



CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN KANNUR

***Ms. Afrath P. P , **Ms. Saheeba Sabakka**

*PG Department of Psychology, WIRAS Kannur, MSc Applied Psychology

**Asst. Professor, PG Department of Psychology, WIRAS Kannur

Received: 16/05/2025

Revised: 19/07/2025

Accepted:24/08/2025

Published:01/11/2025

ABSTRACT

Recent incidents of conflicts that turned tragic among adolescent friends in Kerala drew concerns. Current study examines the relationship between Social Media Usage and Conflict Management Styles among Arts and Science college students in Kannur. This is an empirical study using a sample of 280 students from Arts and Science colleges in Kannur of 18 to 25 years old using simple random sampling. Using Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale and Conflict Management Styles Assessment data were collected through Google Form from 280 college students. Analysis using Pearson Correlation found significant positive correlation between Social Media Usage and various conflict management styles.

Key Words – *Social Media Usage, Conflicts, Conflict Management, Conflict Management Styles, College student*

With surging popularity, social media has quickly integrated into our lives. Over time, it has developed into an interactive platform for discussion, collaboration, and the exchange of information and knowledge (Mude & Undale, 2023) contributing to greater social capital (Putnam, 2000).

The perception of trust created by one's interpretations of events and phenomena around him creates confidence in the immediate environment based on primary life experiences, making social

media a functional tool for developing close relationships (Acun, 2020). Whereas, excessive use of social media decreases in person interactions, crucial for maintaining healthy social connections. Keles, et. al. (2020) highlights the complex relationship between social media usage and mental health, suggesting that while social media can provide social support, it can also exacerbate psychological distress.

Recent and tragic incident in Kozhikode district underscores the importance of this study. In February 2025, a 16-year-old student named



Mohammed Shahabas was fatally attacked by a group of fellow students. Investigations revealed that the assault was premeditated and coordinated through social media platforms, including Instagram and WhatsApp. The attackers had shared threatening messages and even learned to use weapons like the nunchaku by watching YouTube videos (Onmanorama, 2025; MediaOne,2025). This incident highlights how online interactions can intensify real-world conflicts, leading to severe consequences. Such events emphasize the need to understand how social media usage affects the way students manage conflicts. Adolescents are at a critical stage of developing social skills and emotional intelligence. Excessive reliance on digital communication leads to decline in personal interactions, thereby hindering empathy, ability to understand social cues and resolve disagreements constructively.

Another major concern is the overuse of gadgets and digital communication, which is reducing the time students spend in real-life social interactions. As a result, many adolescents are missing opportunities to develop social intelligence (Goleman, 2006). Social intelligence is important for healthy relationships and conflict resolution, and it usually develops through face-to-face experiences and emotional learning. With the growing trend of online communication, students may struggle with empathy, emotional control, and interpreting social cues (Sutar & Patil, 2020).

Conflict is natural and inevitable and arises when individuals or groups perceive that their needs, goals, or values

are incompatible. While often associated with negative emotions or outcomes, conflict itself is not necessarily harmful since it can also lead to increased understanding, stronger relationships, and positive change (Deutsch et al., 2011). Effective conflict management aims to foster cooperation and innovation. (Rahim,2011).

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) identifies five distinct approaches: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974) of assertiveness and cooperativeness.

Recent concerns about conflict management styles among adolescents and the surging use of social media, the study on how social media usage affects the way students manage conflict is important. Focusing on arts and science college students in Kannur the study aims to understand the link between digital habits and interpersonal behavior.

Recent research highlights the complex impact of social media across various aspects of life. Angelini & Gini (2025) found social media accessibility expectations linked to adolescent friendship conflict, with males reporting less entrapment with higher perceived accessibility. Conversely, Shaibhu et al. (2025) noted a predominantly positive influence on Nigerian nursing students' academics, contingent on individual factors.

Studies on college students revealed negative associations. Eichenberg et al. (2024) linked social media addiction to neuroticism and insecure attachment,



while Shrestha & Adhikari (2024) found associations with mood changes and sleep disruption. Raj & Sheikh (2024) identified both positive (long-distance connection) and negative (jealousy) impacts on personal relationships. Gul et al. (2024) suggested social media exacerbates the negative effects of parental conflict on academic performance

In other contexts, Labent et al. (2024) observed moderate well-being in Malaysian young adults, suggesting strategic social media use could be beneficial. F et al. (2024) found positive attitudes towards conflict management correlated with compromising and problem-solving styles in medical students. Manaig (2024) and Lawani, et al. (2024) linked collaborative leadership and emotional intelligence to effective conflict management. Muthumari & Indhumathi (2023) found no direct link between social media and academic performance in Indian undergraduates, while Mercan & Uysal (2023) connected social media addiction to poorer interpersonal problem-solving and certain personality traits. Julian (2023) associated excessive use with mental health issues and delinquency. Overall, these studies reveal both opportunities and risks associated with digital engagement, emphasizing the need for further research.

