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Conflict management and resolution in Irish Workplaces: an investigation of which approaches have demonstrated more benefits to employers and employees

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FACULTY OF LAW
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Abstract

This research was inspired by all the learning on the vast topic of conflict resolution from all disciplines during this Master's degree in conjunction with my personal experience of two decades working in the field of human resources and people management. Workplace conflict, specifically, has been studied by organisational and people management literature with a focus in conflict resolution practices, especially in regards of the alternative dispute resolutions, a practice that has been crescent in Ireland, especially after the publication of the Workplace Relations Act in 2015. Since the publication, some studies have been carried out to investigate innovations in workplace disputes, however, little information exists of how organisations have managed conflicts, and which would be the most effective approach capable of bringing benefits and affect positively the relationship between employers and employees.

In this research, there is a particular interest to shed a light into the aspects of management of conflicts in a day-to-day basis in organisations in Ireland. The objective of this research is to initiate an examination of how effective the approaches to management and resolution of conflicts in organisations operating in Ireland are and how beneficial it is to both employees and employers, besides this research seeks to provide information for professionals, organisations and other interested people and to inspire others to do further research in the topic. As the topic is broad, this research will seek to focus on the conflict management strategies in use by employers at the Irish job market to the degree that the available data permits, once that employment disputes are private information and under confidentiality terms to be disclosed by employers. In order to offer a full overview of the scenario in Ireland, this paper draws on all available source of information regardless of a timeline length, applying the research methodology based on the onion research model by Saunders et al. (2019) to support the data collection made via online questionnaire distributed to employees of organisations operating in Ireland. Through this online survey, this research findings were analysed in relation to the objectives and hypothesis proposed to this study and able to answer this research question.

Key Words: *Workplace Conflict · Effective Management · Dispute Resolution · Constructive Conflict ·*

Introduction

Dispute resolutions methodologies and practices have been the topic of extensive study and research, especially on the fields of social, political and international conflicts. In relation to workplace conflict, the first studies found in literature, were carried out under the lights of the Traditional School of View, with a huge emphasis in the negative aspects of conflict as a synonym of violence and destruction and the encouragement of an avoidant approach to it. It was only after the Second World War, that this view started to change and a new view, named as Contemporary View emerged, accepting conflict as an inevitable dimension of the human relationships, leading to the search for reaching mutual agreements and enlightening concepts such as problem-solving, which was considered to be an effective approach to enable positive outcomes out of negative conflictual situations. From the 1970s, scholars such as Deutsch (1973) and Rahim (1986) introduced the positive aspects of conflict management and resolution, giving relevance to the role of emotions in handling conflicts, initiating the era of the Interactionist View. Nevertheless, at that time, workplace conflict had yet little relevance in the broad concept of conflict and dispute resolutions, only becoming more popular among scholars with the advent of modern employment relations and evolution of industrialisation in the past three decades.

The extent to which companies are effective in resolving disputes through a consistent development of conflict management systems differs depending on several conditions, such as employers and employees' relationship, strengthen of communicated codes of practice and adequate implementation of well-designed systematic management (Teague, and Doherty, 2011). When it comes to conflict management in Ireland, a brief summary of the historical context helps to understand the co-dependency of different conditions to the effectiveness of conflict management. Ireland has its industrialisation history remarkably associated to collective disputes involving trade unions. It was only around the 1980s that the union power started to decline, and multinational companies started to gain space in the Irish job market, showing preference for internal disputes resolutions methods and bringing to Ireland some innovative approaches mostly related to alternative disputes resolutions. A decade later, in the 1990s, the advance of technologies and economical and social changes started to shift employment relations and ignite an initial interest of the research community to carry out studies to better understand and provide information on workplace conflict,

nonetheless there is yet an apparent gap in literature that seems to make room for a lot more to be studied in this field.

For this particular research, I have reflected about all the learning I could acquire during my learning process in this Master of Arts in Dispute Resolution and, furthermore, the questions that I have formulated all the way along, especially in relation to organisational management and resolution of conflicts in workplace, thus after an in-depth review of literature combined with empirical experience in the corporate environment through the lenses of a Human Resources professional background, I chose to investigate the experiences of employees facing day-to-day conflicts in the Irish job market and the outcomes of these processes for them gathering evidences of what they considered to be the benefits of it via an online survey.

The broad topic of this study is the conflict management practices and resolution in the Irish workplaces. The research problem is drawn around to what extent developing strategic and effective management of workplace conflict can have a positive impact on the relationship between employers and employees in Irish businesses. The purpose of this problem formulation is to investigate the disputes resolutions practices seen as the most beneficial from the perspective of both employees and employers.
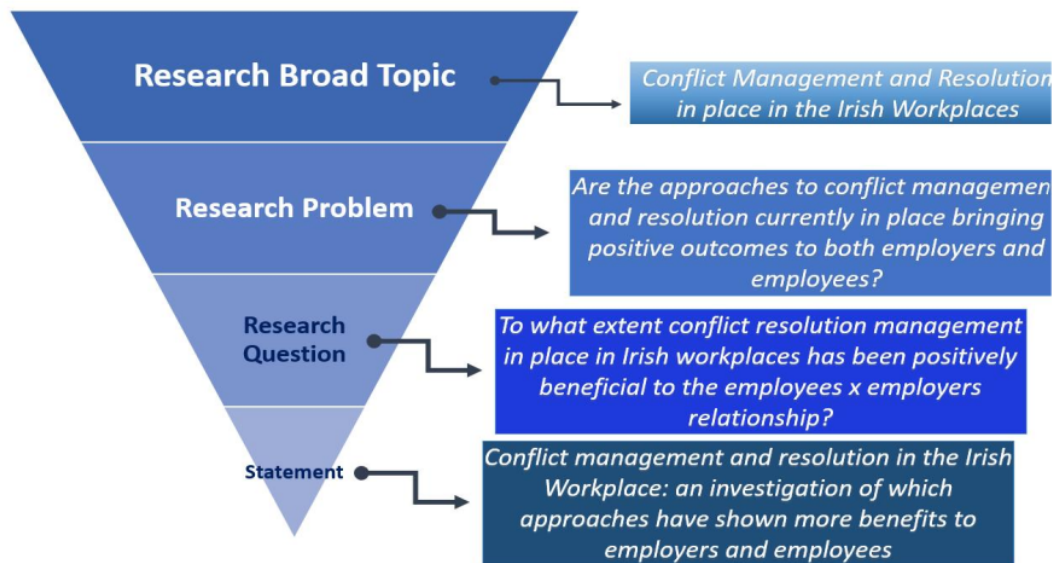

Fig.1 – Research Topic Plan

The relevance of this study is justified in reason of an apparent gap in the literature concerned to the studies of conflict management of daily workplace conflicts besides the drive to provide informed recommendation for conflict management practice and try to find an answer to how effectively and strategically are the tolls utilised by companies in the Irish job market to manage workplace disputes.

This research study is organised as follow:

- In the first chapter, an analysis and review of the relevant literature on the definition and evolution of conflict and workplace conflict, providing an overview of organisational conflict management and its approaches as well as the differences between management and resolution of conflicts and its positives and negative aspects closing up with an overview of the topic in Ireland. The review of literature was of extreme importance to the development of the research hypothesis and understanding of the research gap.
- Following to the second chapter, the focus is on describing the research methodology throughout every layer of the research model suggested by Saunders et al. (2019) providing justification for each choice of this researcher in relation to the philosophy, methods, approaches, strategy and population to be used in this process.
- Third chapter presents the data collected from the online questionnaires distributed to employees of organisations operating in Ireland, making use of charts and tables as well as the data analysis of each of the responses obtained.
- Finally, the last chapter discuss the findings of this research and overall conclusions seeking to relate the data collected and analysed to the main objectives and hypothesis proposed in this study.

1. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The process of conducting literature review was divided in two phases, initially for the purpose of constructing the proposal, first part of this academic work, and then, after the submission and acceptance of the proposal a more in-depth search of literature was conducted along with the process of writing this dissertation. In the first phase, there was an extensive search of definitions, history and views related to conflict management in general and specifically in Ireland carried out mostly by utilising free databases available on the Internet and through the College's library access, which resulted in a number of articles, journals and scholarship material related to the theme. Additionally, the second phase focused on the reading of physical and electronic books especially in organisational and people management literature.

