

# Research on Peer Conflict among Young Children in China: A Cite Space Visual Review

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**Abstract:** Peer conflict, as a crucial form of children's peer communication, has a positive role in promoting children's overall development. In this study, CiteSpace bibliometric analysis software used 280 journal papers included in CNKI from 2003 to 2023 to study the development trend of peer conflict in young children in China. The research found that China has not yet formed a clear core organization in this field, and the quality research results are relatively scarce; the overall number of articles is increasing and has slightly decreased in the past two years; the theme of peer conflict focuses on teacher intervention and solution strategies, but the study of peer conflict itself is not deep enough; the research method is dominated, while the quantitative research method is relatively lacking. In order to further deepen the research in this field, it is suggested to strengthen the cooperation among authors to form excellent research institutions; pay more attention to the peer conflict behavior itself, provide specific and actionable teachers' "intervention guide"; enrich the research methods and strengthen quantitative research to make new breakthroughs in the study of peer conflict in China.

**Keywords:** Child peer Conflict; Literature Review; Knowledge Map

## 1. Introduction

China's Guidelines on Learning and Development for Children aged 3-6, issued in 2012 clearly states that being able to get along well with peers is a key indicator of the social field goals. In 2014, the Ministry of Education developed and issued the Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening Curriculum Reform and Implementing the Fundamental Task of Cultivating Moral Education, which proposed that "the Ministry of Education will organize research and put forward the core literacy system of students in each study section, and clarify the necessary character and key abilities that students should have to meet the needs of lifelong development and social development".<sup>[1]</sup> It can be seen that children's social development has always been the key goal of early childhood education and training in China, and the process of peer conflict itself is an important educational opportunity conducive to children's social communication.

## 2. Data sources and analysis methods

Data from CNKI journal papers used advanced retrieval with the theme "Peer Conflict among children". From 01 January 2, 2003 to November 11, 2023, 282 articles were retrieved. A total of 278 valid articles were finally used for visual analysis through data cleaning and temporal screening.

With Citespace as the main research tool, bibliometry, statistical calculation and visualization means, 278 documents as samples, collinear and cluster analysis of keywords and publishing institutions. According to the interannual distribution of the number of documents, in order to accurately reflect the time distribution of research hotspots, directions and objectives, we will comprehensively summarize the historical development of infant peer conflict research since 2003, and make suggestions for future research.

## 3. Study results and analysis

### 3.1 Basic information of the number of documents issued

As can be seen from Figure 1, the research on the topic of early childhood peer conflict from 2003

to 2023 can be roughly divided into four stages. The first stage was from 2003 to 2006. At this time, the research on peer conflict in young children has attracted widespread attention from the academic community, but the amount of publications was relatively low, and the high-quality research results were few. The second stage was from 2006 to 2014. In this stage, the theme of peer conflict among young children attracted the attention of experts and scholars, and the overall number of literature increased steadily. In the third stage, from 2014 to 2020, the number of literature in this stage fluctuated slightly from year to year, but the number of literature reached the peak in this stage, with the annual volume of 24 articles in 2014 and 2020. In the fourth stage, from 2020 to 2023, the number of literature on the topic of peer conflict in young children decreased during the three years, showing an overall downward trend. According to the search of China CNKI, the relevant literature on the theme of child peer conflict reflects the characteristics of small number and lack of information, and the number of quality papers is also very small, especially in recent years, the research on this topic seems to have entered a bottleneck period. It can be seen that the study on peer conflict in China can be said to be a weak link in children's social development and education.

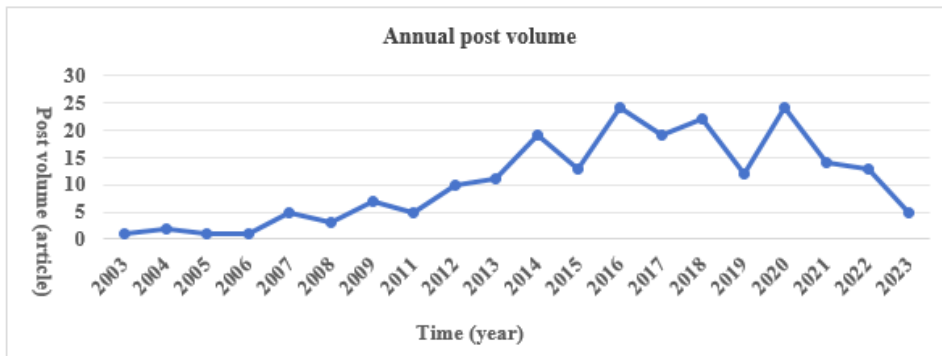


Figure 1: Annual number of peer conflicts in China.

