



"Mediation as a Tool to Resolve Cross-Cultural Conflicts  
in the Workplace in Ireland"

By

Tatiana dos Santos Barea

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# Dissertation Submission Form

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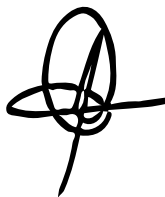
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Date: 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2022

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## ABSTRACT

Mediation is identified as relevant for use in workplaces for a variety of issues where there are ongoing working relationships, including the resolution of interpersonal disputes (Mayer 2004; Monberg 2007).

Applying significant changes in the way organizations manage conflicts can result in efforts to develop strategies for more efficient, less expensive, and more satisfying conflict resolution; thus, as a result, this study will analyze how cross-cultural conflicts were addressed in the workplace, as well as how mediation can be used to resolve cross-cultural disputes through appropriate methods, such as alternative dispute resolution (ADR) approaches in conflict management in the workplace.

The purpose of this mix-method study is to determine whether mediation can play a role in resolving cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace and to develop recommendations on the application of mediation techniques according to the organization's needs.

While conducting the research, and interpretivism philosophy and inductive approach are used. To collect data from the sampling population, survey strategies are used; a mix-method is used to collect quantitative and qualitative data; a cross-sectional method is used; and finally, non-probability sampling is used.

According to the responses of the participants, the majority revealed a willingness to engage in means to reduce and prevent conflicts through cultural diversity training, and that a lack of training and development of internal HR policies, as well as a lack of communication and language barriers, are determining factors for the emergence of these conflicts.

The survey results show that from the workers' point of view, mediation can be an effective tool in resolving cross-cultural disputes in the workplace.

**Keywords:** Workplace Conflicts, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Mediation, Multiculturalism, Workplace Mediation, Cross-cultural Conflicts.

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## **ACRONYMS**

**ACAS** – Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service

**ADR** – Alternative Dispute Resolution

**EDR** – Employment Dispute Resolution

**HR** – Human Resource

**WRC** – Work Relations Commission

## INTRODUCTION

Today, thousands of people around the world are coming here to strengthen their careers, and the pressure of globalization has made companies innovate in this multiculturalism globalization. Since multinational corporations have become so strong in the business world, organizations' dominant cultures are disappearing, giving way to a cultural mix that accepts those from a variety of backgrounds and religions. (Chaudhary 2018).

In Ireland, as in other countries, recent years have witnessed a renewal of interest in workplace conflict and the practices employed by organizations to resolve conflict in workplaces (Teague et al. 2015).

Over the past few decades, academicians, practitioners, and organisational researchers have recognized that diversity is a phenomenon that has a wide array of affects within the workplace, and society in general (Friday and Friday 2003).

Diversity is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual (Milliken and Martins 1996).

Today, the workforce comprises people who are different and share different attitudes, needs, desires, values, and work behaviours (Deluca and McDowell 1992; Morrison 1992; Rosen and Lovelace 1991).

The European Commission (2003) states that investments in diversity policies contribute to a strategy of long-term value creation by creating and strengthening human and organisational capital.

In fact, multiculturalism is beneficial to the business world because it encompasses several perspectives on problem solving. However, cultural conflicts can arise in diverse work environments due to different ways in which people communicate, think, and believe.

According to the responses of the participants, the majority revealed a willingness to engage in means to reduce and prevent conflicts through cultural diversity training, and that a lack of

training and development of internal HR policies, as well as a lack of communication and language barriers, are determining factors for the rise of these conflicts.

The survey results show that from the workers' point of view, mediation can be an effective tool in resolving cross-cultural disputes in the workplace.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE DISSERTATION**

Like most of my colleagues, I am an immigrant and when I arrived in Dublin to learn English, I had the opportunity to work in different areas such as hospitality, catering, and health where I could witness numerous situations of harassment related to the origin, language, and culture of students and immigrants hired by these companies. Most of the conflicts I witnessed were between people in senior positions such as supervisors and managers with their subordinates. My background in Brazil is in law and having legal knowledge about the subject and the consequences that these conflicts bring to a company, I started to observe the events to try to understand the roots of this problem.

I confess that I was not surprised to find that there are several reasons such as language barriers and lack of communication between workers and human resources professionals and managers, but the main one is the lack of training of these managers/supervisors. I could clearly see that most of these conflicts could be avoided if the company carried out an internal diversity training policy for employees. Choosing this topic is a way to get closer to my profession and understand how these conflicts can be resolved with the least cost benefit to the parties through alternative dispute resolution.

It was also observed that these companies offer little or no support for the employee who experiences a cross-cultural conflict in the work environment. From my own experience, I can say that most of the conflicts I witnessed, were minimized by translating the embarrassment into a "joke".

It was also observed that these companies provide little or no support to employees who face cross-cultural conflicts at work. From personal experience, I can say that the majority of the conflicts I witnessed were minimized by translating embarrassment into "joke." The main result of this approach was the worker's refusal to continue working for the company.

This study focuses on the theory that workers may be unaware of the concept of cultural diversity and its impacts as well as the use of mediation to resolve intercultural conflicts, causing dissatisfaction among the parties at work, causing a rupture in relationships, decreasing productivity, and increasing costs with new hires.

The interpretivism philosophy and inductive approach were chosen, the best research strategy for the topic addressed is a survey. The study is carried out using the mixed method to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The cross-sectional method is also used, as well as non-probability sampling.

The survey aims to answer the question: Is mediation more appropriate tool for resolving intercultural conflicts in Ireland-based companies?

The following are the research objectives to be addressed:

To assess what are the most common factors that cause cross-cultural conflict in the workplace.

To determine whether mediation can play a role in resolving cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace.

To assess the role of mediation and its techniques in the resolution of cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace in Ireland. Would this be the most appropriate way?

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

This research aims to investigate how cross-cultural conflicts have been addressed within companies; in addition, it will analyze how mediation can be used to resolve, restore, and transform workers to resolve conflicts on their own.

Also, the objectives of this research are to highlight the characteristics of organizational intercultural conflicts and to provide a brief analysis of how mediation as an alternative method of dispute resolution can be applied to resolve and restore the relationships of those who have been involved in conflicts and continue in better conditions, including employers.

## **SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

The scope of this study is to broaden the comprehension of cultural diversity and the role of mediation in resolving cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace from the perception of the workers. It also intends to investigate what procedures and policies might be suggested in order to develop and inspire confidence in these workers as they embrace mediation to resolve their disputes.

Despite the ease and reach of social media and online surveys, it is not possible to assess the effectiveness of the mediation process by measuring the percentage of respondents from each sector. The main limitation of this study is the approach to the target population. Furthermore, a more comprehensive survey should include a specific survey for human resource professionals, managers, and supervisors on the application of the mediation process, and time constraint is the most limiting factor in this case.



## CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is the confirmation of the point of view of workers that mediation can be an effective tool to resolve conflicts in the workplace in Ireland.

Another contribution of this study is the assembly of literature on cross-cultural conflicts and the presentation of the findings from a survey of workers regarding their perception of diversity in the workplace, conflicts, and mediation as a tool for conflict resolution.

The **recommendations** are directed to organizations that intend to update or implement new internal policies on workplace diversity and still on how to provide training to its members to improve their relationships and how to make the mediation process more attractive, effective, and, promising for resolving cross-cultural conflicts. In addition, this research can be useful for future students, professionals or even interested individuals, such as managers and HR professionals who are considering improving their practices and policies through the use of mediation in their workplaces.

## DISSERTATION ROAD MAP

This research has been divided into an introduction and five chapters for better access to the information in this dissertation.

### Introduction

This section contains a brief presentation of the research topic. the background of the study, Aims and Objectives, the Scope, and Limitation of the Research, Contribution, and this Dissertation Road Map.

The road map shows the key points of information needed to comprehend the context and purpose of the study.

## **Chapter 1 – Literature Review**

This chapter contains the most relevant literature that addresses information and aspects that support the hypotheses of our study and seeks to provide a broad view on the topic.

## **Chapter 2 – Research Methodology and Methods**

The purpose of this chapter is to explain why the chosen philosophy is the most appropriate as well as the approach, design strategy and ethical considerations this research dissertation was based on.

## **Chapter 3 – Presentation of the Data**

This section aims to present the findings obtained to support our research in a graphical and quantitative format.

## **Chapter 4 – Data Analysis/Findings**

The quantitative and qualitative survey results are analyzed in this section in a descriptive manner, providing detailed information to understand the data obtained.

## **Chapter 5 – Discussions**

The final section discusses the theory and findings obtained in the previous chapter in a comprehensive and descriptive manner.

## **Conclusions**

Following the completion of the investigation, this section contains the conclusions reached by this study based on the procedures followed throughout the process as well as recommendations that may be useful for future studies.

## **CHAPTER I - LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section is dedicated to reviewing the relevant literature on cultural diversity, cross-cultural conflicts, and the role of mediation in resolving cross-cultural conflict in the workplace through its styles and techniques, in order to gain a better understanding of the concepts and theories that have emerged about theme.

### **Culture and Conflict**

Conflict is associated with people's central processes and their association with their surroundings and is therefore an inevitable part of organizational life (Jones and George 2003).

Throughout history, conflict has meant competition between various groups for limited resources, incompatible goals, or to gain power. In addition, the intensity of this competition is affected by the perception of individuals about plans, resources, and management, which may differ widely. Culture is part of the perception, of the shared, inherited, and inclined ways of living by which individuals are influenced by the social groups to which they belong. Culture-based conflict thus occurs across cognitive and perceptual boundaries, making it especially vulnerable to misunderstandings and miscommunication between cultures. Whatever the root causes of the dispute – including strictly material interests – these problems exacerbate the conflict. Consequently, culture is an essential factor in many conflicts that initially seem to be only about material resources or trading interests (Avruch 2002).

Traditionally, organizational culture encompasses the shared values, beliefs, behaviors, and background of organization members. Members share a common sociocultural heritage. Culture has portrayed ethnic or nationality groups, but in recent years cultural factors now include race, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability (Blank and Slipp 1994).

More and Wegener (1992) state that conflicts occur in organizations when normal activities are interrupted to the extent that it becomes difficult to achieve organizational goals and objectives.

Conflict can arise when individuals or groups are trying to collaborate in attaining a common goal but have contrary opinions and beliefs about the best plan of action to pursue. Conflict in

an organization could be categorized under two major headings functional and dysfunctional (Bacal 2004).

Over time, as globalization increases, workplaces have become more culturally diverse. As part of this positive effect, people with different cultural backgrounds often think differently and therefore have the ability to analyze a challenge from multiple perspectives. Considering the high number of technology companies and multinationals, Ireland, is the target of attractive opportunities for investors and workers of different nationalities. This attractiveness has brought people from two hundred different countries to this country recently (Census 2016).

As more minorities, women, foreigners and employees with different experiences and educational background are entering the workforce. This diversity inescapably leads to conflicts different from those experienced by a more standardized workforce (Fiol 1994; Williams and O'Riley 1998). If not properly managed, conflict in the workplace can become a complex issue, having harmful effects on the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of the organization's employees, increasing to uncontrollable heights, thus impairing the mission and objectives of an organization (Caudron 1998).

Although diversity in the workplace is generating rewards for companies, on the one hand, it is also generating conflicts arising from diversity itself (Chaudhary 2018).

Chua says conflict and tension between cultures are inevitable in the global workplace. In addition, unresolved disputes between cultures negatively affect the creative process, so it has become vital that organizations properly consider the conflict between cultures in the workplace. (Chua 2003).

In the long run, Watson, Kannales and Michaelsen (1993), compared to homogeneous groups, culturally diverse groups are more effective both in social interactions in the level of work performance. Therefore, this security can have a negative impact on overall productivity. Therefore, it is essential that a manager identifies the cultural specificity of a group to understand how to react and solve the problems it faces (Trompenaars 1993). Cox and Blake (1991) indicate that minorities prefer to work for an employer that values diversity, as well as buying goods and services from such companies.

Potential benefits of cultural diversity management include better decision-making, greater creativity and innovation, greater success in international marketing activities and with local minority ethnic communities, better distribution of economic opportunities (Cox 1993; Cox and Blake 1991).

It therefore requires establishing the means for the diversified workforce to be fully integrated into a fair workplace where no group is privileged over another (Torres and Bruxelles 1992). The issue of cultural diversity is debated not only in the business world, but also increasingly, becoming the cornerstone of discussions in political circles and justice (Williams and O'Reilly 1998).

However, many researchers are still debating the theoretical perspectives that exert the benefits of cultural diversity (Palich and Gomez-Mejia 1999) by highlighting, among others, that diversity can create dissatisfaction and a decline in business performance (Milliken and Martins 1996). Others, more moderate, emerged in the context of globalization, but classical studies (Hall 1959 and 1960; Lawrence and Lorch 1967; Hofstede 1980) stated that the management of the cultural diversity of an organization provides benefits if and only if, it is well managed.

### **Cultural Diversity**

Cultural diversity can be described as a set of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes the presence of all groups within an organization or society, respects sociocultural diversity and encourages their continued contribution within a cultural context that empowers all organizations or members of society. (Chua 2003).

In the understanding of Pitts (2005), diversity is a behavioral psychology aspect based on the sense of likeness and otherness. Bucher and Bucher (2010), describe diversity refers to all divergences among people, including one person, group, and cultural differences.

According to Seymen (2006) diversity is a mix of people with different group personalities within the same social system. Alvesson (2002) highlights that cultural diversity is 'the shared practices administering cognitive and effective perspectives of membership in an organization, and the means whereby they are shaped and expressed'.

Additionally, Mann (2010) points that 'the organization's culture is more than behavior. It is the balance between the strategic focus and values ethos'.

Furthermore Sarala and Vaara (2010) claim that national cultural differences provide great potential for knowledge transfer, showing that cultural integration within organizations and cultural cross convergence is crucial in such knowledge transfer. The authors also claim that 'cultural integration creates a positive social dynamic environment', (Sarala and Vaara 2010). Additionally, Cox (1991) states that there is value in diversity that can be fully recognized by diversity and pluralism in the workplace presented by multiculturalism.

Culture is part of the development of humanity and, in fact, is based on values, beliefs, behaviors, thoughts and how to communicate with each person. Similarly (Mayer 2000) states that Culture is "... the common values, norms, customs and behaviors of a certain group of people." The social structure of an organization is the result of constant negotiations between its four members and their surroundings about values, meanings, and properties (Seel 2000).

Cultural diversity was defined as "the representation in a social system of people with distinct affiliations of a group of cultural significance" (Cox 1993).

The traditional approach to handling multiculturalism in complex organizations has been to expect members of the minority culture to adapt to the cultural requirements of the majority group. What forces have triggered the subtle but perceptible shift away from assimilation and towards diversity? Several organizational dynamics contribute to the growth of the diversity perspective (Donatus 2007). First, a quest for social justice, though a goal of the assimilation concept, has been largely elusive under it. Moral, ethical and social responsibilities toward minority members of society and of business organizations in particular have provided the impetus for a search for new and better paradigms to improve the lot of racio-ethnic and gender minorities. Second, legal obligations arising from civil rights laws and the attendant affirmative action programs have made it necessary for organizations to find alternative ways to eliminate racial and gender discrimination in education and employment (Ramakrishnan and Balgopal, 1995). Third, the limitations of affirmative action which have led to calls for new proposals to replace it, (Gottfredson 1992; Thomas 1990) and the strategic imperatives imposed on U.S. companies for competitive advantage in the global market have created more pressure to

recognize and deal with cultural diversity in a way that recognizes and works with differences in cultures without denigrating or submerging some under others (Donatus 2007).

Globalization, with its multicultural implications, has become an indispensable factor in strategic competitiveness. IBM, Exxon, Coca-Cola and Dow Chemical, for example, get at least half of their revenues from other countries. For the first time since World War I, immigrants make up most of the recent population and workforce growth. Experts predict that business leaders who ignore these demographic trends will find themselves at a competitive disadvantage (Copeland 1988b; Nkomo 1992).

Until then, cultural differences were perceived only in terms of ethnic constrictions and nationality. Now cultural considerations include race, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, etc. These subgroups have different work attitudes, perceptions, values and standards that, in turn, affect individual and group performance (Donatus 2007). The *conclusions of the 2000 Workforce: Work and Workers for the 21st Century* Johnston (1987) highlight the importance and impact of changing workforce demographics and diversity in organizations. The differences that present themselves in the cultural composition of the globalized workforce inevitably lead to tensions and conflicts over cultural viewpoints, behaviors, and beliefs, especially in minority workers who may be more likely to feel overwhelmed by the impact of these differences.

### **Impacts of Cultural Diversity Workforce**

Cultural diversity in the workplace is viewed as a challenge nowadays because its effects can have an impact on organizational relationships both positively and negatively. According to Hoge (2010) if not properly managed, the diversity of the employees can have a negative impact on the whole organisation, and it can result in a devaluation of minorities.

Seymen (2006) indicates 'cultural diversity emerging from the multinational business workforce structure, particularly with globalisation, gets organisations to come across with positive and/or negative conclusions brought on by this diversity'.

Patrick (2010) found that diversity determines not only the effects of the diversity within an organization but also the level of openness to dissimilarity characteristics among the organization's members, work groups, and culture.

Hoge (2010) also states that cultural diversity is a highly complex field with multiple distinctions and the majority of attributes cannot be discovered immediately.

Foot and Hook (1999) claim that diversity in a workplace is about obtaining new ideas by promoting employees' involvement from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds and experiences as they work in teams.

It is well known that understanding the effects of culture on human behaviour is crucial to the business success (Cox1993).

Additionally, Cox (2008) points out that diversity must be seen from different points of evaluation as: structural integration, informal integration, stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination in gender, age, religion, and work.

In the same line of thought Bell (2007) highlights that organisations and their leaders should welcome the challenges of diversity, minimize the threats, and capitalize on the opportunities resulting from diversity.

Diversity executives cite the importance of having an open mind because the job requires them to come out of their comfort zone and experience things that they may not be familiar with or drawn to (Rodriguez 2006).

Organisation's ability to attract, retain and motivate people from different cultural backgrounds, may led to competitive advantages in cost structures and though maintaining the highest quality human resources (Cox and Balke 1991).

The benefits of workplace diversity include rapid adaptability, availability of a greater variety of alternative techniques for solving problems, in-service sourcing, and allocation of resources (Duke 2012; Greenberg 2015).

Other benefits are wider range of service, diverse assemblage of skills/experiences, diverse languages, and cultural background (Duke 2012; Greenberg 2015), and diverse viewpoints (Greenberg 2015; Philips 2014). The diverse assemblage of skills and experiences coupled with the variety of alternative techniques for solving problems leads to efficiency and effectiveness in the execution of projects (Greenberg 2015).



In his studies Hoge (2010), claims that organisations will attract the best available experts of the market and motivate other employers to copy their strategy, stay equally competitive and flourish their businesses.

Cox and Smolinski (1994), argue that those organisations that have a successfully integrated cultural diverse workforce have low turnover. In other words, a well-managed cultural diverse force entails to low turnover and therefore to cost savings.

