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Aditi Dutt

Research Scholar, Department of
HDFS, College of Home Science,
G.B. Pant University of
Agriculture and Technology,
Uttarakhand, India

Ritu Singh

Associate Professor,
Department of HDFS, College
of Home Science, G.B. Pant
University of Agriculture and
Technology, Uttarakhand, India

Varun Kumar Singh

Professor and Head, Department
of Agronomy, B.N.V.P.G.
College, Rath, Hamirpur, Uttar
Pradesh, India

Corresponding Author:

Aditi Dutt

Research Scholar, Department of
HDFS, College of Home Science,
G.B. Pant University of
Agriculture and Technology,
Uttarakhand, India

Exploring gender differences on the grounds of conflict and resolution strategy among the romantically involved young adults

Aditi Dutt, Ritu Singh and Varun Kumar Singh

Abstract

Romantic relationships have been defined in countless ways, by writers, philosophers, religions, scientists, and in the modern day, relationship counsellors whereas; conflict is a disagreement of ideas and interests. Conflict resolution is known as the method and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflicts. This research explores the gender differences on the grounds of conflict and resolution strategy among the romantically involves young adults of GBPUA&T, Pantnagar and PAU, Ludhiana. Snowball sampling was employed to select 400 respondents (200 from each university). Findings showed that in both universities, romantically involved boys reported significantly more conflict due to making decisions without consulting their partners' opinion, resistance to change their behaviour and in digging out old issues whereas, girls reported significantly more conflict on common friend related issues and unfulfilled promises. It was also evident that romantically involved young girls practiced significantly more compromise and submission as a strategy for conflict resolution whereas, boys practiced significantly more avoidance, domination and separation as a strategy for conflict resolution.

Keywords: Young-adults, conflict-resolution style, grounds of conflict, gender

Introduction

Conflict is inevitable in every relationship. One faces conflict in one's relationship with some frequency which is not inherently negative. Conflict resolution is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution. The conduct of the partners during conflict often depicts their understanding of each other and their level of satisfaction with each other in the context of their relationship (Canary *et al.*, 2001; Crammer, 2000) [2, 4]. The dual concern model of conflict resolution (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986) [11] is a conceptual perspective that assumes individuals' preferred method of dealing with conflict is based on two underlying themes or dimensions: concern for self (assertiveness) and concern for others (empathy).

According to the model, group members balance their concern for satisfying personal needs and interests with their concern for satisfying the needs and interests of others in different ways. The intersection of these two dimensions ultimately leads individuals towards exhibiting different styles of conflict resolution. The dual model identifies five with number four being the target to complete the cycle and illuminate the issue at hand. Conflict resolution styles or strategies that individuals may use depend on their dispositions toward pro-self or pro-social goals. Avoidance is characterized by joking, changing or avoiding the topic, or even denying that a problem exists, Strong dislike for following the rules the conflict avoidance style is used when an individual has withdrawn in dealing with the other party, when one is uncomfortable with conflict, or due to cultural contexts. In contrast, yielding, "accommodating", smoothing or suppression conflict styles are characterized by a high level of concern for others and a low level of concern for oneself. This passive pro-social approach emerges when individuals derive personal satisfaction from meeting the needs of others and have a general concern for maintaining stable, positive social relationships.

