Changing the image of a conflict situation while training school students in mediation skills

Nikolay I. Leonov*, Marianna M. Glavatskikh

Department of Social Psychology and Conflictology, Udmurt State University, Izhevsk, Russia

*Corresponding author. E-mail: nileonov@mail.ru

Background. This paper analyzes students' changing perceptions of conflict after training them in mediation skills. The theoretical basis of this paper is an ontological approach of studying conflict, in which the image of the conflict situation determines the specific behavior. This allowed for the development a training program aimed at changing conceptual structures. The processes of constructing conceptual structures are understood not only as explanatory models that are used for the construction of the outer world in social cognition but also as a manifestation of the internal picture of the world and an inducement to control this world as well as certain actions in the conflict. Our training program was designed by considering ontological mechanisms of conflict behavior regulation. Consequently, the most important result of the program efficiency assessment is the change in participants' image of the conflict situation.

Objective. This study aims to change the images of the conflict situation in school students learning the basics of mediation.

Design. This study involved 360 students (grades 7-9; average age of 14 years and 8 months). During the preparatory stage, we tried to identify the characteristics of a conflict situation in 360 school children using the association experiment, which used the word "conflict" as a stimulus. To study the structure of the conflict situation image, we used Kelly's repertory. The method of the training program regarding the basics of mediation was based on communication techniques used to resolve complex issues, including the involvement of students, a free personal statement, problem discussion and a joint search for solutions.

Results. We recorded significant changes in all of the structural components of the conflict situation image before and after training, as well as in their interrelated underlying categorization. One of the results of the program was an increase in the variability of behaviors in conflict. Before the program began, teenagers considered themselves and other conflict participants to be oriented to only meet their own interests. Upon completion of training, they developed an efficient model of behavior in conflict that included various forms of behavior, such as agreement, concession and withdrawal. The teenagers saw good reason to take a qualitatively new, organizational position in the conflict. In this regard, they described themselves as being more active in conflict and as initiat-

ing conflict resolution more often than before the training program. Educational videos and the experience of being involved in the conflict as a third party made the teenagers believe in the possibility of constructive conflict resolution based on having respect for the other participant.

Conclusion. Analysis of structural changes in the conflict situation image during the learning process demonstrated the effectiveness of training students in mediation skills. This study contributes to the better understanding of conflictological competence in general and that of school students in particular. This study describes the mechanism of conflictological competence development.

Keywords: mediation, person's conceptual structures, constructive behavior in conflict, image of conflict situation, training in constructive behavior in conflict

Introduction

Today, the practical approach to conflict focuses on ways to escape from this extreme situation since the resolution of a conflict must be accompanied by favorable effects and personal benefits rather than by a depressive withdrawal from reality or disappointment. The school reconciliation service is an organization in an educational institution in which young volunteers led by an adult supervisor help to resolve conflicts in a civilized manner through mediation (Konovalov, 2010). One of the stages in creating a school reconciliation service involves training students in the basics of mediation. The importance of this study is that there is limited knowledge of the structural changes that occur during the training process and the impact of these changes on the effectiveness of training in mediation skills.

Considering the structure of the conflict, N. V. Grishina (2008), M. A. Yemelyanov (2005), N. I. Leonov (2002), and L. A. Petrovskaya (1977) singled out the image of the conflict situation as a component of the conflict structure. Distinguishing the inadequate perception of a conflict by an individual as a subjective cause is based on the opinion of L. A. Petrovskaya (1977) on the image of opportunities and interests that result from understanding a conflict situation. The most comprehensive description of the concept and structure of a conflict situation is given by N. I. Leonov (2002), who defined a conflict situation as an organized representation of the situation in the subject's system of knowledge, which has two aspects: structural and dynamic. The structure of the conflict situation is composed of images of yourself and the other person (conflict participant) as well as the conceptuality of the conflict situation. The dynamic aspect is characterized by the following phenomena: integrity — incompleteness, interconnectedness — autonomy, being static — being dynamic, and typicality — individuality (Leonov, 2005).