### 3.2 Evolution of research hotspots

Figure 2 keywords clustering timeline map intuitive reflects the nearly twenty years of infant development of peer conflict in our country, can be roughly divided into three periods: the first is 2005-2010, Chinese scholars focus on children peer communication, peer conflict, solution strategies and teachers' intervention. Secondly, from 2010 to 2015, at this time, the research on children's peer conflict was divided in a more detailed direction, and the influence of role games, regional activities, left-behind children, and children's psychological theory on children's peer conflict was discussed. Finally, since 2015, the academic community has made more detailed research on peer conflict, and started to dig into multi-dimensional and in-depth directions, but on the whole, there are more studies on solutions and teachers' intervention. In general, in the past two decades, the study of the peer conflict of young children in China has experienced a development process from scratch, from coarse to fine, and from shallow to deep. More and more researchers analyze the peer conflict from psychological and sociological perspectives and the daily activities into the children of large, middle and small classes.

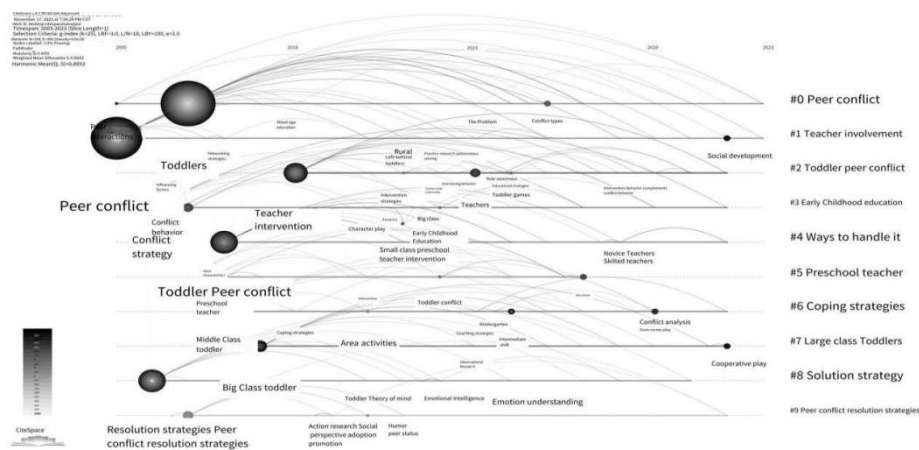


Figure 2: Keywords clustering the timeline knowledge graph.

3.3 Distribution of core institutions

With Institution as the node, the time slice is set to a 1-year generating mechanism co-occurrence map (Figure 3), with a total of 212 nodes and 28 lines appearing. Using Price's law to obtain  $M=2.48$ ,  $M$  takes the maximum integer 3. Therefore, the institutions that had published three or more articles were judged to be the core institutions of the study. According to the calculation results, a total of 53 qualified core institutions were selected, accounting for 18.93% of the total sample, far less than 50%, which indicates that the study of peer conflict among children has not yet formed a core institution group. Most of the issuing institutions are concentrated in higher education institutions and kindergartens, while primary and secondary schools and other educational institutions are less published.