Indeed, workplace conflict topic in literature was available in larger quantity as part of industrial relations discipline due to the characteristics of collective bargaining and disputes in employment relations, which in recent years of modern labour relations has declined significantly. It is important to mention, though, that this decline by any means indicates that workplace conflict has diminished or ended, instead, emphasis began to be given to the different dimensions and complexities on which conflict presents itself in the dynamic day-to-day reality in organisations, which are made of diverse people and varied structures, and influenced by so many endless external forces such as economy, employment law and culture for example. Yet, innovative conflict management practices to handle and rule conflict have received little attention in literature, not including alternative disputes resolutions and elaboration of policies and procedures, especially if we look outside of the USA.

As mentioned previously, the process of literature review was significant and compelling towards this researcher's keenness of shedding a light into this apparent research gap.

1.1. Definition of Conflict

"*Conflictus*" is a Latin noun that means "to contend, fight, struggle" and it is also the past participle of the verb *"confligere"*, which is the assimilated form of the prefix *"com"* meaning

"with, together" in conjunction with *"fligere"* that means "to strike". In English Language, the translation means "be in opposition, be contrary or at variance, to strike together, to clash".

There is no unanimity among the research community in relation to the definition of conflict, considering that it is an interdisciplinary phenomenon, thus the search for a single definition that covers all fields of study would be a difficult endeavour for this researcher.

The first relevant studies on Conflict Theory, which dates back to the 19th century, were carried out by notable scholars such as Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Max Weber (1864–1920) and was the paramount importance to the understanding of conflict and to the development of conflict resolution methods. While Marx (1848;1867) took a structural approach to conflict emphasizing the role of differences in social classes that leads to conflict through the competition for limited resources, his fellow scholar Weber (1847) focused his work on showing that conflict could be caused by power imbalance and status, regardless of structure of social classes. In these traditional views, conflict has often been seen as opposing interests involving a struggle between counterparties over values or a competition for status, power, or scarce resources (Mack and Snyder, 1957; Pondy, 1967; Coser, 1967; Schmidt and Kochan, 1972).

The central point of criticism in traditional view is that it affects the management of conflict, making it more difficult to perceive the benefits that may arise out of some conflictual situations. On the contrary, a number of evidence from researchers point to "many benefits of conflict and is the basis for constructive conflict management whereas assuming goals are incompatible interferences" (Tjosvold, 2006).

More recently, renowned social and organisational scholars have argued that the traditional view leads to the popular belief of conflict as being about divergent interests and incompatible goals only and that this field of vision results in win-lose outcomes. Moreover, the critiques of this definition rather define conflict as "a disagreement between parties with perceived differences or discrepant views that do not eliminate the chances that their current aspirations can be achieved simultaneously with a win-win outcome" (Rubin et al.,1994; Lewicki et al., 1997; Rahim, 2001; Jehn and Bendersky, 2003). A relevant study in this modern view into conflict was introduced by Morton Deutsch (1973) on his Theory of Cooperation and Competition, which defined conflict as an interference of one person's

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action on other person's action creating incompatible activities that are likely to happen in both cooperative and competitive contexts affecting the expectations, interactions, negotiation and outcomes of the dispute between the parties and the extent on which they believe they have cooperative or competitive interests.

1.2. Perspective on Workplace Conflict

Conflict is likely to arise from any human interaction as a natural outcome of the exchanges a person will have during lifetime: being brought up in a family, belonging to a community, attending school and joining a company will certainly involve situations where one experiences disagreements, disputes or conflicts. For the purpose of this research, the focus of this paper will be drawn around the management and resolution of conflicts emerging from workplace relationships. However, even though, workplace conflict is certainly a common characteristic of organisations, it is challenging to provide a single definition once that it comprises a variety of forms and can be managed and/or resolved in many different ways. In this sense, a number of different definitions are used by scholars:

> "perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously" (Rubin et al., 1994, page 5).

> "the interaction of interdependent people who perceived incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals" (Lewicki et al., 1997, page 15).

> "a dynamic process that occurs between interdependent parties as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with the attainment of their goals" (Barki and Hartwick, 2004, page 234).

> "perceived incompatibilities or discrepant views among the parties involved" (Jehn and Bendersky, 2003, p. 189).

In despite of the definition, what it is more importantly to mention is that there is a common consensus that "conflict arises in the workplace not only because of formal labour-management disagreements over wages, hours, and working conditions, or disputes between employees and their supervisors or co-workers, but more fundamentally because individuals differ in their values, interests, and beliefs" (Lipsky, D.B. et al., 2016). Furthermore, due to hierarchical structures and work arrangements present in most organisations, relationships are often characterised by different levels of authority, responsibilities and status, that can influence positive or negatively the day-to-day

interactions and cause occasional disruptions over work related activities. Research shows that workers spend an average of 20 percent of their working hours either facing or trying to contain conflicts and searching for resolution; while line managers and executives see a rise in this number to as much as 80 percent of their working time (Thomas and Schmidt, 1976; Watson and Hoffman, 1996; Runde, 2003; Cloke, 2005).

The subject of workplace disputes is increasingly becoming a focus of study in organisational and human resources management literatures. There is a strong view that agrees that "management of conflict is a core part of the management of the employment relationship" (Teague et al. 2012, p. 581). A comprehensively and thoroughly understanding of workplace conflict requires the study of interdisciplinary perspectives on the integrated co-relation between industrial relations, organisational and human resources management and legal literature. For the purpose of this research, the review in literature will be limited to the organisational and human resources perspective.

Industrial relations have evolved and transformed, especially over the past three decades, following the advent of capitalist industrialisation and remarkable events such as globalisation, the surge of cross-cultural dynamics and employee diversity, advance of technologies and rapid rate of changings not to mention political, environmental and cultural changes to work-related situations, which often contributes to give rise to conflict in organisations in a wide range of formats. In order to facilitate the understanding of workplace conflict, a classical distinction in the literature where 'collective conflict', involving employers and trade unions and 'individual conflict', involving employers and individual employees (Currie et al., 2016) will be considered for the purpose of making it feasible to study the amount of literature for this research.

Conflict in organisations, from this classical distinction, can be addressed through the grievances and disputes between a group of employees, unionised or not, and their employers; individual employees and their employers; among individual members of an organisation regardless of their position in the hierarchy or between group of employees or group of organisations. In this sense, this research will follow the most acceptable classification of organisational conflict in literature, that here will be based on the four interfaces of organisational according to Burke (2006):

1.2.1 Individual-Organization Interface

The individual-organisation interface is related to the congruence between employee and employer goals. Burke(2006) explain this interface focusing in the psychological contract between the organisation and the individual employee, saying that "… a psychological contract implies that there is an unwritten set of expectations operating at all times between every member of an organization and the various managers and others in that organization . . . expectations about such things as salary or pay rate, working hours, benefits and privileges that go with the job, guarantees not to be fired unexpectedly, and so on" (Schein, 1980; pp. 22–23 cited by Burke, 2006). For the individual, this unwritten contract relies on the stability, job security and loyalty offered by the company in retribution for the employee's satisfactory performance. Nonetheless, the concept of a psychological contract has been affected by job market transformations over the years, bringing a lack of job security and stability due to the constant changes in employment relations and organisations structures that includes acquisitions, downsizing, redundancies and crisis and causing imbalance to employee versus employer goals and becoming a trigger for conflicts in this dynamic.

1.2.2 Interpersonal Interface

This interface refers to the relationship between two people – superior and subordinate or co-workers for example – and among a number of people related in a team or in-between teams for example. In both cases, however, the interface refers to people who work together and it is probably the most popular type of conflict inside organisations (Burke,2006).
Workplaces conflict related to the subordinate-boss relationship is the cause of a major number of resignations in organisations. It is common that these relationships survive in a type of "truce agreement" with momentaneous peace or conflict to the point where it becomes unsustainable and escalate to more serious issues. A study published in 1994 by Hogan, Raskin, and Fazzini (1990) noted that "organizational climate studies from the mid-1950s to the mid-1990s routinely show that 60 percent to 75 percent of the employees in any organization—no matter when or where the survey was completed and no matter what occupational group was involved—report that the worst or most stressful aspect of their job is their immediate supervisor" (Burke,2006).
In addition, at the interpersonal interface, workplace conflicts also arise from the interactions between co-workers usually under the form of competition for resources, power, recognition and group acceptance, besides other disputes may emerge from organisational politics in

relation to favouritism, influence, status and gossips. Last and most importantly, the fundamental individual differences of personality, ethnic backgrounds, culture and overlapping roles are great factors to give rise to disagreements and disputes in the organisational environment.

