



## **Frustration of Expectations and Aspirations in Pre-adolescents as a Cause of Emotional and Social Conflict**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author IF designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author VM managed the analyses of the study. Authors MR, VM and SK managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Aims:** The main aim of this article is to investigate the data on prevention and management of intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts in the school environment, which can cause feelings of frustration of expectations in adolescence (11-13 years).

**Study Design:** The design of the research was based on the assumption that frustration is a powerful incriminating factor in causing conflicting behaviors between students and that frustration can be used as a teaching skill in the prevention and management of conflict situations. The research in related bibliography focused on specific theories and assumptions that constituted the theoretical framework of the research.

**Place and Duration of Study:** The sample of the research were students aged 11, 12 and 13, attending schools in the Ioannina and Thessaloniki prefectural administrations. The specific administrations were selected based on where the researchers came from (the "convenience sample").

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**Methodology:** The sample consisted of 50 students 11, 12 y.o., respectively attending 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> grade and 50 students 13 y.o., attending the 1st year of Junior High. All students were selected in a statistically random way. Regarding the research methodology, the research instrument used was a structured questionnaire, based on the following psychometric tools: A) Peer Conflict Scale (PCS), B) The Frustration Discomfort Scale.

**Results:** The analysis of the research variables correlations showed that: a) Research subjects who will vigorously pursue something, want it vigorously and find it difficult to wait for things to be done now (positive, moderate correlation  $P < .001$ . b) When there is likely to be no tolerance, then the expression of the expectation frustration may lead to conflict so that the frustration is not consolidated and the expectation of desire or pursuit is reached (positive, moderate correlation  $P < .001$ . The subjects of the sample tend to avoid negative emotions but also the situations for which they feel will cause them irritation (positive, moderate correlation  $P < .001$ . d) Statistically significant (positive, moderate correlation  $P < .001$  is the correlation of feeling that they are receiving the attention of others, in relation to their willingness to impose on others, in order to gain respect. This does not negate the statistically significant correlation for the subjects to even claim to conflict until something changes that bothers them (positive, moderate correlation  $P < .001$ .

**Conclusion:** The different types of frustration and the various ways of resolving conflicts (highlighting 'compliance' as the main way) form the final research outputs, which are in line with the researchers' latest positions on the 'cancellation-aggression' hypothesis.

*Keywords: School; frustration; conflict; self-image; expectation; pre-adolescence.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this article is to investigate the data on prevention and management of intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts in the school environment, which can cause feelings of frustration of expectations in adolescence (11-13 years). A central concern of the research was the fact that school environment is often an environment of conflict between students. This is a crisis situation within school environment, which needs to be appropriately managed. The design of the research was based on the assumption that frustration is a powerful incriminating factor in causing conflicting behaviors between students and that frustration can be used as a teaching skill in the prevention and management of conflict situations. The research in related bibliography focused on specific theories and assumptions that constituted the theoretical framework of the research.

It has been initially hypothesized that frustration induces many different types of response, one of which is aggression, although aggressive impulses are not the only types of reactions that can occur when a person feels frustrated [1].

The article then examines the inhibitory role of social conformity in aggression. On this basis, knowledge, skills and dispositions acquired by individuals during their socialization phase make them able to participate in life and the activities of social groups and society as a whole by

managing their intention or disposition for aggression, either because of predictability punishment, either because of the negative emotional consequences that a person may feel from the manifestation of aggression and the inevitable conflict. On this grounds, this article examines the four types of adolescent conflict resolution that have been identified and documented through valid and reliable researches [2-5].

Therefore, this article attempts to contribute to the aforementioned research field which concerns the correlation between frustration and conflict. More specifically, it explores how research subjects emotionally manage and organize frustration of personal desires or expectations.

