

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF CONFLICTS IN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR THEIR RESOLUTION

DANIELA SALAZAR FLORES

INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER, LATACUNGA, 050106, ECUADOR, EMAIL: danielasalazar.f@hotmail.com

CRISTIAN SALAZAR

FACULTAD DE INFORMÁTICA Y ELECTRONICA, ESCUELA SUPERIOR POLITÉCNICA DE CHIMBORAZO (ESPOCH), RIOBAMBA, 060155 ECUADOR, EMAIL: cristian_salazarf@hotmail.com

OLESYA VICTOROVNA ULYBINA

PHD IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES, DOCENT, DEPARTMENT OF PEDAGOGY, PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK, BIRSK BRANCH OF UFA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, 5.INTERNATIONAL STREET 10, 452450, RUSSIA, ORCID ID:0000-0003-3348-231X, EMAIL: UOlesya_77@mail.ru

ROMAN VIKTOROVICH OSIN

CANDIDATE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY, PENZA STATE UNIVERSITY, RUSSIA, PENZA. 440026, PENZA, KRASNAYA ST., 40, EMAIL: osin@pnzgu.ru. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2240-5450

SERGEY VLAGIMIROVICH BARINOV

MOSCOW STATE UNIVERSITY OF CIVIL ENGINEERING, YAROSLAVSKOE SHOSSE, 26, MOSCOW 129337, RUSSIA, EMAIL: Barinov100@bk.ru

Abstract.

The article discusses the psychological aspects of conflicts in the educational environment and proposes pedagogical strategies for their prevention and resolution. The theoretical part is based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines social, cognitive, and organizational psychology, as well as cooperative pedagogy and restorative practices.

It has been shown that conflicts are most often caused by mismatches in expectations and norms, asymmetrical power relations between teachers and students, emotional dysregulation among participants, deficits in communication competence, and an unsafe organizational climate.

Special attention is paid to the influence of the digital environment, where asynchronous communication and the effect of "social invisibility" increase the risk of escalation. A conceptual model is proposed that includes three analytical blocks: determinants of conflict (personal, situational, and institutional), psychological mechanisms of escalation and stabilization, and pedagogical interventions aligned with the phases of conflict.

The article discusses an evaluation system that combines indicators of interaction quality, academic performance, psychological safety, and the reduction of disciplinary incidents. The article concludes that multi-level programs that integrate work with emotions, norms, and institutions are effective, provided that the administration is led, teachers are trained, and digital communication is consistently regulated.

Keywords: educational environment, school conflict, psychological safety, emotional regulation, attributional errors, social identity, restorative practices, mediation, de-escalation, socio-emotional learning.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict in the educational environment arises not as a random anomaly, but as a predictable consequence of conflicting expectations, role distribution, and limited resources, where educational objectives coexist with psychological needs and institutional regulations. Modern schools and universities operate in an environment of accelerating digitalization, increasing diversity of educational paths, and increasing public accountability, making every interaction both substantive and symbolic.

Evaluation, routines, disciplinary measures, and the distribution of teachers' attention carry not only a pragmatic meaning, but also a message about status, respect, group membership, and the fairness of procedures. Therefore, conflict should be understood as a specific form of communication that reveals the discrepancy between the cognitive schemes and emotional expectations of the participants, as well as a feedback mechanism that, when properly managed, can enhance the stability and quality of the educational process.

A psychological perspective allows us to see the multi-level determination of conflicts. At the individual level, attribution processes and emotional regulation play a key role. Participants often attribute each other's behavior to stable traits, ignoring the context, which leads to the perpetuation of negative labels and a narrowing of the field of mutual understanding. The lack of skills in recognizing and verbalizing emotions reduces the ability to cope with frustration and engage in collaborative problem-solving [7].

At the interpersonal level, differences in communication style, asymmetry of power and experience, and the influence of group identity and informal norms become significant. Mutual expectations easily shift towards a "us versus them" polarization, and one-time episodes of irritation turn into persistent patterns of resistance or covert sabotage. At the organizational level, conflict emerges through the dissonance between formal regulations and informal culture, the ambiguity of success criteria, staff overburdening, and vague feedback channels. At this point, pedagogical strategies that do not rely on institutional changes become short-lived, as the participants' behavioral patterns are reinforced by the very architecture of the environment [2].

