

Validation of the French-Canadian Adaptation of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory for Adolescents in Dating Relationships

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

This study examined how adolescents resolve conflicts in their dating relationships. When a conflict arises with a dating partner, adolescents may turn to any number of strategies. Some strategies may help to resolve conflicts and maintain a healthy relationship, while other strategies may escalate conflicts and increase risk for dating violence.

In this study, the authors adapted the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI), a questionnaire originally developed for use with adult couples, for use with French-Canadian adolescents. Past analyses showed that when used with adolescents, the CRSI identifies three categories of conflict resolution strategies: positive problem solving, conflict engagement, and withdrawal. The authors of this study were interested in whether positive problem solving could be understood as two different kinds of strategies: collaboration (attempting to find a solution that satisfies both parties) and compromise (both parties making mutual concessions to find an acceptable solution that partially satisfies both).

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

The researchers developed a new version of the CRSI by using questions from the original adult CRSI, adding questions from another measure about compromise and collaboration, and translating the questions into French. The final version was reviewed by five adolescents to ensure clarity.

The researchers recruited a sample of 262 adolescents (ages 14-19) in Quebec who had been in a dating relationship lasting at least one month. The adolescents completed the adapted questionnaire, as well as questions assessing dating relationship quality and emotion regulation difficulties. The researchers then recruited a separate sample of 221 adolescents to complete the adapted questionnaire. They conducted statistical analyses to examine the categories of conflict resolution strategies endorsed by youth and to examine whether more positive problem-solving strategies were associated with better social-emotional wellbeing.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

- Adolescents' conflict resolution strategies fell into three categories: positive problem-solving, conflict engagement, and withdrawal.
- Positive problem-solving was associated with higher relationship quality and better emotion regulation.
- Escalating or withdrawing from conflict was associated poorer emotion regulation. The use of withdrawal was also associated with lower relationship quality.



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WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

The researchers found that adolescents' conflict resolution styles could be understood as falling into three categories: positive problem-solving (e.g., openly discussing the problem); conflict engagement (e.g., throwing insults and digs); and withdrawal (e.g., tuning the other person out). The use of positive problem-solving strategies was associated with higher relationship quality; the use of withdrawal strategies was associated with lower relationship quality. Increased emotion regulation difficulties were associated with the use of conflict engagement and withdrawal strategies. Having lower emotion regulation difficulties was associated with the use of positive problem-solving.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

This article provides preliminary evidence that this adapted version of the CRSI is reliable and valid for use with French-Canadian adolescents. Researchers and practitioners can use this measure to understand adolescents' conflict resolution styles, identify youth at-risk of socio-emotional difficulties, and measure changes following participation in intervention programs.

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