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# Conflict Resolution in Children and the Association Between Parenting Style and the Children's Own Social Skills

Afroza Parvin

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**CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN CHILDREN AND THE ASSOCIATION  
BETWEEN PARENTING STYLE AND THE CHILDREN'S OWN SOCIAL  
SKILLS**

A Masters Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate College of

Missouri State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science, Early Childhood & Family Development

By

Afroza Parvin

December, 2016

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SKILLS**

Childhood Education & Family Studies

Missouri State University, December 2016

Master of Science

Afroza Parvin

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the associations among parenting styles, social skills and conflict resolution strategies of children with their peers. Twenty children aged 5 to 10 years and twenty parents participated in the study. The Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire and an adapted questionnaire from The Matson Evaluation of Social Skills with Youngsters (MESSY) were used to measure parental styles and social skills of children respectively. Children were interviewed to assess their conflict resolution strategies by using six hypothetical stories taken from two different studies. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used for data analyses. The findings suggested associations among parenting styles, social skills and conflict resolution strategies. Results showed that inappropriate assertiveness was positively related with less desirable and negatively related to more desirable conflict resolution strategies. Positive aspects of parenting were positively related to children's use of positive strategies and negatively related to less desirable strategies in response to conflict resolution. Less desirable aspects of parenting were negatively related with children's positive way of resolving conflict. Results also showed that parenting aspects and children's social skills together predicted children's conflict resolution strategies in addition to their individual impacts.

**KEYWORDS:** parenting style, social skills, peer conflict, conflict resolution, conflict resolution strategies.

This abstract is approved as to form and content

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Dr. Joan E. Test  
Chairperson, Advisory Committee  
Missouri State University

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December 2016

Approved:

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## **CHAPTER I: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

Educators and early childhood professionals are interested in conflict resolution of young children because it has important contributions to children's cognitive and social development (Shantz, 1987; Shantz & Hobart, 1989). Unresolved conflicts with peers can be violent and destructive, perceived by many teachers and parents as a sign of failure in socialization (Shantz & Hobart, 1989). While experiences with peer conflict are thought to reduce egocentrism (Piaget, 1966), promote social adjustment (Dunn & Slomkowski, 1992), and provide opportunities for learning how to regulate emotions (Katz, Kramer, & Gottman, 1992), high and frequent conflicts are considered to be a serious risk for subsequent behavior problems (Kupersmidt, Burchinal, & Patterson, 1995; Sebanc, 2003). Peer conflicts are seen frequently in the lives of young children (Genishi & DiPaolo, 1982; Killen & Cords, 1998; Shantz, 1987; Shantz & Hartup, 1992). Children can maintain good social relations by resolving conflicts adaptively (Killen & de Waal, 2000).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Recently, researchers and educators are focusing on intervention programs to help children learn to resolve conflicts in the best adaptive way to foster social adjustment. To do so, better understanding is required of the factors that influence children's conflict resolution strategies.

Conflict can be described as a situation when two children encounter one another with opposing views or disagreement (Laursen & Pursell, 2009). Conflict can also be

characterized as hostile or angry behavior that involves aggression (Hartup, 1992). Conflicts can be characterized with distinct features, including the initiation of conflict and opposition, conflict resolution strategies, and the outcome. Among many other issues, disputes over possessions appear to be the most common situations that begin conflicts for preschool children (Hay, 1984).

Children use different types of strategies, and sometimes multiple strategies, including coercion, avoidance, and compromise to resolve conflict (Joshi, 2008). Studies suggested that children use a conciliatory strategy to resolve conflict, where they use friendly overtures, verbal clarifications, apologies, acquiescence, play invitations and prosocial behaviors (Ljungberg, Westlund, & Foresberg, 1999; Butovskaya, Verbeek, Ljungberg, & Lunardini, 2000; Sackin & Thelen, 1984; Verbeek & de Waal, 2001). The conciliatory strategy often helps children to go on to resume social play and decreases the likelihood of engaging in aggressive behavior after conflict (Ljungberg, Westlund, & Foresberg, 1999). Prosocial behaviors are also viewed as a strategy for conflict resolution. Prosocial behaviors such as sharing resources, cooperating, and providing assistance represent voluntary acts intended to promote the wellbeing of others (Spivak, 2016). Children's prosocial behavior has been related to building and maintaining good interpersonal relationships (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006). Prosocial strategies of conflict resolution provide greater chances of socially adaptive outcomes (Spivak, 2016). The last segment of a conflict situation is called the outcome, and can be characterized in terms of children's interaction following conflict (Sackin & Thelen, 1984; Verbeek & de Waal, 2001). Outcomes of peer conflict seem to be unresolved situations, unequal resolutions, or mutually beneficial solutions (Shantz, 1987; Wilson, 1988).

Previous research on conflict resolution with peers has mostly taken into consideration children's factors, such as social understanding, age, gender, peer relations, and goals. In addition, some family factors in relation to peer conflict resolution have also been studied, such as socio-economic background, intrafamily conflict, and maternal communication. However, little attention has been paid to how parenting influences children's conflict resolution with peers. Therefore, in the present study both child and family factors were taken into consideration for better understanding of children's conflict resolution strategies. Parenting styles were the family factors and children's social skills were the child factors in the study. How social skills of children and parenting styles contributed together in children's conflict resolution strategies was also a focus in this study.

### **Research Purpose and Questions**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the associations among parenting style, children's social skills and conflict resolution strategies of young children, aged 5 to 10 years. The following research questions were designed to meet the purpose of the present study:

1. Is there any relationship between children's conflict resolution strategies and parenting styles?
2. Is there any relationship between children's conflict resolution strategies and their own social skills?
3. Is there any association among conflict resolution strategy, parenting style, and children's social skills?

## **Research Design**

A mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) design was used to answer the research questions of the present study. Twenty children and either of their parents were recruited from Astoria, New York. Parenting styles and children's social skills were measured by using quantitative questionnaires and children's conflict resolution strategies were measured through qualitative interviews. Interviews were coded using pre-defined categories and transformed into quantitative data for further analysis. Bivariate correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the associations among variables (parenting styles, children's social skills, and children's conflict resolution).

## **Significance of the Study**

This study provided further understanding of children's use of conflict resolution strategies and their connection with parenting styles and children's social skills. It was also useful in knowing how parenting styles and children's conflict resolution skills combined together and predicted children's conflict resolution strategies. Knowledge obtained from this study could be useful in designing intervention programs for children's conflict resolution. The information revealed from this study might be useful for educators, researchers, and other practitioners in the field of childhood and family development for teaching and research, as well as for development, implementation and evaluation of programs focused on children's conflict resolution.

## **CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Peer conflict events are generally defined in the research literature as those in which one person protests, retaliates, or resists the actions of another (Hay, 1984; Shantz, 1987). The term conflict has been used interchangeably with aversive, coercive, disruptive, and aggressive behaviors in some previous research literature (Shantz, 1987; Ross & Conant, 1992), reflecting a focus on specific negative behaviors that can cause and occur during conflict such as hitting, biting, name calling, grabbing. Those studies fail to distinguish between aggression and conflict. Conflict is a state that exists when one opposes another, whereas aggression is behavior aimed at harming another person, (Perry, Perry, & Kennedy, 1992; Shantz, 1987).

### **Children's Conflict Resolution Strategies**

Children use a broad array of strategies available for resolving conflict. At one pole children use coercion or power assertion to attain a goal, and on the other pole children strive to maintain interpersonal relationships through mitigation or negotiation. Research indicates that, as children develop, they move towards the sophisticated conflict resolution strategies. Young children focus on less mature strategies, whereas adolescents and adults demonstrate a more advanced level of negotiation (Selman, Beardslee, Schultz, Krupa, & Podorefsky, 1986; Yeates, Schultz & Selman, 1991). Pre-school children exhibited standing firm and disagreement as the most common means of resolving conflict between peers (Laursen & Hartup, 1989). Research on preschoolers and young elementary school children suggests that a majority of verbal disputes end



after moves that are adaptive, in the sense that they propose a remedy or alternative plans, and a few end with explicit compromise or acceptance of such remedies (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981; Ross & Conant, 1992; Walton & Sedlak, 1982).