The relevance of the topic is enhanced by the transformation of educational practices following the pandemic restrictions and the widespread adoption of blended learning. Asynchronous communication in messaging apps and electronic journals has shifted the balance between response speed and depth of understanding, while the "social invisibility" effect has reduced the volume of non-verbal cues necessary for empathic reading of intentions. The blurring of the boundaries between educational and personal spaces, the inclusion of parents in online communication, and the increased monitoring of academic performance have created new points of tension and made traditional disciplinary protocols less effective. At the same time, the development of inclusive education and the increased focus on diverse cognitive profiles require educators to be highly flexible in their assessment of behavior, as manifestations of anxiety, sensory overload, or executive function deficits may be mistakenly interpreted as intentional rule violations. In such conditions, conflict becomes an indicator of the mismatch between the pedagogical design and the psychological characteristics of the participants, and a signal to revise the norms of interaction.

The theoretical aspect of the study is the combination of several approaches. The social identity perspective explains how group membership and self-esteem protection shape the willingness to escalate when status is threatened, especially in situations of public evaluation. The concept of organizational justice suggests that individuals are sensitive not only to outcomes but also to the procedures used, and the perception of unpredictable rules or uneven application can lead to mistrust and resistance. Cognitive assessment models emphasize that participants' experiences are determined by their interpretation of the significance of the event and their resource availability, rather than by the set of stimuli themselves, so pedagogical interventions should focus on influencing the assessment of the situation rather than simply prohibiting it [4].

The practical significance of the topic stems from the managerial challenges faced by educational organizations. Disparate, ad hoc measures, from educational conversations to harsh disciplinary sanctions, have short-term effects and often produce hidden costs in the form of undermined trust and increased latent aggression. Systemic programs that combine de-escalation protocols, mediation, restorative circles, and psychological safety monitoring require initial investments in staff training and communication infrastructure, but they create a cumulative effect of reducing the frequency and intensity of incidents.

In the context of resource scarcity, the question of prioritization becomes important: which elements of interventions provide the greatest return, how to relate them to the phase of conflict, and how to integrate them into existing curricula and regulations. The answer involves not only describing effective tools, but also developing a framework for aligning them with the specific context of schools or universities to avoid formalism and overburdening teachers [6].

The purpose of this study is to provide a theoretical and practical basis for a multi-level model of conflict prevention and resolution that combines individual skills, interpersonal procedures, and organizational policies. To achieve the goal, it is necessary to consistently describe the typology of conflict situations, taking into account their level, subject, and dynamics, identify the key mechanisms of escalation and stabilization, and present a set of pedagogical strategies that are distributed according to the phases of the conflict and are supported by conditions of effectiveness and evaluation criteria. Additionally, it is necessary to pay attention to the specifics of the digital environment, where the speed of communication and the public nature of messages radically change the structure of incentives and increase the importance of network behavior regulations.

MATERIALS AND RESEARCH METHODS

The methodological framework includes elements of critical review, thematic coding, and conceptual modeling. The selection of sources was based on their relevance to the issues of psychological conflict mechanisms and pedagogical interventions, as well as on the availability of operationalized indicators for assessing effectiveness. The study allowed us to identify recurring motives and mechanisms: escalation triggers, participant roles, contextual factors, typical errors, and successful practices.

The conceptual model is structured as a multi-level causal map, in which personal and situational determinants are linked to organizational environmental parameters, and pedagogical strategies are related to the phases of conflict development. The model was validated by comparing the findings of different studies and aligning them with practical guidelines for mediation and restorative practices in education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis shows that the psychological aspects of conflicts in education are concentrated around three key areas: perception and interpretation of behavior, regulation of emotions, and distribution of power and responsibility. Perception is determined by attributional schemes, which, in the absence of information, tend to lead to fundamental attribution errors, where the actions of a student or colleague are attributed to stable personality traits rather than an analysis of the situation.