### **Cross-Cultural Conflict**

According to Mayer (2000) 'Conflict is often associated with issues of values and identity.' Conflict usually begins when individuals or groups realize they have different goals, beliefs, needs, or values for those of others (De Dreu 2008). In addition, in (Avruch 2002) many conflicts are driven by multiple reasons (competition and cooperation), and it is also important to note that most conflicts are a combination of competing views, beliefs and values brought into dispute by the parties.

Many different ethnic groups in society interact daily in a natural way. As their interaction occurs, intercultural conflicts tend to appear due to confrontations of conscious or pronounced interest in different groups. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that there is not a single reason for intercultural conflicts. It is not only a lack of knowledge of language, confrontation or competition or interest, but also the interruption in communication between people (A.S. Matveevskaya 2017).

Additionally, intercultural conflicts can occur between two individuals or between a group of people. It can be defined by the difference of races, cultural assumptions, values, beliefs, and ways of thinking that can generate disagreements (Chaudhary 2018).

Homogeneous groups have been reported to overcome culturally diverse groups, especially when there are serious communication problems that make it more difficult for everyone to make ideal contributions to group effort (Sheridan 1994).

Individuals from minority subgroups also face obstacles to ethnocentrism within an organization's culture. Ethnocentricity is the inclination for members of the majority group to see their own group as the center of the universe, to interpret minority groups from the perspective

of the majority group and to evaluate the beliefs, behaviours, and values of the majority group itself more positively than outside groups (Shimp and Sharma 1987).

There are five fundamental forces, or sources of conflict: the way people communicate, emotions, values, the structures within which interactions occur, and history called the Conflict Wheel (Mayer 2000).

In his book (Mayer 2000) he affirms the five roots of conflicts that are:

**Communication:** Humans are imperfect communicators. In some cases, these imperfections lead to conflicts, regardless of the incompatibility of interests, and almost always make it difficult to resolve. There is a big problem here with how difficult it is for people to communicate about complicated issues, particularly under emotionally challenging conditions. People assume that communication has been accurate when it doesn't, which leads to conflict. People often attribute other people's acts based on different information and assumptions to be bad faith or deception rather than the imperfections of human communication. Several factors can affect an individual's ability to communicate effectively, including their culture, gender, age, class, and environment. People tend to use inaccurate or incomplete perceptions in communication, form stereotypes, and use conclusions derived from previous interactions or experiences.

**Emotions:** Emotions fuel conflicts. It is true that many conflicts would never arise or descale quickly if people were always rational and focused on meeting their needs and meeting the needs of others. Although many of us sometimes pretend, it's not like human beings. Emotions can influence a person's behavior at times. In addition, they are sometimes used as sources of power by disputers. Using these characteristics, people can participate in conflicts with force.

Various interactions and circumstances can generate emotions as well as previous experiences. Whether we react negatively or positively to someone pointing the finger in conflict depends on the context, the meaning of immediate observable behavior, and how we react in the past to finger gestures.

**Values:** As human beings, we have values that define what matters, what is right and wrong, good, or evil, and what principles should guide us in our daily lives. Conflicts become more charged and difficult when they are seen as a matter of values. People will feel attacked when they believe their values are being attacked because they are partly defined by their principles.

When fundamental beliefs are in play, people have difficulty committing themselves because they feel they are compromising their integrity or themselves.

**Structure:** The structure is another source of conflict, the framework in which interactions occur or issues develop. A structure can contain several elements, such as communication procedures, financial resources, and decision-making procedures. However, even when people's interests overlap, the work structure can lead to conflicts.

Litigation is a method for resolving conflicts when there is a conflict between people. A successful outcome can be achieved with litigation when other procedures have failed. Still, despite its advantages, it is also a structure that brings conflict, interrupts the commitment, and throws questions into a win-lose light.

**History:** The history of a conflict does not usually determine its outcome, although it sometimes does; however, the historical context of the conflict is crucial to understanding it. History shapes a conflict in many ways, including the human populations involved, the systems in which it occurs, and the issues involved. In the development of conflict, history plays an important role. Still, we commonly fail to recognize an underlying conflict from its historical context, and therefore we are perplexed by the players' fears. It is noteworthy that the story also impacts the way a person communicates, reacts emotionally and acts in the organization. It is constantly being made and therefore affected by these other sources.

According to the author, conflict is an interaction between several sources, such as communication, emotions, values, structures, and history. Conflict wheel developed by Mayer is a construction, and its effectiveness is measured by how useful it is. In addition, conflicts must be understood and resolved by seeking opportunities to improve a situation in which individuals are trapped, insights are needed, and where perspectives can be obtained. With this in mind, we should consider these sources as part of understanding the conflict and the wheels described by the author will help us accomplish this.

When individuals who disagree can engage in constructive debates and appreciate the perspectives of others, they may be able to take advantage of their differences to generate creative solutions, a process that some management scholars have called "creative abrasion" (Leonard and Swap 1999; Nonaka 1994).

Other research has shown that the positive effects of cultural diversity on creativity are only realized when poor communication and conflicts between individuals from different cultures are softened (Giambatista and Bhappu 2010; Hackman 1990; Swann et al. 2003).

Perkins (1993) suggests that in similar cultural relationships, people from cultures who see relationships in terms of hierarchy have a preference for highly structured teams. People from cultures who see relationships in terms of groups want teamwork to be the norm, and people from cultures that emphasize the individual feel more comfortable with voluntary and formal teams. Mixing these types of culture will have a significant impact on an organization.

Additionally, Cox (1991) states that there is value in diversity that can be fully recognized by diversity and pluralism in the workplace presented by multiculturalism.

### **Workplace Mediation**

Mediation has existed and practice in a variety of forms for centuries (Griffiths 2001) and mediation has been used in industrial disputes in the workplace in the USA since the 1930s (Herman 2006), the academic and political interest in its use is more recent and largely stems from dissatisfaction with conventional procedures of rights-based disputes (Herman et al. 2006).

In many organizations, diversity can produce negative dynamics such as ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and cultural conflicts. These negative dynamics can, in turn, combine with unbalanced power structures to create disadvantages at work for women and minorities. In traditional, assimilationist organizations, cultural differences between majority members and minority groups create barriers to the full participation of minority members. (White 1999).

In concrete terms, the cultural diversity in the workplace, exercised through the coexistence of workers from different backgrounds. The management of cultural diversity therefore requires a type of organizational culture in which each employee can continue their career without impediments by gender, race, nationality, religion, or other factors that are not relevant to performance (Bryan 1999).

The concept of "managing diversity in the workforce" has emerged recently, mainly due to the fulfillment of the "equal opportunities" approach for all. The proactive strategy tends to gradually

replace reactive approaches. It is increasingly accepted that the heterogeneity provided by cultural diversity can be a growth engine for the organization's efficiency in this competitive world (Nkomo and Cox 1996; Jackson and Ruderman 1995). Organizations that promote diversity within them and are considered for their diversity management are likely to attract the best talented employees (Carrel and Everett 1995). Diversity in this sense is seen as a systematic and planned commitment of organizations to recruit, retain, reward, and promote a heterogeneous mix of employees (Gilbert, Stead, and Ivancevich 1999).

Mediation is organized and conducted relatively quickly with less busy management time (Bingham and Pitts 2002) while offering financial savings (Kressel 2006; Goldberg 2005) with estimated costs about five times lower than the time-consuming conventional procedures (Saundry et al. 2013).

The use of mediation, as a form of ADR, in organizations can be motivated by cost, crisis, culture and competition (Latrielle 2011). It was also identified that as people learn about mediation and its benefits (Wall et al. 2012) this increases their use.

Evaluating the impact of mediation in the workplace is discussed in the literature without any single measure of success being identified (Urwin et al. 2010), although the settlement rate is still seen as the main measure of effectiveness (Latrielle 2011).

Managing diversity in organizations can improve cost structures and increase the better work environment quality, as was seen in (Cox 2008).

### **Mediation Styles That Can Be Applied in The Workplace**

Even so, mediation approaches are increasingly being recognized in their context (Bush 2005). In this way, you can identify significantly different "mediation styles". A problem-solving approach is most often adopted by workplace mediators (Bingham 1997). The labor management disputes gave rise to the evaluation process. By using this style of mediation, the mediator seeks to ensure that the parties are realistic about their negotiating positions to agree to an agreement (Alberts 2005). Although the author points to the emergence of the evaluative approach in work management, it may not be effective when it comes to resolving conflicts focused on maintaining the relationship of the parties.

This approach seeks more to get parties to focus on positions than on understanding each other's needs. Consequently, the use of this approach may not be aligned with the objectives of this research. On the contrary, facilitating mediation emphasizes the identification of areas of agreement that will be effective in the future, recognizing the needs and interests of the disputers. Although facilitative mediation tries to address the underlying issues that lead to conflict, it does not do so entirely (Kressel 2007). Although the author points out a critique of the facilitating style, this approach is still the most used in conflict resolution. In addition, it focuses on understanding the needs of the underlying party; that is why mediators need to delve into the roots of conflicts, and it is understood that it is useful for the parties; therefore, further studies on its failure to resolve conflicts should be done.

However, transformative mediation (Bush 2001) provides another alternative to conflict resolution. The agendas are defined by the parties, giving them control over the process and the outcome.

There may be an agreement, but it is not the main objective (Novac 2001). Instead, the goal is to empower the parties, restore their self-confidence and communicate more effectively. It is noteworthy that the authors argue the power that transformative mediation has in conflict resolution with a focus on maintaining the relationship between the parties, therefore, there is a perception that their work would be of great value for the objective of this research.

Narrative mediation is a different approach that goes beyond problem solving, exploring the "history of conflict" to establish a basis of respect and equity on which it is possible to build a working relationship (Winslade 2006). However, it can be argued that mediation in the workplace differs from other types of mediation in the importance of resolving disputes and bringing the competing parties back to work (Mc Dermott 2001). Facilitating approaches have been the most widely used form of dispute resolution (Herman 2003), but no particular style has taken over. In fact, one of the essential mediation schemes that exist uses a transformative approach (Bingham 2004).

A largely unexplored area is the impact of different mediation models on participant and organizational results (Bingham 2002a; Riskin 2003). Mediation can be evaluative if the mediator has a specialized opinion on the merits of the dispute (Waldman 1998). In a problem-solving model or facilitator, the mediator helps the parties identify and dodge their interests

(Fisher, Ury, and Patton 1991; Waldman 1998). Even less directive is transformative mediation (Bush and Folger 1994; Folger and Bush 1996), which focuses on empowering parties to control all aspects of mediation. The transformative mediators do not pressure the parties to accept an agreement, but rather to clarify their own interests, objectives, and choices. The mediator also promotes moments of recognition, in which each party achieves a better understanding or recognizes the perspective of the other.

### **Mediation Techniques and Maintenance of Coexistence in The Work Environment**

In the Mediation Act 2017, the definition of mediation is: "mediation" means a confidential, facilitating and voluntary process in which the parties to dispute, with the help of a mediator, try to reach a mutually acceptable agreement to resolve the dispute." The voluntary and confidential process is guaranteed by trained mediators who apply techniques to address the reality of the parties to the conflict. The willingness is also ensured by the bench, which is defined as a private and confidential meeting that is held by the mediator and by the individual parties and mediation agreements that are signed for all parties involved.

All stages of the mediation process are agreed in advance with the parties that decide to include any disclosure of the results and whether there was agreement between the participants. It is also possible for union representatives to attend the mediation meeting, as long as requested by the participants, as this is not the norm.

Managers who mediate the dispute will use mediation techniques to help the disputers not only reach an agreement that benefits both parties, but also to maintain their long-term relationship. This is important so that they can continue working together in a safe and healthy environment (Ramjee 2019).

Alternatively, through mediation the parties are able to create solutions more suitable for their particular circumstances. Mediators often encourage parties to "think outside the box" and think of possible options to maximize creativity (Moffit and Bordone 2005).

Interpersonal relationships improve because mediation is explicit about openness. The parties to a dispute are encouraged to express their feelings about what happened to them and are expected to work together to find a mutually beneficial solution. Because it is rare in an

employee-management relationship to have this openness, mediation acts as a metaphor for a better way of working. Workplace mediation participants report a better work environment, not only with each other, but also among other team members. (Liebmann 2000).

Finally, mediation provides an opportunity for the parties to agree on creative solutions. When disputes are resolved through legal or other adjudicatory proceedings, the usual outcome is a judgment in favor of one party over another (Moffit and Bordone 2005).

### **The Role of Mediation in Resolving Workplace Conflicts**

Under the Mediation Act 2017, Mediation is "a confidential, facilitating and voluntary process in which the parties to a dispute, with the help of a mediator, try to reach a mutually acceptable agreement to resolve the dispute."

Mediation is a process with a neutral third party, but it has a role in facilitating the parties creatively to resolve their conflicts, recognizing them in a dispute as experts. In addition, Mediation demonstrates a more productive way for people to communicate with each other, being useful in the workplace due to interpersonal and cost benefits (Leibmann 2000).

Workplace mediation is defined as (Kenny 2014): a confidential and voluntary process by which an independent mediator assists two or more individuals, work groups or employers and unions anticipating or experiencing conflicts or a dispute with the aim of reaching a mutually acceptable agreement.

Through mediation, people with a conflict can reach a meaningful and mutually acceptable agreement to resolve their dispute. In addition, it can help disputers (parties to a dispute or conflict) rethink how they interact with each other and develop more peaceful relations and resolutions of their conflict (Moore 2014).

Interpersonal relationships improve because mediation is explicit about openness. The parties to a dispute are encouraged to express their feelings about what happened to them and are expected to work together to find a mutually beneficial solution. Because it is rare in an employee-management relationship to have this openness, mediation acts as a metaphor for a better way of working. Workplace mediation participants report a better work environment, not only among themselves, but also among other team members (Liebmann 2000).



Workplace mediation is defined as (Kenny 2014): a confidential and voluntary process by which an independent mediator assists two or more individuals, work groups or employers and unions anticipating or experiencing conflicts or a dispute with the aim of reaching a mutually acceptable agreement.

The reason mediation is superior to other Alternative Dispute Resolutions (ADR) is that it focuses on external attention, such as communication and interaction between disputers, observation, and discussion of what is not working between the parties and asking them questions to lead to better communication or letting it go through completely (Cloke 2013).

Unlike other procedures, in workplace mediation, parties are encouraged to express their feelings about their needs and concerns and are expected to work together to find a mutually beneficial solution (Liebman 2000).

Mediation is organized and conducted relatively quickly with less busy management time (Bingham and Pitts 2002) while offering financial savings (Kressel 2006; Goldberg 2005) with estimated costs about five times lower than the time-consuming conventional procedures (Saundry et al. 2013).

The use of mediation, as a form of ADR, in organizations can be motivated by cost, crisis, culture and competition (Latrielle 2011). It was also identified that as people learn about mediation and its benefits (Wall et al. 2012:24) this increases their use.

Mediation also provides the potential for the parties to exercise self-determination. In mediation, the parties are the final decisions, while in judgment, arbitration, or administrative hearing proceedings, a third party makes the decision for them. Due to their personal involvement in the process and resolution, the parties tend to possess psychological property, making them more likely to comply with an agreement reached (Moffit and Bordone 2005).

Mediation gives better flexibility when proposing settlement results. More importantly, the privacy of the case contradicts the concern with precedent-setting agreements; thus, the parties are free to seek options that best fit the individual case situations (Cooper et al. 2005).

The number of people trained in mediation and mediation services has grown dramatically in Ireland (Teague et al. 2015).

## **Mediation Applied to Resolve Workplace Disputes**

Mediation is identified as relevant for use in workplaces for a variety of issues where there are ongoing working relationships, including the resolution of interpersonal disputes (Mayer 2004; Monberg 2007) at a relatively early stage, progressing complaints in a less confrontational manner (Fox, 2005), expressing feelings in a relatively safe and safe environment (Seargeant 2005; Sulzner 2003), dealing with problems that are not suitable for resolution through formal procedures (CIPD 2004) and after more formal processes to facilitate the return of people working together.

Mediation in the workplace is a form of early resolution and can be conducted faster than traditional processes (Bingham and Pitts 2002), is more likely to restore employment relationships and offers financial savings at costs five times lower than often long complaints or disciplinary procedures, as well as reduce the possibility of absence and long-term layoffs (McDermott et al. 2000; Bingham et al. 2002; Kressel 2006; Goldberg 2005; Latreille 2011; Saundry et al. 2013). Some of the UK's evidence, however, suggests that mediation is still seen as a last resort (CIPD 2008).

Mediation emphasizes the importance of seeking a jointly agreed resolution and therefore participants find mediation more satisfactory than traditional methods and are more likely to maintain any agreement reached. (Reynolds 2000).

Workplace conflict involves differences of opinion and conflicts between individual employees and their employer; between individuals; and between groups of employees, unionized or not, and their employer. It is recognized that resolving the conflict in the workplace can have beneficial effects for employers, employees, and other business stakeholders. (Teague, Roche, and Hann 2012).

Evaluating the impact of mediation in the workplace is discussed in the literature without any single measure of success being identified (Urwin et al. 2010), although the settlement rate is still seen as the main measure of effectiveness (Latrielle 2011).

The literature also identifies that the introduction of internal mediation schemes resolves conflicts, supports mediation participants by changing the way they deal with conflicts, and managers who conduct mediation training improve their ability to deal with conflicts in the

workplace (Bingham 2004), improve their reputation (Reynolds 2000) and gain skills for creative problem solving (Kressel 2006).

If a more integrated approach to conflict management should be taken in organizations, then measuring the success of mediation in the workplace in terms of agreement is very simplistic (Greig 2005), because partial agreements in complex cases can have lasting organizational benefits (Fox 2005) and impacts on the organization's overall culture. The success of mediation can be seen as a continuum that measured success not in terms of agreement, but offering opportunities to increase employee confidence in dispute resolution and make them more likely to report problems and make complaints (Olson-Buchanan and Boswell 2008), increase the voice or self-determination of employees (Before and Paranica 2009; Lipsky and Avgar 2008; Young 2006), improve the levels of participation and recognition of each other's participants (Bush 2001; Bingham 2003), narrows the number of issues in dispute (Mareschal 2005), recognizes that change often occurs in the months following mediation and agreement should be seen as a step "along a path of development" (Hoskins and Stoltz 2003), sustain partial or all agreements (Sergeant 2005), and improve working relations (Bouchier 2013).

The potential efficacy of mediation was identified in initial studies of its use in industries traditionally prone to disputes (Brett and Goldberg 1983). Subsequent experimental studies have observed the propensity of "third parties" to adopt dispute resolution approaches more associated with mediation when they became aware of the option (Karambayya and Brett 1989; Karambayya et al. 1992).

Costantino (1996), which argues that an "interest-based" approach to getting 'buy' from stakeholders is crucial. Other studies have also rightly evaluated the degree to which the success of these initiatives can be objectively measured (Lipsky et al. 2007). Add here a paragraph that speaks of transformative mediation.

Shapiro and Brett (1993) suggest that the disputers find in mediation a more acceptable approach to resolving their differences and, therefore, are more likely to commit to any final agreement. Mediation can help resolve cases more quickly and reduce the number going into litigation, thus realizing savings in terms of time, money and distress for participants (Goldberg 2005).