Young children's preference on conflict resolution strategies was investigated by Iskandar, Laursen, Finkelstein, & Fredrickson (1995). They explored three conflict resolution strategies: negotiation, power assertion, and disengagement to examine young children's (31 to 72 months old) preference for those strategies. Negotiation has been demonstrated as the most preferred and power assertion as the least preferred method of conflict resolution, respectively.

### **Children's Social Skills and Conflict Resolution**

The ability to manage conflict effectively has often been found to be associated with children's personal characteristics, particularly their social skills. Children's use of conflict resolution strategies was related to a number of aptitudes including enhanced perspective taking, social understanding (Dunn & Slomkowski, 1992) and to the formation and maintenance of friendship (Gottman, 1983). Children who are relatively mature and sophisticated in their understanding of another's perspective or feelings would seem better equipped to negotiate and conciliate, and to play a constructive part in resolving a dispute. It can also be reflected by Selman's (1980; Yeates & Selman, 1989) developmental model of interpersonal competence. This model showed that children moved through four levels of negotiation according to their capacity of taking other's perspectives. The lowest levels are characterized by a lack of coordination and perspective taking, where children engage in impulsive and physical behavior as well as

one way commands or submission as a way of resolving conflict. The next level is characterized by mutual satisfaction of needs through exchange of deals and turn taking. The final stage is characterized by the most sophisticated strategies, through the use of coordinated compromise and dialogue.

### **Parenting and Conflict Resolution of Children**

Family factors have also been associated with children's strategies of conflict management and resolution of disputes. Within either an attachment or a social-learning framework it might be expected that individual differences in children's capacities for negotiation and conciliation would be influenced by early relationships with their parents. The ability to resolve conflicts, dialogue disputes, and manage interpersonal disagreements are among the central skills a child must acquire as he or she enters the social world (Baumrind, 1973; Maccoby, 1992). Theories of socialization propose that social competencies in general and the management of conflicts in particular are learned at home through mechanisms of participation and observation—participating in social exchanges within the family and observing the dialogue between parents (Asher & Gottman, 1981; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Schneider, Attilit, Nadel, & Weissberg, 1989). Whereas higher marital hostility, more co-parental undermining behavior, and ineffective discipline predicted children's aggression; family compromise, marital empathy and resolution by consent predicted lower aggression among young children (Feldman, Masalha, & Derdikman-Eiron, 2010).

Although various family factors contribute to children's responses in resolving conflict, the focus of the present study was particularly on parenting styles. Three

different parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive were studied by Baumrind (1967). In addition, a neglectful/uninvolved parenting style was also found by Maccoby and Martin (1983). Each one of these parenting styles reflects different patterns of parental values, practices, and behaviors (Baumrind, 1991).

Authoritative parents are high in both responsiveness and control, and offer an equal balance of discipline and nurturing behaviors. They are flexible, sensitive, and responsive to their children's needs, set guidelines and limits and expect compliance, make reasonable demands, encourage open communication, and provide explanations for rules and demands in a positive, supporting manner (Baumrind, 1971; Belsky, Lerner, & Spanier, 1984).

Authoritarian parents are viewed as high in control but low in response. They apply rules and limits strictly but without providing explanations, tend to value obedience, and engage in punitive control and discipline. They enforce their opinion on their children and do not allow for open communication (Baumrind, 1971).

Permissive parents are low in control and high in responsiveness. These parents set few rules, apply minimal limits for their children's behavior, and are lax with discipline and application of those rules. They are aware of their children's needs, are fully engaged in their children's lives, and are responsive to their desires (Baumrind, 1967). Uninvolved parents are low in both control and responsiveness. They are neither attentive to their children's needs and desires, nor do they provide the necessary guidance, limit-setting, supervision, or open communication. They are disengaged and allow their children complete freedom and do not engage in close interactions. These parents are emotionally detached and respond to their children only to distance

themselves from them (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). In these ways, different styles of parenting involve different standards of behavior.

Parenting helps children to internalize and employ standards of behavior with others. According to Erickson (1963), when parents avoid over-controlling their children, children retain a sense of being autonomous agents within the constraints imposed by the social context. Children who have internalized adult standards for behavior should more readily employ these behaviors with peers when adults are not present.

Studies show an association between parenting aspects and children's way of resolving conflict. Power assertion between mothers and children predicts children's use of power assertion with peers (Kochanska, 1992; Putallaz, 1987). Fathers' use of power assertion was also found as a strong predictor of children's power assertion and externalizing behavior as is mothers (Crockenberg & Covey, 1991; Dishion, 1990; Phares, 1992). In another study, only father's self-reported aggression towards their children was found as a predictor of children's aggression towards their peers (Strassberg Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1992). Maternal use of suggestion and induction in parenting was negatively related with children's use of coercion with peers (Kochanska, 1992; Putallaz, 1987) and was positively related with non-disruptive mutual talk and activity for girls (Hart, Dewolf, Wozniak & Burts, 1992). Both fathers' and mothers' use of coercion and negotiation strategies were associated with children's use of those strategies with their peers (Crockenberg & Lourie, 1996).

In one study researchers assessed modes of conflict resolution in the parent-child, marriage, and peer-group contexts among 141 Israeli and Palestinian families and their first-born toddlers (Feldman, Masalha, & Derdikman-Eiron, 2010). Israeli families used

more open-ended tactics, including negotiation and disregard, and conflict was often resolved by compromise, whereas Palestinian families tended to consent or object. During marital discussions, Israeli couples showed more emotional empathy, whereas Palestinians displayed more instrumental solutions. Modes of conflict resolution across contexts were interrelated in culture-specific ways. Child aggression was predicted by higher marital hostility, more co-parental undermining behavior, and ineffective discipline in both cultures. Greater family compromise and marital empathy predicted lower aggression among Israeli toddlers, whereas more resolution by consent predicted lower aggression among Palestinians. Considering the cultural basis of conflict resolution within close relationships may expand understanding of the roots of aggression (Feldman, Masalha, & Derdikman-Eiron, 2010).

### **Parenting and Children's Social Skills**

Parental style has been linked to children's domain of social skills. More recent studies showed that children of parents who set limits and provide clear guidelines are more socially competent and better able to negotiate their social environments (Brink, 2006; McGillicuddy-De Lisi & De Lisi, 2007). Also, children of authoritative parents were found to be independent, achievement-oriented, friendly, and cooperative compared to children of parents from other parenting style categories. Children of permissive parents were more likely to be rebellious, impulsive, and low achievers (Baumrind, 1971). It also demonstrated that children of mothers with permissive parenting styles were more likely to display anti-social behaviors and have difficulty in adjusting to social settings (Wu, 2009).

In addition, secure attachment in infancy and sensitive mothering were found as the predictors of children's social skills several years later (Belsky & Fearon, 2002). Those children were described to be more prosocial, cooperative, and empathetic compared to children with less-sensitive mothers.

### **Summary**

Young children use several different conflict resolution strategies based on their goals, personal characteristics, social skills, and social understanding. Family factors also have an underlying influence on children's conflict resolution strategies. Parenting has been demonstrated to have a large impact on children's social skills and social understanding. Literature shows linkages between parenting and social skills as well as between social skills and conflict resolution. Therefore, parenting might have a link with children's use of conflict resolution strategies. However, very few studies have investigated the direct association and interaction between children's use of conflict resolution strategies with their peers, children's social skills, and their parents' parenting style.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of the study is to investigate parenting style and children's social skills as a moderator of conflict resolution strategies used by young children, aged 5 to 10 years. This study is designed to see the associations between parenting style and children's conflict resolution strategies; children's social skills and their conflict resolution strategies; and parenting style, children's social skills and children's conflict resolution strategies.

