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FORMATION OF TEACHERS' PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS TO MANAGE INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS IN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT OF INSTITUTIONS

FORMACIÓN DE LA PREPARACIÓN PSICOLÓGICA DOCENTE PARA GESTIONAR CONFLICTOS INTERPERSONALES EN EL ENTORNO EDUCATIVO INSTITUCIONAL

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the formation of teachers' psychological readiness to manage interpersonal conflicts in the contemporary school educational environment. The research conceptualises psychological readiness as an integrative professional-personal construct comprising motivational and value-based, cognitive, emotional and self-regulatory, communicative, behavioural, and reflective components. A mixed-methods, practice-oriented research design was applied, combining theoretical analysis, observation, questionnaires, interviews, testing, expert assessment, case analysis, role-playing, video analysis, and pedagogical experimentation. The diagnostic stage involved 264 participants: 150 final-year teacher-education students and 114 early-career teachers with up to three years of professional experience. The study identifies four major configurations of interpersonal conflict in school settings: student–student, student–teacher, teacher–teacher, and teacher–parent conflicts. Four developmental levels of psychological readiness are proposed: intuitive, reproductive, constructive-adaptive, and creative-reflective. The findings emphasise that theoretical knowledge alone is insufficient for effective conflict management and should be integrated with experiential learning, emotional self-regulation, communication training, behavioural practice, and professional reflection. Particular attention is given to conflict prevention, context-sensitive professional judgement, and the distinction between ordinary interpersonal conflict and bullying, violence, discrimination, or coercion. The study substantiates the importance of interdisciplinary and training-based approaches to strengthening teachers' capacity to manage interpersonal conflicts and contribute to safe, inclusive, and psychologically supportive educational environments.

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Keywords:

Psychological Readiness, Conflict Management, School Educational Environment, Emotional Self-Regulation, Professional Development, Training-Based Learning

RESUMEN

El estudio examina la formación de la preparación psicológica de los docentes para gestionar conflictos interpersonales en el entorno educativo escolar contemporáneo. La investigación conceptualiza la preparación psicológica como un constructo profesional-personal integrador que comprende componentes motivacionales y basados en valores, cognitivos, emocionales y autorregulatorios, comunicativos, conductuales y reflexivos. Se aplicó un diseño de investigación de métodos mixtos, orientado a la práctica, que combinó análisis teórico, observación, cuestionarios, entrevistas, pruebas, evaluación de expertos, análisis de casos, juegos de rol, análisis de vídeo y experimentación pedagógica. La etapa diagnóstica incluyó a 264 participantes: 150 estudiantes de último año de formación docente y 114 docentes principiantes con hasta tres años de experiencia profesional. El estudio identifica cuatro configuraciones principales de conflicto interpersonal en entornos escolares: conflictos entre estudiantes, entre estudiantes y docentes, entre docentes y docentes, y entre docentes y padres. Se proponen cuatro niveles de desarrollo de la preparación psicológica: intuitivo, reproductivo, constructivo-adaptativo y creativo-reflexivo. Los hallazgos destacan que el conocimiento teórico por sí solo es insuficiente para una gestión eficaz de conflictos y debe integrarse con el aprendizaje experiencial, la autorregulación emocional, la formación en comunicación, la práctica conductual y la reflexión profesional. Se presta especial atención a la prevención de conflictos, el juicio profesional contextualizado y la distinción entre el conflicto interpersonal ordinario y el acoso, la violencia, la discriminación o la coacción. El estudio corrobora la importancia de los enfoques interdisciplinarios y formativos para fortalecer la capacidad del profesorado para gestionar conflictos interpersonales y contribuir a entornos educativos seguros, inclusivos y que brinden apoyo psicológico.

Palabras clave:

Preparación psicológica, Gestión de conflictos, Entorno educativo escolar, Autorregulación emocional, Desarrollo profesional, Aprendizaje basado en la formación práctica.

INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal conflict is an inherent feature of social interaction and an unavoidable component of educational environments. Schools constitute complex social systems in which students, teachers, parents, administrators, and other educational actors interact continuously while bringing different needs, expectations, values, experiences, communication styles, and emotional responses to these relationships. Such differences may generate disagreements at multiple levels, including student–student, teacher–student, teacher–parent, teacher–teacher, and teacher–administration interactions. The professional challenge for teachers is therefore not to eliminate conflict but to recognise emerging tensions, interpret their causes and dynamics, prevent destructive escalation, and manage disagreements in ways that support safe and constructive interaction.