"Frustration" means the situation that arises when an objective is impeded [6]. Frustration has been found to induce many different types of reactions to it, including aggression. The closer to a goal for an individual, the more the excitement increases as well as the expectation of enjoyment, and thus the unexpected appearance of frustration increases the likelihood of an aggressive reaction [7]. The feeling of frustration is directly related to the scope of the goal. Consequently, the higher goal pursued, the stronger the feeling of frustration becomes [8].

"Aggression" means aggressive actions, in which a person is induced by an impulse that causes

frustration [9,10]. It has been argued that any aggressive reaction to frustration depends on the subjective understanding of the situation each time. The relevance of goals and expectations are variables that determine whether a condition of frustration will be experienced as a cancellation of reinforcement, as a delay, as a cancellation of expected reinforcement or as a waiver of an expected boost [11].

However, Breuer and Elson [12] pointed out that there has been a decrease in the number of studies specifically addressing the association between frustration and aggression.

From all above, it appears that the hypothesis of the "frustration-aggression" theory has gone through revisions and reinterpretations over time, leading from an initially purely behavioral and causal view to its rediscovery of more internalized thymic extensions.

Consequently, adolescents' cognitive progress is a change in the way conflict is resolved, since cognitive development has a significant effect on the degree of use of compromise [13], which has the potential for conflict resolution, a process for which four mainly identified types of conflict resolution for adolescents have been identified [14]. Positive problem solving is one of the ways in which negotiation and the use of effective arguments are required to reach a compromise [15].

Another way of managing conflicts is withdrawal, whereby the parties avoid being involved in any way even that of discussing the problem while maintaining appropriate distances. Another way of resolving conflicts is compliance, where one simply adopts the other's perspective. Finally, another recently recognized way of resolving conflicts is exiting, which does not substantially resolve the conflict but involves ending the contact between individuals [16,17,18].

For its main purposes, this article adopts the central assumption that frustration is a strong incriminating factor which may result in conflict. This is also the subject of the research which is presented here, focusing, in particular, on conflicts among students that can be caused by the frustrations of the pursuit of adolescents and

the ways these students choose to resolve them.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS/EXPERIMENTAL DETAILS/METHODOLOGY

Regarding the research methodology, the research instrument used was a structured questionnaire, based on the following psychometric tools: A) Peer Conflict Scale (PCS), B) The Frustration Discomfort Scale.

The research questions asked during the formulation of the questionnaire were as follows: a) In what conditions - situations does conflict occur and how? b) What is the external way of expressing frustration? c) what are the internal expression / feelings after frustration / conflict?

Also the main hypotheses of the research are as follows: a) Pupils usually feel sad when they feel frustrated, b) they express anxiety and strong reaction in conflict situations, c) they are involved in conflict for enforcement and domination loss of self-control.

The sample of the research were students aged 11, 12 and 13, attending schools in the area of Ioannina and Thessaloniki prefectural administrations in Greece. The specific administrations were selected based on where the researchers came from (the "convenience sample"). The sample consisted of 50 students 11, 12 y.o., respectively attending 5<sup>th</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and 50 students 13 y.o., attending the 1<sup>st</sup> year of Junior High school. All students were selected in a statistically random way.

In terms of sample demographics, boys accounted for 49% of the sample and girls 51%. As to the age, 11 years old students were 48% of the sample, 12 years old the 24% and 13 years old the 28%. 48% of the research subjects were at the start of adolescence (11 years old), and a 52% were at the most mature stage of adolescence (12 and 13 years). As to attending grade, 36% were in elementary school grade E, 34% in elementary school grade F, and 30% in the first grade of Gymnasium. Additionally, an 89% had at least one other sibling, 43.7% out of it were boys only, 32.2% girls only and 24.1% both boys and girls.

Finally, the research is subject to limitations related to the fact that the findings cannot be generalizable and that the findings concern a limited sample.