1.2.3 Intergroup Interface

Intergroup conflicts arise between different group of workers, usually in different work teams or departments, seeking to achieve their own objectives as a group. The design of most organisations is the division of the entire amount of work among its people and departments in work units, which set up their own goals and function norms, in this scenario, interdepartmental overlapping tasks and responsibilities will lead these group of people to negotiate and establish levels of structure and responsibilities, which may cause distress and clashes. The challenge for organisations in this case is to integrate and promote collaborative intergroup work in order to achieve organisational effectiveness (Burke, 2006). This type of conflict tends to be less personal and more inherent to organisational structure and may happen as a result of fundamental differences of operations, processes or structures among these groups, for example between day shift workers and night shift workers, when one of them blames the other for misinformation or miscommunication that leads to waste of time, material and productivity. For the organisation, the harmony between interdependent groups is essential to the success of the company as a whole.

1.2.4 Interorganisational Interface

The final interface is the interorganisational that regulates the relationships between companies, such as buyer and supplier relations, contractors and agents, merge and acquisitions, businesses partnerships and joint ventures. Those kinds of relations when in attrition might cause very complex conflicts once they involve significant sum of money and extremely bureaucratic paperwork.

1.3. Difference between workplace conflict management and workplace conflict resolution

An effective management of conflicts in the workplace is the most crucial step for the resolution of conflicts.

It is usual for organisations, especially depending on its structure and size, to handle conflict in a case-by-case basis as an afterthought, relying on reactive strategies such as establishment of policies, procedures and systems to amend the effects of a conflictive situation and failing to gather data and enhance learning and effectiveness (Liddle, 2007). Effective management of day-to-day conflicts prevents them for escalating and leads to changes not only to policies and procedures, but more importantly changes in relationship with employees, once that it improves communication and encourages debates and discussions.

Organisational conflict literature has a huge influence and contribution on the studies of conflict resolution; however, little has been done on the field of conflict management and there is still certain unclarity about the differences of both in literature. The emphasis of this research will be most applied to conflict management, though.

The difference between resolution and management of conflict is more than semantic (Robbins, 1978 cited by Liddle, 2007), as both concepts are not the same, but two different layers of the conflict process. In basic terms, conflict management is the action of dealing with conflict in order to prevent or deescalate it, whereas conflict resolution is the specific action aiming to end a conflict. Conflict resolution seeks elimination or termination of the conflict through the usual recommendations of negotiation, bargaining, mediation and arbitration (Liddle, 2007). Conflict management does not necessary terminates a conflict or focus on its outcome. Rahim (2002) explains conflict management as specific actions designed to promote "effective strategies to minimize the dysfunctions of conflict and to enhance the constructive functions of conflict in order to improve team and organizational effectiveness".

Effective conflict management conflict can have beneficial effects for employers, employees and other stakeholders in the business and helps to create constructive experience (Roche and Teague, 2011).

1.4. Approaches to Workplace Conflict Management and Resolution

In literature, the first mention of conflict management system was in the 1980s (Rowe and Baker, 1984). The early approaches were based on the use of alternative disputes resolution

primarily to reduce costs of court cases and in a second instance in an attempt of preventing conflict from happening.

In more recent decades, modern methodologies have been introduced in some organisations with a focus on the management of conflicts, as a prior step into the resolution, indicating a "shift to a systematic focus on relationship management through the prevention, management, and early resolution of conflict at the lowest possible level" (Lynch, 2005).

A crucial aspect of effective conflict management is to apply the "appropriate management style to an appropriate situation" (Mishra et al., 2018). As a matter of fact, organisations are always searching for best practices to manage conflict and maximise the constructive aspect of workplace disputes and, thus, minimise the competitive one, however the approaches that these companies take to effectively manage conflict in daily basis is surprisingly not very well known. The usual resources to deal with conflict are based on either traditional form of interventions such as designing policies and procedures or turning to alternative conflict resolution processes. Rahim (1985) explains that "conflict resolution implies reduction or elimination of conflict, whereas the management of conflict does not necessarily imply reduction in the amount of conflict", in the scholar view, a moderate amount of conflict optimises the effectiveness of organisations.

An effective management of organisational conflict requires for diagnosis and intervention (Rahim, 1985); however, when it comes to day-to-day management, many companies fail to apply these techniques. Diagnosis should involve the data collection of the amount of conflict to be dealt with, styles of the parties involved in handling conflict and sources of conflict to serve as basis for learning and understanding the co-relation between these aspects. Intervention might be used when the amount of conflict is too little or too much and the people involved are unable to effectively deal with daily conflicts.

Constructive conflicts are part of a health organisation, "harmony is an undesirable goal for the functioning of an organization. The objective should not be to build a harmonious organization, but to build an organization capable of recognizing the problems it faces and developing ways of solving these problems" (Whyte, 1967 cited by Rahim, 2001 page 11).

On the other hand, mismanaged competitive conflicts can have a high cost, monetary and non-monetary, for employers and employees, for example in cases of badly managed conflict that escalates to bullying and harassment in the workplace, placing an emotional toll on workers and destroying relationships, affecting the ones working with the disputants and even causing collateral damage to families and children (Lipsky, Seeber and Fincher, 2003).

1.5. Traditional Approaches to Workplace conflict management and resolution

The traditional view on organisational conflict has the ideology of maintaining peace through resolving or supressing conflict. Furthermore, completely ignoring or avoiding conflict is often one of the approaches used as a response to conflict in this line, which is generally unsuccessful as the conflict is not properly managed or resolved and do not go away.

There are many common strategies on dealing with conflict that includes the elaboration of policies and procedures, application of alternative disputes resolutions processes, mentoring or coaching, engagement and team building initiatives among others that have been used for organisations for years and are still popular approaches to conflict management and resolution.

According to a study conducted in the early years of the 2000s in the USA, mentoring was considered a successful approach to handle conflicts, mentors were seen as active listener and supportive of the parties involved, working on building confidence and optimistic mentality and acting as mediator (Hudson, 2005). Another research showed that a rate of 80% of the organisations consulted, agreed that team building exercises were helpful to enhance relationships and avoid conflict once that these types of engagement activities focus on increasing communication and reinforcing organisational culture, trust and openness. The criticism to these methodologies suggests that employees tend to compromise when doing these activities.

Inherited from the early years of collective disputes and unionised employees, the elaboration and implementation of policies and procedures are used to minimise workplace conflict, encouraging employees to feel valued and promoting the belong feeling (Meyer, Becker and Vandenberghe, 2004). Organizations that make use of this approach are prone to have a Human Resources systematic of recruitment and attraction based on cultural fit,

induction programmes to familiarise new employees to expected behaviours that includes communication, common purpose and teamwork seeking to build an organisational culture that sees conflict as undesirable and unacceptable. Even though, the strategies of these types of organisations are to avoid conflict, they maintain in place formal procedures to address conflict when it arises, which usually consist of the implementation of progressive disciplinary steps such as verbal warnings followed by written warnings, suspension and even the termination of employment, in case of serious conflicts involving misconduct from one or more disputant parties.

More innovative practices have also been implemented to resolve interpersonal conflicts, such as open-door policies, introduction of ombudsman and internal mediators, all of this in an attempt to make conflict management system more accessible, confidential and impartial. When it comes to intergroup disputes, alternative dispute resolution practices are used in a more interest-based approach than adversarial, involving brainstorming sessions and enhancing communication systems, providing employees opportunity to dialogue and build up cooperation and unity. Such innovative approaches inspired on ADR methodologies intend to create a different set of strategies for managing conflict as an alternative for the traditional dispute procedures.

In addition, organisations often rely on their line managers to play an important role in management of workplace conflict. Besides the fact that mentoring and coaching offered by management team to employees help the organisation to monitor workplace issues, there is a consensus in literature that line managers should be directly involved to try to solve conflicts at the lowest level possible as when "the level of conflict increases the likelihood of a settlement decreases" (Costantino and Sickles 1996).

1.6. Modern Approaches to Workplace conflict management and resolution

Effective response to management of conflict in modern organisations requires companies to encourage and support line managers and individual to learn new behaviours, which are difficult to develop when using existing conflict resolutions methods, they should satisfy three different criteria: organisational learning, needs of stakeholders and ethics (Rahim, 2001).

