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CROSS-CULTURE CONFLICTS AND MEDIATION IN THE WORKPLACE

INDEPENDENT COLLEGE DUBLIN
MASTER OF ARTS IN DISPUTE RESOLUTION

By

RAISA CRISTINA BATISTA SANTOS

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CROSS-CULTURE CONFLICTS AND MEDIATION IN THE WORKPLACE

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Abstract

This dissertation was written as part of the MA in Dispute Resolution at the Independent College Dublin (ICD). Conflicts in the workplace resulting from cultural differences are expected and commonly found. Culture is a crucial aspect to analyse workplace relationships, both in terms of communication and behaviour. Self-awareness is necessary to understand the similarities and cultural differences present among the members of a group. When an early resolution through mediation is found, cultural conflict is less likely to result in discriminatory episodes. This dissertation aims to evaluate the importance of mediation and self-awareness in cases of cultural conflict in the workplace. The findings were based on a survey in which ninety-one people voluntarily took part. The questionnaire included questions related to culture clash, the reporting of cultural conflicts, mediation to solve cultural conflicts and cultural inclusion in the workplace. The findings showed that people recognise the benefits of using mediation to resolve cultural conflict in the workplace. However, the lack of training of professionals in management-level positions and the absence of institutional openness to dialogue on cultural differences represent a challenge to creating a more culturally integrative organisational culture.

Keywords: cultural conflict; cross-cultural mediation; workplace mediation; organisational culture; facilitative discussion.

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List of Abbreviation

6-D – Six Dimensional Model

ADR – Alternative Dispute Resolution

BATNA – Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement

CDI – Culture Dimension Interest

CSW – Contingencies of Self-Worth

GLOBE – Global Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness

WATNA – Worst Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement

Introduction

Nowadays, it is very common for people to learn more about the organisation and its culture before applying to a new company. By doing so, new employees will know if the company is a suitable fit for them and if it is a good place to work. A fine example of good company/employee relations are those that have emerged in Silicon Valley, American where employees are encouraged to take down time and also to work from home where possible. The multicultural nature of the workforce in those companies also makes for a diverse work experience.

With the increased mobility and flexibility of people, companies are transferring their employees from area to area, sometimes from country to country. They are expanding and creating subsidiaries worldwide in search of better policies and tax benefits, operating in conjunction with national governments in exchange for job creation and investment in the local economy (Hitt et al., 2005). This way, globalisation performs a decisive role in integrating people with different backgrounds because of the interdependence of the international market.

The benefits accrued by large companies in setting up in foreign countries, not only makes for a multicultural work environment, it can also impact the surrounding region, both positively and negatively through the cultural clash as a result of globalisation.

As a result of this worldwide connection, the culture of individuals has become a key point of research and study. The term 'culture' might be in people's daily vocabulary where it is usually associated with language, cuisine or the place of origin of an individual or a group. However, LeBaron explains that the cultural identity of a person is also constructed by belonging to various cultural groups as "race, ethnicity, or nationality, but they also arise from cleavages of generation, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, ability and disability, political and religious affiliation, language, and gender" (LeBaron, 2003: paragraph 2).

As organisations bring together people, with different cultural backgrounds, into the same space, these companies strengthened daily relationships between individuals. It is therefore vital to establish mechanisms to bridge the cultural differences among the groups. Individuals from the same cultural group have a particular way of communicating with each other which outsiders do not share. This can cause difficulties in communication leading to the message to arrive fragmented, interfering in the perception and interpretation of the message and consequently may cause friction between the parties (LeBaron, 2003).

In addition, conflicts are inevitable in interpersonal relationships, especially in workplace relationships, which can negatively impact organisations, such as decreased productivity of employees (O'Connor, n.d), as well as negatively impacting on the parties directly involved. It is necessary that people and organisations working in multicultural environments become aware of the diversity of cultures and the potential of conflict between them. These conflicts can originate from misunderstanding or misinterpretations due to miscommunication (Mearns & Yule, 2009).

As a result, it is recommended that mediation should take place to facilitate a balance among the cultures and identities concerned. Since "a management technique or philosophy that is appropriate in one national culture is not necessarily appropriate in another" (Hofstede, 1984:81), this should be done through a mediation process or a facilitative discussion in the workplace. Culture can act as a catalyst for conflicts and disputes, it can be looked at as an iceberg (LeBaron, 2003), in which we are often only aware of the tip of it, being utterly blind to most of its extension and length.

Either through immediate culture clash or the blinding of multiculturalism as the tip of the iceberg, the lack of cultural integration in the workplace can result in catastrophic conflicts. Thus, the need for cultural integration and conflict management practices to foster knowledge of the cultures present and to mitigate the impact caused by culture clashes.

This study's importance lies in the fact that multicultural professional environments are an undeniable reality due to globalisation. Consequently, the occurrence of conflicts and misunderstandings due to cultural differences is a common phenomenon and may escalate to disastrous proportions. Therefore, the continuous study and research on applying alternative dispute resolution processes (ADR), such as mediation in intercultural workplace processes, is vital. In addition, the development and promotion of an inclusive organisational culture as a tool to prevent these conflicts from escalating into more significant cultural issues is equally crucial.

To fulfil the main aim of this work, that is to evaluate the importance of mediation and self-awareness in cases of cultural conflict in the workplace, the secondary objectives of the dissertation will be:

1. To explain how the culture of an individual may impact conflict escalation in the workplace.
1. To clarify how mediation can assist all parties involved in a cultural conflict in the workplace.
2. To show how organisational culture can facilitate the relationship between co-workers to mitigate cultural clashes.

In Chapter one, the Literature Review critically reviews the concept of culture and its dimensions, the human needs, the use of mediation process in the workplace, negotiation in cultural mediations, and the impact that organisational culture has on intercultural relationships. In order to understand the disparities arising from cultural differences in the workplace and the possibilities that organisations can use to reduce conflicts caused by cultural clashes in the workplace.

In chapter two the research methodology and methods used during the research and a theoretical explanation of why each item's choice was made over the others are presented. The

data presentation can be found in chapter three, in which the information obtained through the application of a survey comprising eighteen questions is furnished.

Data analysis and the findings obtained through this analysis, looking at any patterns that had emerged is presented in chapter four. Chapter five provides a discussion based on the analysis and findings of the primary research laid out in the literature review. The conclusion draws on the final considerations of the dissertation and the last chapter is a reflection by the dissertation's author including a perspective regarding the personal experience of writing this paper.

1. Literature review

1.1. Cultural Conflict in the Workplace.

1.1.1. The Role of Culture and Conflict in the Workplace.

Culture has a central role within relationships inside the workplace and in all spheres of human relationships. Although most people are familiar with the word culture itself, its conceit and meaning are diverse and complex. Clyde Kluckhohn, anthropologist and social theorist, classified culture as being "patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reaction, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts" (Kluckhohn, 1951: 357).

This definition of culture, which is directly linked to the behavioural pattern of a particular group, has been reaffirmed over the decades by Herskovits (1948), House et al. (2004), Geertz (1973) and UNESCO (2017), when it pointed out that culture is indeed something complex since it is bound up with the knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs and all the skills and abilities inherent to a member of a particular society.

However, this widespread use of the term, by binding it to group patterns often delimited by region or place of origin, is challenged by the complexity of the term. Handwerker (2002:109) clarifies that culture should not be restricted to the macro level by nationalities and ethnicity. Since there are subcultures at the micro-level, it brings several individual variations, such as occupation, gender, age, and the experiences lived by an individual, which, when generalised, have their appreciation diminished. Therefore, the diversity between each person's cultural identity should also be considered when evaluating and studying cultural conflicts within the workplace.

In this context, Gardenswartz, Bennett, Rowe and Digh (2003) developed the "Three Culture Model" when seeking a way to direct the study of cultural differences within multicultural environments, such as the workplace. In this framework, the individual's cultural

identity is formed by different cultural models. The first model is represented by the individual's unique culture, which is relative to the experiences lived by the person throughout his or her life, thus integrating individual skills, personalities, ethnicity, race, family relationships and all educational and professional experience previously acquired.

Secondly, the model refers to the worker's national culture, which encompasses the beliefs, values, and attitudes passed on from generation to generation and shared by a group of people from the same nation or region. Finally, the third model is represented by the corporate or organisational culture, which refers to the values, beliefs and followings passed on by the institution in which the workers are inserted and the values, mission, and vision of the organisation.

Hence, each culture should be considered carefully without excluding any of the three models above. Organisations and people who desire to perform in multicultural environments should, therefore, acknowledge and embrace the cultural differences that shape the group they are inserted in, in such a way as to minimise friction resulting from this diversity. Consequently, these organisations and people should aim to use cultural differences as a transformative and innovative axis to create a healthy and beneficial environment for all.

In order to assess the behavioural differences of the three models, it is necessary to understand that a cornerstone of the culture, either individual or collective (national or organisational) are the values that a person or group holds for themselves (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). In a general meaning of the word Hofstede defines values as a "tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others" (2001:5). On the other hand, Rokeach refers to the term as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence" (1973:159-160). In this way, the values and beliefs carried by individuals and groups directly influence the conduct that these people may have within the environment in which they are

inserted, such as the workplace. A person's attitude is influenced by the values and beliefs of the environment in which they are, thereby having a direct impact on individual and collective culture.

In a study conducted in 1980, Hofstede developed a cultural framework concept based on a case study of the IBM company. A survey of eighty-eight thousand employees was conducted among of the seventy-two countries in which IBM was present. At the time, Hofstede typified the organisational culture through four dimensions individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity/femininity. A fifth dimension long or short-term orientation, was added in 1991. The sixth dimension indulgence/restrictiveness was added in 2010 (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkove). Thus, forming the 6-D model or six dimensional model that can be used to analyse and understand individual, national or organisational cultures.

A study carried out over thirty years by Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars and presented in 2000 describes six dilemmas in their study of culture: Universalism/Particularism, Individualism/Communitarianism, Specificity/Diffuseness, Achieved/Ascribed Status, Inner Direction/Outer Direction and Sequential/Synchronous time. In order to develop their theory, the authors took principles from various cultures ranging from the values of ancient Greece to Asian studies, chaos theory, organisational behaviour, and many others (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000:345-347).

A more recent study conducted by Global Leadership and Organisational Effectiveness (GLOBE) (House et al., 2004) with the collaboration of a hundred-seventy social scientists and management scholars from sixty-one countries, identified a total of nine cultural values among a sample of seventy-thousand employees: uncertainty avoidance, power distance, collectivism I (societal emphasis on collectivism), collectivism II (collectivistic family practices), gender

egalitarianism, assertiveness, future orientation, performance orientation, and humane orientation.

The research conducted by GLOBE and Hampden-Turner and Tompenaars referred to above indicate the diverse range of methods that can be used understand how national, organisational, and individual cultural values can be catalogued into different dimensions, depending on the research interest. This work uses Hofstede's six dimensions model as a baseline for our analysis of the impact of culture in the workplace due to its interdisciplinary application, as pointed out by Beugelsdijk and Welzel “this framework is used in a variety of fields including, cross-cultural management, international business, and cross-cultural psychology” (2018:1470).

As previously mentioned, culture and its differences can be analysed according to various areas of society, and it directly impacts the way we act, think and speak. By analysing the culture in dimensions, it is possible to understand the cultural differences that lead people from different countries and different backgrounds to develop multiple and often escalating issues, culminating in direct conflict. Therefore, in order to effectively manage these crises, it is vital that individuals and organisations in a multicultural context learn to acknowledge the cultural differences between themselves and their peers.

The first dimension represents the power distance as a measure in which members of lower power levels inside an institution (family or school), organisation (workplace) or society, in general, are willing and expect to be treated. Consequently, individuals belonging to cultures with a higher level of power distance are more accepting of the centralisation of that power, whether in personal status or hierarchical rank (Dainton & Zelle, 2011). In contrast to cultures with a low level of power distance, which are more likely to engage in horizontal relationships where status hierarchy do not act as a distinction between individuals.

The representation of individualism versus collectivism, on the second dimension, represents the formation or not of strong ties between the individual and the community. Where people classified within the axis of individualism do not have strong ties with the since in individualism "a social mentality that focuses on the individual, valuing and recognising individual achievement, and encouraging independent thought and action" (Arasaratnam, 2011:45). On the other side is the axis of collectivism, in which the individual has strong ties with the society around them, which as a consequence of his deep insertion within that society causes his deeds to adhere to the social framework.

The relationship of femininity in opposition to masculinity in the third dimension is not determined by the gender of each individual but is based rather on the assumptions that the notion of femininity and masculinity carry. The masculinity axis represents qualities expected from males, such as assertiveness, focus and competition. In opposition, femininity represents individuals who are tender, modest, and concerned with the well-being of those around them.

The fourth dimension brings to attention the avoidance of uncertainties, as it evaluates the level that a person is willing to break new ground due to a high or low commitment to put themselves in a situation of uncertainty. Arasaratnam points out that "cultures high in uncertainty avoidance tend to be more traditional, prefer methods that are tried and true, and prefer stability over change or even innovation" (2011:49). This uncertainty has an impact on the level of anxiety generated by the feeling of fear and perceive loss, that change can bring to the individual's life.

The orientation, which can be short term or long term, is situated within dimension five. Under the axis of long term orientation, it is categorised by qualities such as perseverance and thrift, where there is a search for a more rewarding non-immediate future. While the short-term orientation axis consists of stability and personal appreciation which "centres on a desire for immediate gratification" (Dainton and Zelle, 2011:187). Consequently, while people with

long-term orientation are usually willing to think about the future, people on the short-term orientation axis are short-sighted.

According to Hofstede, the last dimension, dimension six, incorporates all the other factors that are not present in the previous five dimensions. This dimension aims to measure the levels of indulgence and restrictiveness in a happiness survey, since "indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun" (Hofstede, 2011:15). At the same time, restrictiveness stands for strict social norms.

Upon the introduction of this section, it was presented the definitions of culture and its variations depending on the focus given to the research. Henceforth, this dissertation will look to deepen the of culture and cultural diversity within the workplace and assess culture from the perspective previously provided by Gardenswartz, Bennett, Rowe and Digh (2003) through the "Three Culture Model" to assess the causes of cultural conflict in the multicultural professional environment.

1.1.2. Diversity and the Causes of Cultural Conflicts in the Workplace

It is essential for organisations nowadays to study the concept of culture, mainly due to overarching globalisation and interconnection. The global spread of many companies which operate where circumstances best suit; tax facilities, low-cost workforce, accessibility of specific materials, has led to culturally diverse people interacting with each other on a much larger scale.

The beginning of the 21st century saw the advent of the internet, the facilitation of intercommunication and the ease of moving goods and people, and the greater opportunity for people to move quickly from one point to another and the increase in immigration and multiculturalism. This has contributed to the merging of different cultures in the same environment, which Thomas Friedman (2005) categorised as the transformation of the world into something flat.

This perceived flatness levels the playing field for all, allowing those previously at a geographical disadvantage to participate on a broader scale. This in turn enables creation and development of apex companies who are internationally known for their multicultural nature which consists of several cultures' coexistence in a single place (IFLA, 2020). Therefore, companies have begun to experience both the advantages and disadvantages that employing people from different cultural backgrounds can bring. In today highly competitive business environment organisations cannot afford to exclude any particular culture, as workforces which consist of culturally diverse people bring significant competitive advantages.

As pointed out by DiStefano and Maznevsk (2000), due to the high level of interconnection and globalisation in which the society of the early 21st century is inserted, organisations that once participated only in the market and the internal scenario of their countries have now begun to expand their operations transnationally. It was possible due to tax facilities, cheap labour, or the more accessible price of raw materials in a given region, which

made these companies leave their regions of origin. As a result, workplaces with a broad mix of people with different backgrounds have been created, and people began to interact on a daily basis in a multicultural environment.