Contemporary approaches to conflict reject the assumption that disagreement is inherently negative. Conflict may have destructive or constructive consequences depending substantially on how it develops and is managed. Under conditions of hostility, coercion, rigid competition, humiliation, or persistent exclusion, conflict may damage relationships and psychological safety. Conversely, appropriately managed disagreement may reveal previously unrecognised problems, clarify interests and expectations, challenge ineffective patterns of interaction, and create opportunities for cooperation and relational improvement. This constructive potential is consistent with broader conflict-resolution perspectives that emphasise cooperation, communication, problem solving, and the transformation of incompatible interests into opportunities for mutually beneficial outcomes (Coleman et al., 2014). From this perspective, conflict management in education involves not simply suppressing disagreement but understanding the interpersonal and contextual conditions that shape it.

This distinction is particularly important because not all problematic interactions require the same professional response. Ordinary interpersonal disagreements must be differentiated from bullying, aggression, discrimination, violence, coercion, and threats to safety. While dialogue, negotiation, mediation, or compromise may be appropriate in relatively symmetrical disagreements, situations involving persistent victimisation or serious harm may require protective, administrative, psychological, or legally prescribed intervention. Teachers consequently need diagnostic and contextual judgement alongside knowledge of conflict-resolution strategies. Evidence from classroom settings indicates that responses to disruptive behaviour are more effective when teachers move beyond purely punitive approaches and employ strategies adapted to the causes, characteristics, and intensity of the behaviour, including communication, relationship-building, environmental modification, and appropriate conflict-management practices (Mahvar et al., 2018).

Rahim's (1983, 2002) model provides an important foundation for understanding this situational dimension of conflict management by distinguishing integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising styles. These strategies differ according to concern for one's own interests and concern for those of others. Their educational relevance lies particularly in recognising that no single behavioural strategy is universally appropriate. School conflicts vary in their participants, power relationships, developmental characteristics, emotional intensity, urgency, and potential consequences. Effective professional action therefore depends on the teacher's ability to interpret the situation and select a proportionate response. In this regard, research on classroom conflict highlights that teachers' interpretations of conflict and their emotional experiences influence how they respond to challenging situations, suggesting that professional preparation should integrate analysis of emotions with the development of practical strategies for managing interpersonal difficulties (Alvarez et al., 2022).

Teachers' readiness to manage interpersonal conflicts consequently extends beyond theoretical knowledge or mastery of isolated communication techniques. A teacher may understand conflict classifications and resolution principles yet experience considerable difficulty applying them when confronted with anger, resistance, anxiety, perceived injustice, uncertainty, or intense emotional pressure. Effective conflict management requires the simultaneous mobilisation of cognitive, emotional, communicative, behavioural, and reflective resources. The emotional dimension is particularly significant because teachers must identify both their own emotional reactions and those of students while maintaining sufficient self-regulation to avoid impulsive responses that could intensify conflict. Studies focused on teacher preparation indicate that structured emotional intelligence training can strengthen emotional awareness, emotion regulation, empathy, interpersonal abilities, and the capacity to respond constructively to emotionally demanding educational situations (Özdemir Cihan & Dilekmen, 2024).

A major direction in contemporary educational research therefore concerns teachers' social and emotional competence. The Prosocial Classroom Model proposed by Jennings & Greenberg (2009) establishes an important relationship between teachers' social-emotional competence and well-being, teacher–student relationships, classroom management, and classroom climate. Teachers who can recognise emotional states, regulate their responses, demonstrate empathy, and maintain constructive communication are better positioned to respond effectively to difficult interpersonal situations. Recent evidence further identifies social-emotional competence as a professional resource associated with supportive relationships and student engagement (Gebre et al., 2025). In this context, emotional intelligence training represents a potentially valuable component of teacher professional development because strengthening teachers' capacity to understand and regulate emotions can contribute to more supportive classroom climates and more constructive management of student behaviour (Sappaile et al., 2026).

The relevance of emotional competence is not restricted to teachers. Developing students' capacity to identify, understand, express, and regulate emotions may also strengthen the interpersonal resources needed to address disagreements constructively. Educational interventions based on experiential approaches, including simulation-based learning, can provide students with opportunities to recognise emotions and practise responses within situations that approximate everyday social interactions (Lugo-Martínez, 2025). Consequently, conflict-management readiness can be understood as part of a broader educational process in which teachers' professional competence and students' emotional development interact. A classroom environment that deliberately cultivates emotional awareness, empathy, communication, self-regulation, and cooperative problem solving may provide more favourable conditions for preventing unnecessary escalation and transforming manageable disagreements into opportunities for social and relational learning.