METHOD

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between social media usage and conflict management styles.
2. To find relationships between Social Media Usage and Collaborating conflict management styles.

3. To assess the relationship between Social Media Usage and Competing conflict management styles.

4. To examine the relationship between social media usage and avoidant conflict management styles.

5. To assess the relationship between social media usage and Accommodating conflict management styles.

6. To find a relationship between social media usage and Compromising conflict management.

Hypothesis

There will be a positive correlation between SMU and collaborating CMS.

There will be negative correlation between SMU and collaborating CMS.

There will be positive correlation between SMU and Competing CMS.

There will be negative correlation between SMU and Competing CMS.

There will be negative correlation between SMU and avoidant CMS.

There will be positive correlation between SMU and avoidant CMS.

There will be positive correlation between SMU and accommodating CMS.

There will be negative correlation between SMU and accommodating CMS.

There will be positive correlation between SMU and compromising CMS.

There will be negative correlation between SMU and compromising CMS.

Research Design

Correlational research technique was used to find the correlation between variables.

Sample

The sample of this study is Arts and Science college students within the



age group of 18 to 25 years. The sample size is 280 college students from different Arts and Science colleges in Kannur including both males and females. Simple random sampling method was used to collect data and in person meetings and questionnaires through google form.

Tools

1. Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale

The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), created by Andreassen and colleagues, is a self-report tool designed to assess social media addiction. It comprises six items, each corresponding to core addiction components: salience, tolerance, mood modification, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse. Responses are rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (very rarely) to 5 (very often), with higher scores indicating greater dependence on social media and interpretation are no addiction, moderate addiction and high addiction respectively (Shin, 2022).

2. Conflict Management Styles Assessment

Conflict Management Styles Assessment is a self-report tool, created by Reginald Adkins in 2006 and this assessment adopted from David Johnson in 1990. It assesses five different conflict management styles of an individual. The tool consists of 15 statements that are equivalent to the five different CMS that are collaborating, competing, avoiding, accommodating and compromising respectively. These were based on the Thomas Kilmann conflict management

styles and are scored on a four-point Likert Scale of 1 to 4, 1 (rarely), 2 (sometimes), 3 (often), 4 (always). Scoring was item 1,5,7 for collaborating styles, item 4,9,12 for competing styles, item 6,10,15 for avoiding styles, item 3,11,14 for accommodating styles and item 2,8,13 for compromising styles. The interpretation was that the styles with the highest score represent the one we use most frequently while the lowest-scoring styles reflect the one we prefer the least conflict management styles (Adkins, 2006).

Procedure

Data was collected in person from three colleges in Pilathara. Further more data was collected online in personal contacts from different colleges in Kannur and google form was circulated through WhatsApp. The final sample consists of 280 participants. The data analysed using SPSS. Pearson Correlation was found.

RESULTS

Data were collected from 15 colleges in Kannur district including WIRAS, St. Joseph College Pilathara, SES College Sreekandapuram, Pilathara Cooperative Arts and Science College, Sir Syed College Taliparamba, Sir Syed Institute for Technical Studies, Payyannur College, Sunrise College of Advanced Studies, SN College Thottada, Taliparamba Arts and Science College, Krishna Menon Women's College, Kannur University Campus, MM Knowledge Arts and Science College, Gurudev Arts and Science College and Morazha Co-operative Arts and Science College.



Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

	SMU	Collaborating	Competing	Avoiding	Accommodating	Compromising
Mean	17.54	7.03	6.50	7.26	7.56	7.02
S. D	4.283	1.933	1.820	2.109	1.911	1.763

The mean score of Social Media Usage is 17.54 with a standard deviation of 4.283. The mean scores differed with collaborating 7.03 (SD=1.933), Competing 6.5 (SD=1.820), Avoiding 7.26 (SD=2.109), Accommodating 7.56 (SD=1.911) and Compromising 7.02 (SD=1.763) styles.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Coefficient

	Collaborating	Competing	Avoiding	Accommodating	Compromising
SMU	0.156**	0.180**	.210**	.121*	.65

**Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation between SMU and collaborating is 0.156 showing significant positive correlation. This implies that higher the social media usage, greater is the score for collaborating conflict management style.

The correlation between SMU and competing is 0.180 showing significant positive correlation. This implies that higher the social media usage, greater is the score for competing conflict management style.