This interaction in turn exposes companies to the positive and negative effects caused by employing people from different backgrounds can cause. In this context, cultural diversity acts as a "representation, in one social system, of people with distinctly different group affiliations with a cultural significance" (Cox, 1994:6). Due to the interconnectivity generated by globalisation, companies can no longer be closed in terms of accepting diverse cultures among their employees.

The outcomes obtained by the mixture of people is known to have significant strategic competitive if used correctly. As DiStefano and Maznevsk states: "multicultural teams, then, have an enormous wealth of material with which to create innovative approaches to complex organisational challenges and a broad range of operating modes with which to develop new ways of implementing solutions" (2000:46-47).

In this manner, cultural diversity became an inherent factor of companies that operate in the international market and that deal with people from different cultures as a result of multiculturalism (Seymen, 2006). All organisations will, at some stage, given the effects of globalisation and the conception of multinational groups within, go through moments of divergence. It is paramount that companies do not disregard cultural divergences in the workplace (Vlad and Stan, 2013) since these situations of disagreement can escalate to a critical level if they are not carefully analysed and restrained on time.

Controversies are inherent to human nature. Therefore, all who have a role in the socio-cultural environment have become involved in a dispute at some time or another. Boohar (2001) emphasises that those who deny this are either live in a fantasy world with blind eye to their surroundings or are isolated in lonely. The variation of these divergences occurs due to a clash

of personalities, differences in values, cultural differences, and control problems. So, individuals placed in multicultural environments, such as the workplace, should strive to acquire cultural fluency, become familiar with other cultures around them and their dimensions. In this way, it will be possible to reduce potential disputes arising from cultural differences (LeBaron, 2003).

In order to control and solve the problems generated by cultural conflicts in the workplace, it is essential first to identify the cause of the dispute. According to Bell (2002), conflicts in the workplace may originate from one of six causes: resources, styles, perceptions, goals, pressure or roles. Hart (2009) adds a further two situations: personal differences in values and unpredictable policies.

All eight of these causes of conflict are directly tied to the behaviours of individuals or groups formed inside the work environment. In conflicting resources, a person or group may come into conflict overusing or utilising scarce material resources made available by the organisation. As pointed out earlier, more individualistic people tend to focus on their individual needs. In such situations, where resources are limited, it is necessary that a balance be struck so that the needs of all employees are considered rather than just one.

Those differences of style or personality which are capable of acting as the trigger for conflict within the work environment can be identified in any of the six dimensions presented previously by Hofstede (1984, 2001, 2010). The distinct styles, which are represented in contrast within the 6-D, indicate how each person manages a pre-determined situation, whether it be related to the delivery of a project or the way of interacting with others in the workplace, femininity versus masculinity or if its long term orientation versus short term orientation, the culture is intrinsically linked to the style of conduct of each individual.

A person's culture and background play a very significant part in their perception of an event. These differences can stem from differing levels of uncertainty avoidance. Some may

wish to complete a project by following the same time-worn steps that have always been successful in the past whereas others may be less fearful of trying new ways attain success.

Among the conflicting goals, we may find a mix between the Hofstede's dimensions, especially if the main goal or its priorities are not clearly defined to the group (Sonnentag *et al.*, 2013). In this case, clashes over opposing forces within a group such as long-term or short-term orientation and uncertainty avoidance can lead to disputes. Conflict derived pressure on an individual within the group is often caused by assigning short deadline projects to those with long-term orientation and a low level of uncertainty avoidance. Such a situation may increase the levels of stress and anxiety of an employee which can then extend to the other members of the group.

Sometimes conflict which arises from power distance can be seen through conflicting roles. This is common when a person is assigned a job which another member of the group feels should be assigned to them. This can be because they are longer serving or because they have a higher level of expertise on the subject. Disputes over different people's values are mainly caused by the individual's level of indulgence and restraint. A particular task assigned to an individual may violate their ethical principles and moral values. It is therefore, necessary to know through, self-evaluation and self-awareness, the extent that each person is willing to accept doing something which causes internal conflict.

Unpredictable organisational policies are the eighth cause of workplace conflict. This is also linked to uncertainty avoidance and power distance. As a company's policies are constantly changing, communication between the company and employees on the changes in rules is not always clear, resulting in only a fraction of employees taking full advantage of the changes, which can lead to an increase in employees' anxiety levels.

Ballard also sees unfulfilled interpersonal and professional relationship needs as a central issue of diversity conflict. In his opinion "what matters is the basic psychological needs

of one of the parties have not been honoured such as recognition, appreciation, participation, respect of autonomy" (Ballard, 2002:1). As seen from Ballard's perspective, an individual's unfulfilled needs could be the reason behind the causes of conflicts mentioned above.

In line with Maslow's pyramid hierarchy of needs, all people are motivated according to five essential needs. These are ranked from bottom to top by physiological, safety, social, self-esteem and self-actualisation. Accordingly, this theory each individual seeks to satisfy a need from one of the points listed above, starting with the physiological needs and depending on the level of satisfaction for this need, be it one hundred percent fulfilled or not, an individual will develop new needs that are placed higher on the pyramid (Maslow, 1943, 1954, 1987).

In their turn, social needs are linked to the feeling of belonging and acceptance of an individual within the group. This need can be met by including the person in question in events outside the company, when the group has a social interaction whether inside or outside the workplace, in addition to the inclusion and acceptance of different points of view on a given project. Self-esteem brings up the need to be acknowledged and respected, not only by their colleagues but also by their leaders in the workplace. In this way, they can mitigate the feeling that their contributions are not valued by others.

The highest level of the hierarchy of needs is self-actualisation, which is linked to an individual's need to reach the peak of his capabilities by setting challenges to be achieved. This is done through being given the opportunity of professional growth through promotion or through the freedom to undertake challenging projects thereby acquiring self-fulfilment and personal and professional growth.

As pointed out by Maslow, "any behaviour tends to be determined by several or all of the basic needs simultaneously" (1987). Hence, cultural conflicts within the workplace derive from the relative experiences and perspectives of each individual and their needs. Therefore,

each person's needs should be examined separately, as well as the weight that those needs have in relation to each individual's culture.

Organisations need to pay attention to internal cultural clashes and their employees' individual needs from an early stage since any misunderstanding, if unresolved, can spread in an uncontrolled and dangerous way. This may cause harmful effects not only to the employee but also to the whole group and even to the company as a whole. Therefore, the larger the multicultural groups of employees, the more capable the workers should be in managing their functions in a culturally autonomous way whilst also respecting each other's needs.

1.1.3. From Cultural to Hostility

Cultural conflicts that perhaps extend for too long can spread and take on excessive proportions. It would have been better for the parties involved and for the organisation if they had been dealt with in the early stages. According to Barkai, the cultural differences between two individuals appear at first as something new and often strange. However, in some situations, these differences may be interpreted by one of the parties as insulting or offensive (2008). When not acted upon in a timely manner, those differences of interpretation can result in trauma, requiring later on, a more rigorous intervention on the part of the company.

Two examples of cultural conflicts that often get out of control in the workplace are those linked to episodes of discrimination and harassment not limited to racial and gender conflict. Because of the serious nature of these conflicts within the work environment, the usual outcome of these conflicts is the forced resignation of one or two parties from the company (Ballard, 2002).

In order to understand when a cultural conflict becomes an act of discrimination in Ireland, the Employment Equality Act (Government of Ireland, 1998), defined that to be categorised as an act of discrimination the parties must diverge from one of the following points, this divergence being the main factor of the event: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, race, traveller Community or disability.

The Employment Equality Act (Government of Ireland, 1998) has defined an act of discrimination to be where a person has been discriminated on the grounds of their gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, race, traveller Community or disability. However, apart from discrimination based on at least one of the nine subcultures listed above, in order for a conflict to be regarded as discriminatory, in accordance with the Irish Human Rights and Equal Commission.

The episode in question must fall within one of four types of discriminatory actions accepted by the Irish Government: “direct Discrimination when someone is treated less well than other people on purpose, because of who they are; Indirect Discrimination when someone is treated less well than other people because of requirements which they would find harder than others to fulfil; Discrimination by Association when someone is treated less well than other people because of who they know or are connected to; Discrimination by Imputation when someone is treated less well than other people because they are labelled as being in one of the groups covered by the nine discriminatory grounds” (Irish Human Rights and Equal Commission, n.d.).

A multicultural workplace that was once seen as a suitable place to foster new goals and opportunities ends up sinking into the mire of hostility amidst daily conflicts arising from employees' discriminatory acts. Consequently, all those involved, including the institution, are caught in a situation in which the discriminatory attitudes have the power to influence both individual and collective behaviour.

Terry et al. (2012), points out that the responsibility of the company in caring for the well-being of its employees increases in accordance with the level of multiculturalism present in the work environment. Consequently, it is the organisation's role to identify and manage the discrepancies found on the inside of the organisation before any misunderstandings or differences develop into acts of discrimination. Above all, these conflicts can directly influence the employees' physical and mental health. They may in turn begin to present problems such as anxiety, depression, or chronic illness (Spector & Bruk-Lee, 2008). They could also lead to decreased job satisfaction, motivation, commitment and sense of continued belonging to the organisation. This then leads to an increase in absenteeism, mistakes, disagreements, and misunderstandings (Dhanani et al., 2018).

The decrease in an employees' commitment and satisfaction, will be directly linked to the quality of service offered by them, subsequently impacting the company's image. It is therefore essential that the company is aware of the negative impacts that the escalation of conflicts can incur before they are reflected in the health and behaviour of employees, which would consequently lead to a decrease in revenue for the organisation (Dhanani et al., 2018).

As pointed out by O'Connor "stress-related illnesses can inflate healthcare costs as employees seek treatment for unresolved worked issues, as well as legal fees from disgruntled employees who have legitimate grievances or are trying to get even with a company that refused to effectively manage conflict" (n.d.: paragraph 3). According to Ballard (2002), after the escalation of cultural conflicts to discrimination acts, the organisation shall apply its appropriate disciplinary measures consistent with pre-established norms in the company's guidelines, which may terminate the employment contract.

As a result of the escalation of cultural conflicts to discrimination acts, the organisation shall apply its appropriate disciplinary measures, which may terminate the employment contract (Ballard, 2002). Loch (2019) suggest the application of courses and training focused on the regulation of the policies and behavioural manuals of the organisation, containing all the information concerning the disciplinary processes and punishments in cases of non-compliance with organisational policies, as a tool to directly influence the reduction of episodes of discrimination in the workplace.

In the workplace, cultural differences can appear in many ways. The stereotypes that cultural groups bring with them in their way of seeing and dealing with those who are different is a crucial factor to take into consideration in multicultural environments, as the high probability of actions resulting from pre-established thoughts, are the cause of hostile acts (Barkai, 2008:86-87). It is vital for meaningful co-existence in multicultural environments that

all group members become aware of their differences and respect the diversity surrounding them.

Consequently, it is essential that organisations and individuals begin dialogue about cultural differences so that conflicts arising from misinterpretations do not escalate to a level that would impact people's health and behaviour in both personal and professional contexts. Open talk about cultural conflicts within the workplace is necessary and healthy for everyone involved, as cultural conflicts can often arise as a result of inadequate communication. In the following pages mediation as a facilitative process for fostering communication in processes resulting from cultural conflicts will be addressed.

1.2. Mediating Cultural Differences

1.2.1. Cultural Mediation

As a process of conflict resolution, mediation has been used by several people and cultures for centuries, initially used by religious leaders, community leaders, elders, people of high hierarchical level and lawyers. However, nowadays, it is increasingly gaining space in several environments due to its voluntary, non-coercive nature of a fair resolution through a process that seeks to rebuild the relationship of the parties involved (Green, 2005).

In negotiation and arbitration, mediation is the most widely used form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) instead of litigation. In countries such as the Republic of Ireland, lawyers are under a legal obligation to inform their clients of the benefits of mediation for resolving disputes (Government of Ireland, 2017) as an alternative to going to court, thus demonstrating the importance given to this non-coercive process and its advantages when seeking a resolution based on a facilitative process.

The intercultural mediation process involves several sensitive factors and is described by Kalowski as "an opportunity to expand the understanding of self and other" (2019:641). Meanwhile, Diversicare, a division of the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland in Australia, identifies this type of mediation as the opportunity for individuals who are involved in a conflict, resulted mainly from misunderstandings resulting from differences in their respective cultures, to present their cultural perspectives on the problem, so that the mediator may assist in the process of resolving the issue (The Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, 2016).

Menkel-Meadow and Abramson (2011) suggest four steps that a mediator should take when dealing with cultural differences: one is to understand their own culture, the second is to research the other's culture, the third is to build a connection between the two cultures and the fourth is to be able to recognise when the conflict cannot be settled. In the first step,

understanding and recognising their own culture is something that mediators should be aware of in order to avoid reinforcing stereotypes that may further undermine the relationship between the parties. This step is crucial because neutrality and facilitative mediation should be paramount, even when resolving cross-cultural conflicts (Hager & Pritchard, 2000).

The second step described by Mekel-Meadow and Abramson and reaffirmed by John Barkai (2008), in which Barkai states that the cross-cultural mediator must have the ability to understand and adapt to cultural differences, and Appollon (2014) includes emotional and cultural intelligence as essential skills for mediators during cultural conflicts. The third step constitutes intercultural mediation, entailing the "mediation of knowledge and information between members of different lifestyles and ways of life" (Theodosiou & Aspioti, 2015:30). Therefore, the primary function of mediators in cross-cultural conflicts would be to act as a bridge connecting the conflicting cultures to improve the communication between the parties and ease the reconciliation of these cultural differences.

The fourth step is based on the necessity of the parties to choose by themselves the settlement of the conflict without the influence of a mediator, in which case it must respect the choice of the parties even if one or more parties decide that, from their point of view, the conflict cannot be solved by mediation or by any other form of conflict resolution (Peppet, 2004). In this situation, mediators must be cautious during cultural mediations so that they do not force a resolution that one of the parties does not entirely agree with, given that all the cultures involved in the mediation process, including the mediator's, "will influence how these people manage the conflict and the mediation process itself" (Medina et al., 2017:50).

According to Kalowski (2019), the mediator can take two different approaches during cross-cultural mediation processes. The ethnic-specific approach, in which they seek to bring to the table the differences and similarities found between the parties, which according to the author, may bring with it the prejudices carried by the parties, or the broad cultural approach,

in which mediation seeks a greater understanding of the expectations and attitudes expected by the individuals in conflict.

Thus, it is necessary to consider how each individual and culture involved in the conflict views the mediation process and the role of the mediator, as well as the resolution of the conflict, so that one culture is not subjugated to another. The reason for this is that, as Ford proposed, people from the collectivist dimension would prefer the third party in the settlement to be someone from inside the community. Someone who was already familiar with the development of the dispute and able to advise the parties in order to restore the relationship. In contrast, people from the individualism dimension would rather have an impartial mediator from outside the group with a facilitative role. A person who does not have a view on how the dispute will unfold, leaving it up to the parties to manage (Ford, 2001).

In order to understand the cultural particularities surrounding the conflict, mediators may choose to conduct a caucus in which the mediator speaks with the parties separately rather than conducting meetings in which all participants present themselves to the mediation at the same time (Medina et al., 2017). However, as clarified by Billikopf-Enana (2002), the use of caucuses by mediators in cultural conflict situations often faces opposition. The lack of support to the use of parallel meetings between the sides in cross-cultural mediation sessions stems from the assumption that these sessions enable the mediator's impartiality and neutrality to be broken (Moore, 1986).

Nonetheless, those who favour using caucuses suggest that meetings before mediation are essential for building trust between the party and the mediator (Swaab et al., 2014), which creates trust and confidence in the parties involved process. Mediators can use these private sessions to both identify each party's insecurities and have a better insight into each culture and its influence inside the conflict (Radulescu & Mitrut, 2012). In this way, parties and mediators can use these preliminary meetings to create bonds of empathy. Individual cultures can be seen

in their totality and uniqueness, without the influence of stereotypical presumptions. (Swaab et al., 2014).