As an alternative dispute resolution, mediation offers a number of potential benefits that are not available in traditional dispute resolution methods. The relatively informal and flexible mediation process allows the mediator and participants to take different approaches to creative problem solving. By providing accelerated resolution, mediation often saves the parties time and money. In addition, upon reaching a resolution, mediation parties can often avoid much of the emotional drain of engagement in ongoing conflicts. (Moffit and Bordone 2005)

Mediation also provides a different type of communication forum between the parties. In many cases, the parties value the degree of mediation of privacy. Those who feel uncomfortable discussing personal matters in an open court may be more relaxed in a private setting. Moreover, the parties are not restricted to the nature of what they can say, thus allowing the determination and discussion of the actual issues in dispute (Moffit and Bordone 2005 and Kovach 2004).

In some circumstances, resolution may be impossible without the expression and understanding of a party's emotional needs. Mediation not only allows the expression, understanding and release of emotions, but can also create an opportunity for relationships to be preserved. In many cases, the parties to a conflict have a continuous relationship, whether personal or professional. Despite the dispute, continuing the relationship in one way or another may be desirable — or inevitable — for the parties (Moffit and Bordone 2005).

### **Managing Workplace Conflicts**

Gardenswartz and Rowe (2003) claim how do we manage diversity in organizations to reap its potential benefits? At its core, diversity is about inclusion and exclusion.

Workplace conflict involves differences of opinion and conflicts between individual employees and their employer; between individuals; and between groups of employees, unionized or not, and their employer. It is recognized that resolving the conflict in the workplace can have beneficial effects for employers, employees, and other business stakeholders. (Teague, Roche, and Hann 2012)

There is still no universally agreed definition or general theory of mediation (Banks and Saundry 2010; Zariski 2010). Moore (2003) defines mediation as: "intervention in an acceptable third-

party negotiation or conflict that has limited or no authoritarian decision-making power, [and] that helps the parties involved to voluntarily achieve a mutually acceptable solution to the disputed issues." (Moore 2003)

The academic and political interest in the application of alternative or appropriate dispute resolution (ADR) in the workplace is more recent and, to a large part, comes from dissatisfaction with conventional rights-based procedures and disputes, as well as the time and money costs associated with them (Reynolds 2000; 2006 Herrman; Manzor 2010; Bouchier 2013).

Conflict in the workplace is a reality and the employment relationship can be seen as offering incentives for both cooperation and the conflict between employer and employee. In organizations, they often avoid conflicts without knowing it and organizations, work teams or work groups are likely to develop a culture of conflict or climate over time (De Dreu et al. 2001; Lewin 2001; Teague, Roche and Hann 2012).

Unresolved dysfunctional conflicts can also be accepted normally over time and spread to a working group or organization (De Dreu et al. 2001; Kuzstal 2002; Starks 2006; Singleton et al. 2011). There is a myriad of conflict costs for an organization and its employees identified in the literature (De Dreu et al. 2001; Burton et al. 2004; Starks 2006; Suppiah and Rose 2006; Andrade et al. 2008; Lang 2009; Singleton 2011; Teague, Roche and Hann 2012; Gross et al. 2013). All this, in turn, affects the "end result" or financial performance of organizations with destructive conflicts, representing more than 18% (Hignite et al. 2002), 20% (Suppiah and Rose 2006), 13% (7 weeks) in Fortune 1000 manager time companies and 42% in employee time or 1.8 days a week for employees in the UK (Saundry and Wibberley 2012). The conflict costs \$35.4billion in the US (Di Martino 2003), \$6 million per Fortune 1000 company for absenteeism, lost productivity, and turnover or £24 million a year in the UK in 2008 (Saundry and Wibberley 2012).

The most common types of concerns observed by the researchers include: **"Managerial relationships"** such as the exercise of managerial authority and decisions made by managers and issues related to bad communications, ineffective leadership, conflicting priorities, and disciplinary action of managers to address employee misconduct, for example, aggressive behavior. (Lewin 2001; From Breu et al. 2001; Lipsky and Seeber 2006; Starks 2006; Ma et al. 2008; Singleton et al. 2011; Teague, Roche and Hann 2012; Gross et al. 2013), **'market**

**relations'** such as salary and employment conditions (Teague, Roche and Hann 2012); **intra-managerial rivalry**, including power disputes (Singleton et al. 2011; Teague, Roche and Hann 2012); and **disputes between employees** within working groups or involving work groups, including differences in goals, working methods, personality, perspectives based on age, sex, race (Lipsky and Seeber 2006; Singleton et al. 2011; Teague, Roche and Hann 2012).

Experiments and field studies have found that a cooperative approach to conflict encourages partners to express their opinions directly, listen with an open mind, and accurately take each other's perspective (Tjosvold 1998).

Note that some organizations are training managers and employees in mediation to serve as internal problem solvers (Lipsky et al. 2003). While internal mediators are likely to provide benefits for peer-to-peer disputes, their ability to effectively resolve more "collected" disputes, such as discipline or termination, is dubious. Although unable to impose a binding decision on the parties, mediators employ win-win trading strategies in an attempt to reach a mutually agreeable solution (McDermott and Berkeley 1996).

It is understandable that there are conflicts between people from different backgrounds together. However, conflict management is a key element of success. Managers often set up multicultural workplaces without stressing the importance of integrating their employees (Blanding 2013).

Unresolved workplace conflicts can sometimes lead to litigation with their service problems, and employees' willingness to sue their employer have exposed almost all employers to an increasing volume of workplace-related litigation or human resources decisions made on a daily basis. Understanding the conflict and how to manage or resolve it should be an integral part of what and how managers should learn; such an understanding is essential for the personal well-being and success of individuals, as well as for the long-term success of organizations (Singleton et al. 2011).

'It is well known that understanding the effects of diversity on human behaviour is crucial to business success' (Cox 1993). Additionally, Cox and Smolinski (1994) claim that 'Unless the effects of diversity are well managed, turnover, miscommunication, and interpersonal conflict

may increase leading to lower productivity and ultimately lower performance on profit, market share or other strategic goals.

To create opportunities for collaboration, global leaders must not only learn the customs, courtesies, and business protocols of their counterparts from other countries but must also understand the national character, management philosophies, and mind-sets of the people (Hofstede 1994).

There is a strong empirical confirmation that successful diversity management and a resulting improvement in organizational performance are positively correlated (Ozbilgin and Tatli 2008).

## **CHAPTER 2 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

Reliable research requires a precise methodology. This chapter presents the structure of the research and the justification for the choice that, compared to the main philosophies, is presented as the most appropriate according to the research onion by Saunders.

The label “methodology” relates to the philosophy or theory upon which the study will be based. In contrast, the label “method” refers to the processes or stages that must be followed to collect and analyse the data necessary to support or supplement an investigation (Saunders et al. 2007).

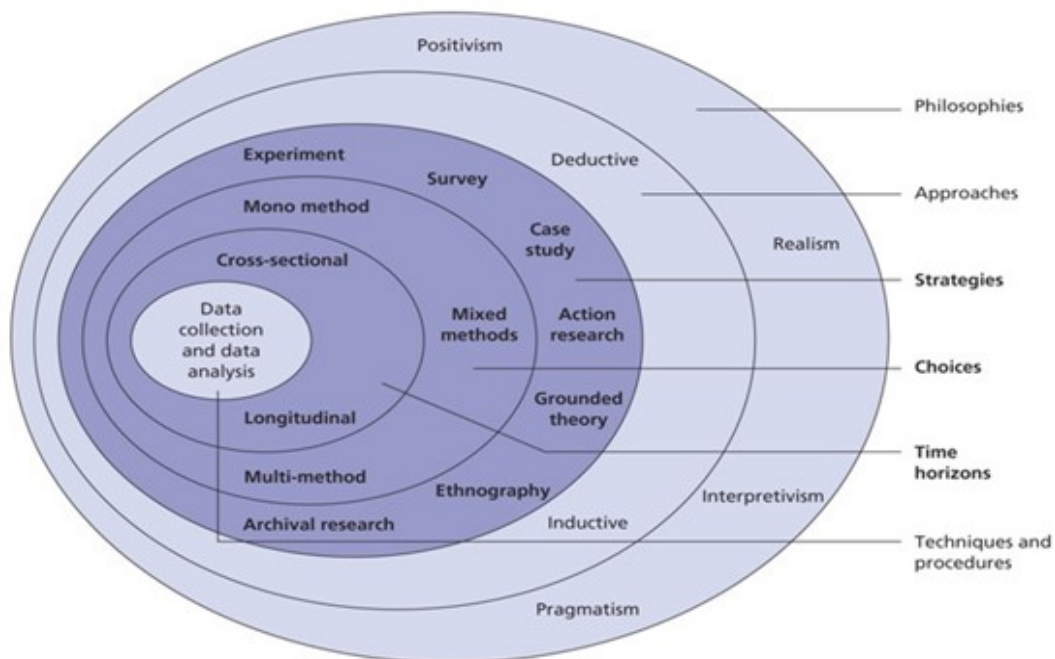
The research makes epistemological ‘assumptions about knowledge to others’ (Saunders et al. 2007), reason why the inductive approach was chosen.

### **Research Design**

The research design represents the approach used to combine the study’s many components in a coherent, understandable, and logical manner. It includes data gathering, measurement, and analysis (Saunders et al. 2007).

The study adhered to the same authors' research onion model, which depicts the numerous steps a researcher must take when developing a practical methodology. As a result, the research onion that summarizes this study is as follows:

**Figure 1: Research Onion**



Adapted from Saunders et al. 2007

## Research Philosophy

As reported by Saunders et al (2007), 'research philosophy relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge', and the philosophy chosen incorporates key assumptions about the researcher's worldview.

The two major ways of thinking about research philosophy is ontology and epistemology both will influence the way in which the research process is approached. Epistemology concerns what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study. The researcher focuses on collection and analysis of facts and figures. Ontology, on the other hand, is concerned with nature of



reality. To a greater extent than epistemological considerations, this raises questions of the assumption's researchers have about the way the world operates and the commitment held to particular views (Saunders et al. 2012).

This study looked at three major philosophies: realism, positivism, and interpretivism.

Saunders et al. highlights that realism is another epistemological position which relates to scientific enquiry. The theory of realism is that there is a reality quite independent of the mind. In this sense, realism is opposed to idealism, theory that only the mind and its contents exist (Saunders et al. 2007).

In the understanding of Walliman (2006), positivism philosophy implies that "there is a sharp distinction between scientific theories and other kinds of belief, and there is a unique best description of any chosen aspect of the world that is true regardless of what people think (Walliman 2006). Saunders et al. (2007) states the positivism philosophy concerns with the collection of data, examining the relationship between variables studied in the research.

Additionally, Walliman (2006) also argues that this philosophy uses as "an objective approach that can test theories and establish scientific laws. It aims to establish causes and effects.' (Walliman 2006).

The purpose of this study is not to seek objective measurement, so the realistic ontology is not the appropriate means of concluding the study. The philosophy of Positivism is also disregarded as the research population's perspective on the research subject would be critical.

The objectives of this research are to highlight the characteristics of organizational intercultural conflicts and to provide a brief analysis of how mediation as an alternative method of dispute resolution can be applied to resolve and restore the relationships. The philosophy chosen for this study is interpretivism which suggests that many realities exist.

Interpretivism is a philosophy that believes that in order to explain distinctions amongst people in our position as social actors, the researcher must first take an empathic perspective to understand them. The goal here is to join the study participants' social environment and comprehend it from their perspective. (Saunders et al. 2007).

## **Research Approach**

The research methodology is linked to how knowledge is discovered and analyzed. According to Cohen et al., deductive reasoning is based on the syllogism which was Aristotle's great contribution to formal logic. In its simplest form the syllogism consists of a major premise based on an a priori or self-evident proposition, a minor premise providing a particular instance, and a conclusion. (Cohen et al. 2007).

About the deductive method, Saunders et al. (2007), states that the deductive research approach is in which a hypothesis is created and then a strategy is designed to test it. VanderStoep and Johnston also state that a deductive approach is a process of reasoning that flows from a theory/hypothesis to systematic empirical observation to conclusion (VanderStoep and Johnston 2009).

Research using an inductive approach is likely to be particularly concerned with the context in which such events were taking place. Therefore, the study of a small sample of subjects might be more appropriate than a large number as with the deductive approach (Saunders et al. 2007).

An inductive approach according to Saunders et al. (2007), emphasise that the purpose of an Inductive approach 'would be to get a feel of what was going on, so as to understand better the nature of the problem.'

Furthermore Walliman (2006) highlights that 'an inductive approach is used to generate theory whereas a deductive approach is used to test theory.

If there is not enough former knowledge about the phenomenon or if this knowledge is fragmented, the inductive approach is recommended (Lauri and Kyngäs 2005).

An approach based on inductive data moves from the specific to the general, so that particular instances are observed and then combined into a larger whole or general statement (Chinn and Kramer 1999).

The deductive approach is not adequate because the objective of the study is not related to the hypothesis to refute or establish any particular hypothesis but to identify patterns that allow the development of theory on the subject.

The inductive approach is the most appropriate for this study, which aims to compare the existing literature with the collected data. The intersection of the two sets of data allows for the detection of patterns.

### **Research Strategy**

According to Saunders et al. (2007), the survey strategy is most commonly employed for descriptive and explanatory research. The authors also highlight that surveys are popular as they allow the collection of a large amount of data from a sizeable population in a highly economical way.

The data obtained from a sample in a survey are standardized, that is, they follow the same pattern, norm, or model, allowing easy comparison between them (Saunders et al. 2007).

Additionally, Saunders et al. (2007) point out when sampling is utilised, it is feasible to obtain conclusions that are indicative of the overall community at a cheaper cost than collecting data for the entire population.

The most appropriate strategy for this study is Survey, as the purpose of this dissertation is to broaden the understanding the majority of respondents' points of view in each survey sample, detect trends, and draw conclusions on how to make mediation the most appropriate instrument for resolving intercultural conflicts.

As a result, a survey is the primary data collection strategy. Workers' participation improves the accuracy and likelihood of reflecting general population opinions. As a result, meaningful public consultation will be necessary. Questionnaires are an effective way to accomplish this because they are easily distributed on social medias.

### **Research Choice**

As reported by Saunders et al. (2007), the term research choice refers to the manner in which the researcher chooses to blend quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as the procedures that are used. Walliman (2006) defines qualitative data as the one 'that cannot be accurately measured and counted and are generally expressed in words rather than numbers.' The same

author states that 'quantitative data can be measured, more or less exactly. Measurement implies some form of magnitude, usually expressed in numbers.'

According to Bell and Waters (2018) qualitative researchers are more interested in comprehending how individuals perceive the world, whereas quantitative researchers collect data and examine how one set of data relates to another.

Saunders et al. (2019) state that methodology could be mono-method qualitative, mono-method quantitative, multi-method qualitative, multi-method quantitative, mixed methods, simple and mix methods complex.

Mix methods under the names of multi-methods, multi-strategy, or mixed methodology, mix methods are based on the simultaneous use of qualitative and quantitative research methods (Bryman 2006).

The most appropriated choice for this study is Mix method. The questionnaire is composed of multiple-choice options, checkboxes, and a discursive question. Quantitative data will be acquired from the multiple-choice questions. Furthermore, the checkboxes and discursive questions will provide qualitative data that, when combined, will contribute to the development of a better understanding of the data obtained.

Mix methods provide flexibility, due to the fact that they conceptualize the term integration, and for this reason it has been used by different researchers from different disciplines, although its use does not have the acceptance in all of them (Tashakkori and Creswell 2008).

### **Data Collection Technique**

When neither collecting nor analysing all available data is possible due to limited time, financial constraints, or difficult access, sampling strategies allow for a reduction in the amount of data that must be gathered by evaluating data from a subset rather than all possible cases or components (Saunders et al. 2007).

The sampling frame for any probability sample is a complete list of all cases in the population from which your sample will be drawn (Saunders et al. 2007).

The study comprises a population of workers of all sexes and different ages and nationality groups working in Ireland to assess whether mediation is the most appropriate tool to resolve and prevent cross-cultural and assess within this context which are the main causes of cross-cultural but time constraints and the difficulty in accessing all workers in Ireland are decisive factors in stating that these workers cannot be quantified in their entirety, reason why probability sampling is not suitable.

According to Nicholas Walliman (2006), probability sampling techniques give the most reliable representation of the whole population, while no-probability techniques, relying on the judgement of the researcher or by accident, cannot be used to make generalizations about the whole population (Walliman 2006).

The sampling procedure chosen in this study is non-probability.

This study will collect quantitative and qualitative data through surveys, specifically questionnaires, which will be distributed through social media to as many individual workers as possible in order to contact the research population and invite them to participate in the survey.

Self-selection sampling occurs when you allow each case, usually individuals, to identify their desire to take part in the research. You therefore:

- 1 Publicise your need for cases, either by advertising through appropriate media or by asking them to take part.
- 2 Collect data from those who respond (Saunders et al. 2007)

Considering the size and proportionality of the population surveyed, it is expected that at least one hundred workers will respond to the survey.

### **Time Horizon**

A cross-sectional time horizon was chosen due to time constraints. A longitudinal analysis would take years and would be out of the range for this study.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The study presented contains confidential personal information about respondents, such as descriptions of personal opinions.

Ethical concerns addressed in this dissertation include the identity of respondents, as well as any information they provide during the research, which will be taken according to the Principles of the Data Protection Regulation Act 1998.

The survey is anonymous for ethical reasons, and answers are not linked to a participant's name or any description that allows them to be identified. The survey was specifically sent to people who were interested in the subject. It was hoped that all of the participants had experienced a cross-cultural conflict at work and had it resolved through mediation, which is why the survey's open statement provides participants with a detailed description.

## **Research Limitations**

The research developed is supported by the theory that professionals working in companies based in Ireland may be unaware of the use of mediation to resolve disputes related to cross-cultural conflicts in their work environment, it is also supported by the hypothesis that most companies are not adapting their internal policies to combat the effects that these conflicts can produce, among them the frustration of the worker who is involved in this conflict and other factors such as the decrease in productivity and the dismissal of the employee who cannot withstand the pressure of a work environment toxic.

Despite the vast literature produced by respected researchers and academics on the subject, little is found on the topic of opinion polls of foreign workers who face issues related to cross-cultural conflicts in their work environment due to lack of access to companies and their collaborators. Many of these workers are not able to identify issues related to multiculturalism due to lack of guidance on the subject through the internal policies promoted by the companies where they are employed.

Online surveys are used to collect data from these professionals, and valid and accurate responses are expected. As a result, the objective of this study is to present and reflect the

current situation in Ireland regarding mediation to resolve cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace and restore the relationship between the workers.

In addition, considering the subjective nature of the survey, the survey results may not accurately reflect the understanding of the entire population surveyed. Moreover, time constraints can impact literature review and data analysis.

## **CHAPTER 3 – PRESENTATION OF THE DATA**

### **Description of The Data**

As indicated in Chapter 2, the present study was carried out using a strategy survey. The investigation gathered data from a target population group composed of workers from different origins and areas of activity, to analyze the understanding and point of view of these workers regarding the mediation process and cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace.

