as she spends a large period of her life with her kids raring and bringing them up physically, emotionally and socially. When talking about conflict resolution and gender there are many evidences from researches females are good at conflict management and resolution in relation with men. Most researches say women can mediate and moderate conflicts well by acting as a third party. Also females are good at coping with stressful situations and pressure tactics than men.

Researches suggests that it is possible to boost the capacity for empathic understanding although there may be individual differences in empathy based on genetic differences.

Conclusion

Empathy is an essential tool in resolving conflicts and I suggest people who have higher empathy level might be good at resolving conflicts. I hope my research will support the idea of “ high empathy help to resolve conflicts successfully and impact conflict resolving skills. Promoting empathy in people will be more useful

to resolve a conflict as well as avoid creating conflicts.

Keywords: Conflict, Empathy, Skills

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