To be effective, it requires the organisation to, first, have a clear diagnosis of the root of the conflict and then act on the intervention. After these steps, the organisation should decide which style of conflict management to apply to reduce numbers of conflict at workplace. A structured system of managing conflict may lead to change in procedures, policies and at some cases even culture. If well handled, the situation can provide lessons to be learnt by organisations and employees, improve workplace satisfaction and enhance employment relationship.

Organisational learning is not a recent concept in literature as it was first introduced by Simon (1953) and Argyris (1976), who defined organisational learning as a process of detection (cognitive) and correction (behavioural) of error and classified it in two different types, according to Rahim (2001):

> "Single-Loop Learning: This type of learning involves the diagnosis of and intervention in problems without changing the underlying policies, assumptions, and goals. In other words, single-loop learning results in cognitive and behavioural changes within an existing paradigm (the old paradigm or mind-set). Double-Loop Learning This type of learning occurs when the diagnosis and intervention require changes in the underlying policies, assumptions, and goals. In other words, double-loop learning involves cognitive and behavioural changes outside the existing paradigm (the new paradigm or mind-set)."

Effectiveness in conflict management should embrace the concept of double loop learning, in detriment of traditional approaches of conflict resolution, which are limited to resolve or reduce conflict between parties in a case-by-case basis or at the microlevel without questioning if the processes and structures are causing competitive conflicts. On the contrary, effective conflict management causes the macrolevel of an organisation to change, encouraging health constructive conflicts and enhancing the learning and competences of organisational members to handle conflicts. In addition, the strategy for effective conflict management should take into consideration the balanced satisfaction of the needs of the stakeholders and must be guided by ethical principles. Nevertheless, there is a deficit of strategies to manage conflict at the macrolevel in existing literature. Rahim (2001) suggest that these strategies are:

1. Attain and maintain a moderate amount of substantive conflict for nonroutine tasks.

2. Minimize substantive conflict for routine tasks.

3. Minimize affective conflicts for routine and nonroutine tasks.

4. Enable the organizational members to select and use the styles of handling interpersonal conflict so that various conflict situations can be appropriately dealt with.

1.7. Costs and benefits of workplace conflict management

The costs of mismanaged and unresolved conflicts have a heavy impact for organisations and employees, directly affecting the morale of individuals and thus their productivity, attendance and relationships as well as the reputation, employer branding and finances of an organisation. A snowball effect takes place once that absenteeism may occur, causing the replacement, training and recruitment costs to increase, impacting not only finances but productive aspects of the organisation.

There is a consensus in organisational literature about the negative effects of workplace conflict in individuals, this includes:

- Lack of interest in work;
- Job dissatisfaction;
- Physical and mental illness;
- Waste of productive time for dealing with conflict
- Unusual behaviours such as excessive smoking or consuming alcohol, isolation and hostility;
- Waste of productive time for dealing with conflict;
- Sabotage and damage;
- Gossips and violent tendencies;
- Promotion of individual interests and goals;
- Low motivation or total lack of motivation;
- Resignation and termination of employment;

On the other hand, successfully managed conflicts are usually beneficial for both employees and employers, promoting a wide range of skills including analytical thinking, team productivity, enhance communication and active listening and resulting in innovations and changing processes to better. Some of the benefits of conflict management and resolution includes:

- Stimulation of creative ideas, leading individuals to a full use of their abilities, skills and talents;

- Contributes to social changes that enables intergroup and interpersonal dynamics in the workplace;

- Facilitates mutual understanding of the organisational problems;

- Promotes debate and communication;

- Creates opportunity for looking for effective solutions to problems;

- Promotes an environment of shared and respected opinions, where members can contribute with their viewpoints;

- Contributes to organisational learning including in relation to future disputes;

1.8. An overview of workplace conflicts in Ireland

To analyse workplace conflicts in Ireland, it is necessary to understand the evolution of disputes in industrial relations.

Over the years, the industrial relations in Ireland have mostly been based on the settlements through collective bargaining processes involving trading unions (Doherty and Teague, 2011). Historically, collective conflicts were a major part of the disputes arising from workplace however, individual disputes have risen in the past three decades, leading companies to organise process and develop management tools.

Ireland, just as many others advanced industrial countries, has seen a huge decrease in collective disputes (see Dix et al. 2008 cited in Roche and Teague, 2011, p.436), this decline of collective representation gave rise to individual employment rights and to a transformative shift in employment relations that has changed the landscape of workplace dispute resolution, due to the evolution of legislation, increase on number of highly educated workforce, workplace structures and hierarchy, pressure for performance among other factors may have resulted more in individual clashes instead of collective disputes. Many of these disputes are usually managed by line managers and HR and treated as normal daily clashes. As the representation of union trade has declined, employees might have assumed that there was power imbalance in the management of those so-called daily clash of interests managed by HR or line managers.

There is no plenty of data in relation to the beginning of dispute resolution in workplace in Ireland. It is believed that the formal management of conflict evolved in line with the industrial relations development and employment legislation. There is a significant mark in this timeline in the 70s with the advent of Unfair Dismissal Act (1977).

With the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry on Industrial Relations in 1978, informal studies began to show the scenario of management of disputes in Irish workplaces and demonstrated that the procedures were less prevalent in small business. Yet, the Commission pointed out the absence of formal procedures that should be seen as a fundamental practice in work environment.

By the 80s, a survey conducted with employees of Irish factories disclosed that nearly 90% of them had formal dispute management procedures, the rate was higher in unionised companies in comparison with non-unionised companies (Murray,1984 cited in Roche and Teague, 2011). Data collected for a survey in 1996, also showed that the incidence of conflict resolution at Irish owned businesses were 57% less prevalent than in the multinational organisations. Reliable data collected in the past two decades showed that formal written procedures became more common, however still lower in small Irish owned business than multinational companies, especially in services when compared to manufacturing. In the Irish context, two institutional influences in workplace management stand out, social partnership and employment legislation. Social partnership has operated in Ireland since 1987 and created new formal and informal approaches to deal with industrial conflicts (Teague, 2007). In relation to employment legislation, there are data showing that more than 14 bills have been adopted in Ireland since 1990, mostly protecting individual interests rather than collective, as it used to be. The law that sets out the recommended process that organisations should follow in defining their own procedures is the Code of Practice on Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures, however, there is no legally binding requirement for organisations to provide procedures for their employees currently in Ireland. In the Irish scenario, the traditional approaches to conflict management that consists of more reactive procedures are still hugely used.

2.RESEARCH METHODOLY AND METHODS

Following the conclusions drawn from the literature review, which demonstrated an emphasis in different approaches to resolve conflict whereas conflict management is little contemplated in literature, the relevance of this research was confirmed as an opportunity to narrow the apparent research gap identified when it comes to the investigation of the benefits resulting from an efficient conflict management system for both employers and employees.

The research problem and research question mentioned previously in this study remains as follow: the research problem is drawn around to what extent developing strategic and effective management of workplace conflict can have a positive impact on the relationship between employers and employees in Irish businesses and the objective of this problem formulation is to investigate the approaches to conflict management in practice in Ireland seen as the most beneficial from the perspective of employees.

This chapter outlines the main characteristics of the methodology employed in this study, including the research gap identified, the research design utilised, the philosophy, approach and strategy used and the research population information as well as the limitations faced in this study.

2.1. Research Gap and Relevance of this Study

The prevalent impact that conflict has in organisations as well as the different approaches that companies take to address the wide variety of conflicts that they face in a daily basis were extensively discussed throughout the construction of this paper. Yet, it is worthwhile to mention once more that literature demonstrates that there is room for further research on the topic of *management of conflicts* (Tjosvold, 2006; Dix, 2012; Rahim, 2012; Roche and Teague 2012; Currie *et al.* 2017; Mishra et al. 2018) beyond being limited to studies of conflict resolution methods only.

Rahim (2012) points out a direction for future research stating that:

> "(…) the literature on organizational conflict is deficient (with minor exceptions) in three major areas:

(…)

(…)

3. There is no clear set of rules to indicate how conflict involving different situations can be managed effectively."

Moreover, Mishra et al. (2018) also suggests further research in the field of effective management as well as Roche and Teague (2012) when they mention:

"Outside the USA, limited empirical work has been done on the extent to which HR managers are diffusing innovative conflict management practices. Thus, little is known about the extent to which organizations are adapting new approaches to managing conflict at work or whether innovative conflict management practices are considered to be an important part of the strategic HRM toolbox used by HRM managers."