**Table 1. I want to be pleasant to others**

		Frequency	Percent%
Valid	Never	14	14,0
	Rare	10	10,0
	Sometimes	20	20,0
	Often	18	18,0
	Always	38	38,0
	Total	100	100,0

**Table 2. I'm sad when things don't turn out the way I want to**

		Frequency	Percent%
Valid	Never	18	18,0
	Rare	26	26,0
	Sometimes	28	28,0
	Often	17	17,0
	Always	9	9,0
	6	2	2,0
Missing	Total	100	100,0
Total			

**Table 3. I strongly insist on getting what I want**

		Frequency	Percent%
Valid	Never	12	12,0
	Rare	27	27,0
	Sometimes	20	20,0
	Often	17	17,0
	Always	23	23,0
	Total	99	99,0
Missing	System	1	1,0
Total		100	100,0

**2.1 Factor Analysis**

Regarding the factor of internal reaction and/ or expression of the research subjects the resulting data show that the majority (56%) of the research subjects stated that they want to be "nice to others", while there is a percentage of 20% who say they want to be nice to others but "sometimes". Consequently, the subjects of the sample are positive to the element of self-satisfaction and positive expression of others. This also leads to the estimation that failure to manifest this positive disposition of others and consequently lack of satisfaction from the research subjects' acceptance of others enhances the state of internal conflict, as a result of the desirability of pleasing.

At the same time, however, they express a negative feeling of not being satisfied with their desires and, in particular, of not doing what they want. This is expressed by a majority of 44%, while 28% say this is "sometimes" the case. This is also confirmed by the fact that in the vast majority survey respondents report being

distressed when they fail to achieve their goals (66.7%). Therefore, it can be deduced that they understand the negativity of failure and possibly the limits of failure or the consequences on them.

The research subjects also do not promote their Ego, a factor with conflicting elements, as emerges from previously reported data- as to their desire to directly own what they want, not just in objects but also in achievements, emotions, behaviors, learning performance etc. Specifically, a 26.3% of the subjects stated that expressed this mood and a corresponding 26.3% stated that sometimes did. In addition, there is a relative equivalence in the positive and negative sign, with a 39.4% stating that they should satisfying their wishes often and always and a 34.3% stating "rarely or never immediately". Consequently, there is a balance of data and an emerging tendency to understand the particular desire/disposition, with data equivalence leading to the existence of desire management conditions between "I want immediately" and "I do not want immediately" to fulfill personal

desires. It may therefore be possible a management of internal expression or reaction.

The above statement is also confirmed by the data mined of the question about the degree to which "I want to claim", which again shows an equivalence of percentages between the positive and negative attitudes of the research subjects. The positive sign of non-conflict accounts for 39.4% and the negative sign 40.4%.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research outputs showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the gender factor and the statements of the research subjects in relation to the intention for conflict, for adapting to the emerging situations and, in particular, for acquiring any negative characteristic. Consequently, irrespective the 'gender', the subjects of the research do not succumb to negative behaviors when they are exposed to them. They respond to them, but in ways that will not lead to extreme conflicts that will potentially exacerbate any emerging or actual negativity.

On the other hand, the "age" factor appears to influence, to some extent, the behavioral events that are likely to cause frustration or even conflict, although the correlations are marginally statistically significant. In particular, using the "one-way ANOVA" statistical analysis, it has been found that, for 11- and 12-year-old research subjects, their disposition to be "pleasant to others" is affected. This finding can be explained by the argument that at the age of 11 and 12 the pupils are progressively moving towards the transition from childhood to early adolescence, including all implications for this stage of developmental course (Lightfoot, Cole & Cole, 2014). Consequently, the intention to arouse the interest of the others is still strong, due in large part to the effect of self-centeredness, even though the individuals understand other dimensions of socio-emotional influences either autonomously or on a heterogeneous basis or influence.