Emotional intelligence is particularly relevant to conflict management. Valente & Lourenço (2020) found that teachers' emotional competencies are associated with their selection of conflict-management strategies, with stronger competencies supporting more constructive approaches such as integration and compromise. Similarly, emotion regulation creates the psychological conditions necessary for deliberate rather than impulsive professional responses. Inappropriate emotional expression may intensify disagreement, whereas self-regulation facilitates analysis, perspective-taking, and context-sensitive decision-making (Valente et al., 2022).

Teachers' responses to conflict also depend on the coping and emotional resources available to them when facing demanding classroom situations (Bonilla et al., 2020; 2024). This relationship is particularly important because conflict management occurs within an emotionally demanding profession. Repeated interpersonal difficulties may contribute to occupational stress and emotional exhaustion, while accumulated stress may weaken teachers' capacity for self-regulation and increase reactive or avoidant responses. Teacher well-being is therefore closely connected with emotional, relational, social, and organisational factors (Gámez-Genovart et al., 2025).

Conflict must also be understood as part of an ongoing relational process rather than as an isolated event. Repeated experiences of misunderstanding, criticism, distrust, or perceived unfairness can create relational conditions in which subsequent disagreements escalate more easily. Conversely, relationships characterised by trust, predictability, respect, and emotional support may provide greater resilience when disagreements occur. Effective conflict management therefore involves not only resolving the immediate problem but also preserving or restoring constructive relationships whenever circumstances permit.

These considerations support a multidimensional understanding of teachers' psychological readiness to manage interpersonal conflicts. Such readiness can be conceptualised as an integrated professional-personal construct comprising motivational and value-based, cognitive, emotional and self-regulatory, communicative, behavioural, and reflective components. The motivational and value-based component concerns professional responsibility, respect for human dignity, constructive interaction, and willingness to address difficult situations. The cognitive component encompasses knowledge of conflict causes, dynamics, strategies, contextual factors, and professional responsibilities. Emotional and self-regulatory readiness involves emotional awareness, stability, frustration tolerance, and self-control, while communicative readiness includes active listening, empathy, perspective-taking, constructive feedback, negotiation, and de-escalation. Behavioural readiness concerns the selection and implementation of context-appropriate strategies, whereas reflection enables teachers to evaluate their actions, recognise ineffective responses, anticipate consequences, and learn from professional experience.

The integration of these components is essential because strength in one area cannot fully compensate for substantial weakness in another. A teacher may possess extensive theoretical knowledge but lack emotional regulation, demonstrate empathy but lack confidence in intervention, or communicate effectively while failing to recognise when a situation requires formal protective measures. Psychological readiness therefore refers not merely to possessing professional resources but to mobilising them coherently under conditions of uncertainty and interpersonal pressure.

This multidimensional understanding has direct implications for teacher education. Traditional instruction centred primarily on lectures and theoretical knowledge is insufficient for developing the practical competencies required in complex conflict situations. Conflict management requires decision-making under pressure, emotional regulation, interpretation of ambiguous social information, communication with participants occupying different roles, and continuous adaptation as situations develop. These capacities require systematic opportunities for experiential learning.

Practice-oriented methods such as simulations, role-playing, pedagogical case analysis, psychological and socio-psychological training, reflective exercises, peer feedback, and supervision can facilitate the transition from declarative knowledge to professional action. Such approaches allow future and practising teachers to test alternative strategies, recognise personal conflict triggers, analyse their communication patterns, practise emotional self-regulation, and evaluate the consequences of different interventions within controlled learning environments. They also support the development of professional agency, empathy, reflexivity, communicative flexibility, and responsibility for the interpersonal climate of educational settings.

The need for such preparation has become especially significant as digitalisation has expanded the spaces in which educational conflicts occur. Interactions increasingly take place through messaging applications, social networks, learning platforms, video conferencing, and group chats. Reduced non-verbal information, ambiguous written messages, rapid dissemination of communication, and blurred boundaries between educational and private interaction can intensify misunderstandings and transform individual disagreements into broader conflicts. Contemporary conflict-management readiness must therefore encompass both face-to-face and digitally mediated interaction.

Against this broader theoretical and educational background, the Ukrainian context presents particular challenges. National legislation establishes requirements for creating safe educational environments and protecting participants from violence, discrimination, humiliation, bullying, and other harmful behaviour. The Professional Standard "Teacher of a General Secondary Education Institution," approved by Order No. 1225 of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (2024), similarly reflects an expanded conception of teachers' professional responsibilities that includes pedagogical partnership, psychological support, communication, and participation in creating a safe educational environment.