Web surveys or email surveys have become very popular in the last decade, they have evolved very quickly because they are very easy to understand or manage by users (VanderStoep and Johnston 2009).

As this is an anonymous survey, the researcher did not have any direct contact with the respondents due to data collection carried out through social media. The questionnaire was distributed after approval by the Study Supervisor through the consent form (Appendix D).

In compliance with the ethical requirements established by the Declaration of Helsinki, a consent form was included in the body of the questionnaire containing the purpose of the research, clarifications on confidentiality, research aims, and the emails of the Supervisor, the researcher, and the College in case of any doubts arise (Appendix C). The disclaimer of the survey also can be found in Appendix B.

Following the mix-method of quantitative and qualitative data, seventeen questions with multiple-choice options, checkboxes, and a discursive question were designed to assess the target respondent population using Google Forms, a simple online tool that assists researchers in creating questionnaires and analyzing data, was used to create the survey.

There are several websites that allow the construction and distribution of survey (VanderStoep and Johnston 2009).

Following that, the URLs to the survey (Appendix A) were distributed to the target population via social media platforms. It is worth noting that the survey was completed by one hundred and seventy-two people during the study, which took place between April 9 and 11, 2022.

The questionnaire's seventeen questions were marked as required, so the survey cannot be submitted unless all questions (except n.13) are answered. In the questions 1A, 1B, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 14 were provided a subspace to add more information if the respondents do not identify themselves or believe the suggested answers are not enough.

The survey aims to answer the question: Is mediation more appropriate tool for resolving intercultural conflicts in Ireland-based companies?

The questions developed are intended to address the following research objectives:

Q1: To assess what are the most common factors that cause cross-cultural conflict in the workplace.

Q2: To determine whether mediation can play a role in resolving cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace.

Q3. To assess the role of mediation and its techniques in the resolution of cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace in Ireland. Would this be the most appropriate way?

As this is a survey on cross-cultural conflicts, it is necessary that the target population be of different nationalities, ages, gender, race, level of English, positions, and areas in order to find a pattern of opinions on the subject.

All questions except n. 13 were marked as required, which means all 172 respondents had responded to all questions except n.13.



## Assessing the Target Population

Every researcher must be careful during this stage, once the moment the data collection is the central part and one of the essential activities to the research work Saunders et al. (2019).

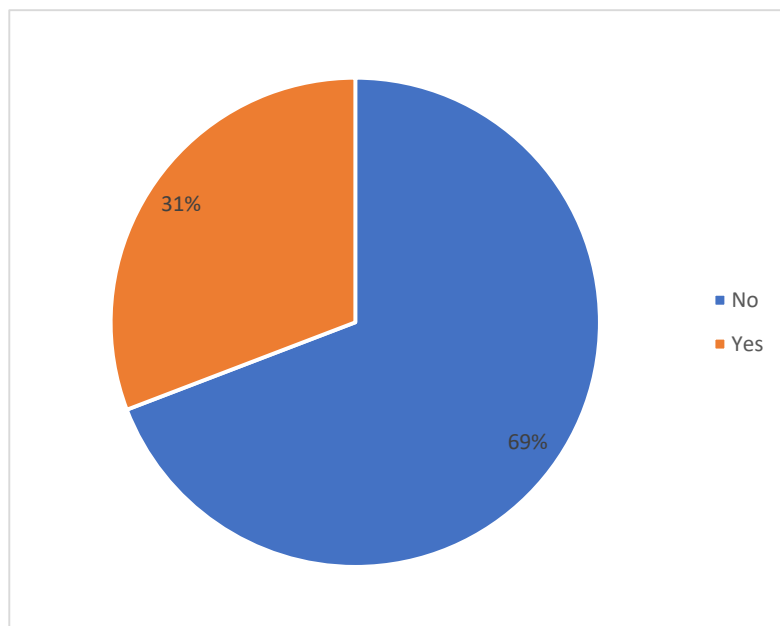
The first set of questions (1 to 7) was designed to identify the target population. To validate the survey, the respondents must be of different nationalities, age groups, gender, level of English, and who work in companies located in Irish territory.

Concerning questions 1, 1A, and 1B, which were designed to determine the origin of the target population, Figure 2 depicts the percentage of non-European and European respondents. The sample must be representative of the universe from which it is drawn (Duncan 1989).

The target population for the validation of the study was reached by analyzing the first group of questions (figures 2 to 8 and tables 1, 2, and 3).

**Figure 2: 1) Are you a European citizen?**

172 responses



Source: Own elaboration

**Table nº 1 – Nationality of the Participants.**

Nationality of the participants																																															
<table> <tr> <th>Country</th><th>Responses</th></tr> <tr> <td>Ireland</td><td>27</td></tr> <tr> <td>Italy</td><td>17</td></tr> <tr> <td>UK</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr> <td>Spain</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr> <td>France</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr> <td>Portugal</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr> <td>Slovakia</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td><td><b>53</b></td></tr> </table>	Country	Responses	Ireland	27	Italy	17	UK	2	Spain	2	France	2	Portugal	2	Slovakia	1	<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<table> <tr> <th>Country</th><th>Responses</th></tr> <tr> <td>Brazil</td><td>107</td></tr> <tr> <td>Mexico</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr> <td>China</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr> <td>Chile</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>Nigeria</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>Botswana</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>Venezuela</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>Saudi</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Arabia</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>Bolivia</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>Jordan</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>India</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td><td><b>119</b></td></tr> </table>	Country	Responses	Brazil	107	Mexico	2	China	2	Chile	1	Nigeria	1	Botswana	1	Venezuela	1	Saudi		Arabia	1	Bolivia	1	Jordan	1	India	1	<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>
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Source: Own elaboration																																															

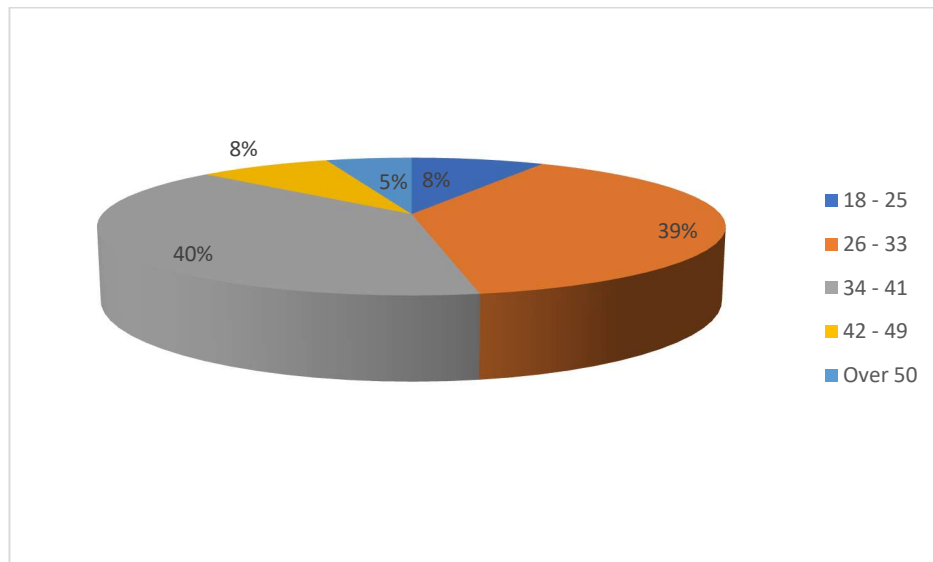
To identify the nationality of the respondents, 3 questions were designed. Figure 2 and Table 1 above is a combination of the three questions.

It can be seen from the table 1 that the largest number of respondents are Brazilians and Irish (see table 1).

Research question 3 was designed to identify the gender of the respondents and try to establish a pattern of analysis among the survey participants about which gender would suffer most from cross-cultural conflicts. As shown in figure 4, most respondents are women, however, it is not possible to determine which gender suffers more cross-cultural conflicts.

**Figure 3: 2) What is your age?**

172 responses



Source: Own elaboration

According to the responses to question 2, there is a balanced predominance of age groups 26-33 with 67 participants and 34-43 with 68 participants.

Other respondents are also represented in a balanced number. There were 14 participants in the 18-25 age group and 14 in the 42-49 age group. There are 9 respondents over the age of 50. The survey reached all of the age groups mentioned in question 2. (see figure 3).

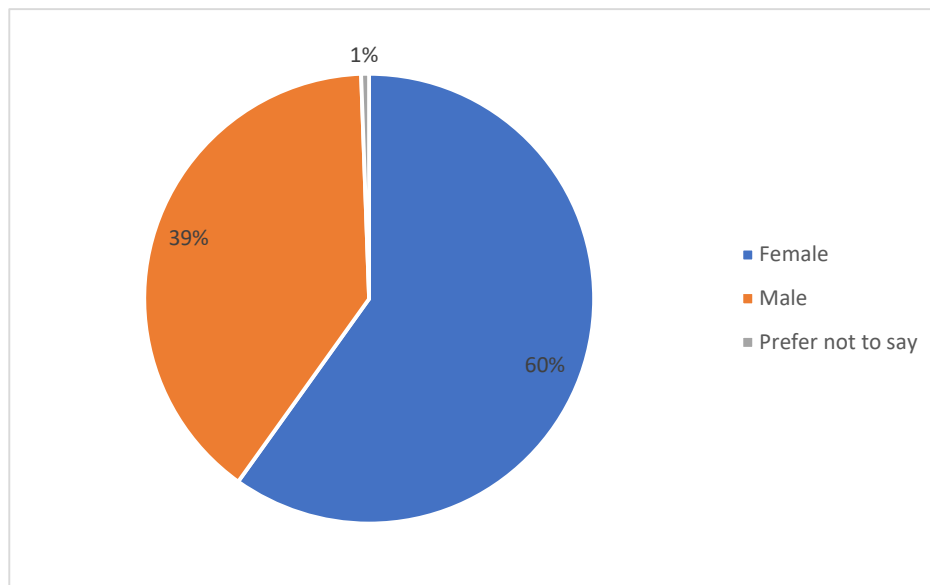
The concept of generation was first introduced by Karl Mannheim in 1920s, which defined some people who have a common culture, background, memories (Mannheim 1952). These affect each generation and impact on their thoughts, values, attitudes, and behaviours, it as a generational identity throughout one's generation's life span (Egri and Ralston 2004).

A generation is defined as the period of time or average age, basically considered to be thirty years (Collins 2019).

Employees with the same generations are more likely to open minded of values (Gursoy, Maier, and Chi 2008), the same attitudes towards work and goals (Tolbize 2008), shared similar concerns and change (Deal 2007).

**Figure 4: 3) What is your gender?**

172 responses



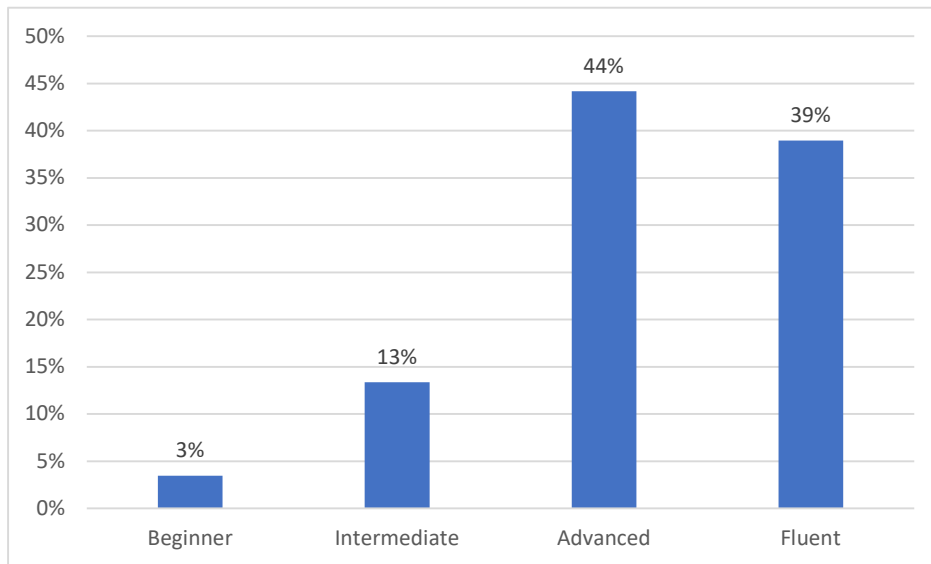
Source: Own elaboration

The third research question sought to identify respondents' gender in order to assess the gender diversity in the Irish labor market and to attempt to establish a standard of analysis among survey participants as to which gender would suffer the most from cross-cultural conflicts.

As shown in Figure 4, the majority of respondents are women 103, while 68 participants are men and 1 participant preferring not to respond.

**Figure 5: 4) What is your level of English?**

172 responses



Source: Own elaboration

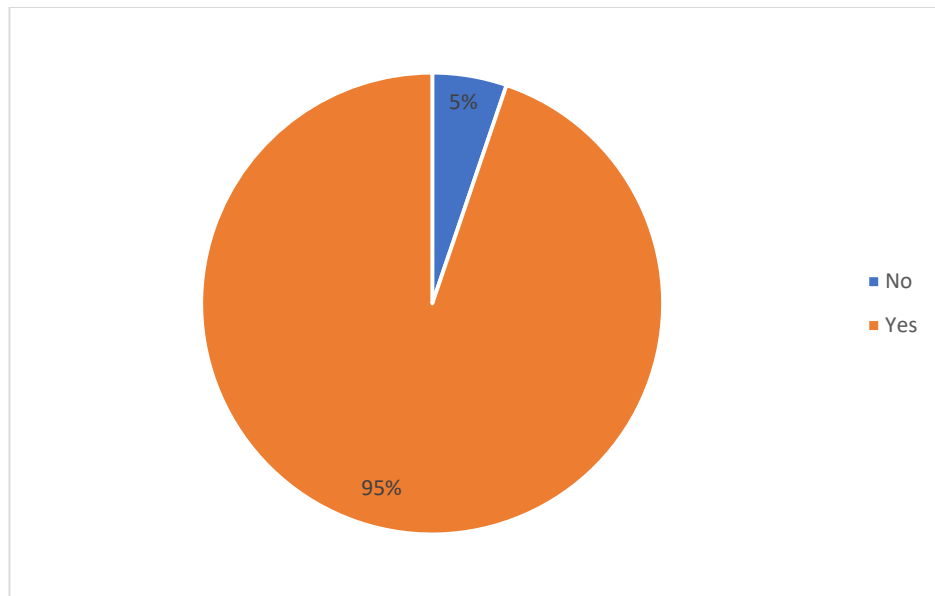
An important barrier that affects full integration of ethnic employees in the Australian workforce is the issue of communication, mainly English literacy (Adler 1986; Loden and Rosener 1991).

Research question 4 asks the participants' level of English to assess their understanding of the mediation process and the survey participant's communication with their co-workers, since most respondents are not native English speakers.

Six participants identified themselves as being at the beginner level, twenty-three as being at the intermediate level, seventy six as being at the advanced level, and sixty seven as being fluent in English.

**Figure 6: 5) Do you live and work in Ireland and/or Northern Ireland?**

172 responses



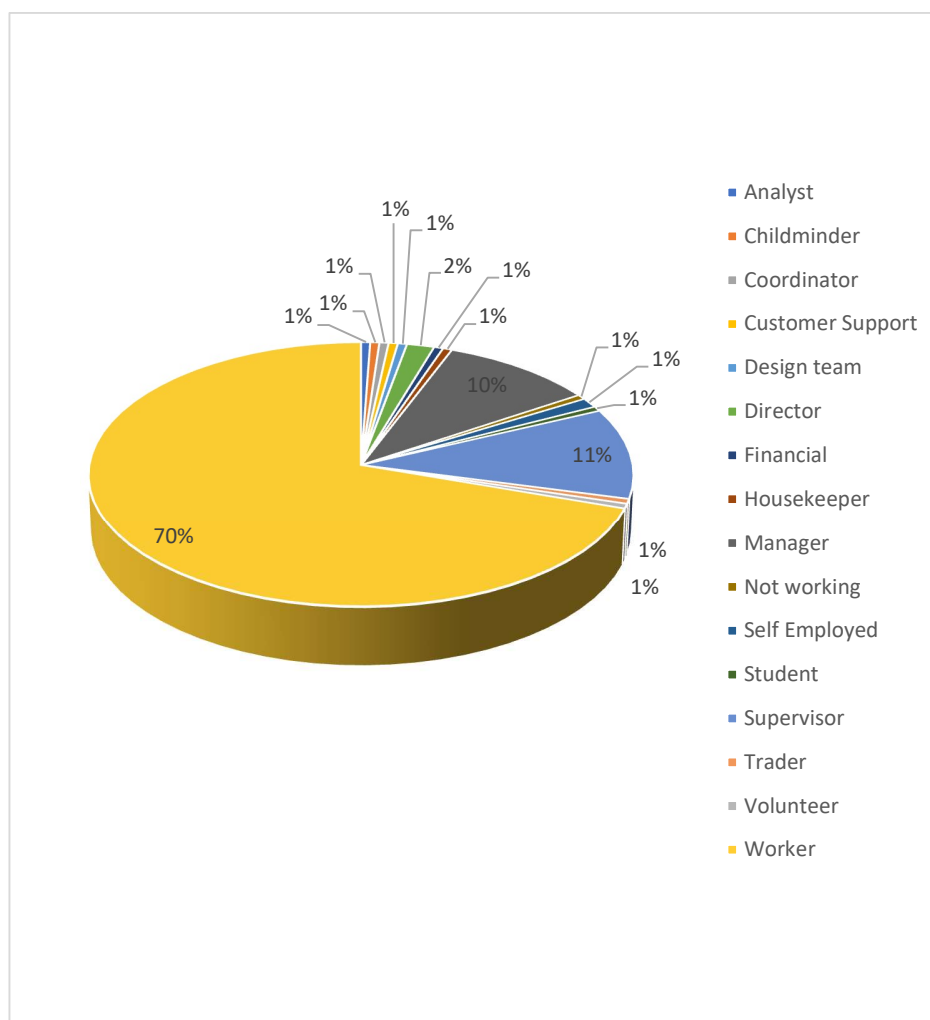
Source: Own elaboration

The study aims to access the population who is living and/or working in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Among the participants, 163 stated that they live and/or work in Ireland, while 09 stated that they do not.

This question is justified by the fact that the study is designed to assess whether mediation is an appropriate tool to resolve cross-cultural conflicts specifically in the Workplace in Ireland. To validate the study, the majority of participants would need to work on Irish soil.

**Figure 7: 6) What is your current position in the company you work for?**

172 responses



Source: Own elaboration

Considering that cross-cultural conflicts can occur in any sector and at any level of professionals, question 6 (figure 7) shows that 120 people identify themselves as workers, 19 as supervisors, 17 managers, 1 director, 1 coordinator, 2 self-employed, 1 unemployed, 1 student and the 8 remaining workers who responded to the survey indicating the name of their position can also be identified as workers (see table 2).