### **Research Design**

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilized to investigate the association between parenting style, social skills and conflict resolution strategies of young children. A qualitative approach was designed for an in-depth investigation of children's conflict resolution strategies, and quantitative methods were used to investigate parenting style and children's social skills. An interview on children's conflict resolution strategies was designed as part of the qualitative method. On the other hand, parenting style and children's social skills questionnaires were used as part of the quantitative approach.

### **Study Site and Participants**

The present study took place in Astoria, a neighborhood in New York City. The participants in the study were recruited from the neighborhood where the researcher lived. Twenty children and twenty parents (either parents of each child) were recruited as

the participants of this study. The children were between the ages of 5 and 10 years old. Adequate verbal and reading ability to complete the questionnaire was considered as the inclusion criteria of the participants.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The participants were informed about the nature, purpose and other relevant information (risks and benefits, role of the participants, physical and psychological threats) about the study to obtain consent and assent from them. They were also informed about their rights to participate and withdraw from research. All of the participants were treated with respect and dignity as a human being. In addition, permission to conduct the study was received from the Missouri State University Institutional Review Board (approval number:16-0257; dates 1/19/2016 & 4/26/2016).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Potential participants were visited at their houses and asked to participate in the study. The purpose and nature of the study was explained to the parents for making decisions about their participation in the study. They were also informed about their rights of participation and withdrawal in the study. Parents also had their questions answered related to the study. If parents agreed to participate in the study, they were asked for their availability to participate in the study. They were also asked whether they wanted to come to the researcher's house or be at their own house for the interview and filling out the questionnaire. Based on their availability, participants were scheduled for data collection. In most cases, parents decided to participate at their own houses. Out of



20, only 6 children and their parents came to the researcher's house to take part in the study. Therefore, most of the interviews took place in children's natural settings.

During data collection, parents were provided with the informed consent letter (see Appendix A) and asked to read it and put their signature on it, if they agreed to participate. The letter contained consent regarding their own and their children's participation in the study. After obtaining consent from parents, the letter of assent (see Appendix B) was explained to children and they were asked to put their signature on the letter.

The parents were provided with the demographic questionnaire and parenting style questionnaire and were asked to fill those out. While parents were filling out the questionnaires, the children were asked to take part in the interview. During the interview the children were presented with six different stories related to conflicts with other children. They were asked to respond about what they would do in each of the conflict situations. After completing the interview, children were given the questionnaire for measuring their social skills.

## **Instrumentation**

**Demographic Questionnaire.** The demographic questionnaire was developed for this study to obtain basic information regarding parents and children. It contained ten questions related to parents and four questions related to children. See Appendix C for a copy of the demographic questionnaire.

**Measure of Parenting Style.** Parenting style was measured by using the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ; Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, &

Hart, 2001) [see Appendix D]. PSDQ was developed based on Baumrind's conceptualization of Authoritative, Authoritarian, and Permissive parenting styles. It is a 32-item, parent-report questionnaire. Each item is rated along a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always), with higher scores indicating more frequent use of the described behavior. Internal consistency reliabilities for the 3 scales are good to excellent (Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart, 1995). Internal consistency for the current sample is also good: Authoritative  $\alpha = .84$ ; Authoritarian  $\alpha = .70$ ; Permissive  $\alpha = .74$ .

Sub-factors associated with authoritative parenting style are warmth/involvement (i.e., gives praise when child is good), reasoning/induction (i.e., explains the consequences of the child's behavior), and democratic participation (i.e., allows the child to give input into family rules). Sub-factors associated with authoritarian style are physical coercion (i.e., uses physical punishment as a way of disciplining the child), verbal hostility (i.e., explodes in anger toward the child), nonreasoning/punitive strategies (i.e., punishes by taking privileges away with little if any explanation). One sub-factor associated with permissive parenting is indulgent (i.e. states punishments to the child and does not actually do them).

**Measure of Social Skills.** A questionnaire was developed from the items used in the Matson Evaluation of Social Skills with Youngsters (MESSY). It is a self-report measure developed by Matson, Rotatori and Helsel (1983). MESSY consists of 62 items, which are rated by the child or adolescent according to a five- point Likert scale. The items are related to six factors/dimensions originally named, 'Appropriate Social Skill', 'Inappropriate Assertiveness', 'Impulsive/Recalcitrant', 'Overconfident', 'Jealousy/Withdrawal' and 'Miscellaneous Items' (rest of the items difficult to classify).

To develop a simple version of the social skills questionnaire for this study, ten items were selected from the first three factors ('Appropriate Social Skill', 'Inappropriate Assertiveness', 'Impulsive/Recalcitrant'). Items that are more relevant to conflict situations were taken into consideration in this way. [See Appendix E]

**Measure of Children's Conflict Resolution Strategies.** For the purpose of measuring conflict resolution strategies, children were interviewed using six hypothetical conflict stories. [See Appendix F]. The stories were taken from two different studies, Mize and Ladd (1988) and Zahn-Waxler, Cole, Richardson, Friedman, Michel, and Belouad (1994). The stories were taken from these two studies as they were very simple and particularly very useful in reflecting conflict scenarios of very young children. Puppets and toys were used to present the conflict situations/stories to the children.

### **Data Analysis**

In terms of analyzing quantitative data, SPSS 24.0 software was utilized. Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted for obtaining frequencies and percentages of demographic data, children's social skills, conflict resolution strategies, and parenting style. Bivariate correlation was executed for obtaining associations between parenting and children's conflict resolution strategies; children's social skills and their conflict resolution strategies; and parenting styles and children's social skills. Further, linear regression analysis was performed to examine to what extent parenting style and children's social skills contributed to children's conflict resolution strategies.

Qualitative interviews were analyzed by using pre-determined categories (see Appendix G) related to conflict resolution strategies. The categories were obtained from

different articles related to children's conflict resolution strategies (e.g. Bryant, 1992; Crockenberg & Lourie, 1996; Marcus, 1986). The seven different categories used for coding interviews were *coercion* (physical force, verbal threats, reprimands, anger, or exclusion by sending home), *negotiation* (suggest a resolution, reasons, ask with please), *tell child* (tell child to do or not to do something), *ask adult* (tell adult about conflict with expectation that adult will intervene), *avoidance* (does nothing overt), *sharing* (the child gives away or allows another use of an object that was previously in the child's possession), and *other* (strategies that do not fit into any of the other categories). The recorded interviews were listened to carefully to code children's strategies, using the seven categories. The frequencies of each of the categories were documented for each child and entered into the SPSS software for analysis as part of the quantitative data analysis described above.

## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

### Characteristics of the Participants

Two groups of forty participants were included in the present study. One group consisted of twenty children between the ages of 5 and 10. Another group consisted of twenty parents of those children. One parent (either father or mother) of each child participated in the parent group. Their demographic characteristics are described in Table 1 and Table 2. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of children, and Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of parents who participated in the study.

Table 1. Characteristics of Children (N=20) Ranging in Age from 5-10 Years Old: Mean (SD)=8.35±1.46

Demographic	%
Gender (%Boy)	55
Grade	
Grade 1	15
Grade 2	5
Grade 3	30
Grade 4	25
Grade 5	25
Birth order	
1 <sup>st</sup>	50
2 <sup>nd</sup>	45
3 <sup>rd</sup>	5

The average age of the children was about eight years. Boys were slightly higher in the sample than girls. The majority of the children were between Grade 3 to Grade 5.

Only one of the children was the third one in the family. The rest of the children were from either first or second position in terms of their birth order.