G. M. Andreeva (2000), M. M. Glavatskikh (2006), N. I. Leonov (2006), and V. L. Sitnikov (2001) have described the schemes and mechanisms of the construction of the image of social reality. The specific characteristics of the formation of a child's worldview have been described by V. V. Abramenkova (2008) and G. M. Andreeva (2000), with social institutions being the leading factor in the formation of children's perceptions since social institutions create a special social situation during a child's development. The Russian researchers A. V. Filippov (1986) and S. V. Kovalev (1986) note that the use of a situation as an element that adequately represents the subject-object relationship in the psychological thesaurus is possible

only if it is understood to be the product and result of the interaction between the individual and environment. Together with prototypes, stereotypes and standards, the conflict situation has a special place in the representation of the social world (Leonov, 2002) and has a predictive function. Particularly, it allows the individual to develop a certain attitude about the communication partner. Therefore, it is logical that the image of the situation can determine human behavior and should be the focus of attention when training specialists in constructive behavior in conflict.

When designing the training program, we relied on works by S. L. Rubinstein (1997), G. M. Andreyeva (2000), S. Moskovichi (1995), and N. I. Leonov (2005), in which a person is considered to be actively constructing the social reality. The result of a man entering the world and the world entering the man is the image of the conflict situation. Consequently, the images are the mediating link between the participants' characteristics and objective conditions of the conflict and may determine the characteristics of conflict behavior. Conflict behavior is understood to be the spatio-temporal organization of the subject's activity, the regulation of which is mediated by the conflict situation image (Leonov, 2002). In this connection, the objective of this research is to study the change in the conflict situation image in students after training them in the basics of mediation.

Adolescence is of interest for studying conflict representations because this is the age when ideas about the complex and contradictory phenomena of the social world are formed, and adolescence is full of interpersonal and internal conflicts. Issues regarding the conflict situation image and social perceptions of schoolchildren were explored in publications by M. M. Glavatskikh (2003) and N. I. Leonov (2013). The authors found conflict situation images of high school students with different conflict behavioral strategies vary in terms of their structural and dynamic characteristics. I. Yu. Leonova (2014) analyzed the relationship between the components of the I-image and Other-image in youngsters with different levels of trust in the world in a conflict situation. M. M. Glavatskikh and D.Ye. Lvov (2014) found that there is little differentiability and filling of the nucleus of the social perception of a conflict between schoolchildren with a power means of its resolution (fight, enmity, scream, resentment). Therefore, the school-based mediation program was developed. School-based mediation, introduced by the Research Center for Mediation and Law, is a tool to develop students' understanding of their desires, interests and feelings. According to Ts. A. Shamlikashvili and M. A. Khazanova (2014), student's perception becomes broader, more voluminous and less stereotyped. The result of self-learning can be a holistic approach to one's experience, creating preconditions for changing attitudes to oneself and others, allowing one to reach a realistic understanding, as suggested by M. Gellin (2012). In the process of remediation learning, the individual must look back and understand the consequences of his or her own actions, as well as understand the other person involved in the conflict. Conceptual changes and awareness-raising occur at all of the stages of remediation learning during the meditative process. E. Poikela (2010) developed the theory of reflexive learning based on the reflexive interaction, leading to a sense of involvement in the conflict situation. Along with reflection, dialog and interaction, this sense contributes to a growing ability to behave in a new way in similar situations.