The benefits that workplace mediation brings to those involved in the conflict and to the organisation to which they belong are manifold; "high settlement rates combined with high levels of participant satisfaction; improved employee relationships along with restoring damaged relationships; organisational benefits including improved morale, enhanced performance, a less expensive and time-consuming process that can 'help to create a 'problem-solving culture'" (Curran et al., 2016:11). These benefits highlight the efficacy of workplace mediation and the use of cultural mediation in the workplace as cultural mediation is able to use effective communication and negotiation, and engage in conflict resolution to overcome emotional and psychological barriers in a humane manner with a win-win perspective (Apollon, 2014). Thus, cross-cultural mediation within the workplace characterised as a multicultural environment ensures that the existing pluralism is felt and respected.

1.2.2. Communication and Cross-Cultural Mediation

Each individual and group have their own characteristics, values, and needs. As a result of globalisation, multiculturalism, and the daily interaction between people with different life experiences, especially in the workplace, this results in cultural conflicts and cross-cultural mediations being more complex when compared to conflicts that do not have cultural differences as the epicentre of the conflict (Barkai, 2008).

Stobbe (2015) pointed out that conflicts can be seen with either positive or negative consequences for those involved or for the community or organisation of which the parties belong to. However, the outcome of the dispute often depends on the viewpoint of the facilitator and the willingness of the disputants to find an equitable resolution. Conflicts can be triggered for multiple reasons, one of the main ones being cultural diversity. Different perspectives and incompatible forms of communication make resolving these issues harder, which means utilizing different conflict management methods and adaptation.

The complexity of cultural conflicts is associated with the high range of nuances that the cultural sphere brings and may be related to experiences, knowledge, beliefs, morals, laws, customs or skills and others (UNESCO, 2017). The recognition of cultural difference and the way of communication and its distinction with the other person's way of communication is necessary because each individual recognises, receives, and sends messages according to their cultural group coding. Stobbe explains that "learning from the ways other cultures understand and resolve conflicts is an important part of maintaining healthy relationships in our interactive world" (2015:30).

Thus, the main challenge faced, in cultural mediation, by the mediator and the parties is precisely the recognition, acceptance and overcoming of differences within cross-cultural relationships (Barkai, 2008). Those related to the difficulties of communication are especially challenging, since it can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations, which in turn give

rise to cultural conflicts.

Lack of communication or poor communication can be one of the leading causes of the escalation of conflict. The mediator must work actively to facilitate the establishment or restoration of dialogue among the parties so that the parties' cross-cultural differences will always be respected. Thus, the opening of a new communication channel, either between the parties or among the parties and the mediator, is considered one of the main objectives for the rebuilding of the relationship and the resolution of the conflict. As pointed out by Mahan and Mahuna, communication "encourages the expansion of emotional positions that can promote self-determination" (2017:12).

Therefore, it is vital that when talking about differences across communication styles, it is necessary to talk about language barriers. During the mediation process, the language used must be chosen by mutual agreement among the parties and the mediator. As a rule, all participants should have sufficient proficiency in it. Although due consideration must also be given to the official language used in the workplace environment. The mastery and fluency with which parties are able to use this official language may differ depending on whether it is their native language, a second language, or even the third language spoken by those involved.

As pointed out by Lucke and Rigaut, language is characterised as "a social instrument [that] reflects a culture" (2002:14). In this manner, words that have different meanings and strengths within a culture can contribute to the escalation of the conflict since the culture of the individual plays a vital role in decoding the messages received during communication. In which case, according to Kalowski, "all of this requires individuals to transcend, not abandon, their cultural systems so that conflict and disagreements are seen not as threats but as challenges" (2019:640).

Therefore, in order to establish a good communication network among the parties, intercultural mediation acts as "a bridging of cultures, meanings, silent languages, terms,

collocations" (Theodosiou & Aspioti, 2015:16). Thus, as pointed out in the Protection Through Cultural Mediation handbook the cultural mediator must be someone who is "bilingual and bicultural in relation to both groups" (UNHCR, 2020:11) so that they can reformulate the entangled messages to allow all parties to understand the message through the cultural adjustments made by the mediator.

Thus, it is essential to note that while the meanings of words which may be lost during translation and throughout the communication process, it is important to consider the differences between low-context communication and high-context communication, which are greatly influenced by culture and dictate how a person interacts. According to Hall, people who communicate in high context "will expect his interlocutor to know what is bothering them so that they do not have to be specific" (1989:113). In high-context cultures, the message to be communicated does not consist, in its entirety, of words spoken, but also in the whole indirect and implicit context surrounding the words said.

Whereas low-context cultures communicate more directly and explicitly. Where verbal communication represents the totality of the information that the individual wishes to convey, whereby the repetition of the message is "appreciated for purposes of clarification, as is putting messages in writing" (Meyer, 2014: paragraph 6). In this way, the clash of the two forms of communication can result in those who possess the low-context style failing to understand the totality of the message, thus leading potential misinterpretation. While the high-context person may perceive the message as rude or unpolite, causing them to become defensive.

Therefore, mediators who act as the third party in cultural mediations must be able to understand and cross between the points of diversity, "in a way that the meaning and form may transfer into the language of the second party to produce the same effect that they would have produced in an audience who shared the first party's language" (Angelelli, 2000:581). Otherwise, there is a risk of creating more stereotypes and barriers between the conflicting

parties.

Another critical factor is the mediator who may face severe challenges in maintaining neutrality and impartiality during the process. Such difficulties can be due to the mediator's own communication style, which may be high-context or low-context. In this case, the mediator who is not able to mediate between these communication styles may generate discomfort and a feeling of injustice from one or more parties in the mediation process. Thus, instead of looking for a right or wrong communication style, the mediator must help the parties to reach the best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA).

1.2.3. Negotiation and Cross-Cultural Mediation

Interpersonal and cultural conflicts emerge from the "different perspectives, ideas and opinions" (Jehn, 1995:258) possessed by members of the same group. In order to balance these conflicting points in such a way that neither party feels inferior or under duress to make concessions, cultural mediators must have knowledge and mastery of negotiation techniques (Barkai, 2008).

Consequently, the mediator must understand that they will have to deal with different negotiation styles in order to find a balance between the parties, since, as pointed out by Barkai, "negotiating parties from different cultures may have completely different interests based upon their cultural interests and preferences" (2008:49). In this way, the mediator should work to encourage all parties to use conflict management techniques to seek an interest-based approach through the best alternative to a negotiated agreement, rather than only thinking about their own interests. In addition to all the cultural differences already discussed in this paper, the mediator must understand and distinguish the five styles of approach, as defined by Blake and Mouton (1964), that the parties may have and which may emerge during the mediation and negotiation.

The competitive tendency when people tend to defend their point of view at any cost, seeing conflict as a competition in which one has to succeed at any price. The opposite is the case of those who possess an accommodating behaviour, in which people are more inclined to let their interests be subordinated to the interests of others. The primary issue with these two approaches is that when it comes to cultural conflicts, the two cultures must be equally addressed. As mentioned before, to solve cross-cultural conflicts, it is necessary to establish a bridge in which both cultures make concessions so that one culture does not overrule the other disproportionately.

The third behaviour that one or more parties may show is avoidance, in which the

individual denies the existence of the conflict or concludes that they have no interest in taking the conflict further. It is necessary though, to understand that conflicts are essential and should not be avoided. Once culture shock occurs, and misunderstandings and misinterpretations arise, conflicts can escalate, if not discussed and resolved in the early stages, into cases of discrimination, which can even have a direct impact on people's physical and psychological health.

In contrast, people with a collaborative nature seek the resolution of the dispute through joint action in which the individual is willing to make concessions. While compromising people are those who, like collaborative ones, are willing to make concessions. However, compromise is conditional on the other party likewise compromising in order to find a solution that pleases both parties in a win-win scenario. Therefore, the compromising approach is the one that parties are expected to use during cross-cultural mediation processes. In order to achieve a better result for all involved, the mediator must be able to understand and adapt between the cross-cultural differences in dispute and be skilled in moving between different approaches.

Since it is understood that negotiation is an essential element of cross-cultural mediation, and that for a good, effective, and fair resolution for all parties involved in the conflict, individuals must act in a way that commits them to a resolution that is mutually agreeable to all parties, the parties should not see each other as opponents in a dispute.

In this way, negotiating bargains can and should be used to establish a satisfactory outcome. Thus, the mediator should assist the conflicting parties in the negotiation principles described by Fisher et al. (1991) in *Getting to Yes*. The first important task is that of separating the person from the problem since, during conflicts and negotiations, people's deepest emotions tend to surface. Therefore, the parties must understand that the goal of the process is not to establish a winner or a loser, but rather for the parties to be able to select a solution to the conflict in which the problem is solved without further harming their feelings or the

relationship between the parties.

The focus during the negotiations should be on the interests of each side of the conflict and not on the positions they hold. When encouraging the use of the interest-based bargaining approach, the mediator should seek to understand the primary and often hidden interests behind the position that each person defends. Indeed, as Abramson elucidates, "a dispute that appears to be primarily about money, for instance, might be mostly about protecting a principle, saving face, preserving the relationship, or promoting particular community norms and collective interests" (2006:255).

This continues with the ability of the mediator and the parties to think through and bring to the negotiation and mediation table win-win resolution options. In this phase, all parties involved in the conflict should bring up options that they believe they, and the other party, could accept as a resolution to the conflict. At this stage, possible conditions, contingencies, and trades should be listed for everyone's consideration. Therefore, it is essential to emphasise objective criteria since the facts that resulted in the conflict are the result of the different perspectives of the cultures involved in the conflict. The parties, therefore, must agree to consider and analyse the conflict from a fair and independent perspective as a mechanism to resolve their differences. This perspective may be that of the organisational culture within which the parties operate during cultural conflicts which have arisen.

Nevertheless, Barkai (2008) differs from 'Getting to Yes' and its approaches. He to separate the person from the problem is an attitude easily achieved by people inside the individualism dimension of culture. In this case, under the collectivist perspective, interpersonal relationships and the problem generated by cultural differences would be interconnected, it being almost impossible to separate them.

The predominance of interest over position would also encounter barriers, according to Barkai (2008) since people with a high-power dimension would be less likely to give up their

status and hierarchical gap even for the sake of resolving the dispute. Likewise, people inserted in a high uncertainty culture tend to have a more challenging time fostering and accepting new resolution options since a new approach may increase anxiety for these individuals.

Also according to Barkai (2008), individuals belonging to the masculinity dimension will have a lower tendency to seek a multi win-win result since these people tend to be more competitive. He also raises the issue that among objective criteria, the definition of the pursuit of a fair result is ambiguous since what is considered fair by one culture may not be fair from the perspective of another culture.

As a consequence of all the diversity that cultural conflicts can bring to a mediation process, as well as the way that culture can influence the negotiation process and the final result, it is essential that the mediator manages to have an overview of the interests and the personal and cultural needs of the parties (Abramson, 2006). In this respect, cultural diversity and intercultural disputes in the workplace are not likely to end in the near future, mainly due to the individual peculiarities of each person, which, as we saw earlier, makes the achievement of a common culture for an entire group practically impossible. Thus, organisations must foster the institutional practice of identifying and combining the cultural differences present within it in order to generate an effective increase in acceptance, tolerance, and integration of different cultures (Mahan & Mahuna, 2017:14).

1.3. Managing Cross-Cultural Conflict in the Workplace

1.3.1. Organisational Culture in a Multicultural Environment

The organisational culture constitutes one of the third models in the study of Gardenswartz, Bennett, Rowe and Digh (2003) and is used to evaluate the causes of cultural conflicts in the professional multicultural environment. The two first being individual culture and national culture. As previously mentioned, when several people who have different cultures are immersed in a shared space, as occurs in work environments, the multicultural nuances of the workplace become evident. Therefore, it is both expected and predictable that conflicts and issues emerge from the cultural clashes which can occur in this environment.

Consequently, a company's organisational culture appears as an essential tool to allow people to be integrated in harmony with the community that they belong to through the incorporation of beliefs and values. The organisational culture is formed by the junction of values, beliefs and norms that should guide the steps of the members of the organisation during their conduct practices within the institution (Bates & Khasawneh, 2005). It, then, does not only dictate what and how the organisational culture should be followed, but also how it sits among the cultural differences that surround it.

As organisations cannot keep their internal culture isolated from the external culture of their employees or from the local culture where the company is located, it becomes "really essential for organisations to increase their understanding with regard to social norms as they have to implement them in their organisation climate" (Ma & Kang, 2020:170). As a result, there is a need to incorporate a variety of cultures during the planning and formatting of the organisational culture.

In accordance with Kang (2015) and Katz, Swanson, and Nelson (2001), organisational culture is not merely something pre-prepared and immutable, in which individuals at the highest hierarchical levels within a company are responsible for choosing the optimal option

and presenting the model of organisational culture that they believe will best fit for the other employees. Since, as pointed out by Asino and Giacomo (2019), the individual culture of community members can influence and modify the way people interact with each other, receiving and retaining information and building interpersonal relationships inside and outside the work environment. In other words each person has a chance to modify and influence organisational culture, even if, only on a small scale.

In this way, the organisations that employ people from different cultures can influence and modify the way in which people interact with each other, receiving and retaining information and building interpersonal relationships both inside and outside the workplace. Thus, organisations that insert and aim to build a multicultural work environment must consider and balance these cultural differences in the internal environment of socialisation when thinking and building their own organisational culture (Asino & Giacomo, 2019). According to Patulak *et al.*, the implementation of a solid organisational culture "is expected to create a whole culture of satisfaction, strong commitment and good performance within an organisation performance" (2013:166).

However, one must consider that organisational cultures may differ depending on each researched organisation and the cultures incorporated within its work environment as well as the local culture in which the organisation is situated. The six basic dimensions that, according to Hofstede et al. (2010), are responsible for the behaviour of organisational cultures should still be taken into consideration and should be further considered in the delimitation of the basic cultural organisational structure.

When evaluating an institution's organisational culture, the first aspect to understand whether it is a process-oriented or result-oriented institution. Accordingly, there are those organisations which are more bureaucratic and technical, they are process-oriented. This type of organisation tends to follow the same established procedures on all occasions. While at the

other extreme there are those that are results-oriented, meaning that they are more eager and open to new ways to achieve the expected outcomes. (Hofsted et al., 2010).

Another dimension, that between employee oriented versus job oriented is about the focus of the organisation. It can be aimed more at people, in which the organisation takes a duty of care upon itself as to the welfare of the employee. Alternatively, the company's orientation can be more focused on the accomplishment of the work, in which employees are often pressured, beyond their limits, to meet the deadlines set by the company (Hofsted et al., 2010).

Hofstede uses the third dimension to correspond with the identification of employees, in which the professional identification, as the name suggests, identifies the members of the organisation by the type of professions they perform. On the other hand, there is the parochial identification, in which employees identify themselves by the organisation they belong to. The fourth dimension contrasts organisations in an open system, in which new members are welcome, as opposed to a closed system, in which even among the company's own members it is difficult to accept new members into a group, thus making it difficult for new members to join (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The loose control versus tight control system is represented in the fifth dimension. This dimension shows whether organisations have a high or low level of control over their structures. Accordingly, employees under loose control have more autonomy when performing their tasks than those under tight control. In contrast, those under tight control, forming a centralised strategy perspective, have more coordination between departments than those in a loose control system. (Hofstede et al., 2010).

The sixth and last dimension of organisational culture proposed by Hofstede et al. (2010) looks at the difference between normative culture and pragmatic culture. The organisation and its employees are governed by company policies and norms, which are more

important than achieving good results. As opposed to a pragmatic organisational culture, in which the drive for better results and the quest to meet customer needs are in a superior position to the norms of the organisation.