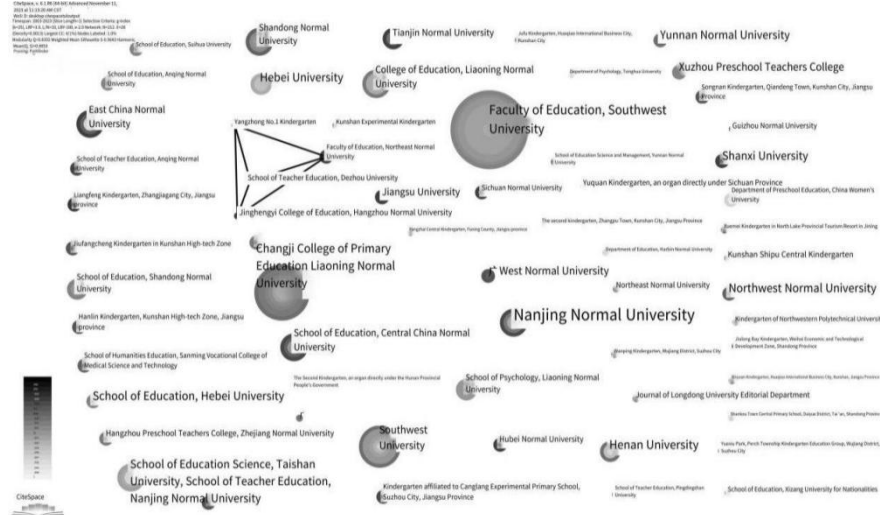


Figure 3: Institution co-occurrence knowledge map.

As can be seen from Table 1, the top 5 teaching institutions in the number of publications are the Department of Education of Southwest University, Liaoning Normal University, Southwest University, School of Education of Liaoning Normal University, Nanjing Normal University, Shandong Normal University and East China Normal University. According to the statistical analysis of the 212 institutions, there are 110 higher education institutions (primary and junior colleges), accounting for 51.89% of the total number of institutions; 89 kindergartens, accounting for 41.98% of the total number of institutions, and 13 primary and secondary schools and other educational institutions, accounting for 0.06% of the total number of institutions. It can be seen that the main position of the research on child peer conflict is concentrated in all kinds of normal colleges and kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and other educational institutions.

Table 1: Statistics of the number of documents issued by core institutions (top 37).

Number	Number of posts	Institution	Number	Number of posts	Institution
1	11	The Department of Education, Southwest University	20	2	Xuzhou Kindergarten Teachers' College
2	6	Liaoning Normal University	21	2	Hanlin Kindergarten in KunShan High-tech Zone, Jiangsu Province
3	5	Southwest University	22	2	School of Education, Suihua College
4	4	School of Education, Liaoning Normal University	23	2	Songnan Kindergarten, Qiandeng Town, Kunshan City, Jiangsu Province
5	4	NJNU(Nanjing Normal University)	24	2	Yunnan Normal University
6	4	Shandong Normal	25	2	University Of Shanxi

		University			
7	4	East China Normal University	26	2	Kindergarten affiliated to Canglang Experimental Primary School in Suzhou city, Jiangsu Province
8	3	School of Education, Shandong Normal University	27	2	School of Primary Education of Changji College
9	3	School of Education, Central China Normal University	28	2	Kunshan High-tech Zone JiuCity Kindergarten
10	3	School of Educational Science, Nanjing Normal University	29	2	Taishan College School of Teacher Education
11	3	He'nan University	30	2	School of Teacher Education, Anqing Normal University
12	3	School of Psychology, Liaoning Normal University	31	2	School of Education, Anqing Normal University
13	2	Hubei Normal University	32	2	Tianjin Normal University
14	2	School of Education, Hebei University	33	2	Liangfeng Kindergarten, Zhangjiagang City, Jiangsu Province
15	2	University Of Hebei	34	2	Department of Preschool Education, China Women's College
16	2	Department of Education, Northeast Normal University	35	2	Guangxi Normal University
17	2	Zhejiang Normal University, Hangzhou Young Normal University	36	2	Sanming School of Humanities and Education, Vocational College of Medical Science and Technology
18	2	Jiangsu University	37	2	Northwest Normal University
19	2	Sichuan Normal University (SNU)			

### 3.4 Statistics of the study methods

There are a lot of papers and works on educational research methods, in which the classification methods and standards are different. In order to make the research results of this paper more clear, this paper adopts the classification standard of research methods in Yao Jihai and Wang Xixue, the Classification and Reflection of Educational Research Methods in China in the past Ten Years, and divides the research methods into four categories: critical thinking research, quantitative research, qualitative research and mixed research.<sup>[2]</sup> Based on this, the use of research methods in peer conflict papers in China in the past two decades is analyzed. See Table 2, among the 280 articles on the topic of peer conflict, speculative studies was the main research method, 134, accounting for 47.8% of the total literature, followed by 75 articles, 26.8% of the total; 47 used mixed research methods, accounting for 16.8% of the total; finally, only 24 quantitative studies, accounting for 8.6%. It can be seen that speculative research is the main method in the study of infant peer conflict in China, which is most used in journal papers; qualitative research, which is the main method used in educational academic papers; mixed research methods are mostly distributed in educational academic papers; quantitative research methods are used least, and quantitative data is scarce in children's peer conflict literature.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of various study methods.