In our view, by giving new meaning to the conflict situation, participants of the reconciliation meeting not only reach a constructive resolution on their own

but also begin to understand the intermediary action algorithm. Reliance on the ontological approach to studying conflicts, in which the image of the conflict situation determines a specific behavior, enabled us to develop a training program that was designed to change semantic structures. Practical training at all stages was designed to meet the ontological mechanisms of conflict behavior regulation since the target was not the development of tolerance and self-control of students, as in the "Positive interaction skills development" program (Oborotova, 2012); was not the development of students' communication skills or rebuilding of relations between conflicting parties, as in the restorative mediation program (Konovalov, 2012; Kolechenko, 1997; Osipova & Chumenko, 2007); and was not the procedural component of mediation (Shapiro, 1999), but was the conflict situation itself. Analyzing the above-mentioned programs, we noted that they mostly aim to develop conflict competence rather than conflictological competence. Improving the mediation skills of students remains the least developed, and sometimes neglected, aspect because of the complexity of this task. The authors did not validate the psychological mechanisms of their findings and did not present the results of studying their effectiveness. In this regard, we note the importance of the initial stage of knowledge regarding the development of students' conflictological competence.

Practical classes at all stages of training are designed with regard to the ontological mechanisms of conflict behavior regulation since the object of exposure is not the opponent but the conflict situation itself. By giving new meaning to the conflict situation, the participants of the reconciliation meeting reach a constructive resolution. Reliance on the ontological approach to the study of conflict, in which the image of the conflict situation determines a specific behavior, allowed us to develop a training program that was aimed at changing conceptual structures.

Method

This study aims to change conflict situation images in school students learning the basics of mediation. This study included 360 students (grades 7-9; average age of 14 years and 8 months). During the preparatory stage, we tried to identify the characteristics of the conflict situation in 360 school children by using the association experiment, which used the word "conflict" as a stimulus.

Research methods

To study the structure of the conflict situation image, we used Kelly's repertory grid, which allowed us to characterize individual attitudes to the object by using the main evaluation factors, semantic distance between objects' values, and analysis of the "conceptual structure" of the study participants (Leonov & Glavatskikh, 2011). The semantic differential was used to measure the value that different objects (or concepts) to a person that result from his/her individual development as well as the lessons learned.

Furthermore, to study changes in the structural characteristics of the image of the conflict situation, we enrolled 35 school students in grades 7-10 who underwent school reconciliation service training. The psychodiagnostic procedure of this study was that students evaluated the structural components of the conflict (I am

in a conflict; what I want to be in the conflict; the other party to the conflict; a rival in the conflict situation; a person who makes concessions in the conflict situation; a person avoiding conflict; a person working towards an agreement in the conflict situation; a person acting neutral; a reconciling party to the conflict) by using a set of bipolar seven-point scales, the poles of which were defined using the adjectives from the Fiedler-Yasyukovaself test (2006): responsibility — irresponsibility, initiative — lack of initiative, faith in good result — lack of faith in good result, independence — dependence, purpose — lack of purpose, tolerance –intolerance, balance — imbalance, high self-esteem — low self-esteem, activity — passivity, self-confidence — lack of self-confidence, respect for others — lack of respect for others, communicativeness — isolation, responsiveness — irresponsiveness, and optimism — pessimism.

The mediation training program is based on communication techniques that are used to resolve complex issues, including involvement of students, free personal statements, problem discussion and a joint search for solutions.

The first stage of training aimed to introduce students to a variety of conflict resolution techniques. Considering the crucial role of the conflict situation image and based on the works by S. Bishop (2001), I. B. Dermanov (2001), and N. I. Kozlov (1997), we developed eight one-hour practical sessions. During each session, students dealt with conflict situations of school life and discussed the possibility of using constructive dialogue at different stages of the conflict.

During the second stage, students learned about a modified scheme of the conflict situation structure described by N. V. Grishina (2008) and S. M. Yemelyanova (2003). Analyzing videos of school conflicts, students practiced the skills of conflict situation analysis to identify the structural and dynamic characteristics of the conflict. During this stage, students studied the role of the third party to the conflict as well as the limitations of mediation.

The main purpose of this stage was to replace destructive methods with constructive ones by realizing their inefficiency as well as to obtain experience with communicating in the intersubjective space and dialogue space, which allows the other participant to have their own vision of the situation.