Table 2. Characteristics of Parents, Percent of Total Sample (N=20)

	Mother	Father	%
<b>Age</b>			
18-29 years	2	0	10%
30-49 years	12	5	85%
50-64 years	1	0	5%
<b>Education</b>			
Grades 9 through 11	0	2	10%
Grade 12 or GED	7	0	35%
College 1 year to years	4	1	25%
College 4 years	3	2	25%
Graduate School	1	0	5%
<b>Employment</b>			
Full-time Employed for wages	0	5	25%
Part-time employed for wages	2	0	10%
Self-employed	1	0	5%
Out of work	6	0	30%
A homemaker	6	0	30%
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
Asian or Asian American	14	5	95%
Hispanic or Latino	1	0	5%
<b>Religion</b>			
Muslim	12	5	85%
Roman Catholic	1	0	5%
Something else	2	0	10%

Mothers were highly represented among the sample of parents. Except one mother, all of the parents were below 50 years of age. Only two mothers, but none of the fathers, were below 30 years of age. In terms of education, except one, the mothers were scattered between high school and college graduation. Although more than half of the fathers had a college education, the remainder did not complete a high school education. In terms of employment, no mothers were full-time employed for wages. The majority of the mothers were either out of work or were homemakers. On the other hand, all of the fathers were full-time employed for wages. Except one Hispanic/Latino mother, all of the parents were Asian or Asian American. Except one Roman Catholic mother and two with an unspecified religious practice, all of the mothers were Muslims. On the other hand, all of the fathers were Muslims.

### **Parenting Styles, Social Skills, and Conflict Resolution Strategies**

Descriptive statistical analyses were executed to examine parental use of parenting styles, children's social skills, and children's use of conflict resolution strategies in six hypothetical conflict situations. The use of different parenting aspects differs in frequencies. The children use of social skills reflects whether they used certain social skills mentioned in the social skill questionnaire or not. The children used single or multiple conflict resolution strategies in each conflict situations. The children's use of conflict resolution strategies reflects how often children used certain conflict resolution strategies across all six stories. The results found from descriptive statistical analyses are presented in Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5.

Table 3 showed that the average score of authoritative parenting style was higher

Table 3. Descriptive Statistical Analysis for Parenting Styles and Sub-factors of Parenting Styles, Scores on Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ) Among Sample of N=20

Parenting styles	Sub-factors of Parenting styles	Mean	SD	Range
Authoritative		4.013	.345	3.13-4.60
	Warmth/Support	4.550	.618	2.40-5.00
	Reasoning/Induction	4.330	.543	2.80-5.00
Authoritarian	Democratic Participation	3.850	.506	3.00-4.60
		2.270	.728	1.08-3.92
	Physical coercion	2.050	.825	1.00-4.00
	Verbal hostility	2.400	.704	1.25-4.00
Permissive	Non-reasoning	2.362	.879	2.00-4.00
		2.790	.508	2.00-4.00
	Indulgent	2.790	.508	2.00-4.00

than authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. Similarly, the average scores of sub-factors of authoritative parenting style were higher than those of authoritarian and permissive parenting styles.

There were 5 items in the children's social skill questionnaire where children could show their use of appropriate social skills. The average score of appropriate social skills from Table 4 showed that almost all of the children used all of the appropriate social skills mentioned in the questionnaire. Children could show inappropriate assertiveness in three items of the questionnaire. The range of inappropriate assertiveness showed that none of the children showed inappropriate assertiveness in all of the items.



The average score of inappropriate assertiveness showed that children less frequently used inappropriate assertiveness. There were two items in the questionnaire where children could demonstrate their impulsive social skills. None of the children showed impulsiveness in both items.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Children’s Use of Social Skills Mentioned in Social Skills Questionnaire

Social skills	Mean	SD	Range
Appropriate social skills	4.850	3.66	4.00-5.00
Inappropriate assertiveness	.400	.598	.00-2.00
Impulsive	.450	.510	.00-1.00

Note. In the questionnaire, total items under appropriate social skills, inappropriate assertiveness and impulsive dimensions were 5, 3 & 2 respectively.

Children were found to use multiple strategies for resolving conflict in the six different conflict situations (See Table 5). The average use of “avoidance” and “sharing” was lowest and the average use of “ask adult” categories of conflict resolution strategies was highest.

### **Relationships Between Parenting Styles and Conflict Resolution Strategies**

Bivariate correlations were computed to examine the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and parenting styles. Results obtained from this analysis are presented in Table 6. No significant relationship was found between parenting styles and conflict resolution strategies.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistical Analysis of Children’s Use of Conflict Resolution Strategies Across All Six Conflict Situations

Strategies	Mean	SD	Range
Coercion	1.45	1.638	.00-5.00
Negotiation	1.65	1.631	.00-5.00
Tell child	1.10	1.021	.00-3.00
Ask adult	2.05	1.731	.00-6.00
Avoidance	.15	.489	.00-2.00
Sharing	.75	.786	.00-3.00
Other	1.67	1.387	.00-5.00

Table 6. Bivariate Correlations (r) Between Conflict Resolution Strategies and Major Categories of Parenting Styles. All not significant.

	Coercion	Negotiation	Tell child	Ask adult	Avoidance	Sharing	Other
Authoritative	-.29	.17	-.41	.10	.09	.29	.34
Authoritarian	.39	-.26	-.07	-.21	.13	-.2	-.29
Permissive	.31	-.32	-.22	.02	.05	-.16	-.12

Table 7 presents the correlation coefficients for the relationship between sub-factors of parenting styles and conflict resolution strategies. Moderate negative correlation was found between the warmth/support sub-factor of authoritative parenting style and the “tell child” category of children’s conflict resolution strategies. This

suggests that children were more likely to tell other children to do or not to do something as a way of resolving conflict when parents were less warm and supportive to them. In reverse, children were less likely tell other children to do or not to do something for resolving conflict if parents used more warmth/support in their parenting styles. A

Table 7. Bivariate Correlations (r) Between Conflict Resolution Strategies and Sub-factors of Parenting Styles.

	Coercion	Negotiation	Tell child	Ask adult	Avoidance	Sharing	Other
W &S	-.06	.08	-.45*	.13	.06	.18	.06
R/ I	-.43	-.01	.03	.29	-.11	.40	.19
DP	-.20	.27	-.27	-.16	.18	.06	.49*
PC	.38	-.27	-.11	-.14	.11	-.22	-.30
VH	.32	-.06	.05	.47*	.23	-.21	-.16
NR/P	.35	-.34	-.11	-.01	.05	-.12	-.32
I	.31	-.32	-.22	.02	.04	-.16	-.12

Note. W&S(Warmth & Support), R/I(Reasoning/Induction), DP(Democratic participation), PC(Physical coercion), VH(Verbal Hostility), NR/P(Non-reasoning/Punitive), I(Indulgent)

\* $p < .05$ ;

moderate but positive correlation was found between the democratic participation sub-factor of authoritative parenting style and the “other” dimension of children’s conflict resolution strategies. Children were more likely to use the “other” category of conflict resolution strategy if parents’ were found to use more democratic participation in parenting styles. The “other” category of conflict resolution strategy can be regarded as

positive conflict resolution strategy as most of the children of these category asked other children's reason for action for resolving conflict. The "other" category also reflected children's positive intention of resolving conflict. The detail of "other" category was in Chapter 5 (see page 40). A moderate negative relationship was also found between the verbal hostility sub-factor of authoritarian parenting style and the "ask adult" category of children's conflict resolution strategies. Children were more likely to seek adult support to intervene in the conflict situation if parents were more likely to explode their anger toward their children, shout, scold and criticize children for their mistakes and vice versa.