There is, therefore, no right or wrong model of organisational culture, merely different perspectives. Employees should understand what sort of organisational culture the company they belong to has. Individuals within organisations with a rigid organisational culture are unlikely to influence the community's culture to generate significant changes. In this way, employees who share the exact dimensions of the organisation tend to feel more satisfied. Therefore, organisations must understand how to align their organisational culture with the cultures within it in order to generate satisfaction, acceptance, happiness, and warmth among community members.

The construction of an organisational culture in which individuals see their respective cultures honoured, brings to light the importance that the company gives to the integration of its diverse workforce. It is one of the positive points of institutional organisational culture. Ma and Kang raise a concern about using organisational culture as a tool to balance the existing cultures in the workplace, since "in an attempt to incorporate the diverse culture presented by employees in a multinational organisation, managers and employees end up developing policies, methods of operations, practices and procedures, which in turn, hinder the organisation achieving its goals due to the over-generalisation" (Ma & Kang, 2020:171).

A rigid organisational culture can also result in unseen cultures surrounding the dominant culture. This event would occur when people with similar cultures to the dominant culture are unable to sense the marginalised cultures within the organisational culture before a conflict occurs due to cultural differences. However, one has to consider that within more flexible organisational cultures, the individual cultures of the community members, even if they are not

dominant cultures, hold sufficient power to alter the organisational culture within their environment.

Guiso, Sapienza and Zingales (2008) report that this change within the organisational culture is possible once a new person becomes part of an environment while adapting to a particular organisational culture or dominant culture different from their own. The new culture also contributes to a change in organisational culture, even if symbolic, because it also has the power to affect the more dominant culture.

As pointed out by Mahan and Mahuna, organisational culture acts inside the workplace as responsible for "identifying these nuances and establishing a channel of communication that is culturally sensitive, which can bridge divides based on a holistic and cosmopolitan network of conflict resolution techniques" (Mahan & Mahuna, 2017:13). In this way, by understanding the importance of organisational culture from its structuring to its implementation within the work environment, it is possible to begin to understand how the organisation can or cannot deal with different perspectives and conflicts. It can be more flexible and open to accept new cultures and changes, or it can be closed, which can make it difficult for individuals to fit in and to adapt to the organisation and its rules.

1.3.2. Facilitative Discussion and Mediation for Cultural Conflicts in the Workplace

In *Clash of Civilisations*, Samuel Huntington (1993) states that it is part of human nature that each individual and or cultural group carries prejudices and stigmas concerning other parties in cross-cultural disputes. Therefore, since this characteristic is inherent to the human being, national, organisational, and individual cultures directly affect people's individual behaviour. An awareness of these differences is crucial so that people and the group to which they belong can benefit from them.

The establishment of a strong organisational culture, according to Medina et al. (2017), can have a more significant influence on the members of the internal community when compared to the employees' own cultures. However, while organisational culture is related to the way members of a group think and behave, depending on the dynamics established by the organisational culture of an institution, it may end up fostering the creation of conflicts within the environment (Gavric et al., 2016).

According to Brett (2014), when attempting to resolve conflicts in the workplace, often the best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) is not possible. Consequently, the next reasonable move would be to establish the worst alternative to a negotiated agreement (WATNA). In this way, in case the parties who cannot see an alternative that is viable, fair, and good for all involved in the conflict, think of alternatives that would be considered by them as the worst outcomes, indicating which path they do not want to follow.

It is important to note that to deal with these different approaches Sauntry and Wibberley (2015) attributes the use of mediation or facilitative discussion to resolve conflicts. In which they differ the intervention process within the workplace between a facilitative discussion, in which managers and Human Resources professionals act as facilitators, assisting during the conflict resolution process. Moreover, the use of mediation, as a modern alternative dispute resolution process, in which the role of the third party is played by a trained and

accredited professional mediator.

Subsequently, apart from external professional mediators, in-house managers and human resources professionals may also conduct an internal mediation process regarding conflicts inside the workplace. However, those who possess knowledge of the mediation process, but are not fully accredited, can only act as facilitators. In a facilitative discussion, the facilitative process follows the same parameters and steps as those performed during the mediation process (Mediation Institute, n.d.). It is therefore incumbent upon a facilitator to have knowledge of the techniques and principles used in cultural mediation in order to satisfactorily mediate cultural conflicts within the workplace.

Consequently, it is feasible for multicultural organisations to establish, through increased recruitment and specialisation, "managers, human resource specialists and employee representatives [who can] coordinate and carry out mediations [and who] can enhance understandings and provide an environment in which high-trust relationships between the parties can be developed, encouraging more informal resolution generally" (Sauntry & Wibberley, 2015:5). Thus, by establishing these employees as interventionists, they are well placed to assess the appropriate time in which to intervene during conflict in the workplace.

According to Brett (2017), intervention on cultural conflicts within the workplace must deal with the timing issue, taking into consideration the fact that, if intervention is early, it denies the relevant parties of an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to resolve their differences on their own. However, if the intervention occurs too late, the conflict may have already escalated beyond the relevant parties and spilled over to affect others outside of the conflict.

Both authors, Brett (2017) and Kozulin (2003), also point out that late intervention can occur due to the fact that cultural differences are often not as apparent as they are presumed to be. This can happen when, groups formed by people who are part of the dominant culture

combined with those who have a very similar culture, make the cultural differences momentarily invisible. In this way, the majority of people follow the same patterns of thought and conduct, thus creating a supposition of cultural harmonisation. It becomes a norm to be followed, even if other members do not share the same bias (Ford, 2001).

The false harmony given by the establishment of a dominant culture tends to hinder the perception of the members of the group in relation to cultural questions during its early stages. Therefore, by understanding the value that culture has on interpersonal relationships in the workplace, it is invaluable that organisations, especially those that engage in multiculturalism, do not ignore conflicts arising from clashes and disagreements, even those which occur with minimally opposing cultures in the workplace.

As a consequence of not resolving a conflict within one particular group in a timely manner, organisations may find that tensions brim over into other unrelated areas within the company. Sauntry and Wibberley, (2015:5) say that "the development of in-house mediation schemes can shape organisational approaches to conflict management; however, this is more likely where it is part of a strategic intervention that recognises the importance of early and proactive conflict resolution". Thus, the challenge for organisations is to establish management processes based around managing conflicts due to cultural differences and they should pay heed, according to Ma and Kang to, "approaches to incorporate and implement a management technique that takes into consideration [about] the diversity of the cultures presented within the institution" (2020:169-170).

Brett (2017) points out the importance of providing an open space for cultural conflicts to emerge within a group, giving those involved the opportunity to show that they are capable of resolving the situation themselves. Immediate intervention should take place when the honour of one of the parties is insulted or when the conflict emerges as an intensifier of disharmony within a group. Therefore, organisations should make use of an organisational

culture in which "cross-culture management involves eliminating or reducing the differences and barriers that arise from the diversity of culture in a workplace environment through cross-cultural awareness programs that enhance effective communication, and cooperation in the workplace" (Ma & Kang, 2020:171).

As intercultural conflicts in the workplace can emerge from the clash of different combinations of cultural clashes, the speed with which such conflict escalates can be both instigated and reduced by the way people handle conflict. Also how the organisation, where the parties to a dispute are located, perceives and acts to contain conflict can either instigate or resolve the issue. Through the use of dispute management measures, such as the use of internal mediations or facilitative discussions, conflict can be restrained and resolved to allow for a more harmonious workplace. It is essential to point out that the implementation of cultural inclusion programmes can positively impact the workplace as a way of minimising discrimination and increasing harmony between the various cultures present in a multicultural organisation.

1.3.3. Cultural Inclusion

In order to implement the use of mediation processes and facilitative discussions to solve cultural conflicts within the workplace, it is necessary to be aware of the need to enact procedures of cultural integration within the organisational culture of the institutions. Since, as pointed out by Ma and Kang, "when an organisation has employed workers from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, it is highly essential for that organisation to ensure a social and corporate harmony among them" (2020:172).

In this way, multicultural organisations present cultural inclusion projects as a way to compensate for the constant changes and upheaval caused by the recruitment and turnover of people with diverse cultural backgrounds. However, according to Chavez and Weisinger, if poorly conducted, inclusion projects may increase tensions within the workplace if individuals do not feel that their point of view has been considered, but rather excluded from the project, causing an increase in "social conflict - divisiveness, hostility, backlash, and increase in litigation" (Chavez & Weisinger, 2008:331).

To avoid increasing conflicts within the organisation, companies can and should develop specific procedures and training courses and propose the revision and recycling of these courses from time to time for employees. Courses and procedures should focus on working toward the recognition and integration of different cultures to prevent situations of discrimination within the workplace, as well as to reduce the spread of other conflicts, whether of the cultural origin or not (Trenerry et al., 2012).

As institutions begin to incorporate integral cross-cultural elements in work environments and not merely in a superficial way, interconnectedness will grow. As soon as it becomes clear that multicultural elements are part of the organisational culture, the intercultural connectivity surrounding their employees will bring more and more positive results. Ma and Kang state that "when an organisation promotes and supports this type of local culture in their

organisation environment, this develops a congenial and professional workplace environment necessary for improving productivity and performance of all employees for a long period of time" (2020: 172).

The concept of a multicultural work environment may at first suggest that the organisation is inclusive as it hires people from different cultures in a non discriminatory way. However, after hiring, it is necessary that the practice of inclusion remains throughout the employment relationship between the employee and the organisation. As pointed out by Washington & Patrick, "inclusion has to be understood as very different from diversity because simply having a wide roster of demographic characteristics will not make a difference to an organisation's bottom line unless the people who fall into any one demographic feel welcomed. Inclusion refers to a cultural and environmental feeling of belonging" (2018: paragraph 10).

Thus, when carrying out inclusion projects, the organisation seeks to meet the needs of belonging of its employees as described by Maslow (1943). However, it must be taken into account that the wider the diversity, the more divergence between the needs to be fulfilled. As an example; every Friday company x provides a lunch with typical dishes from different places around the world. Once this initiative, which helps colleagues get to know a little more of the culture of their co-workers, has begun, it will at a certain level meet the basic needs of employees.

Those whose basic needs are already fulfilled can still feel the need to belong. Once the company starts offering this initiative it should be noted that the organisation will "shift away from a 'managing diversity' intendance toward a strategy of 'managing for diversity'" (Chavez & Weisinger, 2008:332). In this way, there will be the inclusion of generalised cultures and regard for different subcultures, such as people who do not consume a particular type of food, either for health reasons or for a philosophy of life. If the organisation does not consider these differences and only offers meals for people with no dietary restrictions, these employees will

feel excluded by the company, which could in turn, perhaps, lead to unintended negative consequences.

The inclusion of different cuisines, as pointed out above, is a method that could be seen as a cultural celebration. Which when combined with the celebration of cultural festivities such as Christmas, Diwali, Chinese New Year and Nowruz provide an environment of inclusion and sharing, in which employees feel free to show to their co-workers what is important to them. Allowing their colleagues see some of the culture which has helped to shape them. Other projects that can work toward the satisfaction of these needs are events such as talent nights, where people can come together to demonstrate their hidden skills, talents and passions.

Cultural inclusion events become categorised as moments when individuals stop shielding themselves behind the company's organisational culture or dominant culture and feel enabled and free to share and learn more about the different cultures which surround them. However, the implementation of these programs are often quite sensitive. The organisation should be cautious during planning and implementation since employees may feel excluded from the community as it is difficult for all organisation members to have their culture disseminated and regarded in one single inclusion project.

2. Research Methodology and Methods

2.1. Introduction

From the beginning of this research the methodology and methods are presented in the second chapter of this work, highlighting the design used as a guide throughout the project. According to Saunders et al., research is "the systematic collection of information with a clear purpose" (2007: 610), while methodology "is the theory of how research should be undertaken" (2007: 602).

The importance of a delimited research methodology is that the suitable methodology for the research will result in a reliable outcome. In this way, the perspectives adopted concerning philosophy, approach, choice, strategies, time-horizon, data collection and analysis and the limitations of the work will be discussed. In addition to the reason for its biases and the explanation as to why alternatives were not seen as the best option of choice and therefore, were left out of the final selection.

2.2. Philosophy

Philosophy is a crucial part of how the research and analysis of this study will be assessed. There are two main branches in philosophy, ontology and epistemology, which are further divided into branches that may provide different perspectives depending on how a particular study intends to approach it.

According to Crotty, ontology is defined as "the study of being" (2003:10), which follows the thought of Guba and Lincoln (1989), in which they state that research following ontological philosophy raises questions about the nature of reality and what can be known. Realism and relativism are two significant schools of ontology, in which realism points out that there is only one reality, while relativism recognises the existence of several truths (Crowther, 2020).

Epistemology constitutes the "way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know" (Crotty, 2003:3). Similarly, Rey (2020) points out that each person interprets reality according to their perspectives through epistemology.

Regardless of the philosophy to be followed, it is necessary to carefully select the perspective from which the research will be analysed. The emic perspective is defined as an "attempt to capture participants' indigenous meanings of real-world events" (Yin, 2010:11). The study is done through the analysis and perspective of people in the group. From the etic perspective, the analysis is carried out by the vision from the outside of the group. The study is done using "structures and criteria developed outside the culture" (Willis, 2007:100).

This work employs the epistemological philosophy following the interpretivism current and the emic perspective. The choice of epistemology instead of ontology as a mainstream philosophy occurred due to the aim of the research to understand the perceptions, feelings and beliefs of the people who answered the survey in order to find patterns of conduct and or prospects of people who have experienced cross-cultural conflicts in the working environment.

2.3. Approach

There are two options to be considered in this context: the inductive approach and the deductive approach. According to Thomas, inductive analysis is characterised by "approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts and themes" (2006:238).

On the other hand, the deductive approach is characterised by "basing analysis on pre-existing theory" (Gale *et al.*, 2013:3). Hence, research and hypotheses are raised before data analysis. The data obtained from the primary analysis are used primarily to support existing theories. The approach selected for this research was the inductive approach. Data will be gathered data from primary research and patterns and hypotheses in the data will be examined to enable a substantial conclusion.

2.4. Strategies

According to Saunders *et al.* (2007), the research strategy details the way the researcher will conduct the primary research project, where the strategy can be varied according to the design and nuances of the project. Among the strategies that can be used are surveys, action research, experimental and case studies.

Wiles *et al.* (2011) stated that the action research strategy is active research in which the researcher improves their professional skills while increasing their professional knowledge. Thereby they find the resolution of their hypothesis in a practical way. The case study strategy, described by Bryman (2012), involves a researcher performing an analysis of a select group, evaluating the characteristics of that unit and drawing generalisations from this. Considering the size of the research population and the limitation in not selecting a specific organisation to conduct the case study, the first two strategies were quickly rejected for this research.

According to Saunders *et al.* (2007), experimental research is a strategy used to compare the results of experiments against the assumptions or results that were supposed to be achieved at the beginning of the project. Meanwhile, the use of the Survey strategy (Bryman & Bell, 2011) is a powerful method used to collect a large amount of data reliably through sampling to represent the population.

As the preliminary results will not be used to compare the previous hypothesis, it will instead be used to show patterns within. The final strategy chosen and used for this work was the survey, in which a mixed-method for the collection of qualitative and quantitative data was utilized, through the use of an online questionnaire.

2.5. Choice

According to Leedy and Ormrod, the description of the method is "a detailed and systematic examination of the content of a particular body of materials to identify patterns,

themes, or biases" (2001:155). Therefore, our selection lies among the mixed or mono-method approach, which, under Leedy and Ormrod's approach, mono-method contrasts qualitative and quantitative research while mixed method involves the use of both methods.