During the process, we used interactive methods, such as analysis of videos and role playing. Assessing the behaviors of the conflict participants, we relied on students' life experience and identified three courses of action: force (fighting, insults, name-calling), withdrawal (taking offense) and agreement (discussion, debate). To assess behaviors in conflict, we introduced the concept of efficiency by answering the questions: "What will the actions of the conflict participants lead to?" and "What will the result of the actions be?" The next stage was training in mediation and conflict resolution. As a result of the program, credible changes in the values of the selected categories were achieved.

Results

The study identified four groups of associations; see Fig. 1 for the percentage breakdown.

The first association was the most pronounced strategy regarding the intention to join the fight and have a destructive effect on the other participant with psycho-
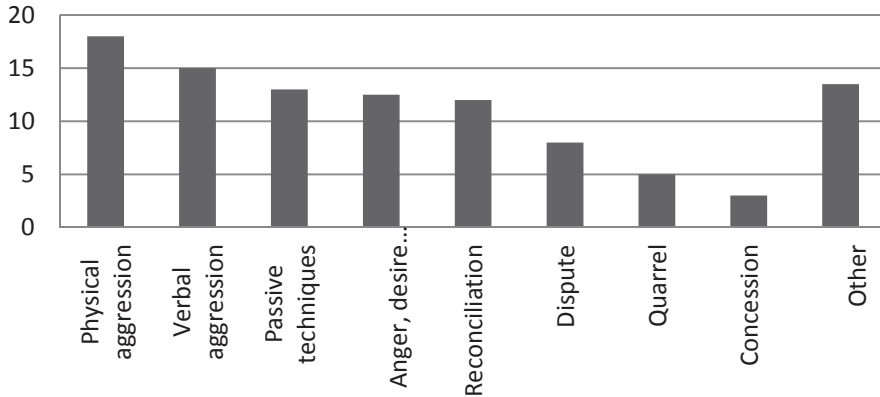
Figure 1. Ways to resolve a conflict as viewed by school children aged 14–17

logically incorrect actions, namely, physical (fight, attack, blow, etc.) and verbal aggression. Physical and verbal aggression accounted for 18 % and 15 % of associations, respectively. We can assume that teenagers, who lack the skills of analyzing and constructively resolving conflict, begin to replace the richness of communication and the various ways to control it with the actions of force.

The next group accounted for 13 % of associations and included passive methods (resentment, loneliness, sadness, etc.). A marked constructive method was reconciliation (12 %), which had an external manifestation (a smile, a handshake, a bar of chocolate) and did require analyzation or elimination of the conflict contradictions. In this regard, it is necessary for researchers to focus on the development of non-violent conflict resolution techniques and their implementation in the educational environment as well as to assess the results of this implementation. S. L. Rubinstein (1997) was one of the first researcher to recommend studying children by teaching them. He also explained the advantages of this method for the genetic principle of the study of the psyche. Rubinstein's (1997) practical position was that teaching must become a part of an experimental study.

Then, we analyzed the interrelations in the association network. Interrelations are central elements that enable one to describe any semantic system underlying the categorization process. Categorization is the ability to identify the social reality in the system of socially accepted values as well as concepts and in the form of new generalizations, which are the products of individual consciousness (Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, 1994; Leonov & Glavatskikh, 2006)

To identify the categories of teenagers' perceptions of conflict, we used factor analysis by applying principal component analysis and the Varimax rotation method (Leonov & Glavatskikh, 2011). This type of analysis integrates statistical methods to identify key basic values or factors that determine the framework that links a large number of variables. We factored seventeen of the most common associations scored by students by using a five-point scale to reflect the degree of the conflict severity. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sample adequacy (0.745) demonstrates an acceptable sampling adequacy for factor analysis with Bartlett's criterion of specificity ($p < 0.05$). Using factor analysis, we identified three categories of perception of conflict by teenagers with a total variance of less than