**Table nº 2 – Current Position of the Participants.**

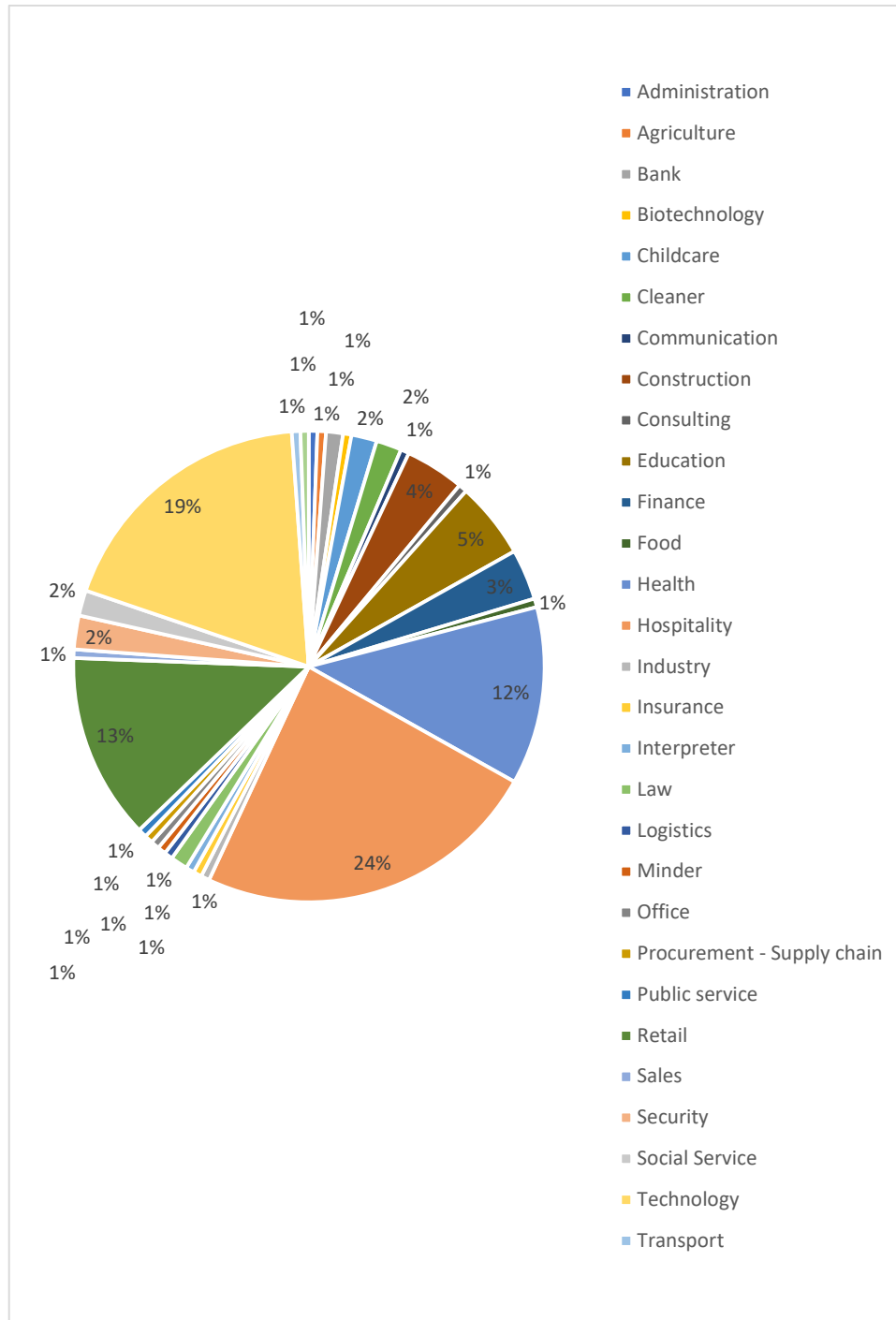
Current Position of the Participants	
<b>Responses</b>	<b>N.</b>
Analyst	1
Childminder	1
Coordinator	1
Customer	
Support	1
Design team	1
Director	3
Financial	1
Housekeeper	1
Manager	17
Not working	1
Self Employed	2
Student	1
Supervisor	19
Trader	1
Volunteer	1
Worker	120
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>
Source: Own elaboration	

By examining Table 2, it is possible to confirm that the vast majority of the target population in this study is composed of workers.



**Figure 8: 7) What sector do you currently work in?**

172 responses



Source: Own elaboration

**Table nº 3 – Sector in Which Participants Work**

Sector in which participants work	
<b>Responses</b>	<b>N.</b>
Administration	1
Agriculture	1
Bank	2
Biotechnology	1
Childcare	3
Cleaner	3
Communication	1
Construction	7
Consulting	1
Education	9
Finance	6
Food	1
Health	21
Hospitality	41
Industry	1
Insurance	1
Interpreter	1
Law	2
Logistics	1
Minder	1
Office	1
Procurement - Supply chain	1
Public service	1
Retail	22
Sales	1
Security	4
Social Service	3
Technology	32
Transport	1
Warehouse	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>
Source: Own elaboration	

Small and large business transactions are often conducted cross-culturally, and this cross-cultural platform ranges from domestic companies with internally diverse workforces to transglobal enterprises with geographically dispersed virtual teams (Grisham 2006). The above claim is supported by our sample.

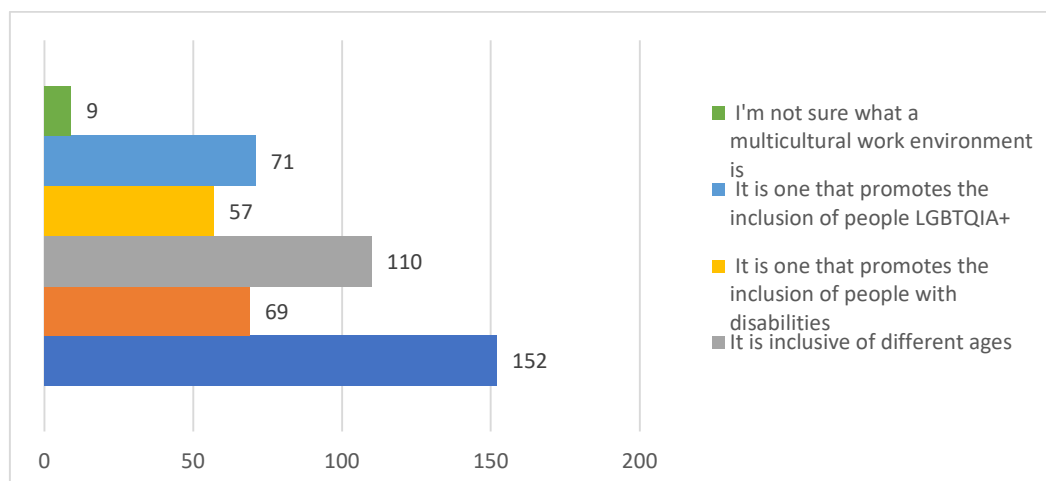
### Assessing the context in which workplace conflict arises

The second set of questions (8–13) was designed to assess respondents' views on what they consider to be a multicultural workplace, whether they recognize that their workplace is a diverse environment, and their views on the factors that influence the increase and decrease of cross-cultural conflicts. Participants were also asked if they had ever witnessed or been involved in a workplace conflict and who were the parties involved.

Research question 8 was designed to identify in the form of checkboxes which factors make a workplace a multicultural environment. Respondents could choose all the options that applied to their opinion on the subject (see figure 9).

**Figure 9: 8) In your opinion, what are the factors that make your workplace a multicultural environment?**

172 responses



Source: Own elaboration

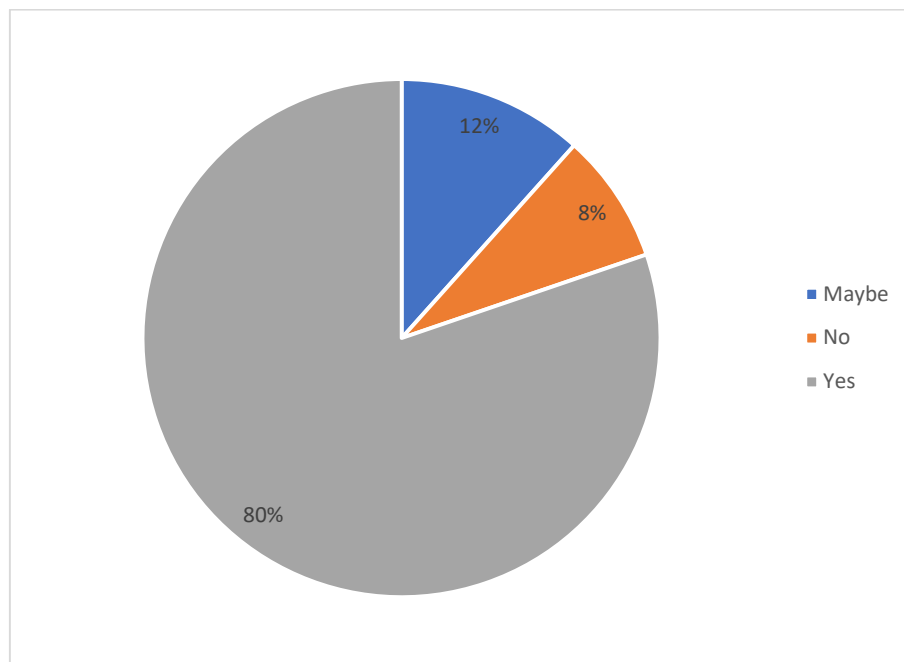
Among the 6 options available, the most chosen were:

1. It is inclusive of diverse cultures: 152 responses.
2. It is inclusive of different ages: 110 responses.
3. Is the one that promote inclusions of people LGBTQIA+: 71 responses.

Our sample indicates that there are not one or two factors that determine whether a workplace is diverse or not, but a set of factors that combine to give the worker the feeling of a diverse workplace, but most of them have the opinion that a multicultural environment is one that brings together different cultures, age groups and sexual orientation.

**Figure 10: 9) Do you think that your workplace is culturally diverse?**

172 responses



Source: Own elaboration

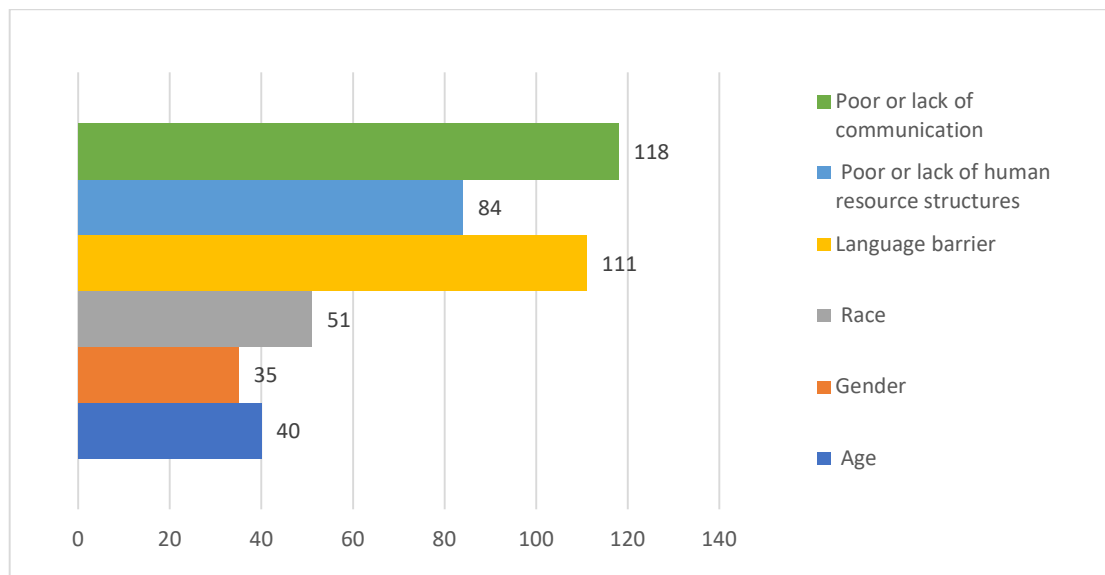
Research question 9 represented by figure 10 shows that 80% of respondents understand that they work in a culturally diverse environment.

According to Currie (2006), workforce diversity refers to the variety of differences between individuals and groups in the workplace.

Regarding question 10, the same response strategy applied to question 8 was used, that is, checkboxes, this time to assess the respondents' opinion about which factors can influence a cross-cultural conflict. Respondents could select all of the options that apply to their understanding of these factors, and even add new factors in the "other" checkbox.

**Figure 11: 10) In your opinion, what are the factors that can influence a cross cultural conflict in the workplace?**

172 responses



Source: Own elaboration

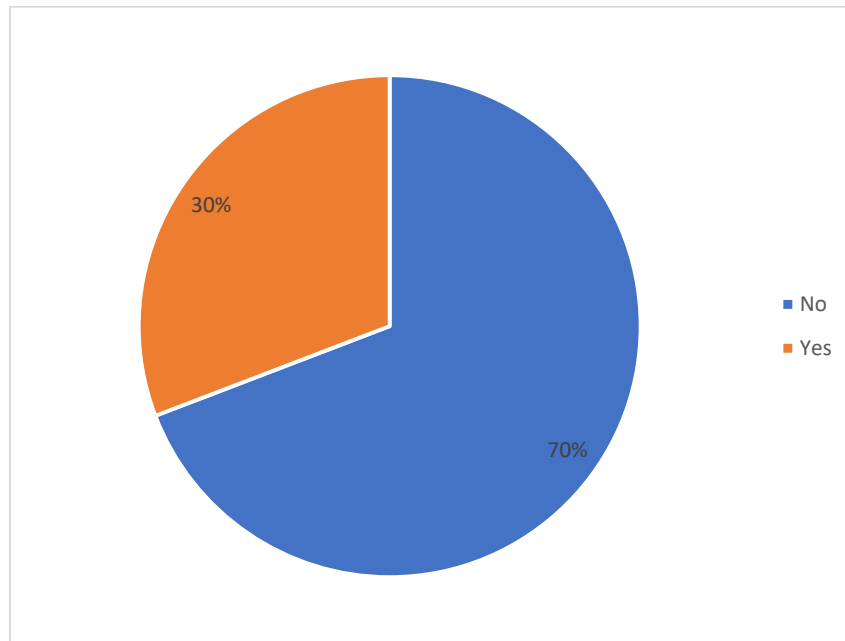
Among the 6 options available, the most chosen were:

1. Poor or lack of communication: 118 responses.
2. Language barrier: 110 responses.
3. Poor or lack of human resource structures: 84 responses.

As expected, the most chosen hypotheses are related to communication between the parties, with poor or lack of communication being the most addressed followed by the language barrier.

**Figure 12: 11) Have you ever witnessed or been involved in any conflict with your co-workers?**

172 responses



Source: Own elaboration

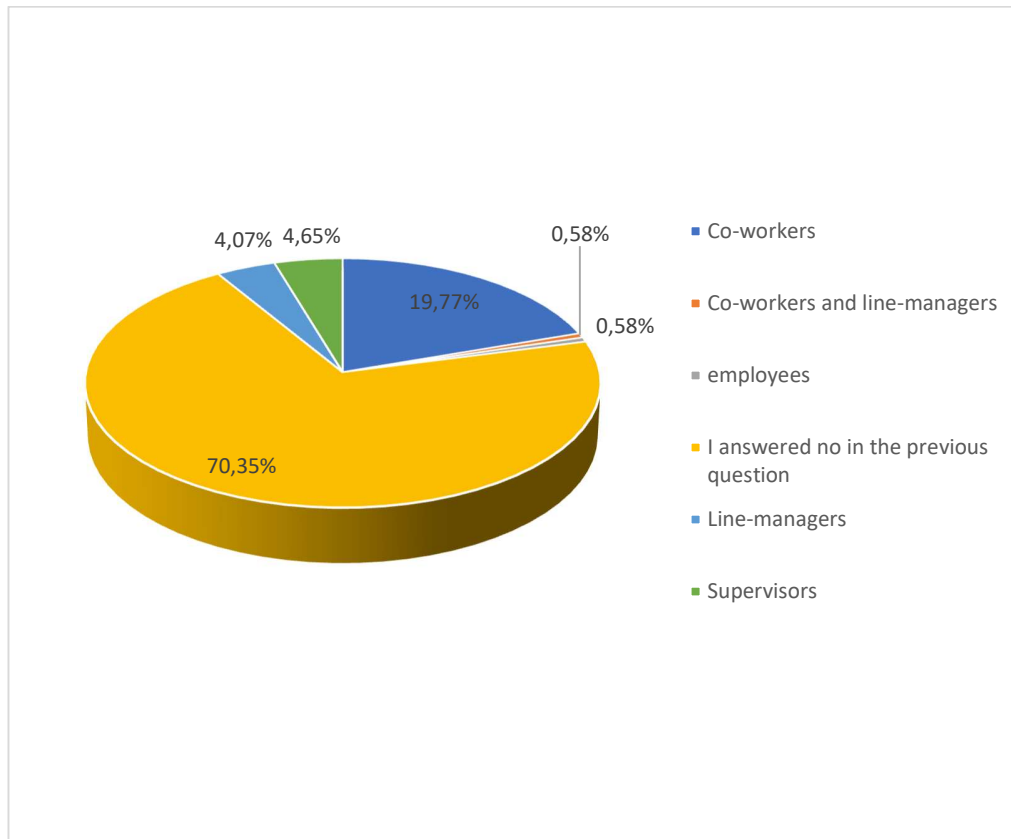
Research question 11 continues the assessment of cross-cultural conflicts by asking survey participants whether they have witnessed or been involved in cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace. (see Figure 12).

In the percentage representation of the above graph in numbers, 121 people said they had not witnessed or been involved in a conflict, while 51 said they had already witnessed or been involved in a conflict.

Those 51 who answered “yes” to this question should indicate who were involved in the conflict in question 12. Among the options, 20% of the participants chose conflicts between “co-workers” (See figure 13).

**Figure 13: 12) If you answered yes to the previous question: Did the conflict involve the following parties?**

172 responses



Source: Own elaboration

The objective of this research question is to evaluate in which group of workers conflicts occur more frequently. The most chosen option was "conflicts between co-workers".

**Figure 14: 13) If you answered “yes” in the question 11. What was the conflict about? Briefly explain how it happened.**

41 responses

Lack of communication

Culture issues about good manners

Unfairness

Different opinions about the politics in Brazil

Racist scum Irish incapable of respecting others

Interest conflict / poor management

A man wouldn't take orders from their female supervisor due to cultural beliefs.

dominance attempt over same level co-workers

From my point of view the nurse who is giving the initial training was racist towards one of the attendees.

Laziness 🤔

People in my workplace are racist (they have problems with what they call “Latino” people), selfish, they have a desire for power and see other people loose.

Previous supervisor displayed xenophobic behaviour, with a clear preference to personal friends in spite of performance.

The person was stalking me and other workers

Some European people think because we are Brazilian we have to work as a slave.

Roster, lack of communication

On my last job, the manager understood the situation wrong and didn't want that I work more there.

Misunderstood

Everyday I used to have an argument with my co-worker because she was too lazy, didn't do her job and wanted me to do it for her.