The competitive, “fighting” or forcing conflict style maximizes individual assertiveness (i.e., concern for self) and minimizes empathy (i.e., concern for others). Groups consisting of competitive members generally enjoy seeking domination over others, and typically see conflict as a “win or lose” predicament. The conciliation, “compromising”, bargaining or negotiation conflict style is typical of individuals who possess an intermediate level of concern for both personal and others’ outcomes. Compromisers value fairness and, in doing so, anticipate mutual give-and-take interactions. Characterized by an active concern for both pro-social and pro-self behavior, the cooperation, integration, confrontation or problem-solving conflict style is typically used when an individual has elevated interests in their own outcomes as well as in the outcomes of others. During conflict, co-operators collaborate with others in an effort to find an amicable solution that satisfies all parties involved in the conflict. Individuals using this type of conflict style tend to be both highly assertive and highly empathetic. By seeing conflict as a creative opportunity, collaborators willingly invest time and resources into finding a “win-win” solution. In conflict, people believe that their interests are threatened by the actions of the other person. Conflict can also be defined as “an interpersonal process that occurs whenever the actions of one person interfere with the actions of another” (Peterson, 1983) [10]. Signs of conflict can include: fighting over repetitive issues, knowing how an argument is going to end even before it is over, ending an argument without resolving the issue at hand, and ending the argument with neither partner feeling that they have been given a fair hearing. A major aspect of many approaches to couple therapy involves trying to encourage partners to resolve their differences, i.e., deal with their conflict (Cramer, 2000) [4].

Method

Data Collection

This study is focused on the Social influence i.e. Social media and peer pressure on the romantic involvement of young adults. Snowball sampling was employed to select 400 participants under two populations i.e. GBPUA&T, Pantnagar and PAU, Ludhiana, Universities.

Research Tools

Self –structured Conflict Questionnaire: It is a self- report measure which includes 17 domains of conflict on six-point likert scale. The scale uses a six-point likert format which is “1”- always agree to “5”- always disagree.

Romantic Partner Conflict Resolution Scale (Zacchilli, Hendrick, & Hendric, 2009) [13]: Romantic Partner Conflict Resolution Scale includes 39 items with six subscales. The purpose of this scale is to measure everyday conflict experienced by individuals in romantic relationships. The subscales include:

- **Compromise:** Measures the extent to which partners resolves a conflict to save their relationship.
- **Avoidance:** Assesses the level to which partner avoid disagreement with their partner.
- **Interactional Reactivity:** Assesses nature and frequency of conflicts partners undergo.
- **Separation:** Measures individual’s behaviour of separation for cooling off period to let the conflict resolve.
- **Domination:** Measures partner’s control over other.
- **Submission:** Measures the tendency of partners to satisfy spouse’s need rather than their own.

The scale uses a five-point likert format which is “1”- strongly disagree to “5”- strongly agree.

Result and Discussion

Fig.1 elaborates mean score of ‘Boys’ and ‘Girls’ of GBPUA&T, Pantnagar and PAU, Ludhiana on Grounds of Conflicts. In table 1 an independent sample t-test was done to analyze the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in common grounds of conflict among romantically involved young Boys and Girls of G.B.P.U.A. &T. Pantnagar and P.A.U. Ludhiana. Findings showed significant difference ($p < .05$) in common friend related issues ($t = -3.792$), resistance to change behaviours ($t = 3.923$), making decisions without partners’ opinion ($t = 6.499$), digging out old issues ($t = 2.951$) and unfulfilled promises ($t = -2.882$) where, boys reported significantly more conflict due to making decisions without consulting their partners’ opinion resistance to change their behaviour and in digging out old issues whereas, girls reported significantly more conflict on common friend related issues and unfulfilled promises. Significant differences were found in areas of conflict in overall samples obtained from both universities across gender. Findings showed that in both universities, romantically involved boys reported significantly more conflict due to making decisions without consulting their partners’ opinion, resistance to change their behaviour and in digging out old issues whereas, girls reported significantly more conflict on common friend related issues and unfulfilled promises.