75 %. The first factor — "Communication in Conflict" (33.3 % of the total variance) — is formed with bipolar characteristics of conflict — "Silence" and "Discussion". The factor loadings were: search for a compromise (0.86), search for a good way out (0.83), converse (0.82), dispute (0.74), silence (–0.72), and loneliness (–0.69). "Insult" and "Fight" are the second factor (54.5 % of the total variance) — "Aggression Types". The second factor comprises the following associations: rudeness (0.81), insults (0.74), cheekiness (0.69), shouting (0.65), fighting (–0.62), and striking (–0.45). Two poles — "Solution" and "Hopelessness" — form the "Conflict Resolution" factor (69.5 % of the total dispersion). The third factor is composed up of the associations of solving a problem (0.73), giving a gift (0.47), hopelessness (–0.50), and sadness (–0.47). Thus, we identified the components in the structure of the conflict situation image of teenagers. Changes in the representation of the perception categories in the process of learning mediation were measured using one-dimension scaling. In this study, students assessed six paired categories that characterized conflict on a seven-point scale.

After training, there was a reliable shift (identified using the shifted criterion in the values of the Wilcoxon T test) in the "Communication in Conflict" category. The proportion of the "Silence" category decreased from scores of 4.7 to 2.7 after the third stage (T = 5.16, p < 0.05). Silence may indicate a destructive or conformist orientation of the individual if it is associated with passivity and inertia in favorable situations.

There were changes in the "Aggression Types" bipolar category as represented by the "Fight" and "Insult" poles. Fight embodies physical aggression. It is one of the brightest concepts of conflict among teenagers. At the first stage of this study, we analyzed free association, and this category was presented by a respondent's answer to many synonyms (kicking, shoot-out, punch-up, broken nose, etc.). After the second stage of training, there was a sharp drop in the mean values from scores of 3.66 to 2.00 (T = 3.75, p < 0.05). This drop indicates an increase in respondents' reflection on violence and their awareness of the possible destructive consequences of conflict development. The mean values of the "Insult" pole decreased from 4.3 at the first level to 3.8 at the second one. This change occurred because students were taught the basic principles of conflictology from the very beginning. Respect for the opposite side as well as the effectiveness of the techniques, methods and ways — the combination of these factors drove out previous behaviors and stereotypes and helped to address teenagers' inner experiences. Upon completion of training in the constructive methods of behavior in a conflict, the "Aggression Types" bipolar category became less important for teenagers. This indicates that there was no redistribution between the poles, but there was a general decrease in aggression.

There was a marked reduction in the "Hopelessness" category from scores of 5.5 to 2.5 (T = 7.45, p < 0.001). This category includes emotions such as resentment, loneliness, isolation, detachment and so on. This category had the the most striking change in mean values with a decrease of more than two times. This change confirms that, under the influence of targeted training, the conceptual structure can vary dramatically. After the second stage, teenagers may have become trained in managing and resolving conflicts on their own. However, the main reason for this change lies in the effect of learning the basics of mediation, which took place during the third stage. An increase in the "Solution" pole value from scores of 4.1

to 6.6 (T = 4.47, p < 0.01) was recorded after the second stage of training. This occurred when the "Insult", "Fight" and "Hopelessness" values reduced significantly. At the same time, the importance of conflict discussion increased. The share of the "Conflict Resolution" bipolar category did not change, but there was a redistribution between the "Solution" and "Hopelessness" poles. This reduction in "Hopelessness" in favor of the increase in "Solution" proves that the entire training process was a success.

We then addressed the change in the structural components of the conflict situation image. The greatest changes occurred in "I am in the conflict," "a person working towards an agreement in the conflict situation," "a person acting neutral," and "a reconciling party to the conflict." To assess the shifts, we used the Wilcoxon test. Tables 1, 2 and 3 present the reliable quality shifts in these components.