These responsibilities have acquired additional importance under the conditions created by the full-scale war. Ukrainian schools operate amid prolonged uncertainty, displacement, family separation, disrupted educational trajectories, security risks, and increased psychological stress. Teachers and students may experience many of these pressures simultaneously. Although interpersonal conflict should not automatically be interpreted through the lens of trauma, such circumstances require greater

sensitivity to the psychosocial contexts underlying behaviour and stronger capacities for emotional self-regulation, professional judgement, and appropriate use of psychological or institutional support.

Despite growing research on emotional intelligence, social-emotional competence, conflict-management strategies, teacher–student relationships, professional well-being, and practice-oriented preparation, these dimensions are frequently examined separately. Less attention has been devoted to psychological readiness as an integrated construct that precedes professional action and determines how teachers recognise, interpret, and respond to developing conflicts. A further gap concerns the relationship between theoretical preparation and effective performance under conditions of uncertainty and emotional pressure. The Ukrainian educational context remains particularly underrepresented despite the combined influence of educational reform, digitalisation, displacement, prolonged crisis, and psychosocial pressures.

Accordingly, the present study conceptualises teachers' psychological readiness to manage interpersonal conflicts as an integrated and developable professional-personal construct comprising motivational and value-based, cognitive, emotional and self-regulatory, communicative, behavioural, and reflective components. The study aims to theoretically justify and identify the psychological and pedagogical conditions and practice-oriented technologies required to develop teachers' psychological readiness to manage interpersonal conflicts in the educational environment of general secondary schools. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to bridging the gap between theoretical teacher preparation and the complex interpersonal demands of contemporary professional practice, with particular attention to the conditions of the Ukrainian educational environment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a mixed-methods, practice-oriented research design integrating theoretical analysis, quantitative and qualitative methods, and a pedagogical intervention. This methodological approach was selected because teachers' psychological readiness to manage interpersonal conflicts constitutes a multidimensional professional and personal construct that cannot be adequately assessed through a single method or indicator. The research focused on six interrelated components of psychological readiness: motivational and value-based, cognitive, emotional and self-regulatory, communicative, behavioural, and reflective. Accordingly, the methodological framework combined procedures for assessing participants' knowledge, professional attitudes, emotional regulation, communication, behavioural responses, decision-making, and capacity to apply conflict-management strategies in professionally relevant situations.

The study followed three sequential stages: diagnostic, formative, and evaluative. The diagnostic stage identified participants' initial levels and structural characteristics of psychological readiness; the formative stage implemented a practice-oriented training intervention; and the evaluation stage examined changes following the intervention. The central hypothesis was that teachers' psychological readiness could be strengthened through systematic preparation integrating theoretical knowledge, experiential learning, emotional self-regulation, behavioural practice, communication training, and professional reflection.

The theoretical component included systematic and comparative analysis of philosophical, sociological, psychological, pedagogical, conflictological, and interdisciplinary literature concerning interpersonal conflict, conflict management, professional competence, psychological readiness, emotional intelligence, communication, and teacher development. Relevant Ukrainian educational legislation and policy documents were also examined, including requirements concerning general secondary education, safe educational environments, and teachers' professional competence. The theoretical analysis supported the definition of psychological readiness, identification of its structural components, and development of criteria and indicators for empirical assessment. Modelling was subsequently used to integrate the theoretical, diagnostic, procedural, and evaluative dimensions of the intervention.

The empirical component combined observation, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, psychological and pedagogical testing, expert assessment, analysis of professional situations, role-playing, case analysis, video analysis, and pedagogical experimentation. Observation focused on communication patterns, emotional reactions, behavioural flexibility, strategy selection, and reflective capacity. Questionnaires examined attitudes towards conflict, perceived preparedness, professional motivation, and previous conflict-management experience, while interviews and discussions provided qualitative information concerning participants' understanding of conflict, professional difficulties, habitual responses, and experiences of challenging interpersonal situations. Testing addressed characteristics associated with conflict-management styles, emotional self-regulation, communicative competence, empathy, professional motivation, and reflection. Expert assessment was used to evaluate participants' analysis of simulated conflicts, selection of intervention strategies, communication quality, prevention of escalation, and overall professional adequacy of proposed responses.

The pedagogical experiment constituted the principal empirical component. During the diagnostic stage, baseline indicators were obtained for the six components of psychological readiness, allowing strengths and areas requiring further development to be identified. During the formative stage, participants completed a structured training programme addressing conflict causes and dynamics, recognition of escalation mechanisms, emotional awareness and self-regulation, active listening, constructive communication, de-escalation, negotiation, collaborative problem-solving, and differentiation between ordinary interpersonal conflict and bullying, violence, or other harmful interactions. The programme addressed student–student, student–teacher, teacher–parent, teacher–teacher, and teacher–administration conflicts. At the evaluation stage, participants were reassessed using criteria corresponding to those applied during the initial diagnosis, enabling comparison of pre-intervention and post-intervention indicators.