research technique	quantity	percentage
Quantitative research	24	8.6
qualitative research	75	26.8
Mixed research	47	16.8
Critical research	134	47.8
amount to	280	100.0

### 3.5 Study topic distribution

Key words are the summary and summary of literature topics, and Figure 4 is the co-occurrence analysis of keywords in the literature on peer conflict in young children. As can be seen from Figure 4, in addition to the conflict between children and peers, which causes the highest word frequency, the core keywords such as teacher intervention and solution strategies also show a high frequency. It can be seen that for the research of children's peer conflict, scholars pay more attention to how to solve and intervene to guide, and the research results in this aspect are also the most abundant. It is also in line with the requirements of the social field in the " Kindergarten Education Guidelines (Trial) issued and implemented in 2001, and provides children with opportunities and conditions for interpersonal communication and common activities, and gives guidance.<sup>[3]</sup>

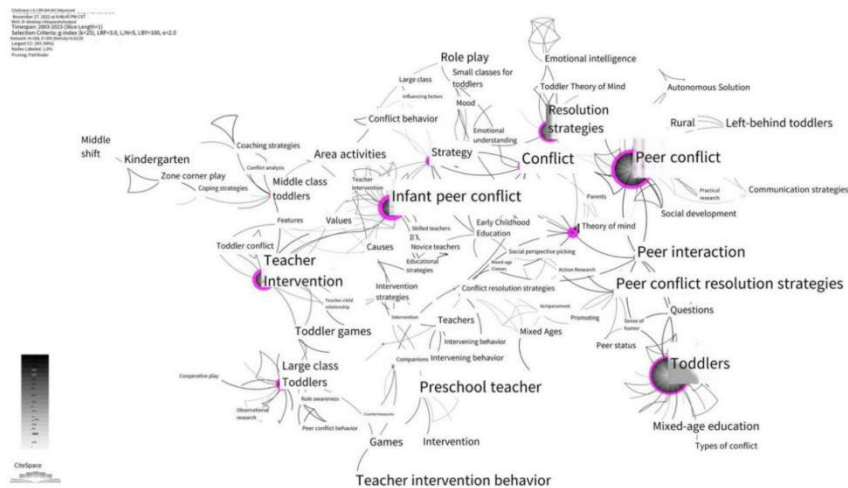


Figure 4: Keyword co-occurrence knowledge graph.

Scholars studied and discussed the topics of children's peer conflict, such as solution strategy, teacher intervention guidance, types and results of children's peer conflict. In different ages, there are more studies of peer conflict in kindergarten than in middle and small classes. In all the links of daily life in kindergarten, regional activities and role games are the high incidence of children's peer conflict, and many scholars focus on the study of children's peer conflict. There are also scholars who study children's peer conflict behavior from the psychological perspective of temperament and personality.

## 4. Research review

From the perspective of overall research, the overall number of peer conflict research in China in the past twenty years is not high, and it shows an increasing trend with the development of time. In the past two decades, there has been no core author group and core organization group, less cooperation between authors, mostly between mentors, students and colleagues, publishing institutions are concentrated in colleges and kindergartens, and other institutions have a small number of articles. The study of early childhood peer conflict is a key link in children's social development and education, but the academic community does not pay much attention to this topic, and the overall number of publications and high-quality research results are small.

In terms of research content, the academic community mainly focuses on the peer conflict between children and teachers 'intervention behavior, which includes various influence factors such as the meaning, cause and type of children's peer conflict. However, most of the research focused more on providing advice for resolution strategies and faculty interventions, with relatively little in-depth

research of peer conflict in young children. In the specific practice of teachers' intervention, the research suggests that we mainly use vague words such as "appropriate" and "appropriate" to guide teachers' intervention, but these suggestions are not clear how teachers deal with the conflict between children in the actual situation, and lack of operability.<sup>[4]</sup> That said, these theories are difficult to provide guidance for practical operations and provide practical "intervention advice" for educators.