Table 1. Reliable shifts in the component "I am in the conflict" in the teenagers learning mediation

Indicator	Mean value		Shift	
	Before training in mediation	After training in mediation	Wilcoxon	p
Initiative — lack of initiative	5.2	6.5	3.99	<0.001
Lack of faith in good result — faith in good result	4.8	5.7	2.98	<0.01
Lack of self-confidence — self-confidence	4.1	5.5	3.45	<0.001
Lack of respect for others — respect for others	4.2	5.2	2.65	<0.01
Isolation — communicativeness	6.2	5.7	2.51	<0.05
Passivity — activity	4.7	5.5	2.03	<0.01
Irresponsiveness — responsiveness	3.5	4.4	2.73	<0.01

Table 2. Reliable shifts in the component "a person working towards an agreement in the conflict situation" in the teenagers learning mediation

Indicator	Mean value		Shift	
	Before training in mediation	After training in mediation	Wilcoxon	p
Dependence — independence	5.7	4.5	4.0	<0.001
Lack of purpose — purpose	3.8	5.1	3.3	<0.001
Lack of initiative — initiative	2.7	4.2	4.1	<0.001
Lack of self-confidence — self-confidence	2.5	4.4	4.5	<0.001
Passivity — activity	4.8	5.8	3.9	<0.001
Isolation — communicativeness	4.4	3.2	3.4	<0.001
Pessimism — optimism	6.0	6.5	2.9	<0.01

Table 3. Reliable shifts in the component "a reconciling party to the conflict" in the teenagers learning mediation

Indicator	Mean value		Shift	
	Before training in mediation	After training in mediation	Wilcoxon	p
Lack of faith in good result — faith in good result	4.1	5.7	3.3	<0.001
Lack of self-confidence — self-confidence	5.1	6	3.3	<0.001
Lack of respect for others — respect for others	5.0	5.8	2.7	<0.01
Imbalance — balance	5.4	6.2	3.1	<0.01
Passivity — activity	3.8	4.7	3.7	<0.001
Irresponsiveness — responsiveness	4.8	6.1	3.3	<0.001
Pessimism — optimism	5.7	6.5	2.9	<0.01

The results of the self-assessment showed that the values of the "Communication" indicator decreased because it was emphasized throughout the course that the ability to listen carefully to the interlocutor and analyze the current situation is a necessary element of a successful conflict resolution.

A possible explanation for the decrease in independence is due to the perception that reaching an agreement is based on dialogue and joint discussion of the conflict. Independence is the ability to be independent of external influences and assessments and to adjust one's behavior by considering the social situation. In the situation of an agreement, the codependent position reduces the possibility of individual control in a conflict situation. At the same time, the value of the "purpose" score goes up. Therefore, an assumption can be made, which requires additional verification, that the conflict participant's objective changes from the desire to meet one's own interests to the desire to resolve the conflict by reaching an agreement.

Another skill of that the mediators developed training that affected teenagers was balance, a skill that ensures inner harmony, empathy and reflection in an individual.

We also analyzed the correlations between the structural components of the conflict situation image using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. Tables 4 and 5 show that there are significant correlations between the studied objects of the semantic differential method before and after the training program.

The teenagers considered themselves and other conflict participants to be primarily oriented towards meeting their own interests. Due to the poor concept of conflict, the model used to build an ideal image of a person in conflict is another person. Targeting only one's own interests leads to a deviation from the maximum requirements, even if an agreement is considered to be a concession.

Table 4. Significant correlations between the structural components of the conflict situation image before training in mediation

		The other party	The rival	The person working towards agreement
I'm in the conflict	r		0.636	
	p		0.011	
What I want to be	r	0.500		
	p	0.051		
The other party	r		0.831	
	p		0.000	
The rival	r			
	p		.	
The person making concessions	r			0.651
	p			0.021

Table 5. Significant correlations between the structural components of the conflict situation image after training in mediation

		The other party	The rival	The person making concessions	The avoiding person	The person working towards agreement
I'm in the conflict	r	0.65	0.74			0.59
	p	0.01	0.00			0.02
What I want to be	r			0.68	0.58	0.54
	p			0.00	0.02	0.03
The other party	r		0.88			0.79
	p		0.00			0.00
The rival	r					0.89
	p					0.00
The person making concessions	r				0.58	
	p				0.02	