At the same time, individuals of this age group express a tendency to exhibit differentiated meaning over others, expecting that others will recognize and affirm this importance. For this reason, the correlation of 11- and 12-years-old for the propensity for conflict to show that it is possible/ important is statistically significant. In addition, statistically significant is also the

correlation between this age group and the variable the research subject "receives respect through his or her conflict with others". These data connect to the age-related transition of research subjects of this age range- from childhood to adolescence. As for the rest of the correlations, it seems that 11- and 12-year-olds research subjects are aware that conflict is not always a necessary factor in managing the resulting situation. On the contrary, they seem to understand that the resulting negative situations require appropriate behavioral adjustments, so that any failure does not lead to the manifestation of the feeling of frustration, but to the logical identification and redefinition of positions and choices.

Concerning the 13-year-old age group, the difficulties reported for the previous age-group do not appear to exist. Rationalization is more present and research subjects focus on predicting and identifying situations that may lead to conflict or the manifestation of negative emotions, as well as frustration. On this basis, a statistically significant correlation ( $P < .001$ ) between the variables of the age of 13 years and the tendency of the research subjects to avoid situations that will annoy them and possibly lead them to unpredictable conflicts is also interpreted. In addition, based on the use of the Post Hoc Tests and Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons statistical tools, it is found that the average value at the age of 13 differs from age 11 and 12 as to the degree of desirability of research subjects to be "pleasing to others". It also differs as to the capacity arising from their possible involvement in a conflict, as well as in the sense of respect for others due to the dynamic involvement in the conflict.

Regarding the factor of internal reaction and/ or expression of the research subjects the resulting data show that the majority (56%) of the research subjects stated that they want to be "nice to others", while there is a percentage of 20 % who say they want to be nice to others but "sometimes". Consequently, the subjects of the sample are positive to the element of self-satisfaction and positive expression of others.

The majority of the respondents (55%) also experience a negative feeling about experiencing "non-control" of their reactions to emergent situations. Thus, the data reveal that the research subjects want to have control over themselves in emerging situations. This leads to the conclusion that having the intention of maintaining self-control of their reactions implies

that even in the event of their goals not being achieved, that is, in the event of their expectations being reversed, this will not lead to conflict and what negative can be extracted from it. It appears, therefore, that the research subjects prefer discretionary withdrawal with a rather adaptive disposition to the data, despite a response to unacceptable behaviors.

At the same time, however, the vast majority (62%) say that they are bothered by obstructions to the development or manifestation of their potentials in a resultant or intended endeavor. The derived conclusion is that they want to be able to use all their personal abilities to engage in situations they wish, but also to manage situations that they do not wish to be involved, in response to behaviors that are not desirable for them, by activating each their personal ability. Such a reaction is also the feeling of being restricted by others in highlighting and using their personal potentials.

However, the emerging tendency of the research subjects to adapt to their expectations does not imply subordination, loneliness or acceptance of any reaction or behavior of others to them. In contrast, 67% of participants say they respond to other people's negative behaviors. This implies that they seem to understand the limits of the negativity of the undesirable behavior, to which they are involved, by managing the negative outcome of the undesirable behavior. Therefore, the willingness to adjust which arose from previous variable situations, is not a result of the research subjects' laziness, but rather an

understanding of the causes of the emerging behavioral states and activation of their emotional and rational background in order to manage their condition.

It follows from the above that there is an emotional and mental potential of the research subjects, which is also confirmed by the question of "whether they avoid doing tasks for which they feel they will not complete them in the best possible way". The data show that the majority (59%) say that this is not the case and that they are involved in tackling tasks for which they feel they will not achieve their fullest potential. It is therefore inferred from the data that, for the most part, the research subjects do not avoid engaging in adversity, despite their concern for failure. Consequently, there seems to be no question in this case about the effort they will make due to the possible emergence of the feeling of frustration which may be caused by the failure to implement an action or its involvement in an existing situation.