Creswell defines qualitative research as "a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the view of participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words from participants, describes and analyses these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner" (2005:39). At the same time, according to Trochim (2006), quantitative research is defined by the descriptive statistics of the population, by the generalisation of the population from the sample.

In addition, the third option comprises the mixed-method approach, which incorporates qualitative and quantitative research methods, carrying the benefits according to Wisdom and Creswell (2013) of presenting comprehensive and complete results since there is no division into qualitative and quantitative data. In this way, it was chosen to use the mixed-method approach. As is noted by Johnson and Onwegbuzie (2004), through this approach, it is possible to combine the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methods in order to reduce their weaknesses.

2.6. Time Horizon

The time horizon refers to the time between the beginning and end of the research. It can be longitudinal or cross-sectional (Bryman, 2012), in which the longitudinal refers to studies that require a continuous and extensive time frame to be completed. In contrast, cross-sectional refers to studies that are conducted within a specific time frame. Thus, it was used the cross-sectional time horizon for this research since the work was conducted throughout the first half of 2021, more precisely from March to May.

2.7. Data Collection and Analysis

The population for this research consists entirely of people who work in multicultural environments and have experienced conflicts, misinterpretations or misunderstandings due to cultural diversity among the people involved. In this manner, an analysis was sought on how people handled the conflict, whether they eventually reported the episode and whether it was settled through mediation. Further analysis is carried out on their particular perspectives as to whether the organisations to which these people belong, operate and deal with multiculturalism among employees and the conflicts arising from these differences.

In order to collect data for this research, a survey was created on the Google Form platform. The link to the questionnaire was sent and shared through LinkedIn and Facebook, People, who were working in multicultural organisations, were kindly encouraged to voluntarily and anonymously answer the survey.

This survey consisted of eighteen questions consisting of closed and open-ended questions. The closed questions, which mainly consisted of yes or no answers, evaluated the percentage of people who did or did not identify themselves as the examples in a particular circumstance. The open questions were fundamental in showing the perspectives of the people who had experienced specific incidents and allowing them to provide a clear example of cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace and how these conflicts were managed.

2.8. Research Limitation

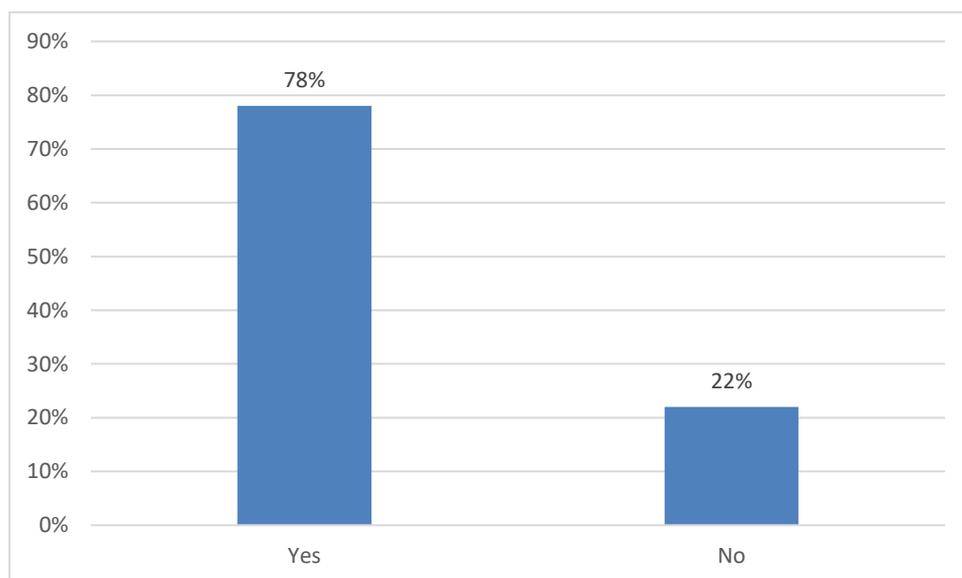
The constraints of this work are found mainly in the issues of the population chosen. Our population includes a scale of millions of people who fit the parameters of working in multicultural environments and who, for one reason or another, have experienced conflict as a consequence of the cultural differences present in the workplace. Thus, it is not possible to catalogue the entire population, a non-probability sampling was used, jointly an inductive data

analysis approach. Theories and conclusions generated by the answers collected are related only to the experiences of the ninety-one people who responded to the survey, which means that the final result cannot be generalised and is subject to challenge.

3. Presentation of Data

The data from this study of cross-cultural conflicts and mediation in the workplace, which was gathered through the application of a survey using the Google forms platform, will be presented below. It was gathered through collecting anonymous qualitative and quantitative information from ninety-one people during the months of March and May 2021, following the methodological formulations already presented. There were eighteen questions in total; quantitative data was sought through eleven of the questions and qualitative data was sought from seven. For the purposes of this research, the terms multiculturalism and culture were defined, in order to ensure that all participants would have the same understanding when answering the subsequent questions.

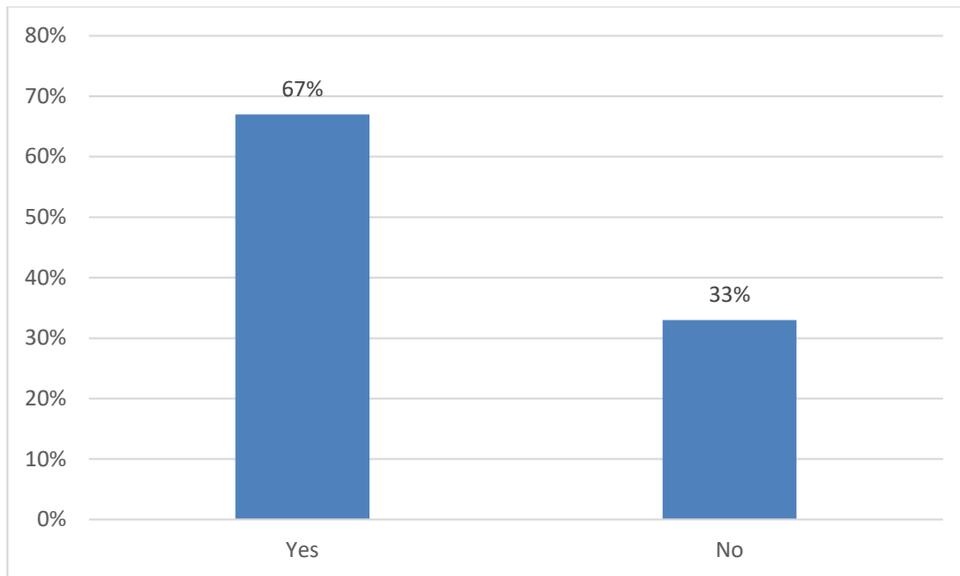
Q1. Do you currently work in a multicultural environment?



Graphic 1 - People who works in a multicultural environment

This first question established that according to the ninety-one responses received seventy-eight percent of people considered their current work environment to have a cross-cultural mix, thus making it a multicultural place, while twenty-two percent responded that they work in monocultural environments.

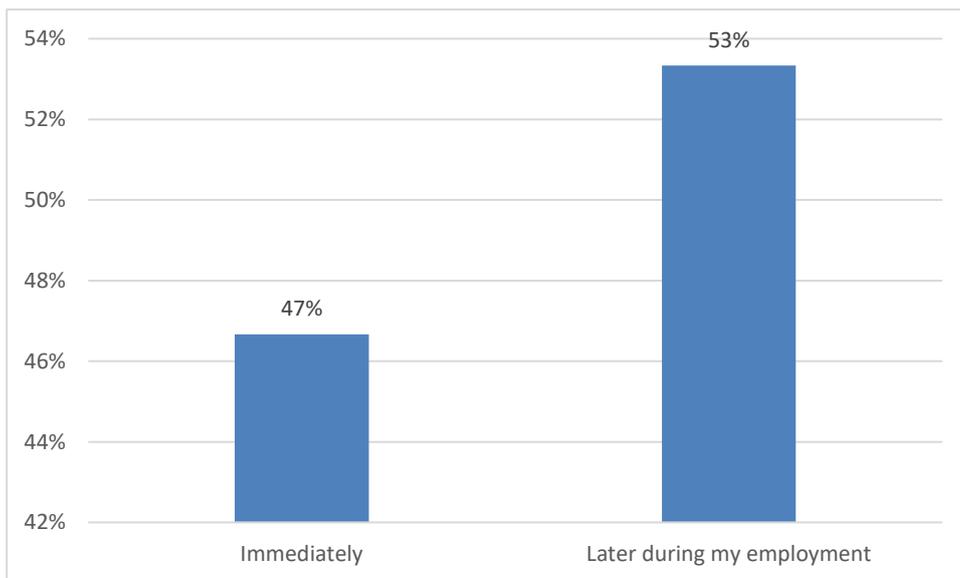
Q2. Have you ever felt there was a clash of cultures between you and a colleague(s) within your current or a previous workplace?



Graphic 2 - People who felt cultural clash in the workplace

Regarding the second question, which looked at the encounter or the cultural shock that may occur, once more than one culture starts to interact in the same environment. Sixty-seven percent of the ninety-one responses reported that at some point during their current or previous work contract there was some form of culture shock between colleague(s). While thirty-three percent responded that they had never experienced cultural clashes in the workplace.

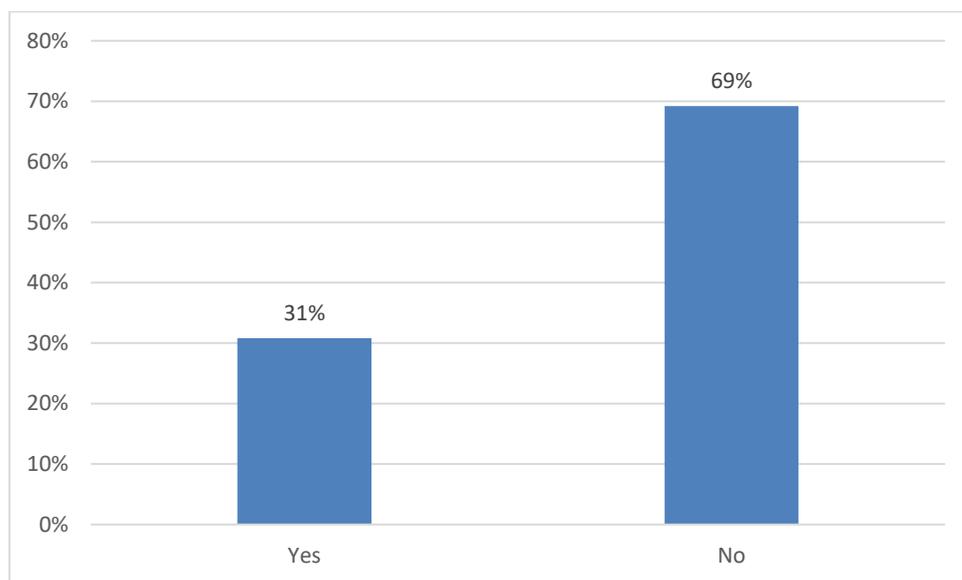
Q3. If you answered YES to (2), when did you experience the cultural clash in the workplace?



Graphic 3 - When cultural clash was experienced

This question sought to discern, among the people who experienced a cultural clash in the workplace, when the shock was felt. Of the sixty responses collected in question number three, while forty-seven percent of people reported that they experienced culture shock immediately after being hired by the new organisation. Fifty-three percent reported that cultural clash was felt later on during their employment.

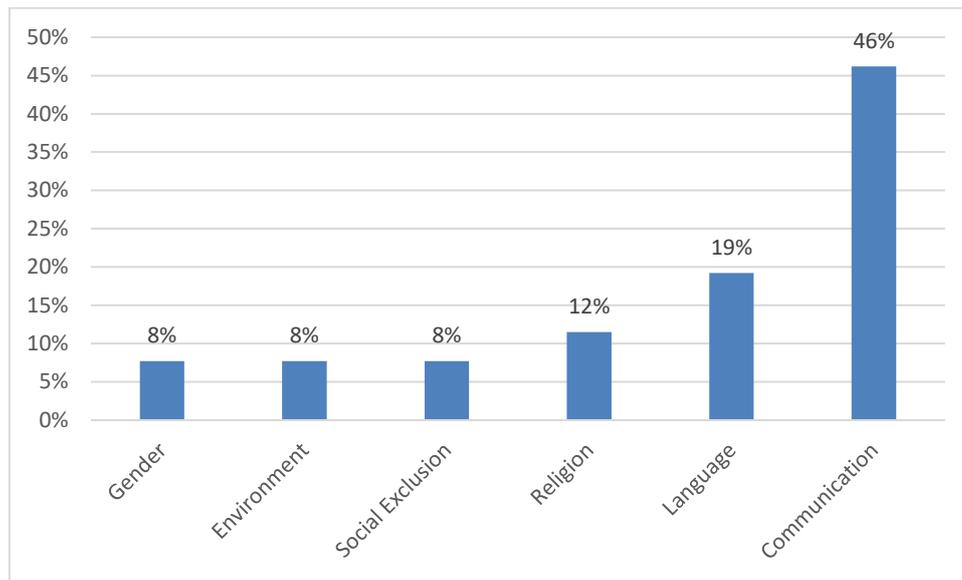
Q.4 Have you been involved in a situation in the workplace where there has been a misunderstanding which you felt resulted from cultural differences?



Graphic 4 - People who were involved in cultural misunderstanding

In question four, we sought to understand the percentage of people who had experienced situations of misunderstanding or misinterpretation caused by cultural differences in the workplace. Of the ninety-one replies obtained, sixty-nine percent said that they had not, from their perspective, experienced any situation of misunderstanding arising from cultural differences within the workplace. However, thirty-one percent reported, from their perspective, having experienced misunderstandings due to cultural differences both from their own perceptions and from the perceptions of those who they were dealing with.

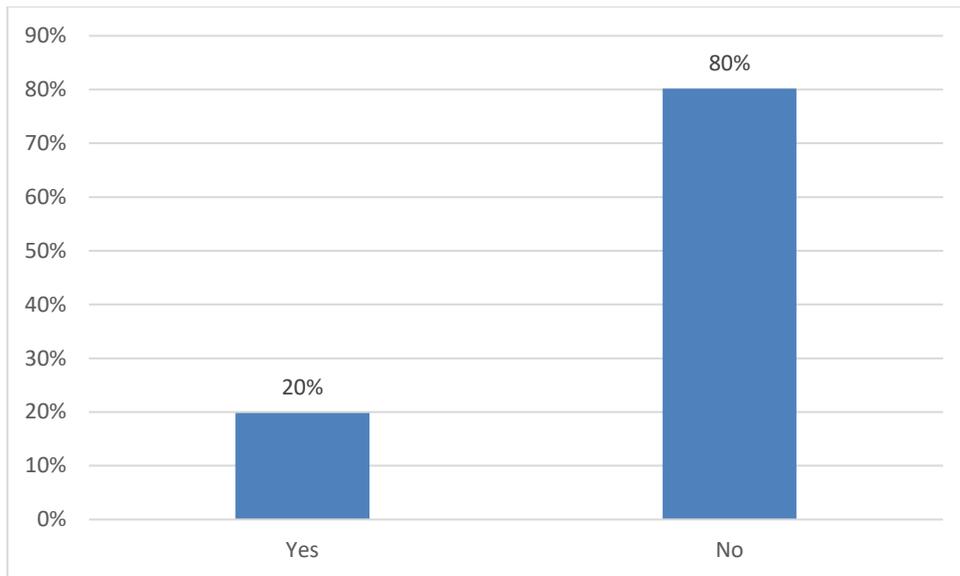
Q5. If you answered YES to (4), please explain briefly how this manifested



Graphic 5 - How the misunderstanding was manifested

Question five further explores whether there are patterns in the way misunderstandings and misinterpretations arise from cultural differences in the workplace. Of the ninety-one respondents, sixty-five abstained from answering. Of the remaining twenty-six who responded, forty-six percent reported episodes of problems or lack of communication, twelve percent reported issues involving religious differences, nineteen percent highlighted language barriers as the main factor of cultural divergence. Eight percent cited feelings of exclusion, eight percent talked about the difference between their own working environment and that of others on the same team and the final eight percent referred to misunderstandings generated by cultural differences related to gender issues.