In the use of research methods, speculative research is still the main body. The author's statistical analysis of the literature found that critical research methods are used the most in journal papers, qualitative research and mixed research in academic papers, whether in journals or academic papers, quantitative research methods are used the least. There is a lack of quantitative research data in preschool peer conflict research, and it lacks qualitative indicators and quantitative evaluation tools. They usually adopt three germplasm research methods: first, to intuitively understand the conflict behavior of children through observation, and propose corresponding solutions; second, questionnaire survey and face-to-face interview to understand the conflict behavior patterns, teachers and parents in order to obtain first-hand research data; third, to verify the applicability of a theory or solution in children's conflict scenarios.

From the perspective of the research, Academics are mainly based on the theories of psychology, The aim is to deeply study the psychological responses of young children in the face of conflict, And then to provide effective strategic suggestions for educators; Second, from the perspective of power, Point out that there may be an abuse of power by teachers when intervening in conflicts between young children, And has put forward the targeted strategy accordingly; Again, from the perspective of social interaction, View of young children's conflict as an opportunity for their social development, Should be actively translated into educational resources, To promote the development of young children; Finally, focusing the focus on specific activities, Such as regional activities, To study the conflict characteristics of young children and propose the corresponding strategies.

## **5. Research outlook**

### ***5.1 Suggestions made in peer conflict studies in young children should be more feasible***

In the study of infant peer conflict, a large number of literature discusses the timing, countermeasures, measures and suggestions of teachers' intervention. However, most articles do not put forward clear intervention timing and methods, intervention timing and boundaries are blurred, and the methods are not targeted. Therefore, the suggestions are to discuss when to intervene and how to intervene in specific situations, so such operational measures can be applied in reality. Instead of using physical conflict as a sign of intervention, the basis should be more detailed. More attention should be paid to the research of peer conflict itself, to observe the state of conflict, how children "resolve the conflict", and whether the conflict result is positive or negative.<sup>[5]</sup>

### ***5.2 Quantitative research methods should be added to peer conflict in young children***

As one kind of educational research method, quantitative research is less used in the study of infant peer conflict, and most of it is used in the articles that study infant peer conflict from a psychological perspective. Scholars should enrich the quantitative research data, from different dimensions, different levels of children's peer conflict behavior, scientific effective analysis and evaluation, to enhance the clarity and the feasibility of solutions, make children's peer conflict research more scientific and specific, more applied to practice. Effective statistical tools and data analysis techniques are studied in various aspects, and quantitative evaluation of children's peer conflict behavior in specific situations, so that the study of children's peer conflict is more scientific and specific, and more applied to practice. Therefore, in order to improve the scientific and applied value of the peer conflict research results, it is necessary to strengthen quantitative research and use various research methods comprehensively and flexibly.

### ***5.3 The research perspective of peer conflict in young children should be more thorough and comprehensive***

There are many relevant research perspectives on the issue of conflict between young children and their peers. For example, age, gender, children's temperament and so on are all physiological and psychological perspectives. The relationship with peers, the educational methods of parents, and the

geographical environment are the social research perspectives.<sup>[6]</sup> After in-depth study of various literature, the author found that the current research on peer conflict is relatively weak in social aspect and lacks research variables of social dimensions. In the future, we should focus more on the social nature when studying the conflicts between young children and their peers. Therefore, in future research, we should consider more "sociality" factors in young children and study the deep connection between them.

#### ***5.4 In the study of peer conflict among children, more attention should be paid to the cultivation of children themselves and their conflict resolution ability***

Peer conflict between young children is generated and developed during social interactions. Therefore, how young children understand these conflicts, what psychological attitudes and coping strategies they adopt should be incorporated into the education and training process of families and kindergartens, and ensure that this process covers the whole process of actual conflict.<sup>[7]</sup> Only through the cultivation of timely and scientific peer conflict coping strategies, can we effectively improve children's ability to solve problems in conflict situations, optimize their peer relationship, reduce the negative psychological experience caused by poor peer relationship, so as to promote the good development of children's social quality and skills.

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