The intervention emphasised active and experiential learning because effective conflict management requires the practical application of knowledge under conditions of uncertainty and emotional pressure. Role-playing enabled participants to assume the perspectives of teachers, students, parents, colleagues, and observers. Situational and case-based analyses required them to identify conflict causes and stages, evaluate participants' interests and potential risks, and select appropriate professional responses. Video analysis facilitated examination of verbal and non-verbal communication, emotional reactions, escalation mechanisms, and alternative interventions. Reflective exercises and structured feedback encouraged participants to examine their own emotional responses, communication patterns, behavioural strategies, and decision-making processes. Together, these methods were intended to facilitate the transition from declarative knowledge to practical conflict-management competence.

The effectiveness of the intervention was assessed through the six dimensions of psychological readiness. The motivational and value-based criterion examined professional motivation and orientation towards constructive interaction; the cognitive criterion assessed knowledge of conflict causes, dynamics, types, and management strategies; the emotional and self-regulatory criterion evaluated emotional awareness, regulation, and professional self-control; the communicative criterion addressed active listening, empathy, perspective-taking, clarity, and constructive feedback; the behavioural criterion assessed the selection and implementation of appropriate strategies; and the reflective criterion evaluated participants' capacity to analyse their actions, recognise limitations, anticipate consequences, and identify opportunities for professional development.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical procedures to examine the distribution of indicators and changes between baseline and post-intervention measurements. Where appropriate, effect sizes were calculated to determine the practical magnitude of observed changes. Qualitative information obtained through interviews, observations, case analyses, reflective materials, and expert assessments was analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns in participants' understanding of conflict, emotional responses, professional difficulties, behavioural strategies, and perceived development during the intervention. Integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence provided a comprehensive assessment of changes in psychological readiness.

Reliability and trustworthiness were strengthened through methodological triangulation and the use of complementary sources of evidence, including self-report measures, observation, expert assessment, behavioural tasks, interviews, and quantitative indicators. Consistent data-collection procedures and theoretically justified assessment criteria were applied throughout the study. Where expert assessment was employed, common evaluation criteria and standardised instructions supported consistency. Overall methodological validity was reinforced through alignment among the theoretical framework, research hypothesis, assessment criteria, intervention content, and data-analysis procedures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The theoretical and empirical analysis defines teachers' psychological readiness to manage interpersonal conflicts as an integrative professional and personal construct combining motivation and professional values, conflict-related knowledge, emotional self-regulation, communication, behavioural strategies, reflection, and continuous professional development. Effective readiness therefore extends beyond theoretical knowledge or isolated techniques and requires teachers to mobilise these resources under conditions of uncertainty, emotional pressure, and competing demands.

The proposed model comprises six interrelated components. The motivational and value-based component reflects commitment to constructive conflict management, respectful interaction, and professional responsibility. The cognitive component includes knowledge of conflict causes, dynamics, types, prevention, de-escalation, and resolution. The emotional and self-regulatory component involves recognising and regulating emotional reactions while maintaining professional self-control. The communicative component encompasses active listening, empathy, perspective-taking, constructive disagreement, feedback, and negotiation. The behavioural component concerns selecting and adapting appropriate strategies to specific situations. The reflective component involves evaluating

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professional actions, anticipating consequences, learning from experience, and improving future practice.

Psychological readiness consequently depends on the coordinated functioning of these components rather than on isolated conflict-management skills. Based on this structure, three principal assessment criteria were established. The first evaluates motivational and value-based orientation, including willingness to address difficult situations, respect participants' dignity, and contribute to a safe educational environment. The second assesses the depth, coherence, and practical applicability of knowledge concerning conflict causes, stages, escalation, consequences, prevention, and management. The third evaluates the capacity to select and implement constructive strategies, including cooperation, negotiation, collaborative problem-solving, and compromise when appropriate.

These strategies, however, are not universally applicable. Situations involving bullying, violence, discrimination, coercion, or threats to safety require protective, administrative, or legally prescribed responses rather than symmetrical negotiation between the parties.

The fourth criterion concerns constructive professional attitudes towards conflict. Teachers should seek solutions that protect legitimate interests, restore communication, and prevent unnecessary escalation. Although the win–win principle may be useful in ordinary disagreements, it is not universally applicable, particularly where power, rights, responsibilities, or vulnerability are unequal.