Currie *et al.* (2017) also agrees that there are limitations in literature when it comes to conflict management:

"Although, there is now a broad consensus in the HRM literature that workplace conflict is bad for organizations, no singular view has emerged about how problems at work should be managed. Even among those who argue that conflict management practices inside organizations need upgrading, a variety of views exist about the nature of the innovations that should be diffused."

The review of literature was the paramount importance to shed a light on the relevance of this study that aims to narrow the gap by assessing which conflict management practices have been used by organisations in the Irish job market and to what extent they have demonstrated benefits from the perspective of employees.

2.2. Research Objective, Question and Hypothesis

The motivation behind this study was first drawn around the broad topic of conflict management practices and resolution in the Irish workplaces. From this initial point, the problem formulation emerged from the lack of information on to what extent developing strategic and effective management of workplace conflict could have a positive impact on

the relationship between employers and employees in Irish businesses, leading to the elaboration of research questions:

- To what extend the conflict management practices in Ireland have been beneficial for employers and employees' relationship?
- Do employees believe that organisations have management strategies to handle day-to-day conflicts or that they are only doing afterwork by using conflict resolution methods?
- How well-developed management systems can help organisations to maximise number of functional conflicts that creates a sense of fairness and engagement to employees?

The research statement and title of this study summarises the main hypothesis that this study seeks to investigate:
- Effective management of conflicts can bring positive outcomes to both employers and employees

The research statement was formed as a result of the reflection made on research questions cited above as well as on the objective of this research, which is to investigate the conflict management and resolutions practices seen as the most beneficial from both employees and employers and provide informed recommendation for conflict management practices to interested people, including professionals in the field of people management and policymakers.

2.3. Research Philosophy, Design and Strategy

The methodology proposed for this study will follow the research onion model suggested by Saunders et al. (2007) that served as a guide through the research process undertaken for this study. In the authors' words, research is "a process that is undertaken in a systematic way with a clear purpose, to find things out" and "a series of linked stages" including "formulating and clarifying a topic, reviewing the literature, designing the research, collecting data, analysing data and writing up". However, Saunders et al. (2019) also highlights that the process is not straightforward and linear and that some stages might overlap and demands for a process of revisiting and making changes.
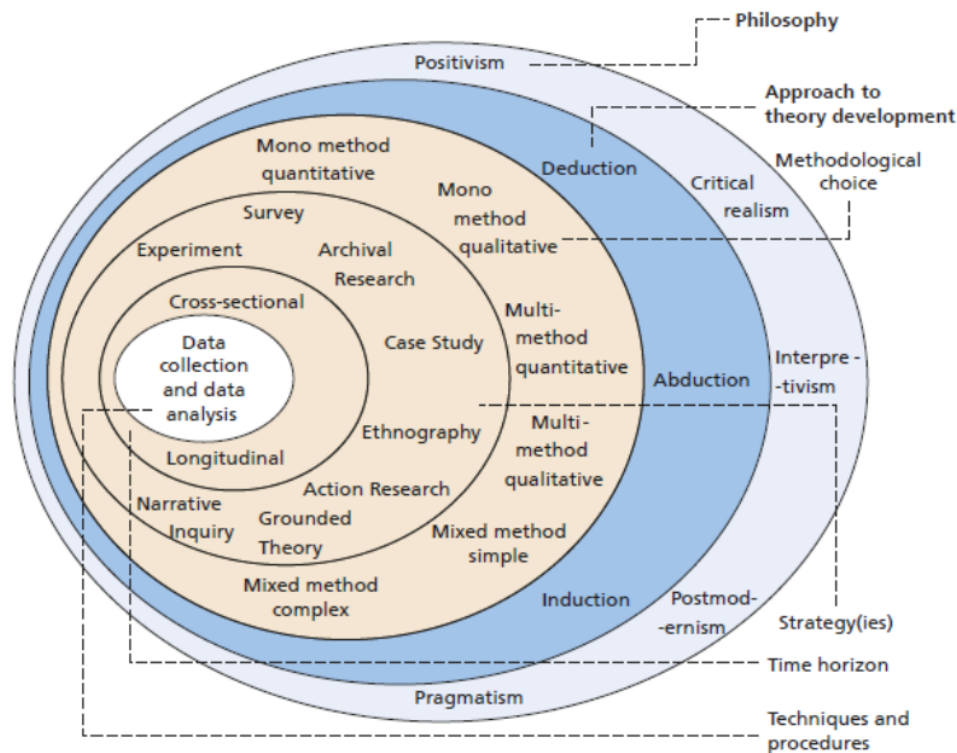
Fig.2 The "research onion" model by Saunders et al. (2007)

The first stage of this process and the first outer layer of the onion research concerns to the research philosophy to be adopted. This term refers specifically to the journey of developing a knowledge that a researcher takes up when starting a research process to address a specific problem and relates to the types of assumptions and beliefs that the researcher will make during the entire process. For this particular study, this researcher has chosen the positivism out of the five major philosophies in business and management present in the research onion as the most suitable. Positivism focuses on scientific and empirical approach to provide data objectively free of bias independently of the researcher views. This choice is justified in the basis of the fact that this study relies on the credibility of the data to be gathered to investigate the effectiveness of conflict management approaches and its benefits from the perspective of employees.

The second stage is related to the choice of method to be undertake for the research process, which includes the next three outer layers of the research onion: research approach, design and strategy; and it is closely related to the choice of the philosophy. Therefore, the deductive approach with a quantitative design and questionnaire strategy technique seems to be most logical and appropriated to this study and can be justified once that this researcher after a detailed review of literature has put forward a problem formulation and hypothesis to be statistically tested by a sample. The choice of this approach, design and strategy was made by this researcher after a thoughtful analysis of Saunders et al. (2019, page 153) explanation of the sequential steps of the deductive approach based on the work of Blaikie (2010):

> "1 Put forward a tentative idea, a premise, a hypothesis (a testable proposition about the relationship between two or more concepts or variables) or set of hypotheses to form a theory. 2 By using existing literature, or by specifying the conditions under which the theory is expected to hold, deduce a testable proposition or number of propositions. 3 Examine the premises and the logic of the argument that produced them, comparing this argument with existing theories to see if it offers an advance in understanding. If it does, then continue. 4 Test the premises by collecting appropriate data to measure the concepts or variables and analysing them. 5 If the results of the analysis are not consistent with the premises (the tests fail!), the theory is false and must either be rejected or modified and the process restarted. 6 If the results of the analysis are consistent with the premises, then the theory is corroborated."

As much as the previous choice of positivism as a foundation for this study influenced the posterior choice of a deductive approach as the most suitable for this study, considering the research question and hypothesis formulated at an earlier stage, the same influence exists in relation to the choice of a quantitative design and a survey strategy. According to Saunders et al. (2019), survey is a popular research strategy in business and management as they allow the collection of data and it is easy to explain and understand, "The survey strategy allows you to collect data which you can analyse quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics".

The data analysis from the methodology chosen will gather the information collected through quantitative questionnaires from employees to provide data on the conflict management

strategies that have been used and demonstrated the level of effectiveness of dispute resolution by the point of view of the individuals, in this case employees or former employees.

2.4. Research Sample

Research methodology has many elements, which requires the researcher to study the various steps of a research process and the logic behind each of them to make many different choices and specify these decisions so the study can be also evaluated by others. Research sample with its all the features, sampling frame and techniques, type of samples and sample size, was one of the most challenging for this study.

Sample is a representative segment of a larger population (Bryman, 2012) and should be related to the targeted population mentioned in the research question and objective. For the purpose of this study, the research sample will be considered employees of organisations based in Ireland. Therefore, most recent numbers of employment in Ireland, from Augusto/2022, shows that a number of 2,554,600 people are currently employed in Ireland. It would be too ambitious to target such population, Saunders et al. (2019) makes an important point in relation to business and management research, "for many research questions and objectives it will be impossible for you either to collect or to analyse all the potential data available to you, owing to restrictions of time, money and often access. This means you will need to select data for a subgroup or sample of all possible cases. Sampling techniques enable you to reduce the amount of data you need to collect by considering only data from a subgroup rather than all possible cases or elements." . Based on this understanding and after a careful study of the research sample possibilities, for this study the researcher chooses to apply non-probability sampling with purposive techniques, which is justified for being the far most prevalent (Saunders et al., 2019) with the choice of research strategy of a questionnaire previously made.