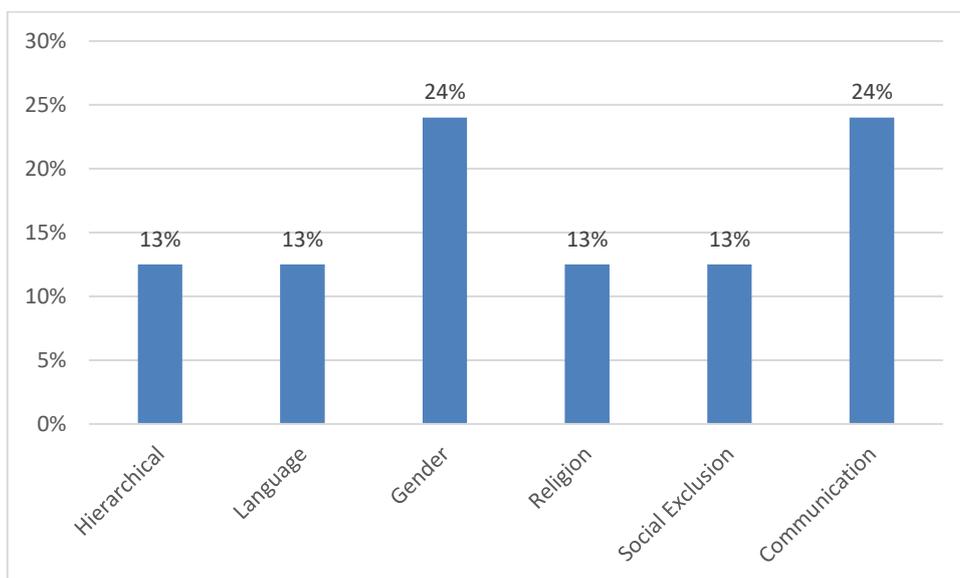
Q6. Had you experienced a situation where individuals were, in your view, unwilling to understand your cultural differences?



Graphic 6 - People who experienced situations where individuals were unwilling to understand cultural differences

Question six endeavoured to discover if the respondents had been in situations in which, from their perspective, another person was unwilling to understand the cultural differences between them. Of the ninety-one replies collected in this question, eighty percent of the respondents did not experience situations in which individuals were not willing to understand the cultural differences between them. Whereas twenty percent reported having experienced situations in which, from their perspective, the other party was not willing to understand the particularities of another's culture.

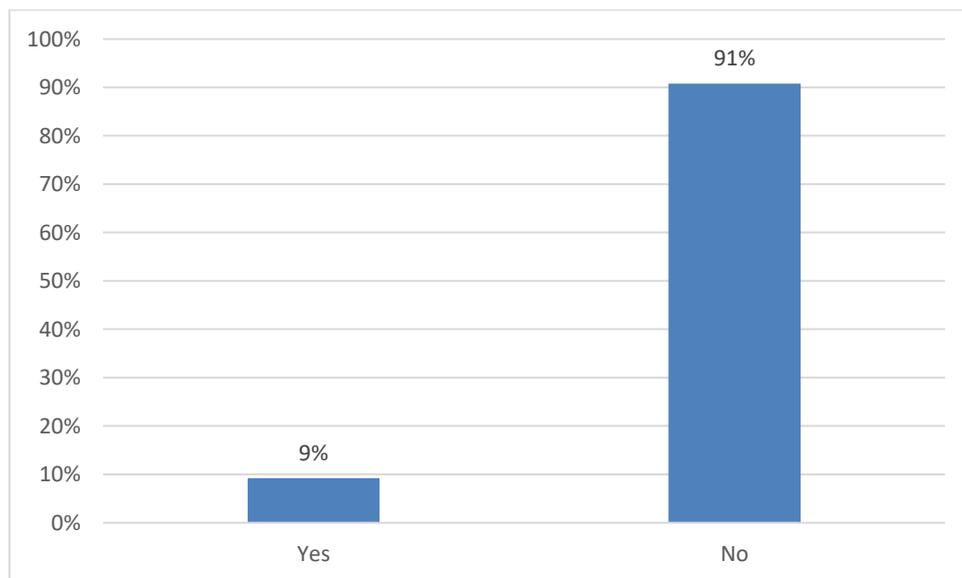
Q7. If you answered YES to (6), please explain briefly how this manifested



Graphic 7 - How people manifested their unwilling to understand cultural differences

In order to understand the perspectives of the participants, it was hoped to understand how they saw the experience of question six, and how they understood the cultural difference which initiated the conflict. Thus, of the eight people who answered question seven, thirteen percent reported episodes in which there were hierarchical differences within the workplace, while thirteen percent said it was due to linguistic differences. Twenty-four percent raised gender issues, thirteen percent religion, thirteen percent social exclusion and twenty-four percent eluded to different styles of communication as the factors which manifested episodes in which people did not want to understand the cultural differences of the other.

Q8. If you have experienced a situation as described in Question 4 or 6 above, did you report the cultural conflict?

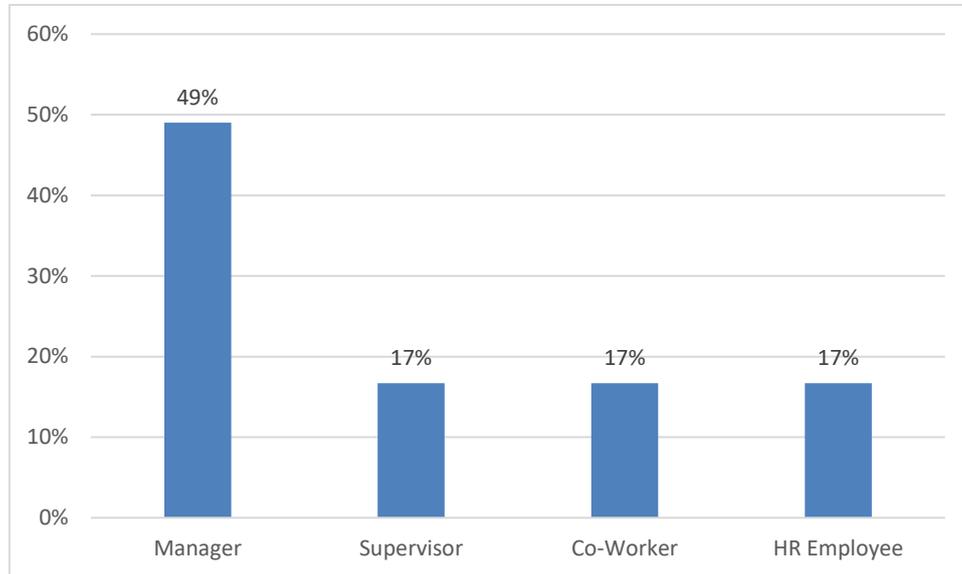


Graphic 8 - People who report cultural conflict

This question shows whether or not respondents, in the past, when experiencing situations of cultural conflict, reported to the organisation the existence of cultural conflicts within the workplace. Of the sixty-five people who answered this question, in which they reported having experienced, from their perspective, situations of misunderstanding which resulted in cultural conflict and or of another individual not being willing to understand the

cultural differences between them. Ninety-one percent of the respondents said that they had not reported the incident, while nine percent said that they had reported the case.

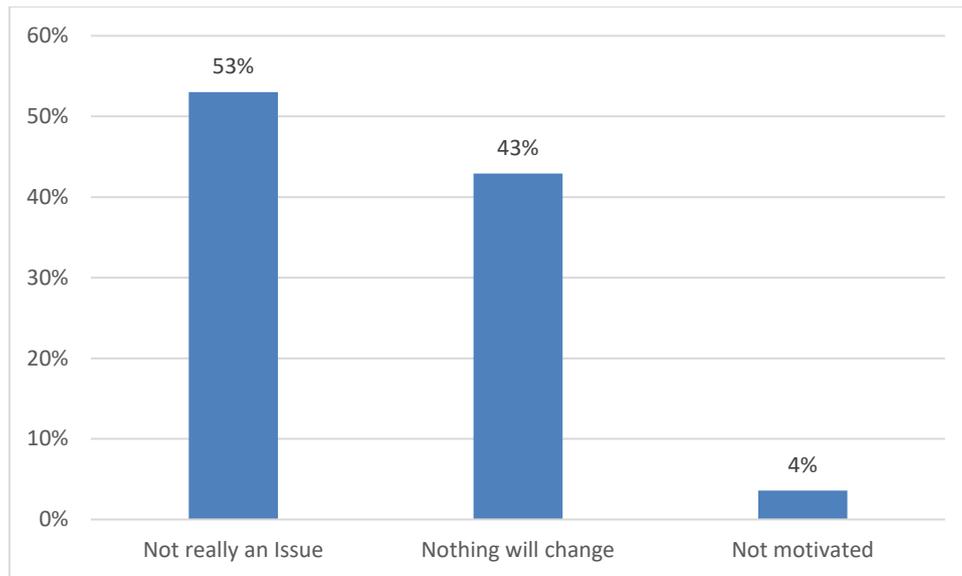
Q9. If you have answered YES to (8), please elaborate on how you reported this issue:



Graphic 9 - How people report cultural conflict

In addition to the previous question, question nine sought to understand the way in which people, in situations of culture shock, reported the incident. Of the six people who answered this question, forty-nine percent reported having made the report to their managers, while seventeen percent reported to their supervisors. Seventeen percent informed the Human Resource professional of the organisation and seventeen percent spoke directly with the co-worker with whom they were having conflict.

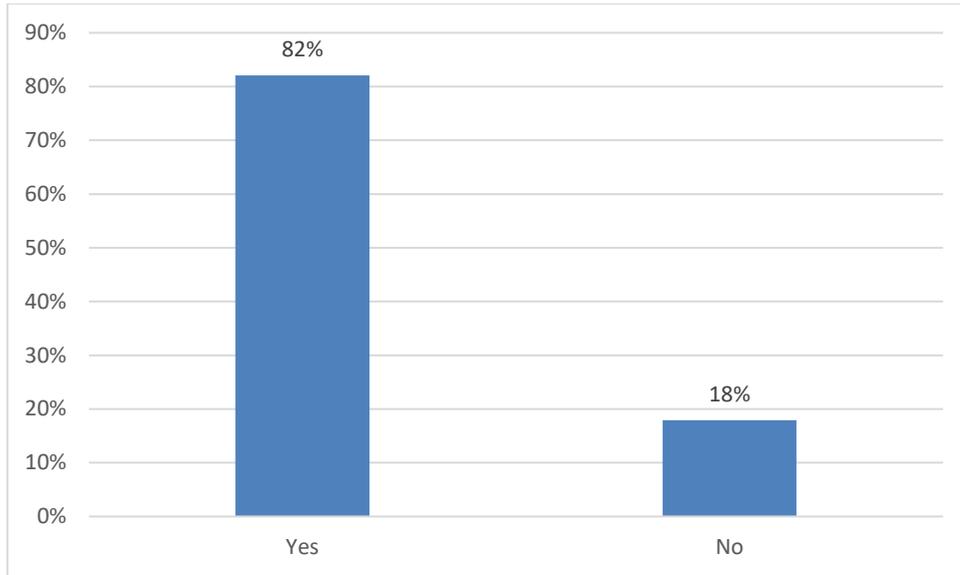
Q10. If you have answered NO to (8), could you explain why you decided do not report it?



Graphic 10 - Why people did not report cultural conflict

In order to better understand why people report or do not report cultural conflicts in the workplace, question number ten, clarified the point of view of people who did not report cases of cultural conflict at work. The results of this question showed that of the twenty-eight people who responded, fifty-three percent said they did not report it because they did not consider cultural conflict to be a real conflict. In contrast, forty-three said that they had not reported it because they assumed that reporting cultural conflict would not make a difference and four percent said they did not feel sufficiently motivated to report.

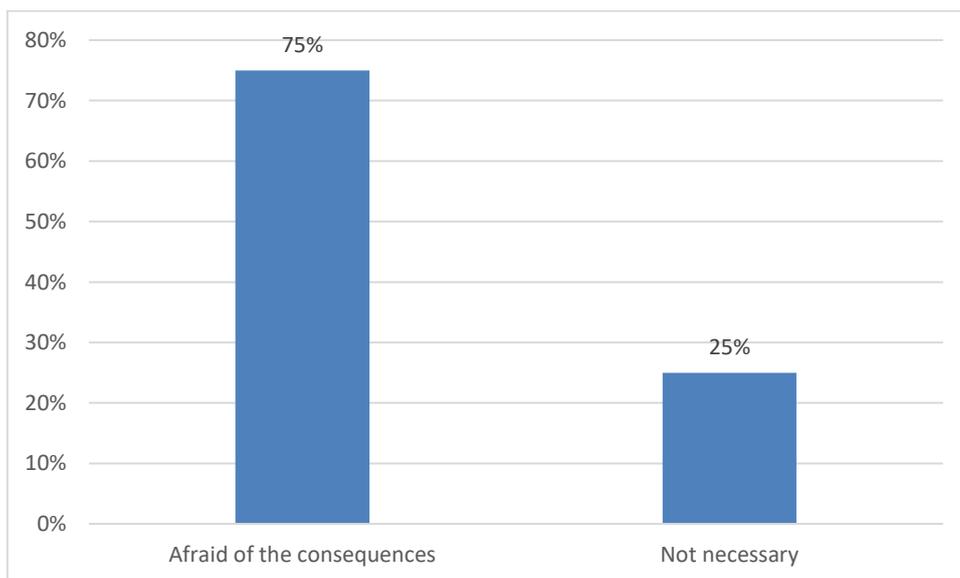
Q11. If it had been offered to you, would you have agreed to partake in mediation to resolve cultural conflict?



Graphic 11 - People who would agree to partake in mediation

Question eleven was posed in order to seek to understand whether the people who responded to the survey would be interested in using mediation to resolve cultural conflicts within the workplace. Of the eighty-four responses collected for question eleven, eighty-two percent of respondents said that had they been offered mediation as an alternative form of conflict resolution to resolve cultural conflicts, they would have accepted the offer. While eighteen percent responded that if the offer had been made, they would have refused.

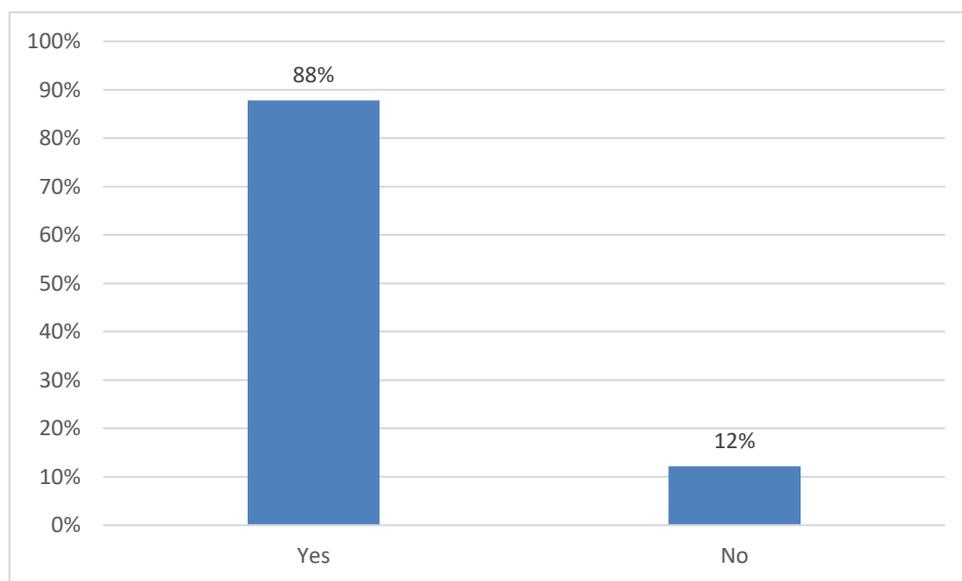
Q12. If you answered NO to (11), could you explain why you would not wish to engage in mediation to resolve cultural conflict?