Discrimination, machism

religious foods

It was about a language barrier, and xenophobia

Poor communication

Sexism and politics

When I first came here the language barrier was huge but I manage to find a job as a housekeeper.

After a while my direct manager started with some non sense comments about how stupid I was just for being Brazilian... I could understand but struggled to speak. I tried to report, but nothing happened. I ended up leaving.

My supervisor were harassing the employees from different nationalities.



Conflict of interest - We had 2 options to finish a project and we had 2 project manager with different ideas

Political allegiance

racism and misogyny

No comments

I have seen conflicts bases on religious beliefs, as co workers were not tolerant of the religious beliefs of others. Additionally I have seen conflicts around LGBTQIA+ issues where workers put up material promoting inclusion on office boards and this caused conflict with other members of the company who felt this was unnecessary

She faked her payslip to ask people money and I found out.

performance of their duties

Different treatment for employees

Overload work in some nationalities over others

Different approach in the way of working. Lack of communication regarding the amount of work to be done

Racism

A friend of mine that believes in her jobs she is being underpaid as she is not receiving all the corresponding income by law, especially the full payment on her annual leave

Disagreement over HR processes

The person was stealing money from the till, got fired

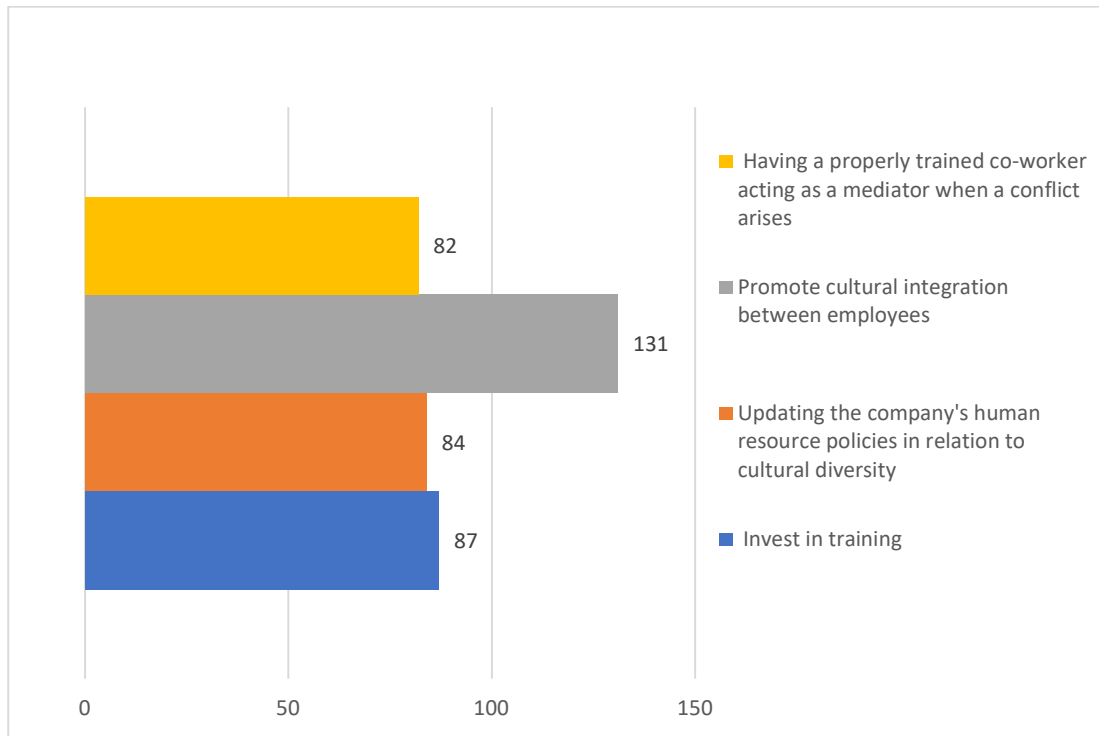
Xenophobia

### **Assessing the Respondents' Opinion About Mediation in The Workplace**

The third set of questions (14 to 17) was designed to assess the opinion of the respondents about strategies to manage workplace conflicts. Participants were invited to answer what could help to reduce cross-cultural conflicts, whether they ever heard about the mediation process, and still about their willingness to join a cultural diversity training to learn about their co-worker's culture. The last question asked if the participants would attend mediation in order to solve the cross-cultural conflict.

**Figure15: 14) What do you think could help reduce cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace?**

172 responses



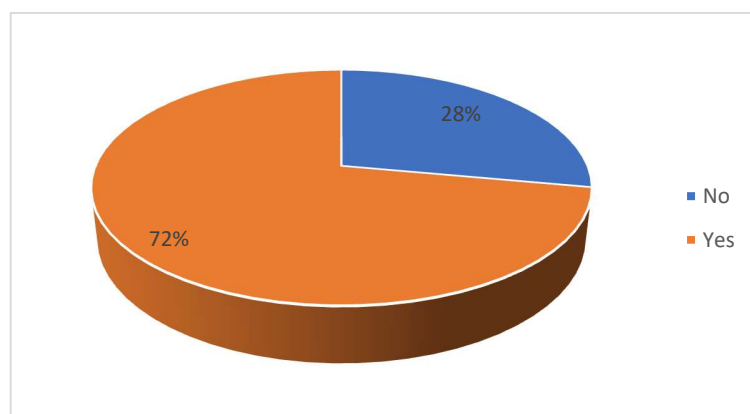
Source: Own elaboration

The graph above shows that the vast majority of participants chose the option "promote cultural integration between employees," but when looking at the remaining options, it is noted that there is no significant difference in votes between them, which are presented in a very balanced manner.

The preceding question implies that conflict reduction or inhibition it depends on a set of factors that, when combined by organizations, can lead to good results in combating conflicts within companies.

**Figure 16: 15) Have you ever heard about mediation?**

172 responses

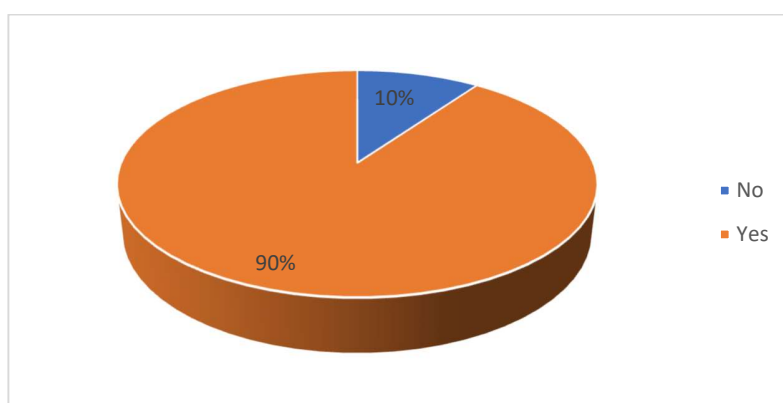


Source: Own elaboration

Research question 15 was elaborated mentioning the definition of the mediation process (see Appendix A) to assess whether respondents have heard about it. The majority of respondents said yes, with 124 saying they'd heard of mediation and 48 saying no.

**Figure 17: 16) Would you be willing to participate in cultural diversity training focused on learning about the culture of your co-workers to improve relationships in the workplace?**

172 responses

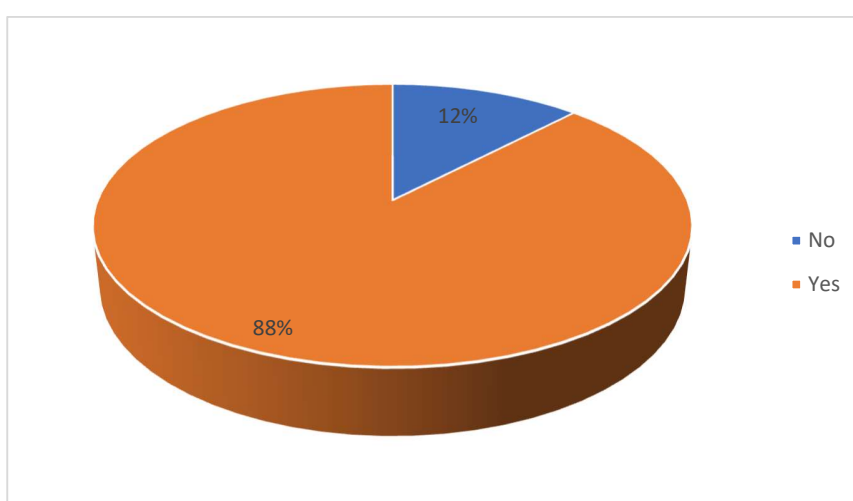


Source: Own elaboration

When asked if they would be willing to participate in training to learn about their co-workers' cultures, 151 participants said "yes," while only 21 said "no." The above result suggests that employees are willing to integrate with their co-workers in order to develop a better work environment.

**Figure 18: 17) Would you be willing to attend mediation in order to solve a cultural conflict in the workplace?**

172 responses



Source: Own elaboration

The last sample indicates the majority of 88% of the respondents are willing to attend mediation.

The results presented in the final group of questions indicate that workers are willing to engage in ADR methods rather than claiming in court.

This survey was an invitation to reflect extended to those who generously gave their time for the benefit of the community. A reflection on their routine with co-workers and the environment in which their activities are carried out, but most importantly, a reflection on how conflicts arise and the interactions that are made to resolve them. Simple questions were developed to connect the study's objectives to data from people who live the reality that the theory produces. In reality, conflict is a subjective and variable phenomenon that can be expressed or may experience subtly by a co-worker without others noticing.

## **CHAPTER 4 - DATA ANALYSIS/FINDINGS**

The following sections of this chapter present the previous chapter's empirical findings in the form of graphs and tables, which are compared to the findings of the literature review. In this chapter, the data collected and presented in the previous chapter is analyzed as empirical data.

The data is then analyzed using a qualitative analytical technique in following the model of Saunders et al. (2007).

With regard to this study, the mix-method was chosen, 'qualitative data refers to quantities and number, whereas qualitative refers to occurrences that are seen but cannot be measured in numbers, as language, for example' (McLeod 2019).

The decision was made based on the fact that the survey contains a mix of multiple choice and conflict descriptions. The survey results are presented and explained in the following sections.

This chapter also examines the descriptive answers to the research question n.13 and elaborates on the percentages, comparing them with the literature presented in this study. These findings and conclusions are based on what the descriptions and numbers represent but are not determinants of how the workplace responds to intercultural conflict or multicultural diversity. In addition, some answers were edited in relation to the position and sector of activity to clarify and protect the anonymity of individuals.

### **Addressing The Diversity in The Workplace**

Today, workforce diversity is defined as the need to work competently with the expanding heterogeneity, including gender, age, race, religion, and ethnicity, of the organization (Lämsä and Sintonen 2006).

Mulkeen (2008) sees the workplace diversity as 'all the differences in age, gender, sexual orientation, education, cultural background, religion, and life experience.'

Cultural diversity in the words of Cox (1992) is the representation in on social system of people with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance. The significance of differences between people is what makes vulnerable an organisation in terms of effectiveness, decision

making and peaceful working environment. He also wisely states that it is well known that understanding the effects of culture on human behaviour is crucial to the business success.

Hofstede (1991) claims that an organisation is a social system of a different nature than a nation' in the context, organisations are the influence of work.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter and through the literature review, Ireland currently has a very diverse labour market, and in order to confirm this hypothesis, the ideal target populations should be of various nationalities, age groups, gender, English level, and work in companies located on Irish territory. The results of the first set of questions (1-7) showed that the target population was successfully reached.

In the answers to question 2, it is observed that among the respondents, there is a balanced predominance of age groups 26-33 and 34-43, corresponding to 39% and 40% of the total, respectively (see figure 3).

Respondents aged 18-25 and 42-49 also present themselves in a balanced number, corresponding to 8% each of the total number of respondents. Respondents over 50 corresponding to 5% of the total number of respondents. The survey reached all age groups suggested in question 2 (see figure 3).

As shown in figure 4, most respondents are women, however, it is not possible to determine which gender suffers more cross-cultural conflicts. The only possible conclusion from the answers to question 4 is that the number of female respondents (59,5%) is highest than the number of male respondents (39,5%) in this survey.

Cultural diversity is a highly complex field with multiple distinctions and the majority of attributes cannot be discovered immediately (Hoge 2010).

Figure 5 shows that most respondents have an advanced or fluent level of English. Through this result, it is possible to determine that 83% of the survey participants have a level of communication and understanding sufficient to interpret interpersonal issues in their professional routine.

The study is designed to assess whether mediation is an appropriate tool to resolve cross-cultural conflicts specifically in the Workplace in Ireland, figure 6 shows that 95% of the target

population are living and/or working in Ireland and Northern Ireland and 5% of respondents do not live and/or work in the region studied.

This was another important criterion in relation to the target population because the study is based on Irish territory. The 5% of respondents who claimed not to live and/or work in Irish territory is evidence that the survey was randomly distributed to whoever was willing to respond.

Questions 6 and 7 were designed to identify the participants' positions as well as the market sector in which they work. Participants indicated 16 different job categories (see table 2) from 30 different market sectors (see table 3).

People with different backgrounds who live in a diverse environment may have different attitudes, values, and ways of thinking. According to Hoge (2010), there are positive and negative effects of cultural diversity, and this will be influenced by the organizational climate of the organization.

Positive opinion on diversity is accepted by many people nowadays (Tüz and Gümüş 2010). Diversity is important in idea generation, growth, learning, image, human resources, and discrimination law (Hon and Brunner 2000; Friedman and Amoo 2002).

Intergroup relations are crucial in organizations and are influenced by power differences between groups in the organizational context (Alderfer and Smith 1982).

### **The Importance of a Diverse Workplace Environment**

There is a notion that the diversity of the workforce can bring many benefits and is a positive implication for work (Li et al. 2011). There are two sides to diversity, one positive side is increased innovation, commitment and the wide range of customers, the downside is increased discrimination, conflict, communication barriers (Joshi and Roh 2009).

Cultural diversity in the workplace reflects demographic, social and cultural differences at the social level (Gotsis and Korte 2015).

Diversity helps expand perspective, approach, strategic tactics, launch a new product, develop a marketing plan, create a new idea, design a new operation, and evaluate emerging trends (Adler 2002).

Although diversity brings many benefits to business and organization, such as building diverse work teams, more creativity and innovation ideas, it can have more problematic solutions than the homogeneous workforce (Watson et al. 1993).

Diversity supports the expansion of perspectives, methods, strategies, and tactics, create new things, formulate marketing plans, generate new ideas and new forms of operation in organizations (Adler and Gundersen 2007).

In the words of Bassett-Jones, (2005), diversity in the workplace involves diverse demographic backgrounds with different cultures and knowledge. A different cultural background team in can bring different contributions, can improve problem solving, creativity and adaptability (Cox 1994).

Several studies have indicated that group decision-making of cultural diversity rather than basic group tasks due to different perspectives of views can result in a more creative and high-quality decision (McLeod, Lobel and Cox Jr 1996; Thomas 1999).

Nevertheless, Williams and O'Reilly III (1998b) pointed out that there are certain types of diversity benefits, but some studies on race and gender have proven positive and negative results. Negative effects may contain miscommunication and more obstacles (Martin 2014).

There are several authors and scholars who support the theory that diversity brings countless benefits to organizations. It is not possible to ignore the reality and disregard the need to implement programs and internal policies in organizations to promote the cultural integration of workers. No strategy during this study proved to be more effective than the dissemination of information and training aimed at cultural diversity.



## **Assessing The Communication in The Workplace**

According to Ober (2006) effective communication, both internally and externally, is essential for any organization wishing to excel in today's internationally competitive corporate environment and global business and competitive advantage would not be achievable without effective business communication.

The second set of questions (8 to 13 represented by the figures 9 to 14) was designed to assess respondents' views on what they consider to be a multicultural workplace, whether they recognize that their workplace is a diverse environment, and their views on the factors that influence the increase and decrease of cross-cultural conflicts. Participants were also asked if they had ever witnessed or been involved in a workplace conflict and who were the parties involved.

The result shows that 80% of respondents understand that they work in a culturally diverse environment (see figure 10). When approached about what a culturally diverse work environment would be, most participants have the opinion that a multicultural environment is one that brings together different cultures, age groups and sexual orientation.

When asked which factors could contribute to an increase in cross-cultural conflicts, the majority of participants chose communication-related options such as poor or lack of communication being the most addressed followed by the language barrier.

Another hypothesis that received a significant number of votes (84) was "poor or lack of human resource structures" (see figure 11). This result suggests that workers would prefer a more participatory human resources structure.

According to the survey, 70% of participants said they had never witnessed or been involved in workplace conflicts, but 30% said yes, and these participants were given the opportunity to briefly describe how the conflict occurred in question n.13. This was the only question that was not required, so participants could choose whether or not to report their experience.

In organizations, people often avoid conflict, they remain inactive when conflict emerges, or they induce conflict without knowing it (O'Connor, Gruenfeld, and McGrath 1993).

People who have never experienced conflict at the workplace are 'living in a dreamworld, blind to their surroundings or are confined to solitary confinement' (Boohar 2001).

Only 41 of the 51 participants who said yes gave their reports which will be analyzed further below, however, it is observed that most reports do not provide sufficient elements for evaluation or do not reflect the definition of cross-cultural conflict.

Over the past decades there has been an increase in research on conflict and its management both internationally and at an interdisciplinary level (Rahim 1989; Thomas 1992). Conflict and its management have therefore been researched from different angles and disciplinary perspectives, such as psychology, behavioural sciences, sociology, communication, health sciences and anthropology (Wall and Callister 1995; Vecchio 2000).

Tillett and French (2006) believe that conflict encourages communication dialogue and help with individual and organizational growth as it provides opportunities for problems to be solved and help the organization to advance; while Eunson (2007) opines that conflict can help change complacency through productive means.

Despite the growing number of conflict concepts and definitions presented in various studies, there is no comprehensive definition of conflict or conflict theory in general.

Even among renowned scholars on the subject, there is no agreement on the subject; it is natural that the reports are related to different types of conflict because the worker intuitively generalizes and understands any type of conflict as a single one; in fact, what distinguishes one from the other is the reasons that led to the escalation of this conflict.

What is observed in the participants' reports is that half of the answers are not related to cross-cultural conflicts but to conflicts related to poor communication or lack of it.

It is also observed that some workers are unable to identify issues related to multiculturalism, there may be several reasons, among the most likely we can highlight the possible lack of guidance on the subject through internal policies that promote awareness of cultural diversity in the workplace where these people are currently employed. This reasoning is justified by the fact that the hypothesis "Updating the company's human resource policies in relation to cultural

diversity" is the third most chosen option when it comes to factors that can help reduce cross-cultural conflicts in participants' opinion (see figure 10).

Other reports are impossible to identify as a conflict, because they are monosyllabic or because there is no sense in what was reported, as below.

Participant 107 *"Laziness"*

Participant 147 *"Unfairness"*

Participant 156 *"No comments"*

Participant 157 *"Misunderstood"*

Participant 136 *"Political allegiance"*

Conflicts may also arise when the behaviour or actions of people, teams, or departments violate the rules, regulations, or social norms of an organization (Starks 2006).