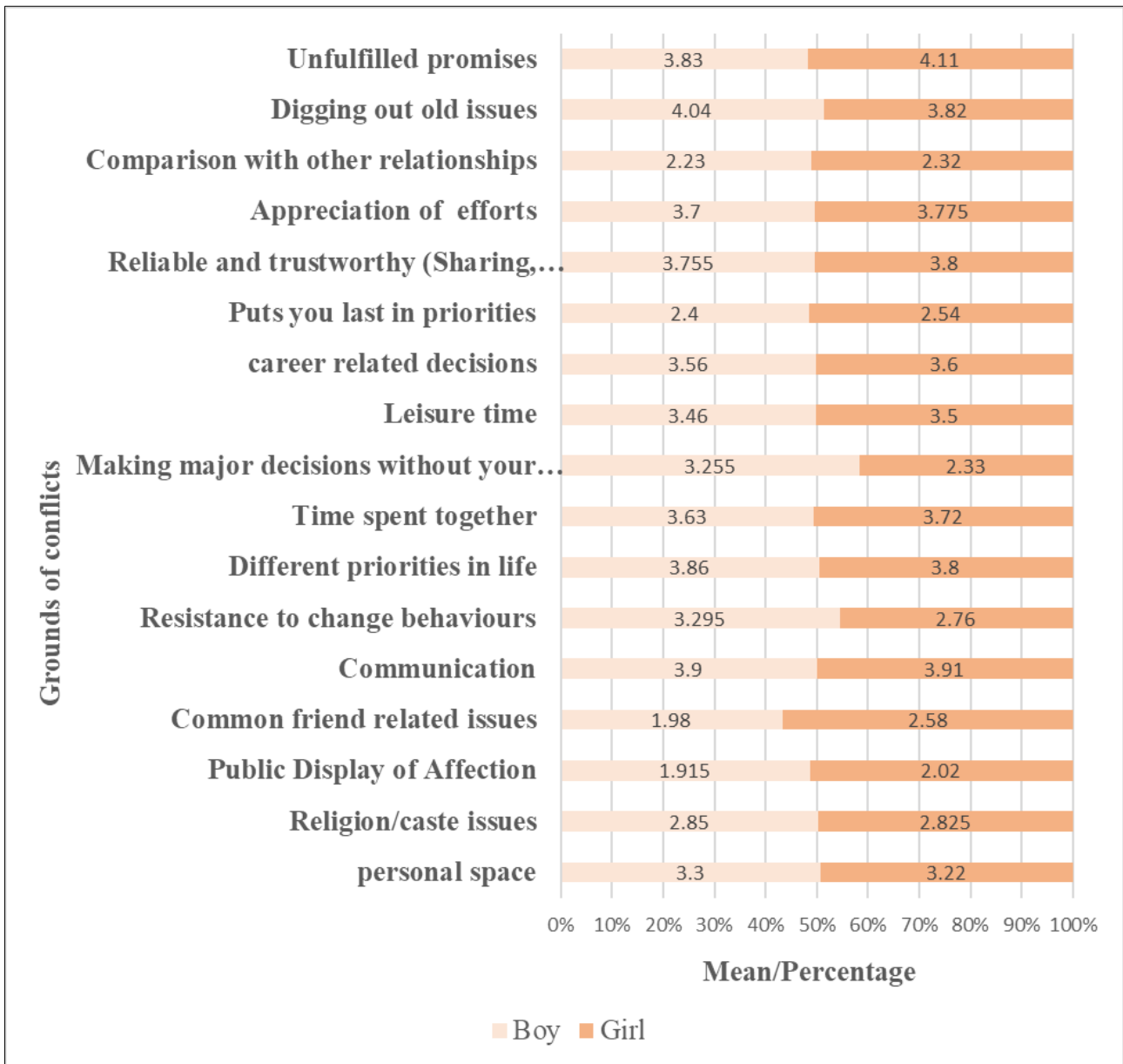


Fig 1: Mean Score of 'Boys' and 'Girls' of GBPUA&T, Pantnagar, and PAU, Ludhiana on 'Grounds of Conflict'

Table 1: Independent sample t-test for romantically involved young 'BOYS' and 'GIRLS' of GBPUAT, Pantnagar and PAU Ludhiana on Grounds of Conflict