Graphic 12 - Why people would not wish to engage in cultural mediation

In order to further understand the response to question eleven, question twelve was intended to complement it. Those who responded that they would not want to engage in a mediation process to resolve cultural conflicts within the workplace were asked why they would not want to engage in such a process. Of the four participants who answered this question, seventy-five percent said they would not participate in the mediation process for fear of reprisals by superiors and colleagues within the work environment. While the remaining twenty-five percent said they would not participate in mediation because they did not consider it necessary to use this form of conflict resolution for cases of cultural conflicts within the workplace.

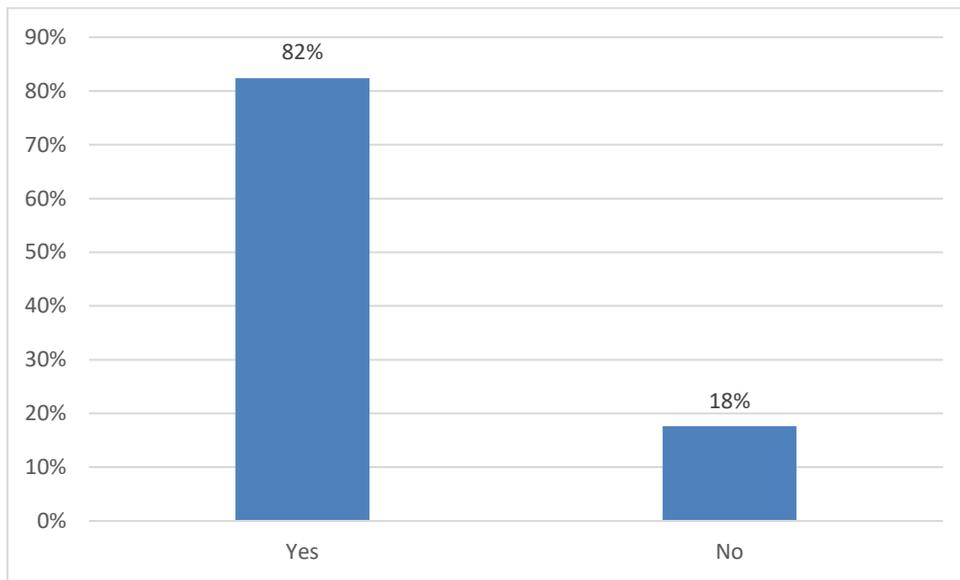
Q13. Do you believe that mediation can effectively open up communication and resolve misinterpretations relating to culture in the workplace?



Graphic 13 - People who believe that mediation can open up communication and resolve misinterpreting

Regarding question thirteen, an attempt was made to understand the perspective of the participants in relation to the use of mediation to open communication between the parties and to solve problems of misinterpretation. Eighty-eight percent of the ninety respondents answered in the affirmative that mediation could be used to improve communication and solve misinterpretations. While twelve percent of people responded that they did not believe that mediation could be used for these purposes.

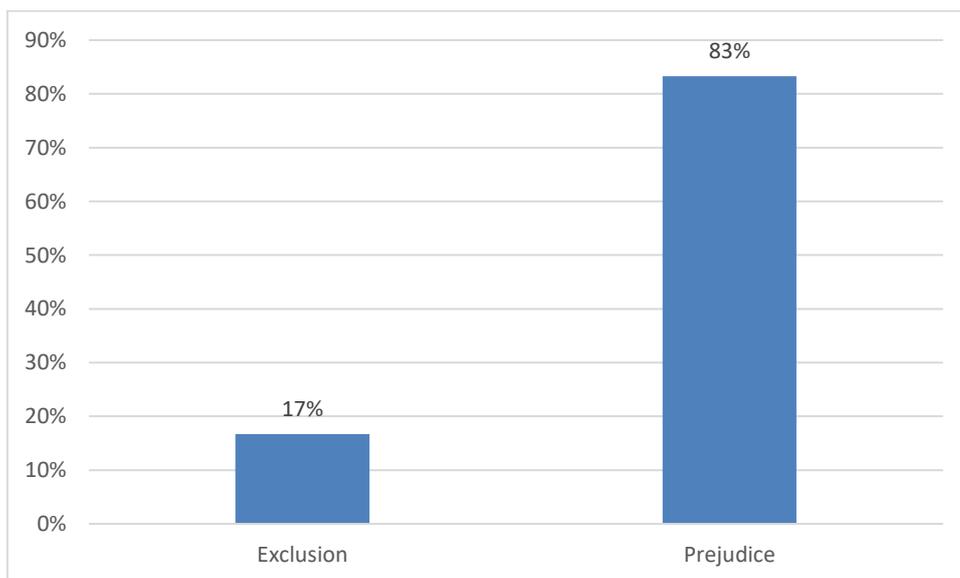
Q14. Do you feel that your cultural diversity is respected in your workplace?



Graphic 14 - People who feel their cultural diversity respected

Through question fourteen, an understanding was sought as to whether respondents considered their cultural differences to be respected in the workplace. Of the ninety-one people who responded to the survey, eighty-two percent of them reported that they felt their cultural difference is respected within the workplace, while eighteen percent of them said that they do not perceive that to be the case.

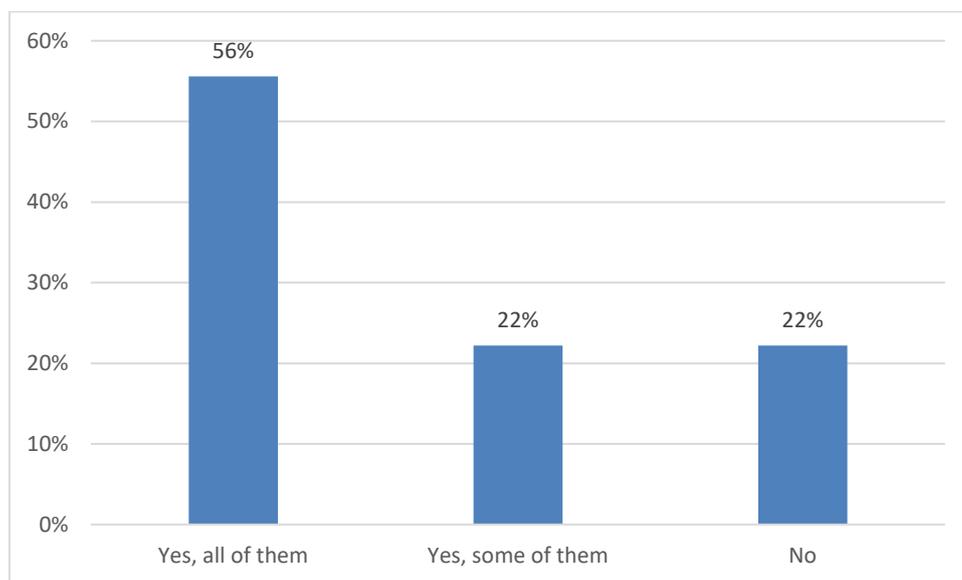
Q15. If you answered NO to (14), could you explain what makes you feel that your cultural diversity is not respected in your workplace?



Graphic 15 - How your cultural diversity is not respected

Complementing question fourteen, question fifteen helps by showing the point of view of people who do not feel that the cultural diversity they bring to the workplace is respected. Thus, of the six people who answered the question seventeen percent reported feeling excluded, as there was no space for the new culture, while eighty-three percent reported that they did not feel respected due to the prejudice that their cultural difference brought to the workplace.

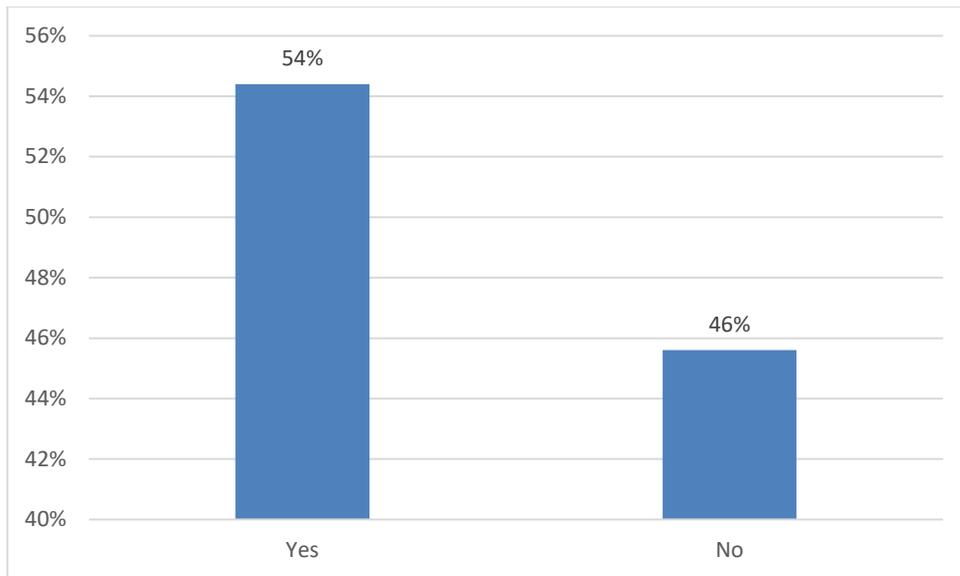
Q16. Do you believe that persons employed at a managerial level in your workplace are prepared to deal with cultural conflicts/cultural diversities?



Graphic 16 - Are managerial level employees prepared to deal with cultural conflicts

Through question sixteen we sought to understand if respondents believed that people employed at a managerial level in their workplace were prepared to deal with cultural conflicts/cultural diversities. Ninety people responded to this question, of which twenty-two reported that they believed that all employees at managerial level within their company were prepared to deal with these conflicts. While twenty-two percent believed that in their respective jobs, people at managerial level would not be prepared to deal with cultural issues. And fifty-six percent said they believed that within their workplace there were some people at managerial level who were prepared to deal with these issues.

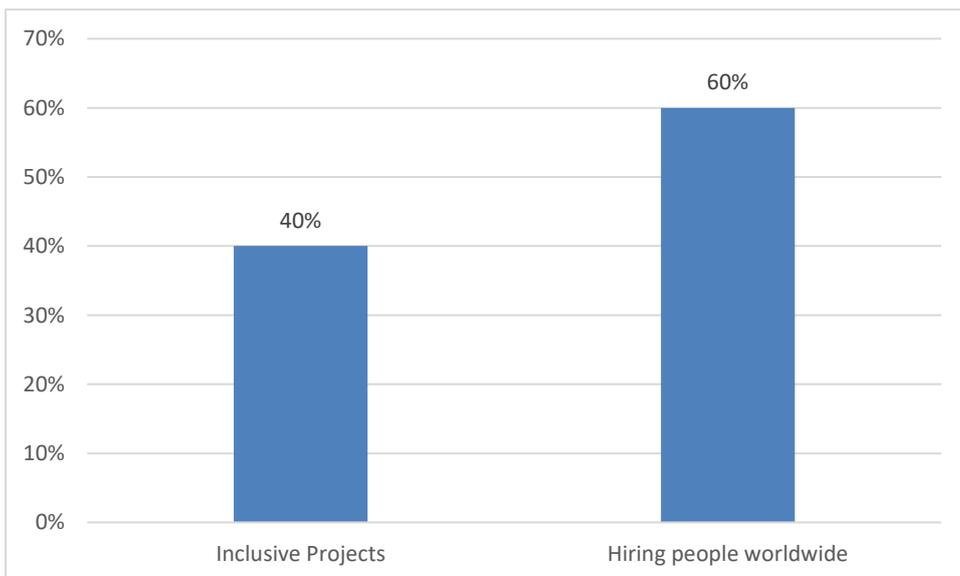
Q17. In your view, does your workplace promote cultural inclusion?



Graphic 17 - Does your workplace promote cultural inclusion

Question seventeen endeavoured to assess the vision of the people who participated in the survey in order to find out whether they believed that their workplace promotes cultural inclusion. Of the ninety responses collected, fifty-four percent answered that their workplace promotes cultural inclusion. While forty-six percent responded that their workplace does not promote cultural inclusion.

Q18. If you answered YES to (17), could you point out how your workplace promotes cultural inclusion?



Graphic 18 - How workplace promotes cultural inclusion

The reasoning behind question number eighteen, was to ascertain, from the perspective of the people who answered in the affirmative to question seventeen, what was understood by promoting cultural inclusion within the workplace. Of the thirty people who answered this question, forty percent pointed to cultural inclusion projects, while sixty percent pointed to the promotion of cultural inclusion by hiring employees from various parts of the world.

The data collection was conducted according to the inductive approach, and the final result presented above is related to the responses collected from the ninety-one people who responded to the survey. Thus, we used a mixed-method, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data for a better understanding of the issues and the respondent's perspectives. Consequently, given the choice of methodology and methods and despite the limitations the research presented it was possible through the use of these questions to further the objectives of this research.

4. Data Analysis/Findings

Through the analysis of the data presented in the previous chapter, the following findings were reached. Despite living in a globalised world where people from different cultures and backgrounds coexist on a daily basis. A smaller proportion of people, twenty-two percent pointed out that they still work in a monocultural environment. In addition, this number still increases when asked if these people had at some time experienced cultural shock, of which thirty-three percent replied that they had not experienced this type of episode. All of these factors indicate that these people belong to the dominant culture, or to a culture similar to the dominating one in the workplace.

Among people who mentioned having felt the culture clash in the workplace, forty-seven percent claimed to have experienced the shock immediately, which points out that they entered an environment that polarized in some way with their culture while fifty-three percent reported having felt the culture shock later, after a few weeks of hiring. This late reaction could be further evidence that these individuals belong to a culture closer to the dominant culture, which as the result of some circumstances led the differences between these cultures to be highlighted.

In this way, from the people who participated in the survey thirty-one percent reported having experienced situations of misunderstanding because of cultural differences and twenty percent said they had experienced situations in which, from their perspective, the other party was not willing to understand the cultural differences between them. Where in both situations differences in communication styles were identified as the main sources of conflict.

Likewise, Person fifteen, reported the experience of working with a person of a different nationality who used straightforward verbal and non-verbal communication, which for her, Latin people was received with rudeness, making the relationship between the parties was managed by fear and frustration. In the same vein, a similar situation was reported by Person

twenty-two, who pointed out that while her manager spoke to her in a language that was normal to him, from her perspective it sounded very rude.

For situations where another person would not be willing to understand the cultural differences of the other person. Person twenty-one said that they are a very warm person and that some people do not understand that it is their way of being. Whereas Person eighty-three said they had experienced situations where the other person just did not want to hear their point of view about the situation.

When questioned whether the people who experienced episodes of cultural conflict reported the incident, less than ten percent of them did, to their respective top level managers. Furthermore, when asked why they did not report it, fifty-three percent responded that they did not consider cultural conflicts as real problems to be carried forward, while forty-three percent believed that reporting the incident would not change anything and four percent did not feel motivated to do so. In fact, if they had been offered the mediation process to resolve the conflict, eighteen percent said they would not accept the offer, of which twenty-five percent reaffirmed that they do not believe that cultural conflicts need intervention, as Person five states that in their view only when it evolves into cases such as harassment, cultural conflict would need to be addressed through dispute resolution.