### **Relationships Between Conflict Resolution Strategies and Social Skills**

Bivariate correlations were computed to examine the association between children's conflict resolution strategies and their social skills. As can be seen from Table 8, the inappropriate assertiveness dimension of children's social skills was positively correlated with the "coercion" category of children's conflict resolution strategies and negatively related with the "negation" dimension of children's conflict resolution strategies. Children having more inappropriate assertiveness were more likely to use

Table 8. Bivariate Correlations (r) Between Social Skills and Conflict Resolution Skills

	Coercion	Negotiation	Tell child	Ask adult	Avoidance	Sharing	Other
ASS	-.14	.43	.18	-.07	-.16	.04	.30
IA	.50*	-.55**	-.24	.30	-.03	.00	-.20
Impulsive	.60	-.05	.51*	-.44	-.07	.16	-.51*

Note. ASS (Appropriate Social Skill), IA (Inappropriate Assertiveness)  
\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$

coercion and less likely to use negotiation as the way of resolving conflict and vice versa. Children's use of impulsive social skills was positively correlated with the "tell child" category of children's conflict resolution strategies and negatively related with the "other" category of children's conflict resolution strategies. More impulsive children were more likely to tell other children to do or not to do something, and they were less likely to use a strategy from the "other" category to resolve conflict.

### **Relationships Between Parenting Styles, Children's Social Skills, and Children's Conflict Resolution Strategies**

A series of multiple regression models was used to examine the relationship between parenting style, children's social skills, and children's conflict resolution strategies. Since there was no significant correlation between the major parenting styles and conflict resolution strategies, authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles were not included in the regression analysis. In the regression analysis, each of the sub-factors of parenting styles was entered separately in combination with each of the dimensions of social skills as independent variables to predict different types of conflict resolution strategies.

Table 9 presents a multiple regression analysis to predict children's use of coercion during conflict from parental use of reasoning/ induction and children's use of inappropriate assertiveness. The overall model was significant, indicating that children's inappropriate assertiveness and reasoning/induction of parenting accounted for 52% of the variance in coercion. The model reflects that one unit increase in children's use of inappropriate assertiveness leads to 1.606 unit increase in children's use of coercion in

response to conflict resolution when reasoning/induction aspect of parenting remains constant. On the other hand, one unit increase in reasoning/induction aspect of parenting can predict 1.585 unit decrease in children's use of coercion in response to conflict when children's use of inappropriate assertiveness remains constant.

Table 9. Multiple Regression Using Inappropriate Assertiveness, and Reasoning/ Induction to Predict Coercion

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					9.418*	.526
Inappropriate assertiveness	1.606	.463	.587***	3.47		
Reasoning/ Induction	-1.585	.509	-.527**	3.11		

\*\*\*  $p < .005$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$

Table 10 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children's use of coercion as a conflict resolution strategy from parental use of physical coercion and children's inappropriate assertiveness. The overall model was significant, indicating that

Table 10: Multiple Regression Using Inappropriate Assertiveness, and Physical Coercion to Predict Coercion

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					3.861*	.312
Inappropriate assertiveness	1.173	.578	.429	2.031		
Physical coercion	.449	.419	.251	1.191		

\*  $p < .05$

children’s inappropriate assertiveness and parents’ use of physical coercion accounted for 31% of the variance in coercion. In the model, inappropriate assertiveness and physical coercion did not reach conventional statistical significance levels.

Table 11 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children’s use of coercion as a conflict resolution strategy from parental use of verbal hostility in parenting and children’ inappropriate assertiveness. The overall model was significant, indicating

Table 11: Multiple Regression Using Inappropriate Assertiveness, and Verbal Hostility to Predict Coercion

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					4.991*	.370
Inappropriate assertiveness	1.406	.527	.513*	2.666		
Verbal hostility	.788	.448	.339	1.761		

\**p*<.05

that children’s inappropriate assertiveness and parents’ use of verbal hostility accounted for 37% of the variance in coercion. The model reflects that each unit increase in children’s use of inappropriate assertiveness leads to 1.407 unit increase in children’s use of coercion in response to conflict resolution when parents’ use of verbal hostility remains constant. The relationship between parents’ verbal hostility and coercion was positive, but did not reach conventional statistical significance levels.

Table 12 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children’s use of negotiation as a conflict resolution strategy from parental use of warmth/support in parenting and children’ inappropriate assertiveness. The overall model was significant

Table 12: Multiple Regression Using Inappropriate Assertiveness, and Warmth/Support to Predict Negotiation

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					3.699*	.303
Inappropriate assertiveness	-1.493	.556	-.547*	-2.687		
Warmth/Support	.063	.537	.024	.117		

\**p*<.05

indicating that children's inappropriate assertiveness social skill and warmth/support in parenting accounted for 30% of the variance in negotiation. The model reflects that each unit increase in children's use of inappropriate assertiveness leads to 1.493 unit decrease in children's use of negotiation in response to conflict resolution when parents' use of warmth/support remains constant. The relationships between warmth/support and negotiation was positive but the relationship was not statistically significant.

Table 13 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children's use of negotiation as a conflict resolution strategy from parental use of reasoning/induction in

Table 13: Multiple Regression Using Inappropriate Assertiveness, and Reasoning/Induction to Predict Negotiation

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					3.805*	.309
Inappropriate assertiveness	-1.535	.556	-.563*	-2.759		
Reasoning/Induction	.246	.612	.082	.402		

\**p*<.05



parenting and children’ inappropriate assertiveness. The overall model was significant, indicating that children’s inappropriate assertiveness social skill and use of reasoning/induction in parenting accounted for 30% of the variance in negotiation. The model reflects that each unit increase in children’s use of inappropriate assertiveness leads to 1.535 unit decrease in children’s use of negotiation in response to conflict resolution when parents’ use of reasoning/induction remains constant. The reasoning/induction was positively related with negotiation, but the relationship was not statistically significant.

Table 14 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children’s use of negotiation as a conflict resolution strategy from parental use of democratic participation in parenting and children’ inappropriate assertiveness. The overall model was significant, indicating that children’s use of inappropriate assertiveness and parents’ use of democratic participation accounted for 30% of the variance in negotiation. The model reflects that each unit increase in children’s use of inappropriate assertiveness leads to 1.519 unit decrease in children’s use of negotiation in response to conflict resolution when democratic participation aspect of parenting remains constant. The relationships

Table 14: Multiple Regression Using Inappropriate Assertiveness, and Democratic Participation to Predict Negotiation

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					3.692*	.303
Inappropriate assertiveness	-1.519	.647	-.557*	-2.347		
Democratic participation	-.042	.765	-.013	-.055		

\**p*<.05

between democratic participation and negotiation was negative, did not reach conventional statistical significance levels.

Table 15 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children’s use of negotiation as a conflict resolution strategy from parental use of physical coercion in

Table 15: Multiple Regression Using Inappropriate Assertiveness, and Physical Coercion to Predict Negotiation

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					3.895*	.314
Inappropriate assertiveness	-1.406	.575	-.516*	-2.447		
Physical coercion	-.223	.416	-.113	-.536		

\**p*<.05

parenting and children’ inappropriate assertiveness. The overall model was significant, indicating that children’s use of inappropriate assertiveness and use of physical coercion in parenting together accounted for 31% of the variance in negotiation. The model reflects that each unit increase in children’s use of inappropriate assertiveness leads to 1.406 unit decrease in children’s use of negotiation in response to conflict resolution when parents’ use of physical coercion remains constant. The relationships between physical coercion and negotiation was negative but did not reach conventional statistical significance levels.

Table 16 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children’s use of negotiation as a conflict resolution strategy from parental use of verbal hostility in parenting and children’ inappropriate assertiveness. The overall model was significant,

Table 16: Multiple Regression Using Inappropriate Assertiveness, and Verbal Hostility to Predict Negotiation

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					3.803*	.309
Inappropriate assertiveness	-1.505	.550	-.552*	-2.738		
Verbal hostility	-.186	.467	-.080	-.398		

\**p*<.05

indicating that children’s use of inappropriate assertiveness and verbal hostility in parenting together accounted for 30% of the variance in negotiation. The model reflects that each unit increase in children’s use of inappropriate assertiveness leads to 1.505 unit decrease in children’s use of negotiation in response to conflict resolution when verbal hostility aspect of parenting remains constant. The relationships between verbal hostility and negotiation was also negative, but not statistically significant.