Grounds of Conflict		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
personal space	Equal variances assumed	.211	.646	.757	398	.449	.08000	.10566	-.12772	.28772
	Equal variances not assumed			.757	394.749	.449	.08000	.10566	-.12772	.28772
Religion/caste issues	Equal variances assumed	.012	.912	.171	398	.865	.02500	.14652	-.26304	.31304
	Equal variances not assumed			.171	397.994	.865	.02500	.14652	-.26304	.31304
Public Display of Affection	Equal variances assumed	.044	.834	-.726	398	.469	-.10500	.14471	-.38950	.17950
	Equal variances not assumed			-.726	397.977	.469	-.10500	.14471	-.38950	.17950
Common friend related issues	Equal variances assumed	.498	.481	-3.792	398	.000	-.60000	.15824	-.91110	-.28890

	Equal variances not assumed			-3.792	396.112	.000	-.60000	.15824	-.91110	-.28890
Communication	Equal variances assumed	.028	.867	-.088	398	.930	-.01000	.11368	-.23350	.21350
	Equal variances not assumed			-.088	397.996	.930	-.01000	.11368	-.23350	.21350
Resistance to change behaviours	Equal variances assumed	.714	.399	3.923	398	.000	.53500	.13636	.26692	.80308
	Equal variances not assumed			3.923	397.910	.000	.53500	.13636	.26692	.80308
Different priorities in life	Equal variances assumed	1.815	.179	.678	398	.498	.06000	.08855	-.11409	.23409
	Equal variances not assumed			.678	385.619	.498	.06000	.08855	-.11410	.23410
Time spent together	Equal variances assumed	1.180	.278	-.838	398	.402	-.09000	.10738	-.30111	.12111
	Equal variances not assumed			-.838	393.276	.402	-.09000	.10738	-.30112	.12112
Making decisions without your opinion	Equal variances assumed	7.722	.006	6.499	398	.000	.92500	.14233	.64520	1.20480
	Equal variances not assumed			6.499	393.903	.000	.92500	.14233	.64519	1.20481
Leisure time	Equal variances assumed	.189	.664	-.422	398	.673	-.04000	.09480	-.22637	.14637
	Equal variances not assumed			-.422	397.030	.673	-.04000	.09480	-.22637	.14637
career related decisions	Equal variances assumed	.050	.824	-.355	398	.723	-.04000	.11267	-.26151	.18151
	Equal variances not assumed			-.355	397.866	.723	-.04000	.11267	-.26151	.18151
Puts you last in priorities	Equal variances assumed	.071	.789	-.826	398	.409	-.14000	.16952	-.47326	.19326
	Equal variances not assumed			-.826	397.982	.409	-.14000	.16952	-.47326	.19326
Reliable and trustworthy (Sharing, transparency)	Equal variances assumed	.362	.548	-.408	398	.683	-.04500	.11016	-.26157	.17157
	Equal variances not assumed			-.408	397.385	.683	-.04500	.11016	-.26157	.17157
Appreciation of efforts	Equal variances assumed	.814	.367	-.972	398	.332	-.07500	.07715	-.22667	.07667
	Equal variances not assumed			-.972	397.640	.332	-.07500	.07715	-.22667	.07667
Comparison with other relationships	Equal variances assumed	.190	.664	-.608	398	.543	-.09000	.14793	-.38082	.20082
	Equal variances not assumed			-.608	397.460	.543	-.09000	.14793	-.38082	.20082
Digging out old issues	Equal variances assumed	9.059	.003	2.951	398	.003	.22000	.07455	.07344	.36656
	Equal variances not assumed			2.951	345.908	.003	.22000	.07455	.07337	.36663
Unfulfilled promises	Equal variances assumed	2.117	.146	-.2882	398	.004	-.28000	.09717	-.47103	-.08897
	Equal variances not assumed			-.2882	380.481	.004	-.28000	.09717	-.47106	-.08894

Fig. 2 elaborates mean score of ‘Boys’ and ‘Girls’ of GBPUA&T, Pantnagar and PAU, Ludhiana on Strategies of Conflict Resolution. In table 2 an independent sample t-test was done to analyze the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in strategies of conflict resolution between romantically involved Young ‘BOYS’ and ‘GIRLS’ of GBPUAT, Pantnagar and PAU Ludhiana. Findings showed that there is significant difference ($p < .05$) in compromise ($t = 2.024$), avoidance ($t = 5.198$), separation ($t = 2.883$), domination ($t = 2.645$) and submission ($t = -4.578$) strategies of conflict resolution. Girls in GBPUAT, Pantnagar and PAU Ludhiana practised significantly more compromise and submission as a strategy for conflict resolution whereas; boys in GBPUAT, Pantnagar and PAU Ludhiana practised significantly more

avoidance, domination and separation as a strategy for conflict resolution.