Identity threats activate defensive reactions, increasing the polarization of "us" and "them," which is typical for conflicts between teachers and students or between departments. The emotional sphere manifests itself in reduced tolerance for frustration and limited cognitive flexibility. Explosive episodes often precede the accumulation of micro-injustices that go unrecognized and unreflected upon. The distribution of power and responsibility determines the communication style and access to grievance procedures. Horizontal communication channels reduce pressure and allow for early identification of disagreements, while a rigid vertical structure without feedback contributes to suppression and subsequent escalation [5].

The digital environment makes an ambiguous contribution. It expands the possibilities for coordination, but it also enhances the effect of "disembodiment," in which participants lose the ability to empathize with texts without non-verbal cues. The asymmetry in response speed and comprehension quality contributes to misunderstandings, especially when discussing grading and discipline. Implementing reasonable regulations for digital channels, including response time rules and discussion formats, can help mitigate the risk of escalation [9].

The conceptual typology of conflicts presented in the first table combines levels and features, which makes it easier to diagnose and choose a strategy. Practice shows that the most destructive conflicts occur when differences in goals and values intersect with a lack of procedural justice [10]. In such situations, participants focus not on the content of the disagreement, but on symbolic markers of respect or humiliation. By shifting the conversation to the realm of principles and a shared search for criteria of justice, the intensity of the conflict is reduced, and attention is redirected back to the task at hand [1]. The typology of conflicts in the educational environment by key parameters is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 — Typology of conflicts in the educational environment by key parameters

Level	Subjects	Subject of disagreement	Manifestations	Dynamics	Possible consequences
Interpersonal	Student–student; teacher–student	Resources, status, rules	Disputes, resentment, sarcasm	Rapid escalation with emotional dysregulation	Cyberbullying, suspension, decreased academic performance
Group-based;	class-teacher; group-group	norms, evaluation, and fairness	sabotage and "quiet" boycotts	accumulation of micro-conflicts	polarization and exclusion from the educational process
Organizational	Teachers–administration; department–department	Policies, workload, procedures	Complaints, appeals, turnover	Protracted nature	Burnout, decrease in the quality of education
Interinstitutional	School–parents; university–partners	Expectations, boundaries of responsibility	Conflicts around incidents	Wavelike dynamics	Reputational risks, legal disputes

Psychological mechanisms of escalation are associated with attributional rigidity, metalization deficits, and group identity effects. The second table summarizes these mechanisms and supporting factors, as well as observed indicators for early warning.

In the practical dimension, effective prevention begins with the systematic development of participants' skills in recognizing emotions, rephrasing, and dialogical argumentation. Pedagogical strategies become effective when they are aligned with the phase of conflict: short and clear de-escalation protocols work better in the acute phase, while restorative circles and mediation work better in the stabilization phase, and reflective sessions and norm revision work better in the post-conflict analysis phase [1].

The psychological mechanisms of escalation and supporting factors are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 - Psychological mechanisms of escalation and supporting factors

Mechanism	Environmental supports	Early indicators	Potential intervention points
The fundamental attribution error	Unclear rules and a lack of feedback	Hard labels and generalizations	Learning about attribute flexibility and clarifying questions

The Identity threat	Competitive climate, public comparison	Defensive aggression, closeness	Safe forms of expression, recognition of status
Emotional dysregulation	High load, sensor noise	Sudden changes in tone, impulsiveness	Pauses, breathing techniques, and "time-outs"
The effect of online "invisibility"	Asynchronous communication, lack of non-verbal signals	Messaging spikes and misunderstandings	Digital communication rules, mediated discussions
Group polarization	Closed micro-groups, lack of mixed activities	«We-they» rhetoric	Mixed projects, corporate training

Aligning the strategy with the conflict phase requires a clear action architecture, which is presented in the third table. Here, each strategy is aligned with a psychological goal, expected effect, and effectiveness conditions. Practice shows that one-time interventions rarely provide sustainable results.

A program is needed that simultaneously develops emotional and communication skills, adjusts organizational rules, and supports a culture of relationship restoration. The leadership of the administration plays an important role, demonstrating the consistency of norms and the willingness to protect procedures rather than parties.