The above data do not imply emotional inadequacy or indifference of the research subjects. On the contrary, the data show that 66% avoid or wish to avoid negative emotions in response to unacceptable behavior, but also in situations that may provoke anger or irritation. These data also confirm previous research findings on both the tendency to adapt to the causes and conditions of the resulting situations, as well as the rational understanding of these causes and the characteristics of any emergent negative behaviors to them along with its management.

**Table 4. I want to be pleasant to others**

		Frequency	Percent %
<b>Valid</b>	Never	14	14,0
	Rare	10	10,0
	Sometimes	20	20,0
	Often	18	18,0
	Always	38	38,0
	Total	100	100,0

**Table 5. I'm sad when I lose control of my reactions**

		Frequency	Percent %
<b>Valid</b>	Never	14	14,0
	Rare	9	9,0
	Sometimes	22	22,0
	Often	34	34,0
	Always	21	21,0
	Total	100	100,0

**Table 6. I rule out those who are hurting me**

		Frequency	Percent %
<b>Valid</b>	Never	4	4,0
	Rare	5	5,0
	Sometimes	11	11,0
	Often	29	29,0
	Always	51	51,0
	Total	100	100,0

**Table 7. It saddens me when I fail my goals**

		Frequency	Percent %
<b>Valid</b>	Never	4	4,0
	Rare	8	8,0
	Sometimes	21	21,0
	Often	27	27,0
	Always	39	39,0
	Total	99	99,0
<b>Missing</b>	System	1	1,0
<b>Total</b>		100	100,0

**Table 8. When I crave something, I want to have it immediately**

		Frequency	Percent %
<b>Valid</b>	Never	13	13,0
	Rare	21	21,0
	Sometimes	26	26,0
	Often	24	24,0
	Always	15	15,0
	Total	99	99,0
<b>Missing</b>	System	1	1,0
<b>Total</b>		100	100,0

The data therefore show that conflict does not appear to be the first priority of the research subjects when negative behaviors occur, but they rather choose other potential behaviors or reactions to manage negative situations.

The above is also confirmed by the fact that 51% of the survey respondents state that they do not feel conflicted with gaining the respect of others. Nor do they feel that people in conflict enjoy the attention of others. This is expressed by the majority (52%) of the survey subjects. They rather seem to clash in an attempt to change whatever negative element is causing the conflict to something more positive and acceptable as energy and behavior.

The survey participants state that they do not want to impose on others (70%). They are interested in how others feel about their own actions (70%). They are bothered by blocking the development or manifestation of their potentials in a targeted effort (62%). They respond to other

people's negative behaviors (67%) and may conflict with those who behave badly (54%). They have a conflict intention but aim to change negative elements that cause conflict to something more positive (48%). Concerning the case of 'withdrawal from the conflict situation', the survey data show that the subjects of the sample wish to avoid negative emotions (66%). They do not feel that people involved in conflicts gain the respect of others (51%). They do not feel that these people enjoy the attention of others (52%).

Regarding the possibility of "compliance with the regulatory framework required for non-occurrence of the specific conflict", the survey respondents state that they wish to be "nice to others" (56%). They do not avoid engaging with adversity despite the concern of failure (59%). They wait to "get things done right now" (46%), and there is a 29% that "sometimes" find it difficult to wait. Those who consider to be negative (80%) are excluded. They avoid conflict,

even if they feel strongly about the outcome, apparently seeking other means of management (47.5%).

Finally, regarding the way in which conflict is managed with "Discriminatory withdrawal from conflict situations", the survey respondents state that they are distressed when they fail to achieve their goals (66.7%). They have a negative feeling about the situation of "not checking" their reactions to emergent situations (55%). They express their negative feeling of not fulfilling their wishes and especially of what is not done the way they would like (44%).

Concerning the interpretation of the frustration by the research subjects, the mined data shows that the main personal interpretations of the frustration are as follows: A. Frustration as an act of conscious understanding of the causes of the conflict. B. Frustration as a reaction to a compromise situation that they do not accept.