Once decided the sample technique, the suitable sample size was to be analysed. Then, it is important to mention that the non-probability sample technique does not necessarily dictates rules for the matter of sample size, and it is more dependent on what the researcher needs to find out and what can be done with available resources in relation to your research question and objectives (Saunders et al., 2019, page 315). A recent study in the sampling

issues in quantitative research demonstrated that "sample size between 30 and 500 at 5% confidence level is generally sufficient for many researchers (Altunışık et al., 2004, s. 125), the decision on the size should reflect the quality of the sample in this wide interval (Morse, 1991, 2000; Thomson, 2004)" while another study says that "sample sizes of much less than 30 will tend to produce results where individual respondents may skew the results" (Flick, 2011).

2.5. Data Collection

Data collection using a survey is a popular strategy in business and management research. For this study, the primary data consists of an online questionnaire made of 15 questions distributed to a maximum variation type of sample population, which the researcher judged to be the most suitable to find out the answer to this research problem. There were 3 demographic questions in the survey in relation to the employment situation of the respondents and 12 questions, one of those being an open question, sought to find out the experience in relation to conflict management of people employed to organisations based in Ireland and this people perception of the benefits that came out of the health or poor management of these conflictual situations from their point of views. The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms, which is an easy and free of costs tool to design, distribute and collect data.

Since the target population for this study are employees, the choice of this researcher, based on a professional background in Human Resources, was to distribute the questionnaire using multiple professional network ways, including the social network on the internet known as LinkedIn, e-mail, text message and professional contacts.

2.6. Research Limitations

As with the majority of studies, this study has faced some limitations as follows:
- Time Constraints: a research plan was designed for this study including a timeline that aimed to facilitate the time management as it was seen as a possible contingency. However, the limited amount of time that was allotted to this research due to relatively tight deadline summed up to the unavailability for a full time

dedication to academic research ended up being one of the most impactant limitation to this study;

- Funding: this study has not been aided with any funding, limiting paid access to research materials and some literature;

- Limited number of studies in the research objective: as this researcher advanced in the review the literature, it was getting clear that although there are plenty of research in conflict resolution, the same can not be said in relation to management of conflicts.

- Sample size: the target population for this study was wide when considering the number of employed people in Ireland, which made the sample of population reached represents only a small portion.

3.PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

This chapter will make a direct presentation of all responses obtained from the questionnaire survey in an orderly and logical way using graphic resources such as charts and tables. As the data is presented, there will be the researchers analysis discussed in a descriptive format, connecting the results to the research objective.

The questionnaire was composed of 15 questions divided into 3 sections:
- First section being the standard "Information form & consent sheet" made available in the dissertation handbook provided by Independent College Dublin;
- Second section including exclusively the consent question (non-numbered question), the demographic questions (questions 1, 2 and 3) needed to understand whether the sample of respondents would fit the targeted population for this study and an explanatory question (question 4) briefing respondents into the topic of the research and being primordial to define the exact target population expected: employees or former employees of organisations based in Ireland that had experienced conflict at any point in their career and work experience. At this point in the questionnaire there was an explanatory statement saying that anyone who responded to question 4 as not being a fit for the targeted population could terminate their participation in the survey. That was made necessary as the questionnaire was distributed through different channels, including the social network platform LinkedIn;
- The third section included the other 11 questions more specifically about the respondent' organisational experiences, perspectives and learning with an emphasis in their view on their employers' abilities to manage conflicts and the benefits that they experienced in the entire process of going through workplace conflict.

3.1. Data Analysis

As mentioned, the presentation of data will follow a logical and narrative methodology, to start with, the demographic questions will be presented and discussed as follow:

1. Do you reside in Ireland?
54 responses

● Yes
● No

9.3%

90.7%
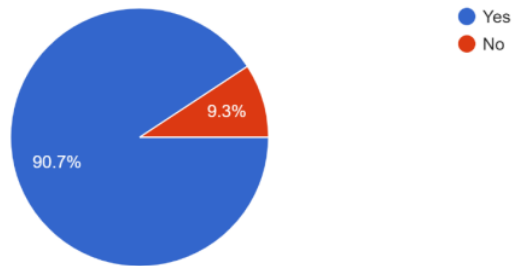
Fig.3 – Question 1

2. Have you ever been an employee of an organisation, local or multinational, operating in Ireland?
54 responses

● Yes
● No

98.1%

Fig.4 – Question 2

3. Considering the total length of employment that you have had in Ireland, including current and previous jobs, how long have you been employed in Ireland?
54 responses

● Less than 1 year
● Between 1 and 2 years
● Between 2 and 5 years
● Between 5 and 10 years
● More than 10 years

14.8%
11.1%
44.4%
11.1%
18.5%

Fig.5 – Question 3

1. Do you reside in Ireland?
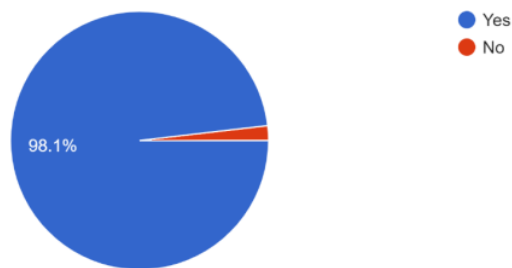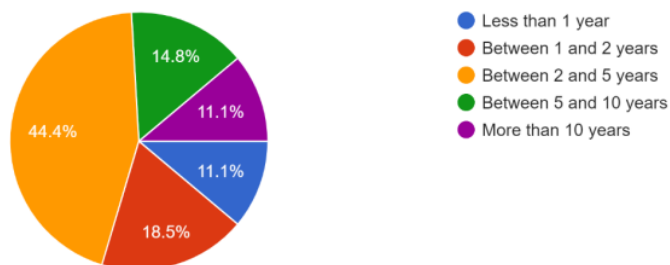
	Qtd	%
Yes	49	90.74%
No	5	9.26%
Total	54	100.00%

2. Have you ever been an employee of an organisation, local or multinational, operating in Ireland?

	Qtd	%
Yes	53	98.15%
No	1	1.85%
Total	54	100.00%

3. Considering the total length of employment that you have had in Ireland, including current and previous jobs, how long have you been employed in Ireland?

	Qtd	%
Between 1 and 2 years	9	17.31%
Between 2 and 5 years	24	46.15%
Between 5 and 10 years	8	15.38%
Less than 1 year	5	9.62%
More than 10 years	6	11.54%
Total	52	100.00%

The aim with questions number 1, 2 and 3 were to get a piece of information in the demographics of the respondents. In relation to question 1, respondents that do not live in the country currently but work or have worked for a company based in Ireland were relevant to this study regardless of their location in the world. There was one respondent that affirmed never having been employed by an organisation operating in Ireland, thus for the purpose of this research this respondent will not be considered. In regards of question 2, the objective was to identify whether one of the criteria for target population: employees of companies operating in Ireland. Question 3 aimed to identify the length of working years that each respondent had, which could be co-related with the incidence of conflicts experienced and later on with the view of a respondent about what they believed to be beneficial.

The responses to these questions that are relevant to comment of, are that in this sample, a major part of respondents had a maximum of five years length of work experience, which is fairly enough as background for the matter of being involved in workplace conflicts and contribute for the investigation in this research.

4. Conflict, disputes and disagreements are likely to arise from any human interaction. The focus of this research is management and resolution of ... experienced conflicts on workplace environment?

54 responses
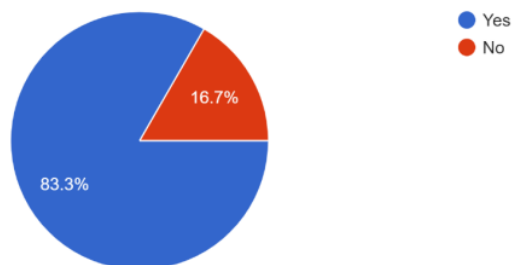
If your answer for the previous questions, number 2 and 4, was "No", your participation on this survey is terminated. We really appreciate your interest and time spent up to here. **If you have responded "Yes" to the previous question, please follow up with the survey, clicking on the bellow bottom "Next".**

Fig.6 – Question 4

4. Conflict, disputes and disagreements are likely to arise from any human interaction. The focus of this research is management and resolution of conflicts emerging from workplace relationships. Having that in mind, please answer: Have you ever been involved in or experienced conflicts on workplace environment?