The correlation between SMU and avoiding is 0.210 showing significant positive correlation. This implies that higher the social media usage, greater is the score for avoiding conflict management style.

The correlation between SMU and accommodating is 0.121 at 0.05 level significance. This shows that there is significant positive correlation implying higher the social media usage, greater the score for accommodating conflict management style.

The correlation between SMU and compromising is 0.65 at no level of significance. This shows slight correlation implying that this relationship is not significant.

DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to examine the relationship between Social Media Usage and Conflict Management

Styles, more specifically examine the relationship between Social Media Usage and Collaborating conflict management style, to assess the relationship between Social Media Usage and Competing conflict management style, to find the relationship between Social Media Usage and Avoiding conflict management style, examine the relationship between Social Media Usage and Accommodating conflict management style and to assess the relationship between Social Media Usage and Compromising conflict management style among Arts and Science college students in Kannur district, aged 18 to 25 years.

The findings of the study shows that there is a significant relationship between Social Media usage and Collaborating, Competing, Avoiding and Accommodating conflict management styles, while Compromising conflict management style did not have significant correlation with Social Media Usage.

The study found significant positive correlation between Social Media Usage and Collaborating conflict management style ($r=0.180$ at 0.01 level significant). This implies that students who frequently use social media are more likely to use a collaborative conflict management style when addressing interpersonal conflicts and it is characterized by mutual respect and cooperation. They may try to find solutions that satisfy both sides.

The significant positive correlation between Social Media Usage and Competing conflict management style ($r=0.180$ at 0.01 level significant). This implies that students who have increased usage of social media, could contribute to a more competitive stance during conflicts, where individuals aim to assert their own

position, sometimes at the expense of others.

The strongest correlation was found between the Social Media Usage and Avoiding conflict management style ($r=0.210$ at 0.01 level significant). This indicates that students with higher social media exposure may also tend to avoid conflicts rather than confronting them directly. This could reflect the nature of social media communication, where it is easier to withdraw or disengage from uncomfortable interactions.

The correlation between Social Media Usage and Accommodating conflict management style found that it is weaker but it is still significant ($r=0.121$ at 0.05 level significant). This implies that increased usage of social media may be associated with a greater tendency to prioritize others' needs over one's own during conflicts- possibly as a way to maintain harmony with social media groups or circles.

However, no significant correlation between Social Media Usage and Compromising conflict management style was $r=0.65$, which was not significant correlation. This implies that no meaningful relationship was found between Social Media Usage and Compromising conflict management style, it indicates that compromising may not be influenced by social media use in the same way as the other conflict management styles.

The results of the relationship between Social Media Usage with Collaborating, Competing, Avoiding and Accommodating conflict management styles have rejected the null hypothesis, null hypothesis was there is no significant relationship between these two variables. The findings of these accepted the



alternative hypothesis. On the other hand, the null hypothesis of the Compromising conflict management style was accepted and the alternative hypothesis was rejected, as the correlation did not reach a significant level.

The results show that there is positive correlation between Social Media usage and Collaborating, Accommodating conflict management styles. Social media use can improve communication skills and promote Collaboration and positive interpersonal behaviours (Subrahmanyam and Greenfield, 2008).

Similarly, there is positive correlation found between Social Media Usage and Avoiding and Competing conflict management styles. The recurrent use of social media can lead to increased competitiveness, reduced tolerance, or avoidance of direct confrontation in real-life interactions (Yang and Brown, 2016). On the other hand, results found that there is no significant correlation between Social Media Usage and Compromising conflict management style. The communication in social media platforms may influence how individuals engage in conflicts, sometimes promoting surface-level interactions rather than deep conflict management (Przybylski and Weinstein, 2013).

Overall, the study findings show that, significant relation to social media usage and different conflict management styles among college students in Kannur district.

Implications

Our findings point to how social media usage is connected to how students handle interpersonal conflicts. Positive associations with collaborating and accommodating styles indicate that social media may encourage students to engage in more cooperative and relationship-focused conflict resolution. These platforms often promote group interaction and shared decision-making, which can help users develop empathy and communication skills (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008).

One important implication is that social media may influence how students respond to real-life interpersonal conflicts, often reflecting patterns they practice in virtual interactions. For instance, those who frequently use social media may develop stronger collaborative and accommodating skills, likely due to online group activities and discussions. At the same time, a tendency toward avoidance or competitiveness might stem from the indirect or performative nature of online exchanges (Yang & Brown, 2016).

CONCLUSION

The study found significant positive correlation between SMU and collaborative, competing, avoiding and accommodating CMS and a slight positive correlation between SMU and compromising.