Regarding the first personal interpretation as a "Conscious Understanding of the Causes of the Conflict", the subjects of the sample appear to understand the negativity of failure, at the level of causes, characteristics, limits and effects (66, 7%). They also desire to control emergent situations (55%), they are being bothered by the impediment of developing or manifesting their potential in the intended endeavors (62%), they desire to manage conditions between "I want to immediately" and "I don't want to immediately" about fulfilling personal desires (+39,4% -34, 3%). They also appear to avoid negative emotions in response to unacceptable behavior, but also to situations that may provoke them to anger or irritation (66%) and react to other negative behaviors (67%).

The analysis of the research variables correlations showed that: a) Research subjects who will vigorously pursue something, want it vigorously and find it difficult to wait for things to be done now (positive, moderate correlation  $P < .001$ . b) When there is likely to be no tolerance, then the expression of the expectation frustration may lead to conflict so that the frustration is not consolidated and the expectation of desire or pursuit is reached (positive, moderate correlation  $P < .001$ c) The subjects of the sample tend to avoid negative emotions but also the situations for which they feel will cause them irritation (positive, moderate correlation  $P < .001$ . d) Statistically significant (positive, moderate correlation  $P < .001$  is the correlation of feeling

that they are receiving the attention of others, in relation to their willingness to impose on others, in order to gain respect. This does not negate the statistically significant correlation for the subjects to even claim to conflict until something changes that bothers them (positive, moderate correlation  $P < .001$ .

According to the above conclusions of the analysis of the research data, it seems that the theories that have been supported on this subject are confirmed. In particular, aggression can be functional, as aggressive reactions to a cancellation are not necessarily harmful to achieve goals and some can be understood as a person's natural defense and motivation.

In addition, the feeling of frustration can be used as a message of self-feedback resulting in the avoidance of mental pain. If the person continues to pursue his / her needs / desires, it is advisable to follow the steps that will allow him / her to have self-control of his / her behavior or even the situation he / she is called to face. Recognition of emotions, therefore, works not only as an improvement in the manifestation of behavior but also as a formative factor of re-engraving the personal course of the individual.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The above survey data analysis led to the following conclusions.

- The subjects manage the feeling of frustration. This conclusion partly does not validate the research hypothesis that students feel sad because of frustrated expectations.
- They do not want to be involved in conflicts and they understand their limits and the possible consequences and therefore choose to adapt to the data. This conclusion: (a) Does not substantiate the research hypothesis that students in conflict situations express a desire for strong reaction. b) Does not verify the research hypothesis that students are involved in a conflict due to the loss of self-control.
- They express a positive element of referring to Important Others and not projecting their Ego. This conclusion does not validate the research hypothesis that students are involved in a conflict for coercion or dominance over others.
- They are interested in how others feel about their own actions. This conclusion also does not validate the research hypothesis that



- students are involved in a conflict for imposition or dominance over others.
- They want to control themselves in various situations. This conclusion does not confirm the research hypothesis that students are involved in conflict due to the loss of self-control.
  - They are annoyed when they are hindered to the development and manifestation of their potentials. This conclusion does not confirm the research hypothesis that students feel sad when they feel frustrated.
  - They want to be able to use all of their personal abilities in managing any resulting situation in response to behaviors that are not desirable to them. This finding partly confirms the research hypothesis that students respond in conflict situations.
  - They seem to prefer adaptation more than conflict.
  - They do not subconsciously accept negative behaviors. They react to them but in ways that will not lead to extreme conflicts.
  - They seem to develop internal emotional organization, rational understanding and rational management of the feeling of overriding personal desires or expectations.

Therefore, it is generally stated that adolescents are able to understand and manage the boundaries of the present study's basic concepts, namely frustration and conflict, but also develop appropriate ways of managing it.

## CONSENT

As per international standard informed and written participant/parental consent was collected and preserved by the authors.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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