	Qtd	%
Yes	45	83.33%
No	9	16.67%
Total	54	100.00%

Question number 4 was elaborated to provide information to respondents on the focus of the research with a brief description of the topic conflict. The responses to this question would define whether a participant should not follow with questionnaire in the case that they were not a fit for the targeted population. There was a total of 9 respondents that stated not being involved in or experienced conflicts in the workplace throughout their lives, which makes important to highlight that they were oriented to terminate their participation in the survey. However, what this researcher noticed is that a hundred percent of them, which means all the nine participants carried on responding the questionnaire as it will be possible to see in the next questions, for that reason, this researcher believes that perhaps there was either a misunderstanding of the question or an unintentional mistake when selecting the answer "no" instead of "yes" specifically for this question. Obviously, this uncertainty of the

29

reason could not be cleared up as per the confidentiality of this research no personal data or identification of the participants were collected and they could no be reached to give further details on this specific question. Nevertheless, the questions that follow are not affected by this specific response obtained in question 4.

Having gone through the demographic questions, the respondents would move to the next section of the questionnaire where the more specific questions about their experiences in workplace conflict and their perspectives on the employer's management effectiveness as well as information on what they have seen as positive outcome were found:

5. How many times would you consider that you have been personally involved in a workplace conflict?
54 responses
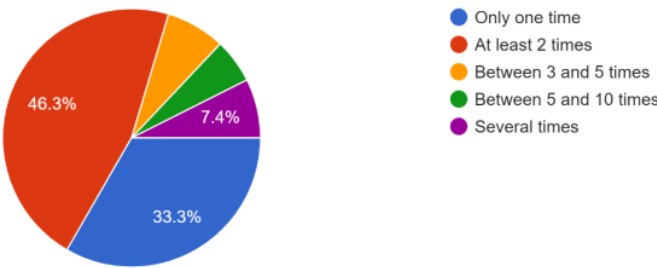
Fig.7 – Question 5

5. How many times would you consider that you have been personally involved in a workplace conflict?		
	Qtd	%
At least 2 times	25	46.30%
Between 3 and 5 times	4	7.41%
Between 5 and 10 times	3	5.56%
Only one time	18	33.33%
Several times	4	7.41%
Total	54	100.00%

Question 5 shows that the vast majority of the respondents, 79.63% considered to have been involved in workplace conflicts less than 3 times regardless of the years of employment they have had in their lifetime, with 1/3 of the sample experiencing conflict only one time. At this point, it is important to relate the responses to this question to question 3 where we can

see that 63.46% of respondents alleged having a maximum of 5 years of total length of employment. The results of this questions may or may not impact the findings of this research in the sense that the number of time that a person has experienced workplace conflict might or might not influence this person's perspective on how that one specific or the multiple experiences were managed and the positive or negatives that that one specific or multiple experience has/have brought in this particular person judgement. Reflecting on that, it is worthwhile to highlight once more that conflict, included workplace conflict, is subjective to each individual and this individual perception, naturally, will be affected by a number of variables related to how it happened, in which circumstances, who was involved and a countless other factors and for that reason is not possible to precisely affirm whether or not the responses to this specific question 5 may or may not impact the findings of this research.

6. In the workplace, conflicts are likely to arise due to an imbalance between employee and employer goals, for example different expectation...experienced the type of conflict mentioned above:
54 responses
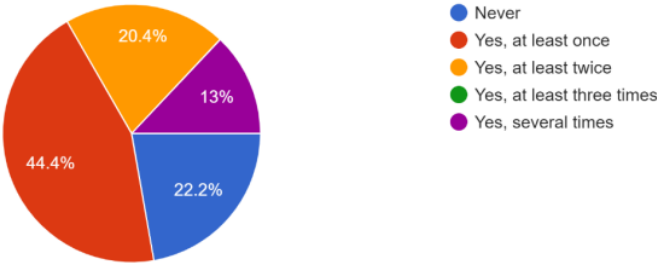
Fig.8 – Question 6

6. In the workplace, conflicts are likely to arise due to an imbalance between employee and employer goals, for example different expectations in relation to salary, benefits, working hours or performance. In literature, these are examples of individual-organisational interface of conflicts (Burke, 2006).

Based on this information, would you consider that you have already experienced the type of conflict mentioned above:

	Qtd	%
Never	12	22.22%
Yes, at least once	24	44.44%
Yes, at least twice	11	20.37%

Yes, several times	7	12.96%
Total	54	100.00%

7. The subordinate-boss relationship is the cause of a large number of resignations in organisations, in literature they are known as part...as compared to yours on the organisational chart):

54 responses
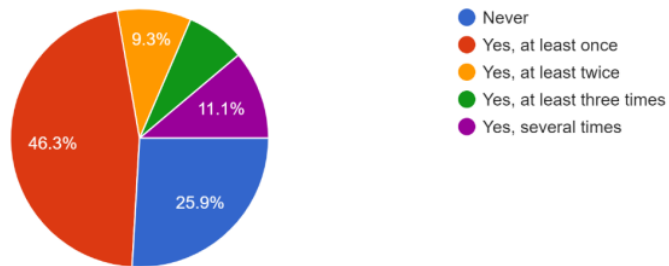
Fig.9 – Question 7

7. The subordinate-boss relationship is the cause of a large number of resignations in organisations, in literature they are known as part of the interpersonal interface of conflict (Burke, 2006).

Have you ever faced any kind of conflict in your relationship with your superiors (team leader, supervisor, manager or others in a superior role as compared to yours on the organisational chart):

	Qtd	*%*
Never	14	25.93%
Yes, at least once	25	46.30%
Yes, at least twice	5	9.26%
Yes, at least three times	4	7.41%
Yes, several times	6	11.11%
Total	54	100.00%

8. Conflicts that arise from inter-relationships with work colleagues are mostly related to competition for resources, power, recognition and ...as compared to yours in the organisational chart):

54 responses

- Never
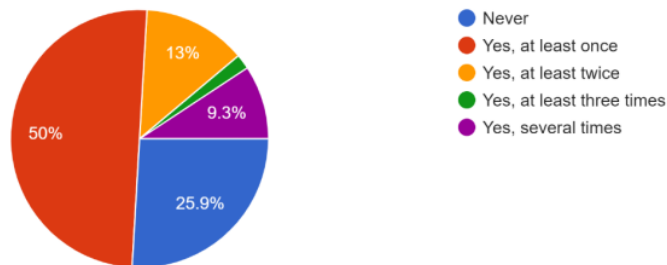- Yes, at least once
- Yes, at least twice
- Yes, at least three times
- Yes, several times

Fig.10 – Question 8

8. Conflicts that arise from inter-relationships with work colleagues are mostly related to competition for resources, power, recognition and group acceptance. In addition, disputes may emerge from corporate politics in relation to favouritism, influence, status and gossips. Furthermore, individual differences of personality, ethnic backgrounds, culture and overlapping roles are also common causes of disagreements (Burke,2006).

Based on this information, would you consider that you have already experienced interpersonal conflicts in your relationship with work colleagues (in the same or inferior roles as compared to yours in the organisational chart):

	Qtd	%
Never	14	25.93%
Yes, at least once	27	50.00%
Yes, at least twice	7	12.96%
Yes, at least three times	1	1.85%
Yes, several times	5	9.26%
Total	54	100.00%

Question 6, 7 and 8 aimed to build up a relation between the topic of this research and tie it up to the types of conflict mentioned in the review of literature, giving to the respondent further details on what conflict in relation to its different types is, that an employee can face in a workplace environment. The researcher found it important to path a manner on which the respondent could better understand how conflict really looks like in a day-to-day basis and would be able to recall these situations of conflict that they have experienced in order to provide most fundamental information in relation to the management of conflict from their perspective in the next questions. The responses to these three questions demonstrate that:

- The predominance of interpersonal conflicts is largely the majority of workplace for this sample of people;

- The major number of interpersonal conflicts experienced for this sample of people were related to their relationship with co-workers and "mostly related to competition for resources, power, recognition and group acceptance. In addition, disputes may emerge from corporate politics in relation to favouritism, influence, status and gossips. Furthermore, individual differences of personality, ethnic backgrounds, culture and overlapping roles are also common causes of disagreements" (Burke,2006).

- An average of 24% of the respondents has never faced at least one out of the three types of conflict mentioned in the questionnaire.