Findings showed that in both universities, romantically involved young girls practiced significantly more compromise and submission as a strategy for conflict resolution whereas, boys practiced significantly more avoidance, domination and separation as a strategy for conflict resolution. It is evident that males are more objective, competitive, independent, (Kluwer *et al.*, 1998, p. 638) [7], forceful, dominating (Davis *et al.*, 2010; Papa & Natalle, 1989) [5, 9]. Kluwer *et al.*, (1998, p.638) [7] portrayed females as “ warm, dependent, emotional, cooperative and vulnerable” and resolves the conflict with compromising style (Ppapa & Natalle, 1989) [9]. This shows that they are more relationship oriented and always appeasing the other party (Canary, Cunningham & Cody, 1988; Davis *et*

al., 2010) [1, 5]. Women also place great emphasis on preserving and maintaining harmonious relationships (Merrill

and Afifi, 2017) [8], whereas; men always want to suppress the conflict or avoid it all together (Caughlin et al., 2013) [3].

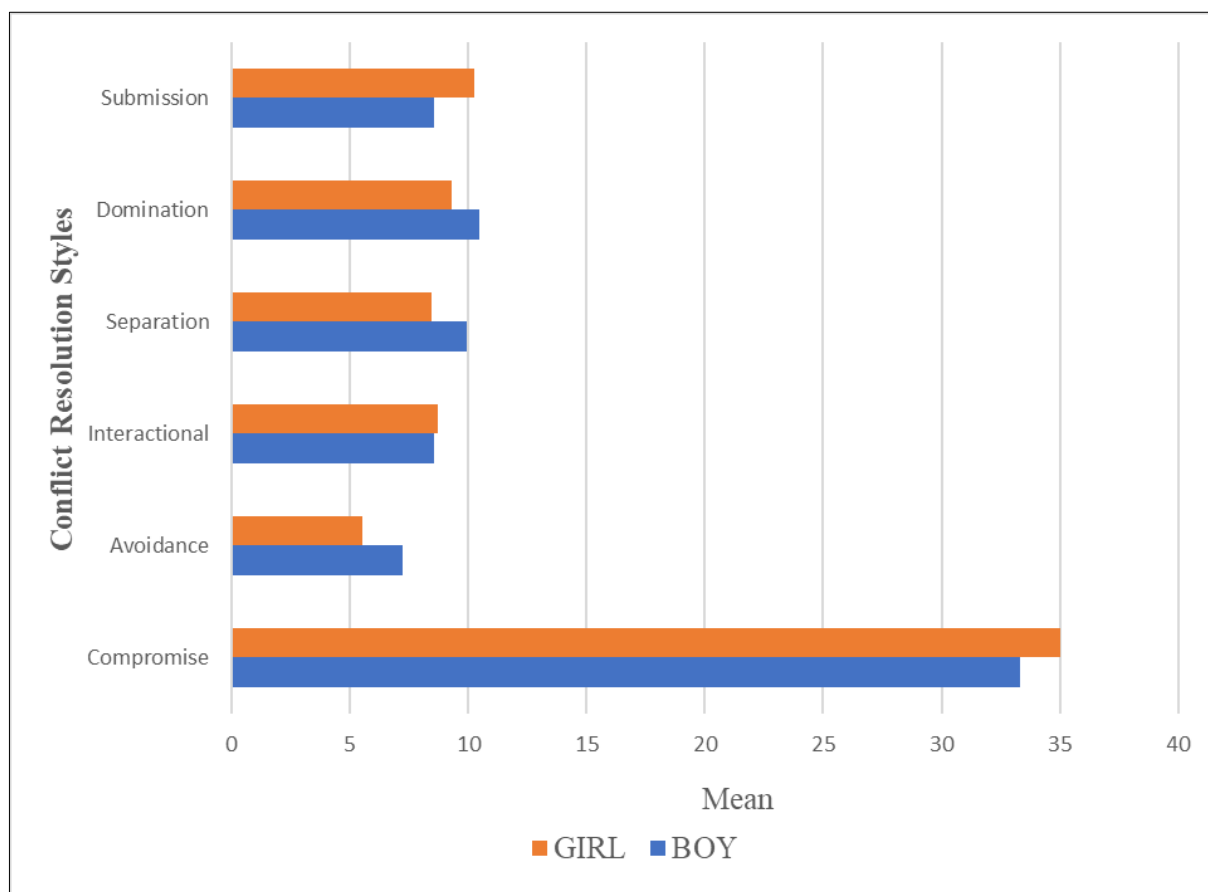


Fig 2: Mean Score of 'Boys' and 'Girls' of GBPUA&T, Pantnagar, and PAU, Ludhiana on Strategies of Conflict Resolution

Table 2: Independent sample t-test for romantically involved young 'BOYS' and 'GIRLS' of GBPUAT, Pantnagar and PAU Ludhiana on Strategies of Conflict Resolution

Types of Conflict Resolution Styles		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Compromise	Equal variances assumed	1.123	.290	-2.024	366	.044	-1.72017	.84995	-3.39156	-.04878
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.029	365.550	.043	-1.72017	.84788	-3.38750	-.05284
Avoidance	Equal variances assumed	3.858	.050	5.198	398	.000	1.70500	.32800	1.06017	2.34983
	Equal variances not assumed			5.198	391.515	.000	1.70500	.32800	1.06014	2.34986
Interactional	Equal variances assumed	.192	.662	-.368	398	.713	-.15000	.40750	-.95112	.65112
	Equal variances not assumed			-.368	397.215	.713	-.15000	.40750	-.95112	.65112
Separation	Equal variances assumed	.925	.337	2.883	398	.004	1.45500	.50464	.46290	2.44710