The phases, goals, and conditions for the effectiveness of pedagogical strategies for conflict resolution are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 - Pedagogical Strategies for Conflict Resolution: Phases, Goals, and Conditions for Effectiveness

The phase of the conflicts	Strategy	Psychological purpose	Summary of actions	Expected effects	Risks and conditions of effectiveness
Acute	De-escalation and crisis support	Reduction of arousal, restoration of control	Brief instructions, pause, fixing boundaries and security	Stopping the escalation and returning to rational dialogue	Staff training, uniform protocols
Stabilization	School mediation and rehabilitation practices	Shifting the focus from punishment to recovery	Dialogue about harm and needs, agreement on steps	Reduction of relapses, growth of trust	Voluntary participation, neutral facilitators
Post-conflict analysis	Reflective sessions and revision of norms	Consolidating lessons, changing rules	Analysis of causes, setting up procedures, and training skills	Prevention, improvement of psychological safety	Involvement of all parties, transparency of decisions
Prevention	Social and emotional learning and communication training	Developing empathy and self-regulation	SEL lessons, role-playing dialogues, and cooperative tasks	Reducing the frequency of incidents, improving the climate	Regularity, integration into the curriculum
Organizational level	Fair Procedures and Digital Ethics Policies	Reducing subjective injustice	Clear regulations, understandable appeals, and rules for online communication	Increasing predictability, reducing stress	Management support, compliance monitoring

When discussing performance evaluation, it is important to use a combination of criteria. Psychological safety can be measured using subjective scales of trust and respect, as well as objective indicators such as the frequency of disciplinary incidents. Academic performance and attendance can provide indirect signals, but they require careful interpretation as they may be influenced by factors unrelated to conflicts [8]. A robust evaluation design should combine incident data, climate surveys, and independent assessments of communication quality in teacher councils and class meetings. Monitoring digital interactions while maintaining privacy has become an important component: aggregated data on response times, the number of escalation episodes, and the proportion of mediated discussions allows for timely adjustments to the rules [3].

The limits of the proposed strategies are determined by resources and the cultural context. In environments with high staff turnover or overloaded classrooms, even well-designed programs face limitations. Modular design and gradual implementation mitigate this risk by starting with the minimum necessary elements, such as de-escalation protocols, brief teacher training sessions, and pilot restorative circles. Gradual expansion, supported by monitoring data, creates a cumulative effect. The training of facilitators among employees and high school students is particularly important, as horizontal support enhances the sustainability of practices.

CONCLUSION

The conducted research confirms the need to consider conflicts in the educational environment through the prism of multi-level causation, where personal characteristics, interpersonal relations and institutional parameters jointly form the trajectory of tension.

The analysis showed that a sustainable reduction in conflict is achieved not by individual disciplinary measures, but by a coordinated system of pedagogical and organizational actions. The key role is played by the transition from a punitive logic to a restorative one, which focuses on acknowledging the harm caused, aligning the needs of the parties, and taking realistic steps to rebuild trust. In such conditions, the school and university environment ceases to function as a collection of disparate episodes of response and begins to operate as a developing community where rules are meaningful through the experience of fair procedures.

The psychological mechanisms of conflict identified by comparing sources and cases demonstrate the participants' sensitivity to attributive justice, identity threats, and the level of emotional regulation. Attribution errors and group polarization are intensified by the lack of transparency in rules and weak feedback, as well as by high cognitive and sensory load. This necessitates the purposeful development of mentalization, empathic listening, and verbalization of feelings in students and teachers. Social and emotional learning programs integrate these skills into everyday practice, reducing the likelihood of escalation and improving the quality of collaborative problem-solving.

Digital communications form an independent circuit of risk and opportunity. Asynchrony and the reduction of non-verbal signals lead to misinterpretations of intentions, accelerate outbursts of irritation, and multiply the reasons for clashes. The regulation of online communication formats, the definition of acceptable timeframes for responses, the mediation of complex discussions, and the teaching of online etiquette significantly reduce the number of incidents without suppressing initiative and autonomy.

The transition from episodic responses to prevention policies requires leadership from the administration and a stable coalition of stakeholders. Management support is expressed through consistent application of procedures, willingness to explain decisions, and allocation of time for teacher training. The distribution of roles is significant: psychological services take on the facilitation of difficult dialogues and the training of mediators among staff and high school students; classroom teachers and supervisors become the first detectors of early signs; Subject specialists integrate communicative and reflective practices into their classes without adding to their schedules. The team-based configuration reduces personal burnout risks and increases the likelihood of implementing new ideas.