Meanwhile seventy-five percent said they feared some kind of reprisal by the company or co-workers if they entered into a cultural mediation process as pointed out by People eight-one, which would also explain why they believe that reporting cultural conflicts would not change the main issue. However, even with the vast majority of volunteers not being in favour of reporting in cases of cultural conflict as pointed out above. Eighty-eight percent said that they believe that mediation would be able to open up communication and resolve misinterpretations relating to culture in the workplace.

Regarding their experiences in the workplace, eighteen percent replied that they do not

feel that their cultural identity is respected in their workplace. From these, eighty-three percent reported that they suffered prejudice Person fifteen, for example, described an episode in which their boss made jokes about people of Person fifteen's nationality being dramatic and attending therapy. Whereas seventeen percent said they felt excluded, such as Person two who said they could not find a space inside the work environment for themselves.

In this way people's views varied when asked if they considered that managerial level employees in their workplace were able to deal with cultural conflicts. Fifty-six percent expressed the opinion that all of these employees would be able to deal with cultural conflicts, while twenty-two percent said that only a few would be prepared and twenty-two percent reported that they did not consider these people to be qualified to deal with such conflicts.

Towards the volunteers' perception of cultural inclusion in the workplace, slightly more than half fifty-four percent agreed that the organisation to which they belong promotes cultural inclusion. Of which sixty percent emphasized the hiring of people from different parts of the world, thus showing a great cultural mix within the workplace (Person sixty-two) as characteristics of cultural inclusion. Another forty percent indicated that the organisation encourages cultural inclusion through promoting projects, such as events, speeches and media communications (Person thirty-eighth). Nevertheless, forty-six percent of the people who responded to the survey said that from their perspective, there is no promotion of cultural inclusion within their workplace. The main point here is that people usually see the hiring of employees as a way of promoting cultural inclusion by itself, however, just allowing people to enter the company does not mean that they will be included to it.

5. Discussion

Even though we live in a globalised world it can be difficult to see that globalisation within our own daily lives. Based on the results achieved through primary research, it was observed that a fraction of people still believe that cultural discrepancies do not need to be discussed or cannot perceive the shades offered by these differences.

This idea, that differences do not need to be acknowledged, is not acceptable in the twenty-first century (Boohar, 2001). However, the inability of people to perceive multiculturalism is connected with their culture's proximity, to the workplace's dominant culture (Hofstede, 1984, 2010). Thus, the further apart the cultures are from each other, the more quickly the cultural differences would be felt (Brett, 2017).

5.1. A Real and Ongoing Challenge

Moreover, each person sees, understands, and interacts with each other in the workplace in line with their own culture and follows the organisational culture that regulates the work environment. The cultural mix inside an organisation allows for the emergence of cultural disputes. Such conflicts may primarily begin due to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, or poor communication (Mearns & Yuke, 2009), since these individuals may communicate at a very different levels.

It is quite likely that following a cultural clash, the new member will seek to fit into the dominant local culture (Guiso et al., 2008). This was the case for respondent five, where, upon being introduced into an environment distinct from their own, they experienced disagreements regarding their uniform and religious rules, which they had no previous experience of. An early explanation of cultural relevance allowed the parties to avoid any future discomfort regarding such topics.

A person who had to become more conscious of the challenges of the multicultural

atmosphere was respondent forty-five which references employment in an airport retail outlet. To better address and minimise a cultural clash this person faced, they needed to employ a variety of approaches in order to face people according to the other's cultural background.

However, adjustments do not always occur so harmonically due to the polarisation in at least one of the six dimensions of Hofstede (1980, 2010) or through different communication frequencies (Hall, 1989). Based on the survey carried out, the significant divergence factors that led to misunderstandings within the workplace match those mentioned by several authoritative authors; lack of communication due to language barriers (Lucke and Rigaut, 2002), language expression (LeBaron, 2003) and non-verbal language used (Hall, 1989).

As Huntington (1993) addressed, prejudice is a feeling that everybody experiences towards another person or group. However, it should be noted that in order to prevent such conflicts from growing to a severe scale, it is essential that, as Person forty-five points out, people understand and respect others' cultural differences, even if, at first meeting, there is a feeling of unease. Otherwise, the inability to not understand the other person's perspective or cultural background may result in long-term adverse outcomes (Barkai, 2008).

As a result, by failing or unwilling to understand the different perspectives among people in a group, conflicts have arisen, such as the one experienced by Person forty-one, who mentioned that by being on a team in which they were the only person in a different country, the other members of the team would suggest the use of customer approach based on their societal norms, not knowing or understanding the social realities for the Person forty-one, which on some occasions resulted in Person forty-one feeling excluded by the others in the group.

People and organisations should address disputes arising from cultural differences. If not, instead of multiculturalism acting as a positive difference within a group, when these conflicts are not managed, they can escalate and result in negative outcomes for everyone.

Consequently, increasing discussions around similarities and differences among the cultures present in the workplace may reduce the incidence of misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

5.2. Intervention

As pointed out above, communication is an essential element that contributes to the occurrence and escalation of cultural conflicts in the workplace. Even though people have admitted to experiencing cultural conflicts, most of them declared that they had not reported such occurrences internally within the company. The delay in communicating it to the organisation, or the organisation's delay in responding to it, is another crucial factor to be overcome so that these culturally related disputes can be managed.

Person one, ten, forty-two, forty- three, forty-four and forty-six emphasised that since cultural conflicts are part of human interactions, they should not be immediately reported to the human resources department. In this way, conflicts provide the opportunity for those involved to learn and understand, through cultural differences, to strengthen their relationship with each other (Stobbe, 2015). Indeed, individuals must be encouraged to learn how to manage, respect and live together with multiculturalism inside the workplace.

Brett (2017) highlights the complexity of identifying the perfect time for intervention in such conflicts. Therefore, from some people's perspective, intervention is unnecessary, as these conflicts which are related to cultural clashes allow people to demonstrate that they can deal with diversity within their workplace. Similarly, people like respondent five believe that intervention should only occur in the most severe instances, such as harassment.

The disadvantage, however, is the physical or psychological damage (Dhanani et al., 2018) that can be caused to the parties involved in the conflict by the delay in allowing these conflicts to develop into discriminatory episodes. Finding a balance midway between, initially

allowing the parties to settle their differences and intervening through the mediation process before the conflict escalates, is a difficult task in conflict management.

Mediation can therefore empower the parties to reach a resolution, with the assistance of a third party, in cases where they themselves are unable to do so as a result of cultural differences which have blocked the smooth flow of communication (Apollon, 2014; Mahan & Mahuna, 2017). It can assist by preventing a total breakdown in communication between the parties and further damaging the mental and physical health of those in and around the dispute and fostering a resolution before it becomes necessary for one of the parties to be dismissed.

5.3. Institutional Issue

The majority of the people who participated in the survey consider mediation an efficient conflict resolution mechanism in which it is possible to open up communication and resolve misunderstandings. Kalowski (2019) also points out that mediation in cases of cultural conflict should be seen as an opportunity to explore a different perspective.

Nevertheless, even knowing the advantages, these people still face significant opposition within the organisation to the possibility of participating in mediation in the workplace. According to Person eighteen, these challenges are caused by the fact that some issues are linked to the organisation's institutional culture. For example, where employees' are treated differently according to their nationality (Person fifty-nine and eighty-one) and the lack of space for them to discuss cultural clashes openly (Person eleven and thirty-eight).

By not preparing staff to manage cultural conflicts, an organisation is displaying an institutional issue. Sauntry and Wibberlay (2015) state the importance of training human resource staff and other management-level employees in order for them to be prepared to deal effectively and appropriately with cultural conflicts. This is crucial, because, as evidenced in the survey responses, people in managerial functions were also part of the problem (Person

fifteen and eighty-eight).

This training should deal with a cultures' inclusion and the role of those in supervisory and managerial positions in mitigating the harmful effects of cultural disputes rather than further aggravating the lack of understanding between cultures inside the workplace (Trenerry *et al.*, 2012). Otherwise, by not having mechanisms to report cultural conflict, people are left feeling insecure about where and how to do so (Person forty-eight). Consequently, they become unmotivated to report cultural conflicts, in particular those which do not cross the line in terms of the company's rules and regulations (Person thirty-eight and eighty-three),

Organisations should then understand that cultural inclusion cannot be characterised merely by cultural diversity within the workplace (Washington & Patrick, 2018). Cultural diversity in these environments is that which can give rise to cultural conflict. Unless there are both long and short term efforts to foster inclusion, the friction caused by this coexistence will be increasingly apparent. This is especially true when people at higher hierarchical levels have biased preconceived ideas. It highlights an institutional issue that must be resolved as soon as possible. As Person thirty-eight highlights, the need for a change in thinking and conduct on issues of cultural conflict must start from the top.

Therefore, the integration of cultures must be done harmoniously and safely for all involved, (Ma and Kang, 2020). Thus, a company's organisational culture supports the training of professionals in managerial positions, conducting seminars and training on diversity awareness, inserting multiple channels for feedback, and above all respect. At the same time the company's culture acts as a bridge, enabling and guaranteeing that the multicultural work environment remains harmonious in solving cultural conflicts in an open and safe way, either through the use of workplace training, mediation or facilitated discussions.

The employees' abstained in front of the report of cultural conflicts was noticed as a topic for future research as it was identified a lack of study about this topic. It is crucial to

understand in-depth the institutional challenges committed to it and how it affects employees' approach to conflicts and the appropriate measures to overcome these issues to achieve greater effectiveness in managing cultural conflicts through interventions.

Conclusion

The research findings suggest that the number of people breaking down or building up walls among interpersonal and cultural relationships in the workplace happens on an almost daily basis. Self-awareness on how your own culture shapes you and, in the same proportion, self-knowledge about the ability to understand, recognise and respect other cultures and often unknown cultures is a big step towards reducing cultural conflict in the workplace. However, it is not only up to the multicultural organisation's employees to play this role, rather the inclusion and promotion of the cultures that shape an institution is a crucial matter which should be addressed by that institution.

Confrontations are inherent to interpersonal relationships, so in multicultural environments, it is to be expected that conflict will result from clashes arising from the multiple cultures present. As a result, an individual's culture is highly likely to influence the escalation of conflict in the workplace, considering that culture determines how a person communicates, interacts, and manages events around them. Consequently, it is imperative that cultural issues receive proper care and attention in order to prevent clashes spiralling out of control.

It should though be noted that, while implementing measures of cultural inclusion, it is necessary to ensure that those who coexist with such diversity have the space to express themselves openly about these differences, to prevent misunderstandings and misinterpretations from escalating into situations of prejudice. Indeed, the integration of different cultures that share the same workspace enables a more harmonious interaction among staff. However, it does not mean that no conflict will cease to exist inside the group, but rather that the members of that group will have enough space to express themselves and address their cultural conflicts openly before it escalates into discriminatory situations.

The inclusion of non-dominant cultures entails adjustment from all parties, those working within the dominant culture and those outside. Since if such minorities are left out, it

will damage existing relationships as well as new ones. Relationships will be weakened, raising the odds of a quick escalation in cases of conflict inside the group. So rather than culture acting as a conflict hub, differences should be worked on to increase the group's strength, demonstrating that people can respond to many different challenges and contexts.

In this way, cultural mediation in the workplace can assist the parties in cases where cultural clashes have already resulted in cross-cultural conflicts but have not yet escalated into cases of discrimination. A mediation process is necessary for re-establishing communication and bridging the gap between opposing cultures and perspectives.

In these circumstances, the role of a mediator or a facilitator is crucial since in order to reach a mutually acceptable outcome it is necessary that all parties involved feel respected throughout the facilitative discussion/mediation process. This way, in situations where people may not feel they are being listened to or valued, they have the opportunity to have their perspective and feelings about the conflict clarified.

The development of an organisational culture that embraces and respects the cultural differences of employees can be used as a tool to harmonise the cross-cultural relationships and to show the organisation's appreciation of the cultural differences present in the environment before the conflict escalation. However, continuous work on the adaptability of the organisational culture is needed since, as it adjusts to different cultures, it should not act in such a way as to encourage the exclusion of minorities.

In addition to promoting a multicultural environment, organisations must establish a commitment to multicultural inclusion and respect at the core of their culture. The inclusion of employees from different cultural backgrounds is an essential element of cultural diversity. However, merely bringing people from different cultures into a shared environment is insufficient to deal with the conflicts that may arise from this action.

Companies should therefore provide training and continuous upskilling for

management staff to deal with cultural issues to assist in the process of multicultural awareness and inclusion in the workplace especially during crisis management resulting from cultural conflicts. The organisation should also implement short and long-term projects, e.g. cultural festivals and diversified cuisine, to encourage harmony and well-being.

Openness to hearing employees' perspectives in identifying gaps that may develop into cultural conflicts as well as dialogue following a cultural conflict is another crucial factor. When professionals in management positions are properly trained, it is possible to align cultural mediations or facilitative discussions as a cross-cultural conflict resolution mechanism in the workplace. This, if used in the early stages of a dispute, can be a powerful way to restore damaged relationships through the building of communication and trust.

Consequently, the use of mediation in cases of cross-cultural conflict in the workplace is not the only essential element. Instead, all employees working in multicultural environments should exercise cultural self-awareness to enable peers to recognize the similarities and differences across workplaces. Organisations need to make greater use of cultural diversity in the workplace to achieve positive outcomes for the whole workplace community.

Through this research, it was noted that it is essential that organisations align the organisational culture with the program of cultural inclusion alongside providing and promoting cross-cultural mediations or facilitative discussions. This would allow cultural conflicts to be clarified, analysed, and efficiently settled to ensure that cultural differences act as a positive element in workplace relationships and not as barriers to healthy interaction among colleagues in the workplace.

In addition, it is essential to note that there are still concerns relating to cultural diversity in the workplace and the conflicts caused by these differences, either because of the dominant culture's prevalence or because these differences are treated with indifference up until a crisis occurs. It is recommended that the study of cultural conflicts in the workplace and the use of

mediation to resolve these disputes, as well as a stronger engagement of employers and employees in seeking cultural self-awareness in order to strengthen relationships and minimize the effects caused by cultural clashes, should be encouraged.

Reflection

The dissertation was written during the coronavirus pandemic. While the vast majority of people have been working from home, I have been in my normal place of work, outside the home. As I spend my daily life in a multicultural environment, I decided that this subject was an important area for research since dealing with cultural conflicts have been a constant reality.

During the reading and writing processes of lived and witnessed episodes of culture clash and given the high levels of anxiety generated by the pandemic and the conclusion of the master's degree, as well as the expectation of submitting an approved dissertation, instances and events were recalled and analysed from a different perspective.

The dissertation as an academic work in English was challenging but being a source of self-analysis of conduct and beliefs it proved to be highly effective and constructive. It proved informative and allowed the achievement of self-knowledge on how culture impacts communicating and establishing relationships with others.

By incorporating into the dissertation process the disruption of the pandemic, enforced lockdowns alongside normal job stresses and homesickness, this dissertation emerged as a tool to understand people in this time of global crisis. The conclusion of the dissertation marks a milestone in overcoming self-doubt and achieving personal growth. The steps taken during the writing process stemmed from a desire to make cultural differences in the workplace a tangible and visible issue. The opportunity to study and analyse a specific company, where the analysis of the perceptions and understandings of employees within the company was possible, would prove informative and interesting.

From the research process of writing the dissertation, it was possible to understand why some choices and actions were taken in compliance with specific patterns in past situations. This information enables the mitigation of stigmas and involuntary reactions in future situations due to cultural awareness enhancement.

As culture involves behaving, perceiving, thinking and acting, the insight gathered during the process of producing this dissertation applies to other areas of daily life and new study projects at a future stage, even where those projects are not focused on conflict resolution issues.

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