Table 17 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children’s use of negotiation as a conflict resolution strategy from parental use of non-reasoning in

Table 17: Multiple Regression Using Inappropriate Assertiveness, and Non-reasoning to Predict Negotiation

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					3.945*	.317
Inappropriate assertiveness	-1.342	.607	-.492*	-2.211		
Non-reasoning	-.247	.413	-.133	-.597		

\**p*<.05

parenting and children's inappropriate assertiveness. The overall model was significant, indicating that children's inappropriate assertiveness and parents' use of non-reasoning together accounted for 31% of the variance in negotiation. The model reflects that each unit increase in children's use of inappropriate assertiveness leads to 1.342 unit decrease in children's use of negotiation in response to conflict resolution when non-reasoning aspect of parenting remains constant. The relationships between non-reasoning and negotiation was negative but did not reach conventional statistical levels.

Table 18 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children's use of negotiation as a conflict resolution strategy from parental use of indulgent in parenting and children's inappropriate assertiveness. The overall model was significant, indicating that children's use of inappropriate assertiveness and indulgent parenting together

Table 18: Multiple Regression Using Inappropriate Assertiveness, and Indulgent to Predict Negotiation

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					4.333*	.338
Inappropriate assertiveness	-1.365	.557	-.501*	-2.452		
Indulgent	-.620	.655	-.193	-.947		

\**p*<.05

accounted for 33% of the variance in negotiation. The model reflects that each unit increase in children's use of inappropriate assertiveness leads to 1.365 unit decrease in children's use of negotiation in response to conflict resolution when indulgent aspect of parenting remains constant. The relationships between indulgent aspect of parenting and

negotiation was negative, but did not reach conventional statistical significance levels.

Table 19 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children’s use of “tell child” category as conflict resolution strategy from parental use of warmth/support in

Table 19: Multiple Regression Using Impulsive, and Warmth/Support to Predict Tell Child

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					4.782*	.360
Impulsive	.819	.410	.409	1.995		
Warmth/Support	-.537	.339	-.325	-1.586		

\**p*<.05

parenting and children’s impulsive social skills. The overall model was significant, indicating that children’s impulsive social skills and use of warmth/support in parenting accounted for 36% of the variance in telling other children to do or not to do something as conflict resolution strategy. In the model, impulsive social skill was positively and warmth/support was negatively related with “tell child”. None of the relationships were statistically significant.

Table 20 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children’s use of “tell child” category as a conflict resolution strategy from parental use of physical coercion in parenting and children’s impulsive social skills. The overall model was significant, indicating that children’s impulsive social skills and parents’ use of verbal hostility in parenting together accounted for 37% of the variance in telling other children to do or not

to do something as a way of resolving conflict. The model reflects that each unit increase in children’s use of impulsive social skills leads to 1.097 unit increase in children’s use of

Table 20: Multiple Regression Using Impulsive, and Physical Coercion to Predict Tell Child

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					3.750*	.306
Impulsive	1.097	.409	.548*	2.678		
Physical coercion	-.253	.253	-.205	-.999		

\**p*<.05

telling other children to do or not to do something in response to conflict resolution when physical coercion aspect of parenting remains constant. The relationships between physical coercion and “tell child” was also negative, but did not reach conventional statistical significance levels.

Table 21 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children’s use of “tell child” category as a conflict resolution strategy from indulgent parenting and children’s

Table 21: Multiple Regression Using Impulsive, and Indulgent to Predict Tell Child

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					3.806*	.309
Impulsive	1.021	.403	.510*	2.532		
Indulgent	-.420	.405	-.210	-1.039		

\**p*<.05

impulsive social skills. The overall model was significant, indicating that children’s impulsive social skills and indulgent parenting accounted for 30% of the variance in telling other child to do or not to do something as a way of resolving conflict. The model reflects that each unit increase in children’s use of impulsive social skills leads to 1.021 unit increase in children’s use of telling other children to do or not to do something in response to conflict resolution when indulgent aspect of parenting remains constant. The relationships between indulgent parenting and “tell child” was negative, but did not reach conventional statistical significance levels.

Table 22 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children’s use of “ask adult” category of conflict resolution strategy from parental use of verbal hostility in parenting and children’ impulsive social skills. The overall model was significant,

Table 22: Multiple Regression Using Impulsive, and Verbal Hostility to Predict Ask Adult

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					4.984*	.370
Impulsive	-1.318	.659	-.388	-2.000		
Verbal hostility	-1.031	.478	-.419*	-2.158		

\**p*<.05

indicating that impulsive social skills and use of verbal hostility in parenting accounted for 37% of the variance in seeking adult help for intervening conflict. The model reflects that each unit increase in verbal hostility aspect of parenting leads to 1.318 unit decrease

in children’s use of adult intervention in response to conflict resolution when children’s use of impulsive social skills remains constant. The relationships between impulsive social skills and “ask adult” was negative, but did not reach conventional statistical significance levels.

Table 23 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children’s use of “other” category as a conflict resolution strategy from parental use of democratic participation in parenting and children’ impulsive social skills. The overall model was significant,

Table 23: Multiple Regression Using Impulsive, and Democratic Participation to Predict Other

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					5.963*	.412
Impulsive	-1.151	.517	-.424*	-2.226		
Democratic participation	1.097	.521	.400	2.103		

\**p*<.05

indicating that children’s impulsive social skills and use of democratic participation in parenting together accounted for 41% of the variance in other. The model reflects that each unit increase in children’s use of impulsive social skills leads to 1.151 unit decrease in children’s use of “other” category in response to conflict resolution when democratic participation aspect of parenting remains constant. The relationships between democratic participation in parenting and “other” was positive, but did not reach conventional statistical significance levels.

Table 24 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children’s use of “other”



category as a conflict resolution strategy from parental use of physical coercion in parenting and children’ impulsive social skills. The overall model was significant, indicating that children’s impulsive social skills and use of physical coercion in parenting together accounted for 31% of the variance in other. The model reflects that each unit

Table 24: Multiple Regression Using Impulsive, and Physical Coercion to Predict “Other” Category of Conflict Resolution

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					3.826*	.310
Impulsive	-1.283	.555	-.472*	-2.313		
Physical coercion	-.385	.343	-.229	-1.122		

\**p*<.05

increase in children’s use of impulsive social skills leads to 1.283 unit decrease in children’s use of “other” category in response to conflict resolution when parents’ use of physical coercion remains constant. The relationships between physical coercion in parenting and “other” was negative, but not statistically significant.

Table 25 presents multiple regression analysis to predict children’s use of “other” category as a conflict resolution strategy from parental use of non-reasoning in parenting and children’ impulsive social skills. The overall model was significant, indicating that children’s impulsive social skills and parents’ use of non-reasoning in parenting together accounted for 33% of the variance in other. The model reflects that each unit increase in children’s use of impulsive social skills leads to 1.318 unit decrease in children’s use of “other” category in response to conflict resolution when non-reasoning aspect of

Table 25: Multiple Regression Using Impulsive, and Non-reasoning to Predict “Other” Category of Conflict Resolution

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE	$\beta$	T	F	R <sup>2</sup>
Model					4.325*	.337
Impulsive	-1.318	.539	-.485*	2.447		
Non-reasoning	-.442	.313	-.280	1.414		

\**p*<.05

parenting remains constant. The relationships between non-reasoning in parenting and “other” was negative, but not statistically significant.

## **CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the association among parenting style and children's social skills and the conflict resolution strategies used by young children aged 5 to 10 years.