The effectiveness of interventions is determined by their alignment with the conflict phase. In the acute phase, de-escalation becomes a priority, emphasizing short instructions, pauses, and the restoration of basic security and boundaries. In the stabilization phase, restorative practices and school mediation take center stage, facilitating conversations around needs and responsibilities. The post-conflict phase provides an opportunity for institutional learning, including analyzing causes, adjusting norms, updating digital communication regulations, and expanding SEL components. Shifting the focus from one-time actions to cyclical procedures gradually reduces the frequency and severity of incidents, fostering a culture of predictability and fairness.

Evaluating effectiveness requires a mixed methodology. Quantitative indicators, such as disciplinary cases, absenteeism, and mediator referrals, capture external dynamics, while qualitative data, such as trust surveys, observations of communication at teacher meetings, and reflective diaries, capture changes in participants' experiences. By comparing these layers, we can visualize the relationship between procedural fairness, sense of security, and academic outcomes, allowing us to adjust the program without excessive bureaucracy. In the context of resource scarcity, it is reasonable to start with pilot sites and a minimum set of practices, expanding the scale as evidence of effectiveness accumulates.

The model developed in this work demonstrates that sustainable conflict resolution relies on the alignment of psychological mechanisms and educational policies. The ability to recognize emotions and correctly interpret intentions is complemented by clear rules, fair procedures, and accessible communication channels.

Mediation and restorative circles give participants the experience of acknowledging, making amends, and planning for the future together, while regular reflection practices reinforce behavioral changes. A digital ethics policy reduces the likelihood of uncontrolled escalation in online channels, and monitoring indicators allows for timely reinforcement of the program's weaknesses.

In this configuration, conflict is transformed from a source of chronic stress into a development resource, where competencies in civic responsibility, empathy, and self-regulation are formed, and the educational environment is given a chance to sustainably improve the quality of interaction and trust among all participants.

LIST OF REFERENCES

1. Andrianova R. A. Overcoming conflicts in the student environment: pedagogical aspect //Pedagogics and psychology: academic journal. – 2024. – No. 3 (6). – Pp. 8-14.
2. Baeva I. A. et al. Resources of psychological safety of students in a tense socio-cultural environment: a review of theoretical and empirical studies //Psychological and pedagogical research. – 2024. – Vol. 16. – No. 2. – Pp. 3-29.

3. Gonova S. S. The relevance of the problem of the culture of communication of the subjects of education in the main school // Problems of modern pedagogical education. – 2025. – No. 86-3. – Pp. 85-87.
4. Dobrova V. V. Management of the Pedagogical Situation: Practical Aspects // Bulletin of the Samara State Technical University. Series: Psychological and Pedagogical Sciences. – 2025. – Vol. 22. – No. 2. – Pp. 89-100.
5. Izvekova T. F. Psychological and Pedagogical Aspects of the Educational Process in a Multinational Team // World of Science, Culture, and Education. – 2025. – No. 2 (111). – Pp. 321-324.
6. Karimova V. G. et al. Conflict Behavior Strategies and Emotional Maturity of Students at a Pedagogical University: Determining the Relationships // Science for Education Today. – 2022. – Vol. 12. – No. 6. – Pp. 55-78.
7. Petrosians V. R., Griedaeva L. N., Arpentieva M. R. Bullying and the Problems of Psychological Safety in Education // Psychopedagogy in Law Enforcement Agencies. – 2022. – Vol. 27. – No. 1 (88). – Pp. 40-49.
8. Plaksina I. V. Conflicts in the Educational Environment: Theory and Practice of Resolution: Educational and Methodological Guide. – 2024. – 412 p.
9. Roslyakova S. V., Chernikova E. G., Sokolova N. A. Pedagogical Support for Adolescents in Conflict // Karelian Scientific Journal. – 2022. – Vol. 11. – No. 1 (38). – Pp. 16-20.
10. Edzhibadze A. V., Turchin A. S. Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Pedagogical Conditions for Preventing Destructive Conflicts among Adolescents in a General Education Organization // Prospects for Science and Education. – 2022. – No. 3 (57). – Pp. 422-440.