The following set of reports is about conflicts for a variety of reasons, but what can be observed from this set of reports is that both the general conflicts reports and the reports that might reflect cross-cultural conflicts have a primary characteristic in common: a poor or lack of communication.

### **General Conflicts Reported**

Participant n.5

*"A friend of mine that believes in her jobs she is being underpaid as she is not receiving all the correpondant income bu law, especifically the full payment on her anual leave".*

Participant n.8

*"Disagreement over HR processes"*

Participant 12 *"Lack of communication"*

Participant 13 *"Performance of their duties"*

Participant 26 *"The person was stealing money from the till, got fired"*

Participant 28 *"The person was stalking me and other workers"*

Participant 48 *"Different approach in the way of working. Lack of communication regarding the amount of work to be done"*

Participant 68 *"She faked her payslip to ask people money and I found out."*

Participant 70 *"Different treatment for employees"*

Participant 80 *"Roster, lack of communication"*

Participant 123 *"On my last job, the manager understood the situation wrong and didn't want that I work more there."*

Participant 134 *"Everyday I used to have an argument with my co-worker because she was too lazy, didn't do her job and wanted me to do it for her."*

Participant 142 *"Conflict of interest - We had 2 options to finish a project and we had 2 project manager with different ideas"*

Participant 105 *"Interest conflict / poor management"*

Participant 132 *"Poor communication"*

Participant 171 *"Lack of communication"*

### **Reports of Conflicts That Might Reflect Cross-Cultural Issues**

Participant 66 *"xenophobia"*

Participant 71 *"Racism"*

Participant 20 *"My supervisor were harassing the employees from different nationalities."*

Participant 32 *“Sexism and politics”*

Participant 39 *“Previous supervisor displayed xenophobic behaviour, with a clear preference to personal friends in spite of performance.”*

Participant 41 *“People in my workplace are racist (they have problems with what they call “Latino” people), selfish, they have a desire for power and see other people loose”.*

Participant 51 *“racism and misogyny”*

Participant 52 *“Racist scum Irish incapable of respecting others”*

Participant 53 *“A man woudn’t take orders from their female supervisor due to cultural beliefs”.*

Participant 58 *“Different opinions about the politics in Brazil”*

Participant 59 *“Some European people think because we are Brazilian we have to work as a slave.”*

Participant 73 *“Overload work in some nationalities over others”*

Participant 89 *“dominance attempt over same level co-workers”*

Participant 94 *“I have seen conflicts bases on religious beliefs, as co workers were not tolerant of the religious beliefs of others. Additionally I have seen conflicts around LGBTQIA+ issues where workers put up material promoting inclusion on office boards and this caused conflict with other members of the company who felt this was unnecessary”*

Participant 97 *“Discrimination, machism”*

Participant 109 *“When I first came here the language barrier was huge but I manage to find a job as a housekeeper. After a while my direct manager started with some non sense comments about how stupid I was just for being Brazilian... I could understand but struggled to speak. I tried to report, but nothing happened. I ended up leaving.”*

Participant 111 *“It was about a language barrier, and xenophobia”*

Participant 113 *"Culture issues about good manners"*

Participant 116 *"From my point of view the nurse who is giving the initial training was racist towards one of the attendees."*

Participant 158 *"religious foods"*

Intra-organisational conflicts can be defined as oppositions between and among individuals or groups who have professional and/or personal relationships within the same institution. These issues are normally related to material (e.g., objects, income) and nonmaterial (e.g., ideas, emotions, values, symbols) entities (Tripp 1985).

Other factors that can influence the escalation of conflict are 'tight deadlines and time pressure hinder the ability of any group to build relationships' (Jarvenpaa and Leidner 1999).

The changes in worldwide economies and technology provide a wealth of business opportunities that challenge even the most advanced company's ability to effectively integrate and manage the diversity of all its subsystems, including workforce, customer base, and vendor supply chain (Hulten 2006).

There are inherent differences between cultures that can have a serious impact on a business relationship. Individualistic versus group cultures, low-context versus high-context cultures, formality of communication, and frequency of communication (Bandyopadhyay, Robicheaux, and Hill 1994).

The inability to grasp these differences and understand the need for cultural competency has been ascribed as the reason for many international business failures (Johnson, Lenartowicz, and Apud 2006).

There has long been an assumption that individuals should "want" to assimilate when introduced to a new culture in order to get along and succeed in the business world. Instead, some research has shown that people do not want to set aside their cultural values, lifestyle preferences, and identities in work life (Barker and Gower 2010).

Organizations must then realize they are responsible for making themselves sensitive to the diverse needs of different groups of people (Lämsä and Sintonen 2006).

### **Mediation to Resolve Workplace Disputes**

In the third set of questions (14 to 17) the intention was to approach the participants about the mediation process and evaluate their opinions on strategies to manage conflicts in the workplace as the best means to reduce conflicts and also assess the participants' perceptions. to join cultural diversity training to learn about the culture of their co-workers. The last question asked whether participants would attend mediation to resolve cross-cultural conflicts.

Workplace mediation is an increasingly popular process for resolving workplace disputes. More and more, organisations rely on mediation as a means of managing and resolving workplace disputes internally (Teague et al. 2015). In fact, 78% of participants have already heard about the mediation process. All disputes can be mediated, and that it is difficult to positively damage a dispute through mediation (Berger 2015).

In the research question 17, 88% of the participants pointed that they would attend mediation. There are several advantages identified by researchers in mediating disputes in the workplace: mediation can seek to rebuild damaged relationships (Bennett 2013; Tallodi 2019); it can address 'power imbalance' between disputants (Bennett 2013); it allows parties to address issues beyond the immediate matter of dispute (Ridley-Duff and Bennett 2011) and it can help to improve employee relationships (Banks and Saundry 2010; Latreille 2011). It can allow for a more nuanced approach to resolving a dispute than other dispute resolution methodologies can, taking account of particularly complex inter-relational dynamics (Jameson, Bodtker and Linker 2010; Sargent, Picard and Jull 2011).

Most participants showed they were willing to participate in training on cultural diversity, 'It is also crucial to understand intercultural communication as simultaneously intergroup and

interpersonal, to incorporate both aspects into interventions, and to advocate for such training to improve intercultural relations' (Gallois 2003).

The increasing popularity of mediation largely stems from the growing trend among employee claimants to pursue litigation and the strong desire among employers to avoid litigation (Feuille 1999).

This may be particularly advantageous when the claimant is still employed by the organisation, and when a resolution is achieved without attributions of blame (Harkavy 1999).

Mediation can foster open and consensual dialogue (Banks and Saundry 2010), allow parties to explore underlying concerns and emotions (Bollen and Euwema 2013), lead to an expectation of transformative change at a relational level (Gaynier 2005) and improve workplace processes, relationships, and cultures (Banks and Saundry 2010; Latreille 2011; CIPD survey cited in ACAS 2013) after which, whenever possible, those benefits should be reaped through mediation.

Addressing relational and emotional aspects of the parties' interactions can, where appropriate, pave the way to resolving not only narrower quantifiable, or work process issues, but also bring the added and proven benefit of improving workplace relationships (Banks and Saundry 2010; CIPD 2008).

This can enable the parties to consider organisational or operational changes to avoid future disputes (Tallodi 2015). Consequently, it can also reduce the costs of long-term absence, staff turnover and litigation (Latreille and Saundry 2014).

Mediation is a process that has many advantages over other means of conflict resolution. People can reach a mutual agreement faster because they do not depend on a judge to decide the conflict, it is a voluntary and confidential process, and only with the authorization of the parties can it be disclosed, and the results are lasting, as the parties agree only when they are satisfied with their decisions. It is worth noting that the parties are not obliged to reach an



agreement just because they have agreed to participate in the mediation process. The parties can withdraw at any time because control of the process and the results to be achieved is in the hands of the parties involved, who exercise it through self-determination.

Self-determination is characterized by the act of exercising their wills and decisions voluntarily and not coerced. Each party involved in the process makes its choices freely and informed from the beginning to the end of the process, regardless of the result achieved.

Consequently, it can also reduce the costs of long-term absence, staff turnover and litigation (Latreille and Saundry 2014).

## **CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSIONS**

Unquestionably, communication is the highlight of this study, followed by the willingness of participants to point out hypotheses that can improve relationships in the work environment, such as adhering to participation in training on cultural diversity to integrate co-workers.

The survey results clearly show that participating workers not only need change but are also willing to join forces with organizations to address these issues through information and alternative means of dealing with the problem, rather than resorting to traditional means.

With regard to the knowledge of the population surveyed, 75% of the participants answered that they had already heard about the concept of mediation, however, it was not possible to determine the level of knowledge only through this sample. A more in-depth study on the topic would involve interviews with specific questions about the mediation process and the application of its principles. Furthermore, 88% of participants claim they could use mediation if they become involved in a conflict in the workplace.

It is valid to mention that ADR has been used by different civilizations throughout history, as conflicts will occur as long as there are two or more people interacting (Moore 2014).

In addition, Fisher and Ury (1991) state that conflict is a growing industry, as people do not accept decisions dictated by others if those decisions affect them.

These are expressive numbers that confirm the hypothesis that mediation can be a good instrument in the resolution of disputes related not only to cross-cultural conflicts but to any type of conflict between workers, obviously within the guidelines of the law and self-determination principles.

The awareness of workers about mediation should be made in the foreground. In order to choose the mediation process, workers must be properly oriented about the mediation process and its possible consequences. Studies show that a lack of awareness and understanding of the use and potential benefits of mediation are among the main reasons why the process is not widely used by individuals and companies when problems arise (Latreille 2011).

Even though mediation has become more popular in the last three decades, the promotion of the practice is extremely important and has to be continued, as research in the UK has shown the unawareness and misunderstanding about mediation are among the main reason which still prevent people from pursuing it when conflict arises (Latrielle 2011).

The lack of information about mediation and its process, as well as the way in which it is conducted, can be impeding factors for the worker's confidence in the process. People need to feel familiar with this alternative means of disputes so that one of the most important principles of mediation is exercised, which is self-determination. Latreille, (2011) points out that this misconception may be related to an organisational culture where employees tend to pursue formal complaints/grievances procedures when an issue arises.

It is important that ADR education is promoted among employees in the organizations. The importance of understanding the practices and protocols followed in mediation is that it allows disputing parties who opt to solve their issue through mediation to frame their expectations, so that they will be satisfied with the outcome, which reduces the chances of future litigation on the topic (Latreille 2011; Shestowsky 2017).

## **Benefits of Mediation in The Workplace**

Mediation is defined by The Mediation Act, 2017 as “confidential, facilitative and voluntary process”. The style required by legislation is facilitative however, it is possible to find in the literature divergent opinions on whether this is the best strategy to approach workplace disputes.

With regard to the concept, mediation is a confidential and voluntary method to solve disputes in which an impartial and neutral third party is selected to facilitate the communication between conflicting parties, so that they can solve or prevent an issue based on mutually acceptable outcomes that are suggested and agreed by themselves (MII 2021; Beer and Packard 2012).

Any decision making in facilitative mediation is left to those involved; the mediator has no decision-making authority. This is based on the assumption that the people involved in the situation have the best understanding of what they require from each other and from themselves. According to Muller (2017) “power is about what people need and their option for getting those needs met”.

In order to clear the backlog in the judicial system, judges and even legal representatives will frequently advise parties to try to resolve their dispute through a non-litigious route process. Heffernan (2011) states the growth of ADR practices in Ireland to an overwhelmed judicial system.

In 2011, on average, mainstream court cases were taking up to two years or longer to be heard before a judge. Colvin (2003) found that both institutional pressures and human resource strategies are factors driving adoption of EDR.

Researchers using the organizational justice literature have long established that perceptions of fairness are an important factor in assessing the effectiveness of EDR voice systems (Boroff 1991; Blancero 1995; and Phillips 1996).

The effectiveness and success of a mediation process do not lie solely on the tactics or style chosen for the conflict, but it also lies on the distinct characteristics of the dispute, parties' attitude, and context (Bollen and Euwema 2013).

Mediation also has the power to deeply change interpersonal relationships in the long run, opposite to a dominant problem-solving mindset that short-term fixes the problem. This form of ADR should look for ways of addressing more complex social issues once it has the power to transform individuals (Bush and Folger 1994, cited in Spangler, 2013).

Regardless the style and objective of the mediation process, it is understood that parties will feel more satisfied once they feel that the procedure has been fair, and this can be achieved by giving parties the chance to fully participate and take charge of the process, treat them with respect and guarantee impartiality (Bollen, Euwema and Müller 2010; Bollen, Ittner, and Euwema 2012).

It is valid to mention that the conciliatory nature of the process and the possibility of reaching win-win outcomes emphasises the advantages of mediation over adversarial dispute resolution processes, such as arbitration and litigation. Consequently, business relationships may be maintained or restored even when conflict emerges (Doyle 2010).

Globalization is a phenomenon that is here to stay, the tendency is for it to grow even more, for an organization to benefit from the diversity of its workers it is necessary that “organizational identification aligns Individual interest and behaviors with interest and behaviors that benefit the organization” (Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail 1994, cited in Luijters et al. 2008).

The transformative model recognizes and values the role of an impartial and neutral mediator. Bush and Pope (2002), highlights that conflict generates a feeling of weakness and self-absorption in individuals, as one feel confused, helpless, aggressive, individualist, and closed. These feeling lead parties to a circle of interactional degradation or conflict escalation. Thus, the main goal of mediation should be to address these feelings and assist disputants to overcome them through a transformation of their conflict interactions (Bush and Pope 2002).

According to Zumeta (2000), transformative mediation as an approach that focuses on empowering the parties as much as possible while enabling parties to recognize each other's needs, values, and points of view.

Additionally, Zumeta (2000), highlights that this personal growth is associated with mediation allowing for more reflective thinking and understanding of the conflict which helps the individual

develop the ability to solve problems on their initiative, as well as have their relationship transformed during the process.

Regarding the characteristics of the transformative style, Bush and Folger (1994) state that there are two main characteristics:

I) Empowerment: achieved by giving the parties the chance to determine the issues and find a way to a solution if that is also their desire.

II) Recognition: achieved by assisting parties to understand the other's point of view, their issues, and their ideal solution.

The empowerment means to return to individuals a sense of own value and strength when dealing with life's problems, and recognition brings forward empathy for the situation and others, allowing for a more cooperative solution.

Transformative and facilitative mediation empowers the parties to take responsibility for the process as well as the resolution of the dispute (Zumeta 2000).

When workplace conflict arises, the first attempt should be to resolve it through informal existing procedures. However, some issues cannot be resolved through such procedures. In such cases, mediation should be administered by the company before any further formal action is taken (Tripp 1985).

Not always does workplace conflict only require a legal solution, rather it requires a long-lasting and constructive answer that manages the negative emotion associated with the situation (Bollen and Euwema 2013).

Podro and Suff (2013) advert that mediation is not suitable in cases when:

I) It is used as a first resource to ending the conflict. Parties must try to solve the dispute among themselves before engaging in mediation.

II) It is used by superior training to avoid their responsibilities.

III) One of the parties has requested a workplace investigation.

IV) One of the parties has learning disabilities that may impair their judgement.

V) One of the parties is using mediation to bring up unrealistic expectations of a positive outcome.

VI) Parties do not have the power to agree on a settlement. For example, if the dispute involves several areas of the business and the parties do not have authority to decide on behalf of others in cases when staff may also be affected by the outcome.

The authors (Podro and Suff 2013) draw attention to an aspect of workplace mediation that is frequently overlooked. The process is not and cannot be used as a “one fit for all” type of solution. It is necessary to point that mediation is not a factor to avoid or determine the direction of interpersonal relationships in the work environment.

It is worth mentioning that, as the disputing parties and managers, they should first use their human relations skills to resolve the issue without engaging in any further process. However, if this attempt fails, mediation should be an option available to employers and employees without jeopardizing their rights under other companies' policies.

The process of mediation in the workplace searches for a fast and casual solution and it can be used at any stage in the conflict (Podro and Stuff 2013). In fact, the choice for the mediation process avoids extensive disciplinary procedures, long-term absence, and the chances of grievance between parties affecting their productivity and, in some cases, the team's work (Corby 1999; Kressel 2006; Seargeant 2005).

### **Implications of Implementing In-House Mediation in Companies**

When it comes to intra-organizational conflicts, a company can take one of two approaches: use external mediator services or develop an in-house mediation scheme. A number of factors, however, may be considered by a company in order to develop a mediation scheme, which includes the size of the institution, cost, training, and time (Gifford 2021).

Mediation will not only benefit the employees at the time, but it may also instil more empathy in them for the future. Nonetheless, a lack of consensus, combined with limited access to resources, the size of the organization, and the origin of the mediator, has a significant impact on workplace conflict resolution.

Developing an in-house mediation scheme requires investment in training internal mediators and implementing the scheme across the organisation, fund which may not be readily available for some companies. However, the scheme is likely to be more cost-effective on long-term basis, as the organisation will not have to hire an external mediator every time an issue arises, besides being less expensive than defending one case at an employment tribunal. Once the mediation program is in place, parties contact the HR which then refers the case to one of the internal mediators, so that disputes can be resolved quickly and informally within the company (Liddle 2017).

Internal mediators are generally members of the human resources (HR) department, or a multidisciplinary team formed by staff from across the company. The issue that arises from the use of internal mediators is that they may not be impartial and objective in relation to the dispute. In small-sized businesses, having a mediator who is not connected to the disputants may be challenge, which is less likely to be an issue in big and medium-sized firms. For this reason, some authors argue that small institutions should use external mediators, as they will be seen as independent. In addition, the use of external mediators may be appropriate in more complex cases, such as group conflicts (Gifford 2021; Liddle 2017).

In relation to qualification, besides generating costs, selecting, training, and managing a pool of internal mediators may be a challenge for companies. Employees who are selected to be internal mediators are expected to participate in continuing professional development activities in order to practise their mediation skills an offer a high-quality service. Moreover, it is recommended that organisations have mediation scheme coordinator, a person who is responsible for managing the program and checking the results of the scheme to the business. The coordinator will also promote and secure buy-in at all levels of the organisation, while ensuring that participation is completely voluntary (Gifford 2021; Latreille 2011; Liddle 2017).

Besides the time needed to train internal mediators, the organisation should offer adequate time off for staff to perform their mediator role and related activities alongside with their current role in the company (Gifford 2021). Time could be a barrier, especially where parties work shifts, as a mediation session must mutually suit mediators' and disputants' work schedule (Latreille 2011).

Latreille's argument emphasizes the importance of the mediator's role in the mediation process's success. Only a qualified and duly accredited mediator can provide the parties with adequate assistance. The mediator plays an important role in establishing the legitimacy of the mediation process. In carrying out the mediation process, the mediator adheres to the principles of impartiality and neutrality. Another important function of the mediator is to ensure equality between the parties and voluntary participation, thus ensuring the principle of self-determination. Adequate experience and training of the mediator avoid misunderstanding between the parties and ensure the effectiveness and reliability of the mediation process by the rules of the Mediation Act, 2017.