### **Parenting Styles and Conflict Resolution**

Two sub-factors (warmth/support and democratic participation) of the authoritative parenting style and one sub-factor (verbal hostility) of the authoritarian parenting style were associated with conflict resolution strategies of children. Use of positive parenting dimensions either increases children's likelihood of using positive conflict resolution strategies or decreases the likelihood of using less desirable strategies for resolving conflict. For example, democratic participation was positively related to the "other" category of conflict resolution strategy. When the "other" category was further analyzed for better understanding, it showed that more than 80% of the data of this category could be coded into an "ask for reason" category where children wanted to ask other children the reason for their actions. So, it can be considered as a positive way of resolving conflict. The rest of the data in the "other" category also demonstrated children's positive intentions for resolving conflict. On the other hand, warmth/support in parenting decreases children's likelihood of telling other children to do or not to do something to resolve conflict. As children did not seem to be empathetic to the needs, feelings, and desires of other children, it can be considered as a less desirable way of

resolving conflict. Previous research also found warmth and sensitivity aspects in parenting as two of the most salient predictors of children's social development (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2006). In addition, all of the above findings can be explained by Erikson's (1995) notion that children who have internalized adult standards for behavior should more readily employ these behaviors with peers when adults are not present. Identification with parental strategies encourages children to use those strategies during conflict with peers. Research also found that positive aspects of parenting (maternal suggestion and induction) during toddlerhood predicted children's less frequent use of coercion with peers at later ages (Kochanska, 1992; Putallaz 1987).

Less desirable aspects of parenting were negatively linked with children's positive way of resolving conflict. For example, verbal hostility in parenting decreases the likelihood of seeking adult help for resolving conflict. Even though asking for help reflects children's dependency on others' for resolving conflict, it can be considered as a desirable way of solving a problem. Previous studies also found similar findings, where mothers' use of power assertion was linked to more negative and less positive behavior with peers (Hart et al., 1992; Kochanska, 1992; Putallaz, 1987). Fathers' behavior shows a similar pattern of association in their studies.

### **Children's Social Skills and Their Conflict Resolution Strategies**

Inappropriate social skills or a lack of social skills are often considered as detrimental for children in maintaining interpersonal relationships with others. Research showed that impulsivity in children makes it difficult to form and maintain peer relationships (Campbell & Ewing, 1990; Pope, Bierman & Mumma, 1991). These studies

showed that inadequate impulse control leads children to aggressive responses, poor problem solving, lack of empathy, and a failure to consider potential consequences of their action. They also have difficulty in taking turns and trouble sharing; they also act impulsively and make critical remarks. Similarly, inappropriate social skills such as poor impulse control, low frustration tolerance, limited ability to generate alternative responses to stress, and limited insight into the feelings of themselves and others often lead children to engage in aggressive behavior (Jimerson, Morrison, Pletcher, & Furlong, 2006). The findings of the present study were consistent with previous research. This study showed that inappropriate assertiveness was positively related with less desirable and negatively related with more desirable conflict resolution strategies. For example, children who demonstrated more inappropriate social assertiveness were more likely to use coercion (physical force, verbal threats, reprimands, anger or exclude children from play), and they were less likely to use negotiation (suggest resolutions or use their reasoning ability) to resolve conflicts. Similarly, more impulsive children were more likely to tell other children to do or not to do something without taking into account others' feelings and desires, and less likely to employ other positive strategies ("other" category) to resolve conflict.

### **Relationships Between Parenting Styles, Children's Social Skills and Children's Conflict Resolution Strategies**

Parenting styles play an important role in the development of children's social skills. According to Bornstein and Bornstein (2014), the balance between demanding and responsiveness that can be seen in the authoritative parenting style is linked to children's

higher social competencies. They also noted that authoritarian and permissive parenting styles do not contribute much to the positive outcome of children's social competence, because too much control and demandingness in the authoritarian parenting style limits children's opportunity to make decisions and thereby limits their ability to cope in stressful situations. On the other hand, the permissive parenting style does not provide appropriate direction and guidance for the children which limits children's capacity to develop appropriate morals and goals. Since parenting styles and children's social skills are interconnected, both factors might work together to influence children's selection of strategies to resolve conflict.

In the present study, results obtained from the multiple regression analyses suggested that children's use of coercion to resolve conflict can be predicted from children's inappropriate assertiveness and each of three aspects of parenting (warmth/support, physical coercion, or verbal hostility). Findings of this study also showed that each of seven aspects in parenting (warmth/support, reasoning/induction, democratic participation, physical coercion, verbal hostility, non-reasoning, and indulgent) in conjunction with children's inappropriate assertiveness can predict children's ability to negotiate during conflict. Telling other children to do or not to do something as a way to resolve conflict can also be predicted from children's impulsiveness together with each of three aspects of parenting (warmth/support, physical coercion, indulgent). Seeking adult help as a way of resolving conflict can also be determined by children's social skills and parenting aspects. Impulsive nature of children together with verbal hostility in parenting can determine children's tendency to seek adult help. Each of the three aspects of parenting (democratic participation, physical coercion,

non-reasoning) distinctively joins with children's impulsiveness to determine children's use of positive strategies ("other" category/ask for reasons and other positive ways) in resolving conflict.

So, it is obvious from the above findings that parenting aspects and children's social skills together make a difference in children's conflict resolution strategies. Except "avoidance" and "sharing", all of the conflict resolution strategies used in the present study can be predicted from parenting styles and children's social skills.

### **Limitations**

There are limitations to the current study. There are limitations of generalizing the findings due to the small sample of children and parents. There is the possibility that unaccounted factors confound the link between conflict resolution strategies. There were also limitations to the coding process of interviews. Recorded data were not transcribed into text due to time constraints. In this study, hypothetical conflict scenarios were used to obtain data on conflict resolution strategies. But natural conflict scenarios might be different and children's responses might be different. There might be a difference in what children say and what they really do (Leventhal, 2007). This research did not investigate differences in fathers' and mothers' parenting style in relation to children's conflict resolution strategies. It did not examine gender differences in conflict resolution strategies.

### **Conclusion**

Although there were several limitations, findings of this research can serve as a

foundation for work dealing with conflicts in early childhood and for establishing early childhood conflict resolution programs. Following are some suggestions from this study:

- Parents can be encouraged to practice positive aspects of parenting to foster children's use of constructive and desirable conflict resolution strategies, such as "ask for reasons".
- Parents should be made aware and sensitized that positive aspects of parenting may keep children away from using undesirable strategies to resolve conflict.
- Both social skills of children and parenting aspects should be incorporated together in conflict resolution programs for better outcomes.
- More research with larger sample sizes needs to be conducted in order to better understand how consistently young children utilize conflict resolution strategies.
- This study can be replicated using a larger number of participants and using a representative sample so that findings could be generalized.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Letter of Consent

You have been asked to participate in a research study. Before you agree to participate in this study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the study and the procedures involved. The investigator will also explain the project to you in detail. If you have any questions about the study or your role in it, be sure to ask the investigator. If you have more questions later, Dr. Joan Test, the person mainly responsible for this study, will answer them for you. You may contact the investigators, Dr. Joan Test at 417-836-8918, or [JoanTest@MissouriState.edu](mailto:JoanTest@MissouriState.edu) and Afroza Parvin at 347-741-0675, or [Afroza1@live.missourisate.edu](mailto:Afroza1@live.missourisate.edu).

You will need to sign this form giving us your permission to be involved in the study. Taking part in this study is entirely your choice. If you decide to take part but later change your mind, you may stop at any time. If you decide to stop, you do not have to give a reason and there will be no negative consequences for ending your participation.

**Purpose of this Study.** The reason for this study is to investigate how parenting styles and social skills of children interact with children's conflict resolution strategies when they encounter conflict with their peers. This study will explore whether children's conflict resolution strategies differ in terms of parenting styles or their social skills.

About 30 children and their parents will participate in this study.