REFERENCES

- Acun, I. (2020). Sosyal Sermaye ve Sosyal Medya. *Future Visions Journal*, 3(9), 30–40.
- Adkins, R. (2006, November). Conflict management quiz. *Elemental Truths*.
- Angelini, F., & Gini, G. (2025). Digital stress and friendship conflict in adolescence: the role of perceived norms and features of social media. *Frontiers in Digital Health*, 7.
- Deutsch, M., Coleman, P. T., & Marcus, E. C. (2011). *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and practice (3rd ed.)*. Jossey-Bass.
- Eichenberg, C., Schneider, R., & Rumpl, H. (2024). Social media addiction: associations with attachment style, mental distress, and personality. *BMC Psychiatry*, 24(1)
- F, M., M, K. M., A, S., & A, N. (2024). Investigating the Relationship between Attitude towards Conflict Management and Conflict Management Styles in Medical Students. *Journal of Medical Education and Development*.
- Goleman, D. (2006). *Social intelligence: The new science of human relationships*. Bantam Books.
- Gul, H., Zia, M. A., & Rasheed, A. (2024). The Mediating Role of Social Media on the Correlation of Parental conflict and academic Performance of University Students. *Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences and Management Practices*, 3(1), 257–271.
- Julian, R. (2023). Quantifying the impact of social media on adolescent delinquency. Volume I(Issue 3)
- Keles, B., McCrae, N., & Grealish, A. (2020). A systematic review: The influence of social media on depression, anxiety, and psychological distress in adolescents. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25(1), 79–93.
- Labent, S., Kong, L. C., Wong, J. X. L., & Chan, S. L. (2024). Relationship between well-being and social media usage among young adults in Malaysia. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, 9(54), 290–305.
- Lawani, K., Abad, L. a. A., Craig, N., Hare, B., & Cameron, I. (2022b). Exploring emotional intelligence and conflict management styles in Dominican Republic construction industry. *Journal of Engineering Design and Technology*, 22(1), 89–119



- Manaig, M. T. (2024). Leadership and conflict management styles of Top and Middle-Level Managers of selected companies towards Strategic HR management. *Asia Pacific Journal of Advanced Education and Technology*, 3(3).
- Mercan, N., & Uysal, B. (2023). The relationship of social media addiction with interpersonal problem-solving and personality traits in university students. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 43, 50–56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnu.2022.12.025>
- Mude, G., & Undale, S. (2023). Social media usage. *International Journal of E-Business Research*, 19(1), 1–20.
- Muthumari, V., & Indhumathi, K. (2023). Impact of social media usage among UG students of government arts college for women, sivagangai: A study. *Paripex- Indian Journal of Research*, 191–194
- Onmanorama. (2025, March 1). Those who have guts gang up: Chats inciting attack surface in Kozhikode student death case.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster.
- Przybylski, A. K., & Weinstein, N. (2013). Can you connect with me now? How the presence of mobile communication technology influences face-to-face conversation quality. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 30(3), 237– 246.
- Rahim, M. A. (2011). *Managing conflict in organizations (4th ed.)*. Transaction Publishers
- Raj, R. S., & Sheikh, S. A. (2024b). The impact of social media on personal relationships: A study in Raichur district Karnataka India. *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research*, 6(2), 370–378.
- Shaibu, P. Y., Adamu, H., Mingyi, D. E., Habila, P. L., & Maikaho, E. B. (2025). Effect of social media on the academic performance of students in College of Nursing Sciences Gombe, North-East Nigeria: a Cross-Sectional study. *Research Square (Research Square)*
- Shin, N. Y. (2022). Psychometric Properties of the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale in Korean Young Adults. *Psychiatry Investigation*, 19(5), 356–361.
- Shrestha, M., & Adhikari, S. (2024). The impact of social media usage on mental health among college students: patterns, psychological effects, and implications for well-being. *International Journal of Atharva*, 2(2), 96–111.
- Subrahmanyam, K., & Greenfield, P. (2008). Online Communication and Adolescent Relationships. *The Future of Children*, 18(1), 119–146.



- Sutar, R., & Patil, R. (2020). A Study on the Role of Social Intelligence in Conflict Resolution. *Journal of Psychological Research*, 15(2), 45
- Thomas, K. W., & Kilmann, R. H. (1974). Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. Tuxedo, NY: Xicom.
- Thomas, K. W., & Kilmann, R. H. (2007). Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. CPP, Inc.
- Yang, C. C., & Brown, B. B. (2016). Online self-presentation on Facebook and self-development during the college transition. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 45(2), 402–416