Allocating resources to a mediation scheme demonstrates a company's commitment to conflict resolution, which can increase participant participation. While employees may be influenced to participate in mediation based on the relational benefits that the process offers, employers are more likely to support the practice based on the cost-benefits to the organisation (Latreille 2011).

Research undertaken by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) in the UK has identified that unawareness and misunderstanding are among the predominant barriers for the use of mediation by organisations. Even in organisations that had a mediation policy in place, the level of awareness of mediation among staff was low, as a considerable proportion of workers had never heard of mediation, and the companies did not promote the scheme to the staff (Latreille 2011).

The study conducted by ACAS showed that more significantly than unawareness was the impact of misconceptions on the use of mediation by the workers interviewed. Employees perceived mediation as a form of punishment or that referral was related to some sort of disciplinary issue or complaint, instead of seeing it as a process to help improve employee's relations. For instance, some individuals had the idea that mediation should be used as a tool to claim compensation or to penalise the other party (Latreille 2011).

In company with a mediation policy in place, employees had the impression that they would be forced to engage in mediation. Furthermore, some employees did not trust the process, especially with regard to partiality and confidentiality. Once again, Latreille (2011), states that the reason for that, however, may be related to the fact that parties who have been involved in



the process themselves have breached confidentiality. Moreover, the research identified that individuals may have the impression that mediation is not financially beneficial to them, while others do not want to involve emotions in the resolution process.

Furthermore, the research undertaken by ACAS has shown that there was unawareness about mediation even among the members of the management team interviewed. Additionally, some managers may have the impression that mediation undermines their authority, while others did not believe that mediation was appropriate in case of bullying, for instance (Latreille 2011).

Another misconception that may prevent companies from engaging in mediation is the fact that parties may be seen as weak if they suggest mediation, as they are believed to have cases which would not win if brought before the court (Freehily 2016).

The consequences of unmanaged or poorly managed disputes are typically far greater than the issue itself. As a result, the company is impacted with the waste of time, money, and human resources, as individuals tend to use of blaming and fault-finding in such situation (Cowan 2003).

Furthermore, the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) provides free or low-cost mediation services for businesses to resolve workplace disputes in Ireland (WRC 2017). Despite the fact that the service is not appropriate for inter-organizational disputes, intra-organizational conflicts may be mediated by the WRC's mediation agency upon the parties' request. This highlights the government's attempt to make access to mediation easier for disputants, with ignorance remaining the main barrier to people using such services.

In the final analysis, no one wins in an organisational conflict unless everyone wins. Any member of an organisation who perceives him or herself as a loser can be expected to produce losses for the organization as well, whether those losses be in the form of reduced morale, damaged communication, lowered productivity, faction-building, or some other consequence (Cowan 2003).

## CONCLUSIONS

Regarding globalization, it is essential to state this is a phenomenon that is here to stay; every day, more people move around the world in search of new opportunities; this growing demand for labour in the country's most diverse sectors serves as a warning that companies must constantly improve their institutional policies and practices about diversity in the workplace.

The innovations brought by internet access, such as the ability to interact with people and cultures from all over the world without leaving their country of origin, have opened up a new world of sharing information, knowledge, professional opportunities, feelings, expectations, and with that, the need to be heard. Survey results show that people want to be heard and are willing to listen and engage in ways to improve relationships in the workplace. The sample results also suggest that these people would like the human resources department to be able to guide them on how to deal with everyday issues involving interpersonal relationships between co-workers as well as update the internal policies concerning cultural diversity.

In the leadership literature, there is consensus that effective communication is a critical factor in successful management and of particular importance for leading subordinates through changing and challenging contexts (Barrett 2010; Heifetz and Linsky 2002; Lloyd et al. 2015; Thompson 2011).

The research findings also indicate that, in many cases, what is sought is not compensation or even an act of vengeance, but rather the cessation of the behaviour that caused the conflict.

Recently, the term active listening or active-empathetic listening, in relation to managers or supervisors and their subordinates, has received increased attention among researchers (Arman, Wikström and Dellve 2013; Lloyd et al. 2015). At its core, active listening is a higher form of listening to gain a deeper understanding of the message and the context. It has been used effectively in a wide variety of disciplines such as counselling, therapy, and health care (Fassaert et al. 2007).

The comparison of the second set of questions reveals that the survey participants identified communication issues in the workplace as the primary causes of conflict. Research question

11 shows that participants understand “poor or lack of communication as well “language barrier” are factors that can influence the emergence of conflicts.

A number of steps might be taken by management to ensure effectiveness in communication. For example, translating summaries of the documents into the main workplace languages, providing English language and literacy training for migrants, training migrant staff on workplace cultural issues, and training all staff in cross-cultural communication are examples of such activities (Adler 1986; Morrison 1992).

Managing diversity involves leveraging and using the cultural differences in people's skills, ideas, and creativity to contribute to a common goal, and doing it in a way that gives the organisation a competitive edge (Deresky 1994; Fernandez 1993; Morrison 1992). Diversity allows increased creativity, a wider range of perspectives, better problem definition, more alternatives, and better solutions (Adler 1986).

It is valid to mention that globalization, workplace diversity, flexibility, and global market development are increasing awareness in the managers regarding the diverse individual's results in managing diversity within organizations. In this regard, cultural diversity is a method where individuals, and different groups have the same rights and opportunities, and no one is considered worthless (Shen et al. 2009).

To create opportunities for collaboration, global leaders must not only learn the customs, courtesies, and business protocols of their counterparts from other countries but must also understand the national character, management philosophies, and mind-sets of the people (Hofstede 1994).

Understanding conflict and how to manage or resolve it should be an integral part of what and how managers should learn; such understanding is essential for the personal well-being and success of individuals as well as the long-term success of organisations (Singleton et al. 2011).

The core principles which mediation is based upon are confidentiality, voluntary participation, impartiality and neutrality, respect, and self-determination of the parties (MII 2021). It is worth mentioning that the survey results show the workers' willingness to engage in mediation in 90%,

‘even if parties cannot reach an agreement through mediation, the process will help them to narrow down the issues which then may be solved in the court’ (Doyle 2010).

Some of the benefits of workplace mediation when correctly administrated, are the rebuilt of broken relationships, enhanced performance, culturally sensitivity and reduced occupational stress (Curran et al. 2016).

Mediation allows for earlier intervention, minimizing the chances of the conflict escalating, especially when taken into consideration that not always can the beginning of the dispute be identified, as well as saving time and resources (Saundry et al. 2016; Podro and Stuff 2013).

In addition, mediation addresses people's needs and concerns, focuses on the relationship, and seeks a mutually beneficial outcome. Culture issues can be complicated and have many different levels. Mediation can help to foster an open dialogue between parties, which is beneficial in a diverse workplace.

However, the challenge lies in developing communication channels that guide workers about mediation and its principles and how the process works.

It is possible to find numerous titles on methods developed to improve the management of people and conflicts, but the fact is that no theory, no matter how much credibility it offers, can prove efficient without practical application and periodic evaluation of its development. There is no lack of method, what is lacking is the interest in the application and development of these methods at different scales to evaluate process performance in small, medium, and large companies.

This must be a collaborative effort on the part of society. The State intervenes by regulating mediation through the Mediation Act, 2017 and providing means for its access and execution, as is the case with the WRC, which offers free or low-cost mediation services for companies to resolve labour disputes in Ireland, in contrast to the private sector, which plays another fundamental role in this process, updating its internal policies on multiculturalism and introducing information on the mediation process plays another fundamental role in this process, which is to provide information and clarifications to workers and, finally, to the citizen, who through free and motivating knowledge chooses the mediation process and assumes control over the direction of this process being guided by an accredited mediator.

## REFLECTIONS

I have no doubts in saying that this was my biggest academic challenge, it is an arduous task that depends on the discipline and total dedication of the researcher. The handbook and Guide to Harvard Referencing were essential tools in the structure of this work.

There are many challenges that an international student faces, the language barrier, followed by time limitations can be pitfalls during this process, but no challenge was greater than synthesizing the information according to the hypothesis of the study, it took many hours of research and reading countless academic articles and manuals that take you on a journey through time and your companion on this journey is the dictionary because a world of previously unknown academic words and expressions appear before you.

One of my biggest concerns during this study was not finding enough people to respond to my survey. I was deeply surprised and moved by the support of people on social media who, even after the survey ended, continued to share the questionnaire and this engagement motivated me to give even more of my best.

Producing content based on previous studies that match your ideas is a very difficult and at the same time pleasurable task, because making this patchwork quilt made up of studies and theories opens the door to a universe of possibilities, new ideas and invaluable knowledge and this is without a doubt the most enriching experience a student can achieve.

I feel deeply grateful and proud at this moment to finish this dissertation. I arrived in this wonderful country without speaking English and after two years I boldly applied for a master's degree, and today the conclusion of this dissertation represents more than the end of a course, it is the consecration of my resilience in the face of so many losses and obstacles faced. in the last two years. I end this cycle very happy and grateful, ready for new challenges.

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## **APPENDIX**

### Appendix A

#### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

##### **1) Are you a European citizen?**

- a) Yes
- b) No

##### **1A) If you are a “European Citizen” please select which member state you are from:**

- a) France
- b) Spain
- c) Italy
- d) UK
- e) Irish
- f) I am not a European Citizen

##### **1B) If you a “Non-European Citizen” please select which country you are from**

- a) Brazil
- b) China
- c) Chile
- d) Mexico
- e) I am a European Citizen

##### **2) What is your age?**

- a) 18 – 25 years old
- b) 26 – 33 years old
- c) 34 – 41 years old
- d) 42 – 49 years old



e) Over 50

**3) What is your gender**

a) Male

b) Female

c) Transgender

e) Prefer not to say

**4) What is your level of English?**

a) Beginner

b) Intermediate

c) Advanced

d) Fluent

**5) Do you live and work in Ireland and/or Northern Ireland?**

a) Yes

b) No

**6) What is your current position in the company you work for?**

a) Manager

b) Supervisor

c) Worker

d) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**7) What sector do you currently work in?**

a) Construction

b) Health

c) Hospitality

d) Retail

e) Technology

f) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**8) In your opinion, what are the factors that make your workplace a multicultural environment?**

Please select all options that apply to you.

- a) It is inclusive diverse cultures
- b) It is inclusive of religious beliefs
- c) It is inclusive of different ages
- d) It is one that promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities
- e) It is one that promotes the inclusion of people LGBTQIA+
- f) I'm not sure what a multicultural work environment is

**9) Do you think that your workplace is culturally diverse?**

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Maybe

**10) In your opinion, what are the factors that can influence a cross cultural conflict in the workplace?**

Please select all of the options that are relevant to you.

- a) Age
- b) Gender
- c) Race
- d) Language barrier
- e) Poor or lack of human resource structures
- f) Poor or lack of communication
- g) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**11) Have you ever witnessed or been involved in any conflict with your co-workers?**

- a) Yes
- b) No

**12) If you answered yes to the previous question: Did the conflict involve the following parties?**

- a) Co-workers
- b) Line managers
- c) Supervisors
- d) I answered no in the previous question
- e) Other

**13) If you answered “yes” in the question 11. What was the conflict about? Briefly explain how it happened.**

A: \_\_\_\_\_

**14) What do you think could help reduce cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace?**

- a) Invest in training
- b) Updating the company's human resource policies in relation to cultural diversity
- c) Promote cultural integration between employees
- c) Having a properly trained co-worker acting as a mediator when a conflict arises
- d) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**15) Mediation is a confidential and voluntary process that offers those who are experiencing a conflict situation the opportunity and adequate space to seek a solution that serves all involved without the interference of third parties. In this process, the parties have autonomy to decide the best result to be achieved. Based on the concept above, answer if you have heard of this process.**

**Have you ever heard about mediation?**

- a) Yes
- b) No

**16) Would you be willing to participate in cultural diversity training focused on learning about the culture of your co-workers to improve relationships in the workplace?**

a) Yes

b) No

**17) Would you be willing to attend mediation in order to solve a cultural conflict in the workplace?**

a) Yes

b) No

## Mediation as a Tool to Resolve Cross-Cultural Conflicts in Ireland

### Research Dissertation: Master of Arts in Dispute Resolution

#### Purpose

This research has an academic purpose only. There is no direct benefit from answering the questionnaire, but your participation will have an importance in the development and further understanding of the topic.

#### Confidentiality

Any answers provided will be sent to a link at Google Forms, and the data collected will be stored online in an electronic format protected by a password. Information such as name, email address or IP address will not be collected by the platform. As a result of this, all responses are completely anonymous, and no identification is required.

#### Aim

The research aim is to understand if Mediation is an appropriate tool to resolve cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace in Ireland.

#### Declaration

This research is being carried out in accordance with the WMA Declaration of Helsinki ethical principles [available at: <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki-ethical-principles-for-medical-research-involving-human-subjects/>].

#### Concerns

In case you have any doubts or concerns in relation to this research, you are welcome to contact the research supervisor, Mr. John Dunne BL ([john.dunne@independentcolleges.ie](mailto:john.dunne@independentcolleges.ie)) and the research candidate Ms. Tatiana dos Santos Barea ([tatianabarea@icloud.com](mailto:tatianabarea@icloud.com)), who is a registered student at Independent College Dublin undertaking the degree of Masters of Arts in Dispute Resolution.

In case you feel that this research has not been able to maintain ethical principles, please contact Independent College Dublin at the contacts below:

Independent College Dublin at Block B, The Steelworks, Foley St. Dublin 1, or by email: [info@independentcolleges.ie](mailto:info@independentcolleges.ie)

Proceeding with the questionnaire, you are automatically indicating that:

You have READ and AGREED with the above information.

You agree to participate in this research VOLUNTARILY.

You are 18 years or over.

## Appendix C

### Mediation as a Tool to Resolve Cross-Cultural Conflicts in Ireland

#### RESEARCH DISSERTATION:

#### MASTER OF ARTS IN DISPUTE RESOLUTION

#### IMPORTANT NOTES

##### Purpose

This research has an academic purpose only. There is no direct benefit from answering the questionnaire, but your participation will have an importance in the development and further understanding of the topic.

##### Confidentiality

Any answers provided will be sent to a link at Google Forms, and the data collected will be stored online in an electronic format protected by a password. Information such as name, email address or IP address will not be collected by the platform. As a result of this, all responses are completely anonymous, and no identification is required.

##### Aim

The research aim is to understand if Mediation is an appropriate tool to resolve cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace in Ireland.

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This research is being carried out in accordance with the WMA Declaration of Helsinki ethical principles [available at: <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki-ethical-principles-for-medical-research-involving-human-subjects/> ].

##### Concerns

In case you have any doubts or concerns in relation to this research, you are welcome to contact the research supervisor, Mr. John Dunne BL ([john.dunne@independentcolleges.ie](mailto:john.dunne@independentcolleges.ie)) and the research candidate Ms. Tatiana dos Santos Barea ([tatianabarea@icloud.com](mailto:tatianabarea@icloud.com)), who is a registered student at Independent College Dublin undertaking the degree of Masters of Arts in Dispute Resolution.

In case you feel that this research has not been able to maintain ethical principles, please contact Independent College Dublin at the contacts below:

Independent College Dublin at Block B, The Steelworks, Foley St. Dublin I, or by email: [info@independentcolleges.ie](mailto:info@independentcolleges.ie)

Proceeding with the questionnaire, you are automatically indicating that:

You have **READ** and **AGREED** with the above information.

You agree to participate in this research **VOLUNTARILY**.

**You are 18 years or over.**

Appendix D  
Consent Form

<b>Form A: Application for Ethical Approval</b>	
<b>Undergraduate/Taught Postgraduate Research</b>	
This form should be submitted to the module leader for the relevant initial proposal and/or the relevant supervisor is the proposal has already been accepted.	
Please save this file as <i>STUDENT NUMBER_AEA_FormA.docx</i>	
<b>Title of Project</b>	Mediation as a Tool to Resolve Cross-Cultural Conflicts in Ireland
<b>Name of Learner</b>	Tatiana dos Santos Barea
<b>Student Number</b>	51710641
<b>Name of Supervisor/Tutor</b>	Mr. John Dunne

Check the relevant boxes. All questions must be answered before submitting to the relevant lecturer / supervisor. Note: only one box per row should be selected.

Item	Question	Yes	No	NA
1	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3	Will you obtain written consent for participation (through a signed or 'ticked' consent form)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6	Will you give participants the option of not answering any question they do not want to answer?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Will you ensure that participant data will be treated with full confidentiality and anonymity and, if published, will not be identifiable as any individual or group?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e., give them a brief explanation of the study)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9	If your study involves people between 16 and 18 years, will you ensure that passive consent is obtained from parents/guardians, with active consent obtained from both the child and their school/organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10	If your study involves people less than 16 years, will you ensure that <u>active</u> consent is obtained from parents/guardians <u>and</u> that a parent/guardian or their nominee (such as a teacher) will be present throughout the data collection period?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11	If your study requires evaluation by an ethics committee/board at an external agency, will you wait until you have approval from both the Independent College Dublin and the external ethics committee before starting data collection.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Item	Question	Yes	No	NA
12	If you are in a position of authority over your participants (for example, if you are their instructor/tutor/manager/examiner etc.) will you inform participants in writing that their grades and/or evaluation will be in no way affected by their participation (or lack thereof) in your research?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13	If you are in a position of authority over your participants (for example, if you are their instructor/tutor/manager/examiner etc.), does your study involve asking participants about their academic or professional achievements, motivations, abilities or philosophies? (please note that this does not apply to QA1 or QA3 forms, or questionnaires limited to market research, that do not require ethical approval from the IREC)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14	Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants in any way?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
15	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
16	Does your project involve work with animals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
17	Do you plan to give individual feedback to participants regarding their scores on any task or scale?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
18	Does your study examine any sensitive topics (such as, but not limited to, religion, sexuality, alcohol, crime, drugs, mental health, physical health, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
19	Is your study designed to change the mental state of participants in any negative way (such as inducing aggression, frustration, etc?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
20	Does your study involve an external agency (e.g. for recruitment)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
21	Do your participants fall into any of the following special groups?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

*(except where one or more individuals with such characteristics may naturally occur within a general population, such as a sample of students)*



<p>If you have ticked any of the shaded boxes above, you should consult with your module leader / supervisor immediately. <b>You will need to fill in Form B Ethical Approval</b> and submit it to the Research &amp; Ethics Committee <b>instead</b> of this form.</p> <p>There is an obligation on the researcher to bring to the attention of the Research &amp; Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not clearly covered by the above checklist.</p>	
<p>I consider that this project has <b>no</b> significant ethical implications to be brought before the relevant Research &amp; Ethics Committee. I have read and understood the specific guidelines for completion of Ethics Application Forms. I am familiar with the codes of professional ethics relevant to my discipline (and have discussed them with my supervisor).</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Name of Learner</b>	Tatiana dos Santos Barea
<b>Student Number</b>	51710641
<b>Date</b>	05 – April – 2022
<p>I have discussed this project with the learner in question, and I agree that it has no significant ethical implications to be brought before the Research &amp; Ethics Committee.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Name of Supervisor/Lecturer</b>	Mr. John Dunne
<b>Date</b>	06 April 2022 (JD)