**Description of Procedures.** If you agree yourself and for your child to be part of this study, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire that consists of 32 items regarding parenting skills. It will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Your child will

also be asked to take part in an interview. During the interview your child will be provided with six stories about peer conflict situations and will be asked to role-play the situations by using Puppets and toys. The interview will be tape-recorded. It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete the interview. After the interview, your child will be given a questionnaire with 10 items related to his/her social skills. The questionnaire will take about 10-15 minutes to complete. If you like, the interview could take place at the researcher's house. In that case you and your child will be invited to the researcher's house for about 40-45 minutes.

**What are the risks?** There would be minimum risk for the participants under study. Conflict scenarios might upset children. However, involving the children in active role-play in a way to make it fun would help to feel less upset.

**What are the benefits?** You may not benefit directly from this study. However, the information from this study will help to design intervention programs for resolving children's conflict with their peers. The information revealed from this study might be useful for educators, researchers, and other practitioners in the field of childhood and family development for teaching, research as well as development, implementation and evaluation of program on children's conflict resolution.

**How will my privacy be protected?** The results of this study are confidential and only the investigators will have access to the information, which will be kept, in a locked box at house of the investigator. Your name and your child's name as well as any personal identifying information will not be used in any published reports of this research. Instead of using your and your child's name, numbers will be used in all materials for identification. A list of names & numbers will be kept separately from other



materials in a secured manner. The printed data will be kept in a secured locker and the soft copy of the data will be kept in a personal computer in password protective files at researcher's house.

**Consent to Participate.** If you want to participate in this study, “Conflict Resolution In Children and The Association Between Parenting Style And The Children’s Own Social Skills”, you will be asked to sign below:

I have read and understand the information in this form. I have been encouraged to ask questions and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. By signing this form, I agree voluntarily to participate in this study and for my child to participate in this study. I know that we can withdraw from the study at any time. I have received a copy of this form for my own records.

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of the Child \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B. Assent to Participate in a Research Study**

You have been asked to participate in a research study. This study will explore whether children's conflict resolution strategies differ in terms of parenting styles or their social skills.

If you want to participate in this study, I would like you to take part in two types of task. During the first one, We are going to act out some stories about some kids your age with our puppets. I want to find out what you would do with your peers, so you can show me with your puppet what you would really do. I would like you to play with me in six stories. While we are going to do this task, I will tape-record our conversations. For the second task, I would like you to complete a questionnaire of 10 items related to your social skills. The questionnaire will take about 10-15 minutes to complete. If you decide to take part but later change your mind, you may stop at any time.

If you want to participate in this study, "Conflict Resolution In Children and The Association Between Parenting Style And The Children's Own Social Skills", you will be asked to sign below:

You, \_\_\_\_\_(Subject), want to be in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix C. Demographic Questionnaire**

**1. What is your age?**

- 18-29 years old
- 30-49 years old
- 50-64 years old
- 65 years and over

**2. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female

**3. What is the highest grade or year of school you completed?**

- Never attended school or only attended kindergarten
- Grades 1 through 8(Elementary)
- Grades 9 through 11 (Some high school)
- Grade 12 or GED (High school graduate)
- College 1 year to 3 years (Some college or technical school)
- College 4 years (College graduate)
- Graduate School (Advance Degree)

**4. Are you currently:**

- Full-time Employed for wages
- Part-time employed for wages
- Self-employed
- Out of work
- A homemaker
- A student
- Retired
- Unable to work

**5. What is your marital status**

- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Separated
- Never been married

**6. How many members live in your household (including you)?**

.....

**7. How many children do you have?**

.....

**8. How do you describe yourself? (please check the one option that best describes**

you)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Non-Hispanic White

**9. What is your religious preference?**

- Muslim
- Roman Catholic
- Mormon
- Protestant
- Jewish
- Christian Scientist
- Something else (please specify):

**10. What is your country of origin?**

.....

**Child's Information**

Child's age: .....

Child's gender:.....

Child's grade:.....

Child's birth order:.....

## Appendix D. Parenting Style Questionnaire

REMEMBER: For each item, rate how often you exhibit this behavior with your child.

### I EXHIBIT THIS BEHAVIOR:

1 = Never; 2 = Once In Awhile

3 = About Half of the Time                      4 = Very Often 5 = Always

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I am responsive to my child's feelings and needs
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I use physical punishment as a way of disciplining my child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I take my child's desires into account before asking him/her to do something.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. When my child asks why he/she has to conform, I state: because I said so, or I am your parent and I want you to.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I explain to my child how I feel about the child's good and bad behavior.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I spank when my child is disobedient.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I encourage my child to talk about his/her troubles.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I find it difficult to discipline my child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I encourage my child to freely express (himself)(herself) even when disagreeing with me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I punish by taking privileges away from my child with little if any explanations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I emphasize the reasons for rules.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I give comfort and understanding when my child is upset.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I yell or shout when my child misbehaves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I give praise when my child is good.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I give into my child when the child causes a commotion about something.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I explode in anger towards my child.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I threaten my child with punishment more often than actually giving it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I take into account my child's preferences in making plans for the family.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I grab my child when being disobedient.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I state punishments to my child and do not actually do them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I show respect for my child's opinions by encouraging my child to express them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I allow my child to give input into family rules.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I scold and criticize to make my child improve.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I spoil my child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I give my child reasons why rules should be obeyed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I use threats as punishment with little or no justification.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I have warm and intimate times together with my child.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. I punish by putting my child off somewhere alone with little if any explanations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. I help my child to understand the impact of behavior by encouraging my child to talk about the consequences of his/her own actions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. I scold or criticize when my child's behavior doesn't meet my expectations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. I explain the consequences of the child's behavior.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 32. I slap my child when the child misbehaves

## Appendix E. Social Skills Questionnaire

The following statements have been taken from MESSY to measure Children's Social Skills.

1.I have many friends	yes	no
2.I take or use things that are not mine without permission	yes	no
3.I share what I have with others	yes	no
4.I slap or hit when I am angry	yes	no
5.I join in games with other children	yes	no
6.I get into fights a lot	yes	no
7.I feel sorry when I hurt someone	yes	no
8.I gripe or complain often	yes	no
9.I know how to make friends	yes	no
10.I become angry easily	yes	no

## Appendix F. Interview Script

Story number	Description
1	You and another child are playing with farm animals. You only have two farm animals to play with. Another child comes over, pushes one child and says to you "Hey, child's name, I want to play with you now!" What would you do next (Mize & Ladd, 1988)?
2	You are having a good time playing in the sandbox when another child comes over and hits you. What would you do next (Zahn-Waxler, Cole, Richardson, Friedman, Michel, & Belouad, 1994)?
3	You are kicking a soccer ball and Susie comes and takes the soccer ball away. What would you do next (Zahn-Waxler et al.)?
4	You are building a very tall tower with blocks. While you are building, another child comes over and knocks the building down. What would you do next (Mize & Ladd)?
5	You are walking around the room one day and you see two children playing with farm animals and it looks like they are having fun. You go up close to those children because you would like to play too. When you walk up to the other children, one of them says, "You can't play, cause we only have two farm animals." What would you do next (Mize & Ladd)?
6	Mary/Bobby is playing on the jungle gym and you start to climb up.



	Mary/Bobby pushes you off, saying "I'm playing on this." What would you do next (Zahn-Waxler et al.)?
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## **Appendix G. Pre-defined Categories for Coding Interviews**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Coercion	Physical force, verbal threats, or reprimands, anger, or exclusion by sending home
Negotiation	Suggest a resolution, reasons, ask with please
Tell child	Tell child to do or do not something
Ask adult	Tell adult about conflict with expectation that adult will intervene
Avoidance	Does nothing overt
Sharing	The child gives away or allows another use of an object that was previously in the child's possession
Other	Categories that do not fit into the above mentioned categories