	Equal variances not assumed			2.883	396.153	.004	1.45500	.50464	.46288	2.44712
Domination	Equal variances assumed	5.273	.022	2.645	398	.008	1.17000	.44239	.30029	2.03971
	Equal variances not assumed			2.645	381.129	.009	1.17000	.44239	.30018	2.03982
Submission	Equal variances assumed	.077	.782	-4.578	398	.000	-1.70000	.37132	-2.42999	-.97001
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.578	397.650	.000	-1.70000	.37132	-2.43000	-.97000

Accountable reason for the gender differences in conflict resolution styles can be a cultural difference because in India men and women socialized differently. In Indian culture and society, femininity has been described as being soft, considerate and it is expected from them to be problem fixers in a relationship so most of the time they went with obliging and compromising type of conflict resolution styles. To Indian girls, it is their duty to approach their partners for conflict resolution. Whereas, according to Woods (2011) ^[12] males grow up learning that the following elements are essential to masculinity: do not be female, be successful, be aggressive, be sexual, be self-reliant, embody and transcend traditional views of masculinity. Various researches also support this finding that genders respond to romantic conflict according to their cultural perceived gender roles (Davis *et al.*, 2010) ^[5]. Gayle *et al.* (1991) ^[6] also supports this evidence that gender plays a massive role in conflict resolution strategies in romantic relationships.

Conclusion

Conflict plays an important part in shaping the romantic relationship of young adults. It is inevitable but not a negative factor of it. As we can see, that young adults are more inclined to experience romantic relationship during college. For their personal health and both physical and mental well-being this research can help them to understand the gender differences to resolve conflicts and the grounds of conflict which can help them to understand the area which require them to improve their relational bonds with their partners.

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