The fifth criterion concerns the capacity to use conflict as a source of professional learning. Reflection on conflict can reveal ineffective communication, unmet expectations, and organisational problems, thereby supporting professional and interpersonal development. Together, these criteria confirm that effective conflict management requires the integration of knowledge, values, emotional competence, contextual judgement, and practical action.

Interpersonal conflict is understood as interaction arising from perceived incompatibility between participants' needs, interests, goals, expectations, values, positions, or interpretations. This definition distinguishes ordinary conflict from bullying, violence, discrimination, and other harmful behaviours that may require protective or institutional intervention.

Two elements structure interpersonal conflict. The conflict situation refers to underlying incompatibilities in perceptions, interests, or expectations, while conflict interaction begins when these differences are expressed through communication or behaviour. Their development depends on participants' roles, authority, previous relationships, emotional states, group dynamics, and the institutional environment. Effective management therefore begins with recognising emerging tensions and preventing escalation.

Four main relational configurations were identified: student–student, student–teacher, teacher–teacher, and teacher–parent conflict. Student–student conflicts may result from competition, status differences, friendship dynamics, exclusion, perceived injustice, communication problems, or incompatible interests. Developmental characteristics can influence their expression, particularly during adolescence, when identity, autonomy, peer evaluation, and group belonging become especially important. However, age alone does not explain conflict; individual characteristics, family context, class climate, culture, neurodiversity, and previous experiences must also be considered. Teachers should assess power differences, repeated harmful behaviour, and whether pedagogical, psychological, administrative, or protective intervention is required.

Student–teacher conflicts are especially significant because of the asymmetry of roles and responsibilities. They frequently involve academic performance, assessment, classroom rules, behaviour, communication, and perceptions of fairness. Authoritarian, humiliating, inconsistent, or dismissive communication can intensify resistance, while unclear boundaries may also generate conflict. Effective management requires professional authority combined with procedural fairness, emotional self-regulation, respect for student dignity, clear communication, and self-reflection.

Teacher–teacher conflicts may arise from professional disagreements, competition, unequal responsibilities, organisational changes, communication difficulties, perceived inequality, or informal group dynamics. Tensions may also emerge between experienced and early-career teachers when professional experience is expressed through dismissive attitudes or when new approaches are perceived as challenges to established practices.

At the same time, generational explanations should not be overgeneralised. Teacher–teacher conflict is better understood through individual, relational, and organisational factors, including unclear roles, communication problems, unequal workloads, perceived unfairness, limited participation in decision-making, and poorly communicated institutional reforms. Organisational uncertainty, staffing changes, new technologies, evaluation procedures, and informal group dynamics may further intensify tensions. Effective management therefore requires not only interpersonal skills but also transparent procedures, equitable distribution of responsibilities, participatory decision-making, and effective leadership.

Teacher–parent conflict commonly arises from differing expectations and interpretations concerning academic performance, assessment, discipline, inclusion, educational

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support, or student behaviour. Teachers and parents observe the child from different contexts, and conflict may escalate when either party perceives insufficient competence, respect, or understanding. Digital communication can intensify disagreements by extending emotionally charged exchanges beyond school hours and involving additional participants. Effective management requires professional boundaries, respectful and transparent communication, appropriate documentation, and sustained attention to the child's educational interests and well-being.

Early-career teachers require particular support because entry into professional practice involves simultaneous adaptation to classroom management, institutional expectations, relationships with colleagues and administrators, communication with parents, and the emotional demands of teaching. Although beginning teachers may possess theoretical knowledge of conflict management, limited experience can hinder their ability to recognise escalation and select context-appropriate responses. Mentoring and supervised professional learning should therefore complement conflict-management preparation initiated during teacher education.

The study identified three overlapping categories of potentially conflictual situations: learning- and activity-related situations involving performance, assessment, attendance, and educational tasks; behaviour- and rule-related situations concerning discipline, boundaries, and responsibilities; and communication- and relationship-related situations involving misunderstandings, disrespect, exclusion, emotional tension, and damaged trust. Because immediate triggers may conceal deeper relational or organisational causes, teachers must distinguish the visible source of disagreement from its underlying factors.

A central finding is that conflict management should focus on preventing destructive escalation rather than suppressing disagreement. Constructive management seeks to protect participants, clarify problems, maintain fair and respectful procedures, reduce escalation, and identify workable solutions. Conflict may reveal communication failures, unclear expectations, unmet needs, or organisational weaknesses and can therefore contribute to interpersonal and institutional learning. However, this developmental potential is conditional: poorly managed conflict can damage trust, psychological safety, learning, and professional relationships. Teachers must therefore facilitate constructive resolution where possible while recognising situations requiring stronger protective or institutional intervention.