The low degree of the structuring of the conflict situation image before training and increased number of correlations after structuring draws one's attention. A successful model of a person in conflict that involves different forms of behavior, such as agreement, concession and withdrawal, is formed. Upon completion of training, teenagers viewed themselves and other participants in the conflict not only as oriented at meeting their own interests but also as working towards an agreement in a conflict situation. We also identified the passive behavior pole, i.e., the interrelated modes of behavior in a conflict, such as withdrawal and concession. This flexibility in deciding how to behave in a conflict appeared after analyzing the situation and seeing the prospects of different behaviors.

Discussion

A possible explanation for the decrease in independence is due to the perception that reaching an agreement is based on dialogue and joint discussion of the conflict. Independence is the ability to be independent of external influences and assessments and to adjust one's behavior by considering the social situation. When reaching agreement, the codependent position reduces the possibility of individual control in a conflict situation. At the same time, the value on the "purpose" score goes up. Therefore, an assumption can be made, which requires additional verification, that the conflict participant's objective changes from the desire to meet one's own interests to the desire to resolve the conflict by reaching an agreement.

Studies in cognitive psychology suggest that there are models of intrinsic meaning organization, such as semantic networks, associative networks, schemes, frames, and scripts. The following steps can be identified in diagnosing these semantic structures: formation of a system of concepts, identification of relations between concepts, and establishing semantic relations. In ordinary consciousness, discussion symbolizes joint, mutually beneficial activities to reach different arrangements and deals.

After learning about the techniques and rules of the organization and management of the negotiation process, young people began to take a qualitatively new, organizational position in the conflict. The training program participants reported that they became more active and more willing to initiate conflict resolution after training. Educational videos and their experience as a third party made them believe in the possibility of constructive conflict resolution based on respect for the other party.

Effective communication is only possible after thoroughly analyzing the conflict situation.

Robert Bush and Joseph Folder (Robert et al, 2007) note that conflict resolution through negotiations provides a person with self-confidence, which in turn makes it possible to build a more open relationship with the other party, who usually responds in the same way. As a result, openness and self-confidence come to replace isolation and powerlessness.

The image of a mediator, the leader of a reconciliatory meeting, is not clear in ordinary consciousness. It is unstructured and depends on the individual's life experience, not only in teenagers but also in adults. The training changes its content, particularly increasing one's involvement in the organization of the conflict resolution process based on dialogue and faith in a positive outcome of the conflict.

Conclusion

According to the study results, the following conclusions can be drawn. Although it is relevant and necessary to implement innovative techniques for training school students in constructive methods of conflict resolution as a basis for school reconciliation services, this area is at an early stage of development. Training in mediation, as well as mechanical transfer of its types, forms and learning techniques, is not effective without considering the socio-psychological characteristics of students. Studies of school conflicts focus on describing their causes and consequenc-

es rather than developing constructive techniques and implementing them in the educational environment.

Our results show that there were changes in the mean values in all of the categories of the structural components of the conflict. Restructuring the components of the image represents the emergence of new interpretations of the world as well as the rules and norms of relations (Yanchuk, 2005) In our view, the relationship between the perception categories and their poles are more complex than a binary division. However, such a task is of undoubted interest for upcoming research in this area and will require analysis of a more complex image of the conflict situation.

Our training program was designed with regard to the ontological mechanisms of conflict behavior regulation. Consequently, the most important result of the program efficiency assessment is the change in participants' image of the conflict situation. The results of the analysis of the structural changes in the conflict situation image during the training process demonstrate the effectiveness of training school students in mediation.

This study contributes to a better understanding of conflictological competence in general and that of school students in particular. It describes the mechanism of conflictological competence development. This study is of practical value since it helps to develop mediation training programs for school students based on the ontological approach.

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