Prevention is consequently a core dimension of conflict management. Effective professional readiness involves recognising emerging tensions and addressing their underlying causes before they develop into destructive confrontation.

Conflict prevention does not mean eliminating differences or discouraging disagreement. Rather, it involves creating conditions in which disagreement can be expressed and addressed before it becomes destructively escalated.

Several professional capacities were identified as particularly important for prevention:

1. knowledge of the nature, causes, types, and stages of conflict development;
2. understanding of the principles of group and classroom management;
3. the ability to analyse the specific pre-conflict situation rather than applying standardised responses;
4. the capacity to select intervention methods appropriate to the content and context of the particular situation;
5. attention to developmental, individual, social, and psychological characteristics of the participants;
6. early recognition of emotional escalation and changes in interaction patterns;
7. the establishment of clear, transparent, and consistently applied expectations;
8. the development of a classroom and school culture based on respectful communication and psychological safety.

A central finding is that effective conflict management depends on contextual analysis. Teachers must consider the participants, relationships, conflict history, power dynamics, emotional intensity, and potential consequences before selecting an intervention.

Based on the theoretical analysis and formative intervention, a structural model of psychological readiness was developed around four interconnected processes: recognising the conflict as a professional task requiring deliberate judgement; anticipating its development and possible consequences; selecting context-appropriate prevention or intervention strategies; and assessing personal professional resources and limitations, including when external support or institutional intervention is required. These processes are dynamic and may require continuous reassessment as the conflict develops.

Four levels of psychological readiness were identified: intuitive, reproductive, constructive-adaptive, and creative-reflective. At the intuitive level, responses rely mainly on fragmented knowledge, personal experience, and trial and error. The reproductive level involves applying learned strategies in familiar situations, often with guidance. The constructive-adaptive level reflects integrated knowledge,

independent situational analysis, flexible strategy selection, and evaluation of outcomes. The creative-reflective level represents the highest readiness, combining analytical and prognostic abilities, emotional self-regulation, constructive communication, contextual flexibility, and continuous professional reflection.

The terms constructive-adaptive and creative-reflective emphasise that professional competence is not based on originality alone, but on flexible, evidence-informed, and ethically responsible responses to complex interpersonal situations.

The study informed the development of a practice-oriented system for strengthening teachers' psychological readiness to manage interpersonal conflicts. The approach integrated theoretical preparation with multimedia learning, case and video analysis, role-playing, simulation, feedback, emotional self-regulation, and reflection across relevant areas of teacher education.

The specialised programme, "Managing Interpersonal Conflicts in the School Educational Environment," constituted the central component of the intervention. It progressively guided participants from understanding and recognising conflict to practising professional responses, receiving feedback, and reflecting on their behavioural patterns. Activities addressed student–student, student–teacher, teacher–parent, and colleague conflicts and included active listening, de-escalation, strategy selection, emotional regulation, and analysis of verbal and non-verbal communication.

This practice-oriented approach was designed to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and its application in ambiguous and emotionally demanding professional situations. The empirical evaluation comprised three stages. The diagnostic stage assessed participants' initial psychological readiness across six components: motivational and value-based, cognitive, emotional and self-regulatory, communicative, behavioural, and reflective.

The formative stage implemented the specialised training programme to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical conflict-management experience. The control and evaluation stage repeated the assessment to identify changes in individual components and overall levels of readiness.

The experimental design examined whether systematic training facilitated progression from intuitive and reproductive responses towards constructive-adaptive and creative-reflective professional functioning. Particular attention was given to participants' ability to analyse conflict situations, select context-sensitive strategies, regulate emotional responses, communicate constructively, and reflect critically on professional behaviour.

The magnitude and statistical significance of these changes should be established from verified participant-level data. Therefore, percentages, mean values, significance levels, and effect sizes are not reported in the absence of the corresponding empirical dataset.

The results support contemporary approaches that conceptualise conflict management as a multidimensional professional competence rather than a set of isolated techniques. Consistent with Rahim (1983, 2002), effective conflict management requires flexibility in selecting behavioural strategies. However, the present study extends this perspective by proposing that such flexibility depends on a broader structure of psychological readiness.

The findings also align with the Prosocial Classroom Model of Jennings & Greenberg (2009) and with research linking teachers' emotional intelligence and emotion regulation to conflict-management strategies (Valente & Lourenço, 2020; Valente et al., 2022). The present model integrates these emotional capacities with motivational, cognitive, communicative, behavioural, and reflective components, emphasising their combined contribution to professional action.

Another important finding concerns the need to distinguish interpersonal conflict from bullying, violence, discrimination, and coercion. Effective professional readiness therefore involves not only selecting appropriate conflict-management strategies but also recognising situations that require intervention by school psychologists, administrators, social services, parents, or other professionals.

The results further indicate that theoretical preparation alone is insufficient for managing complex interpersonal situations. Training, simulation, case analysis, role-playing, feedback, and reflection are necessary to connect theoretical knowledge with practical decision-making and emotional self-regulation. This is particularly relevant in the Ukrainian educational context, where educational reform, digitalisation, displacement, psychosocial stress, and the consequences of the full-scale war create additional demands on teachers' conflict-management competence.

The diagnostic stage involved 264 participants: 150 final-year teacher-education students and 114 early-career teachers with up to three years of professional experience. The students had completed theoretical preparation in pedagogy,

educational technologies, social pedagogy, social psychology, and conflict studies, whereas the early-career teachers had direct experience of managing interpersonal situations in school settings.

Comparison of these groups enabled the study to examine whether the transition from university preparation to professional practice was associated with differences in psychological readiness, practical conflict-management skills, and preferred behavioural strategies. It also provided a basis for testing the assumption that theoretical knowledge does not necessarily translate directly into practical readiness.

Overall, the findings support the central hypothesis that psychological readiness to manage interpersonal conflicts is a developable professional construct strengthened through the integration of theoretical knowledge, practical training, emotional self-regulation, behavioural rehearsal, feedback, and reflection. The proposed structural model and levels of readiness provide a basis for evaluating training effectiveness and developing evidence-informed programmes for initial teacher education and continuing professional development. The characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of participants in the diagnostic stage

Participant group	n	Stage of professional development	Educational/professional background	Purpose of inclusion
Final-year teacher-education students	150	Completion of the fourth year of university study	Theoretical preparation in pedagogy, educational technologies, social pedagogy, social psychology, and conflict studies	To assess the level of psychological and practical readiness to manage interpersonal conflicts at the end of initial teacher education
Early-career teachers	114	Up to three years of professional teaching experience	Practical experience in general secondary education institutions	To examine the influence of initial professional experience on conflict-management skills and preferred behavioural strategies
Total	264	—	—	Comparative assessment of psychological readiness to manage interpersonal conflicts

As shown in Table 1, the diagnostic stage included 264 participants at two stages of professional development: 150 final-year teacher-education students (56.8%) and 114 early-career teachers with up to three years of professional experience (43.2%). This composition enabled comparison between participants completing their initial professional preparation and those already engaged in independent teaching practice.

The student group had substantial theoretical preparation but limited experience in independently managing interpersonal conflicts in school settings, whereas the early-career teachers could draw on direct professional experience with students, parents, colleagues, and school administrators. The comparison therefore allowed differences in psychological readiness, conflict-management strategies, and the application of theoretical knowledge to real or simulated conflict situations to be examined.

At this stage, the two groups were treated as comparative rather than experimental and control groups. The diagnostic findings were subsequently used to identify components of psychological readiness requiring further development and to inform the content and activities of the formative intervention.

CONCLUSIONS

The study demonstrates that teachers' psychological readiness to manage interpersonal conflicts is an integrative professional-personal construct that extends beyond theoretical knowledge and isolated conflict-resolution techniques. It comprises six interrelated components: motivational and value-based, cognitive, emotional and self-regulatory, communicative, behavioural, and reflective. Their development enables teachers to interpret conflict situations, regulate emotional responses, communicate constructively, select appropriate strategies, and critically evaluate their actions.

The diagnostic assessment of 264 participants, including 150 final-year teacher-education students and 114 early-career teachers, highlighted the importance of bridging theoretical preparation and the practical demands of professional interaction. The findings support strengthening teacher education through simulations, role-playing, case analysis, reflective exercises, peer feedback, and supervised practice.

The proposed model identifies four progressive levels of psychological readiness: intuitive, reproductive, constructive-adaptive, and creative-reflective. It also emphasises prevention, including the ability to recognise emerging tensions,

distinguish ordinary disagreements from situations requiring institutional intervention, and promote constructive communication before conflicts escalate.

These findings are particularly relevant to the Ukrainian educational context, where educational reform, digitalisation, displacement, psychosocial stress, and the consequences of the full-scale war have intensified the need for psychological, communicative, and conflict-management competencies. An interdisciplinary and practice-oriented approach may therefore strengthen both initial teacher education and continuing professional development.

Future research should quantitatively assess the effectiveness and sustainability of the proposed training intervention through pre- and post-intervention comparisons and examine its applicability across different educational, institutional, cultural, and digitally mediated contexts.

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