These three questions have a relevant importance to one of the research questions presented in the methodology chapter - to what extend the conflict management practices in Ireland have been beneficial for employers and employees' relationship? – in the sense of helping to understand the relationship between employers and employees, especially when it demonstrates that for this sample of respondents the individual-organisation interface of conflict mentioned in the question 6 related to conflicts that arise from the imbalance between employers and employees' goals, has happened of a incidence of 77.78% of the cases, making it even more important to put effective conflict management systems in place to preserve relationship between both parties and have beneficial outcomes from these clashes and imbalance.

9. Does the organisation you worked/work for, have formal conflict management policies and practices in place (such as Employee Handbook, HR...ies, Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures etc):
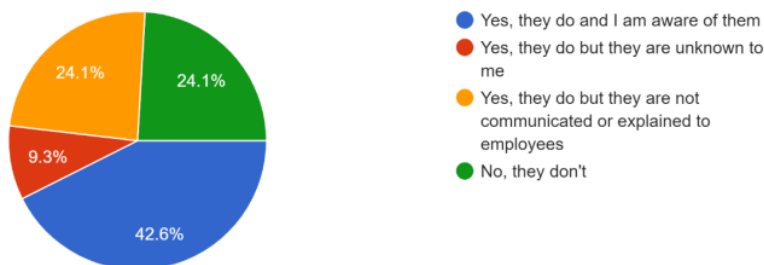
54 responses

- Yes, they do and I am aware of them
- Yes, they do but they are unknown to me
- Yes, they do but they are not communicated or explained to employees
- No, they don't

Fig.11 – Question 9

9. Does the organisation you worked/work for, have formal conflict management policies and practices in place (such as Employee Handbook, HR Policies, Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures etc):		
	Qtd	*%*
No, they don't	13	24.07%
Yes, they do, and I am aware of them	23	42.59%
Yes, they do but they are not communicated or explained to employees	13	24.07%
Yes, they do but they are unknown to me	5	9.26%
Total	54	100.00%

From this point in the questionnaire emphasis was given to management practices, based on what was learnt to be the most common practices in place in Irish workplaces according to the literature review. Question 9 was intended to show whether the organisations that the respondents work or have worked for, were making use of policies and other forms of conflict resolution to approach conflicts and what is the level of awareness of these policies and procedures from the employees' side. A surprising number of 57.40% of the respondents either do not have these formal procedures in place in their companies or do not are aware of them.

10. Choose from the types of conflict resolution approaches mentioned bellow, the ones that you know that are most frequently used in the organisations you have worked for:
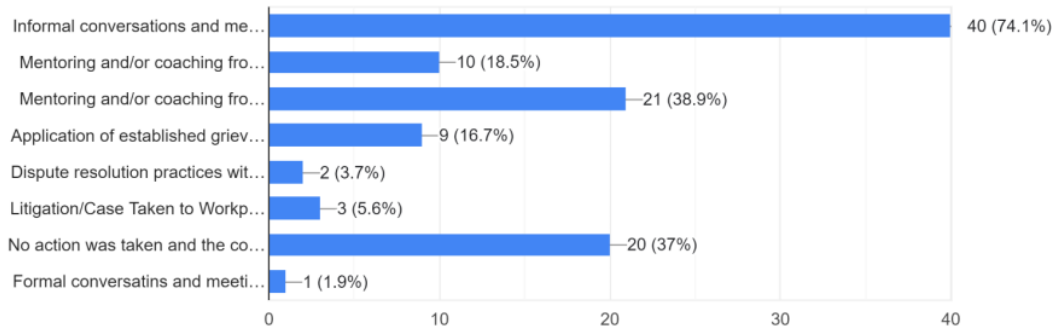
54 responses

Informal conversations and me…		40 (74.1%)
Mentoring and/or coaching fro…		10 (18.5%)
Mentoring and/or coaching fro…		21 (38.9%)
Application of established griev…		9 (16.7%)
Dispute resolution practices wit…		2 (3.7%)
Litigation/Case Taken to Workp…		3 (5.6%)
No action was taken and the co…		20 (37%)
Formal conversatins and meeti…		1 (1.9%)

Fig.12 – Question 10

10. Choose from the types of conflict resolution approaches mentioned bellow, the ones that you know that are most frequently used in the organisations you have worked for:

	Qtd	%
Application of established grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures	9	8.49%
Dispute resolution practices with a third party/facilitator such as mediation or arbitration	2	1.89%
Formal conversations and meetings to resolve the issues	1	0.94%
Informal conversations and meetings	40	37.74%
Litigation/Case Taken to Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)	3	2.83%
Mentoring and/or coaching from HR	10	9.43%
Mentoring and/or coaching from superiors (managers, supervisors, bosses etc)	21	19.81%
No action was taken, and the conflict was ignored or unresolved	20	18.87%
Total	106	100.00%

Question 10 brought to the respondents the most common approaches to conflict resolution in organisations operating in Ireland, according to the literature review, therefore the respondents would be able to elect the ones that they knew that were utilised in the companies that they work or have worked for. On this question, the respondents were able to choose all the options that would apply to them, which means, that some of them have chosen more than one option. Almost 20% of the respondents pointed out that in some of the conflicts that they have experienced "no action was ever taken, and the conflict was ignored or unresolved", what shows that some companies still have an approach based in traditional views of conflict management were conflict was seen as absolutely negative and,

therefore, the best approach possible was to ignore and deny. In addition, the majority of responses showed that informal conversations are the most recurrent approach to managing daily conflicts and also that superiors, such as manager or supervisors, are the ones taking the lead to manage conflict with the parties involved.

The responses to this question bring some information closely related to the research questions mentioned previously in the methodology chapter, especially concerning to which types of conflict management strategies organisation have been using and whether or not they are innovative approaches or traditional ones. The responses from the sample reached, indicate that the traditional approach is still prevalent in Irish organisations, including the tendency to ignore conflicts as if it was going to go away without impacting the parties involved, inclusive the own organisation itself.

11. From your employee perspective, classify the conflict resolution approaches you are of the view are more effective in resolving disputes and ... colleagues in the conflicts you have experienced:
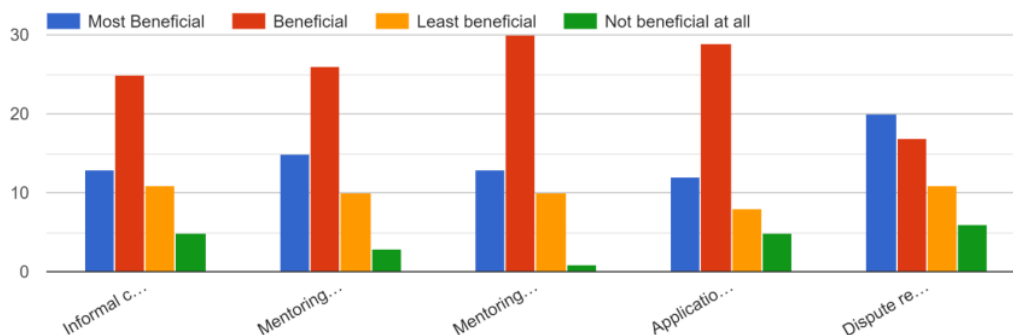

Fig.13 – Question 11

In question 11, the participants were asked to rank the conflict management practices from most beneficial to the least beneficial or not beneficial at all from their point of view and based on their own experiences. This question was especially designed to gather data on the aim of this research along with responding to the researching questions and test the predicted hypothesis stated previously in this research.

The data gathered with this question will be presented showing the ranking of each practice individually:

Application of established grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures

	Qtd	*%*
Beneficial	29	53.70%
Least beneficial	8	14.81%
Most Beneficial	12	22.22%
Not beneficial at all	5	9.26%
Total	54	100.00%

The establishment of policies and procedures is a traditional and very common approach to resolving conflict in organisations. Even though, in literature it was argued that this approach has more to do with resolving than managing conflict, it is still in practice in organisations and for most of the people reached by this questionnaire showed to find it beneficial (53.70%) or most beneficial out of all practices (22.22%).

Dispute resolution practices with a third party/facilitator such as mediation or arbitration

	Qtd	*%*
Beneficial	17	31.48%
Least beneficial	11	20.37%
Most Beneficial	20	37.04%
Not beneficial at all	6	11.11%
Total	54	100.00%

Another approach closer to conflict resolution than to management, is the use of mediation or arbitration practices. Positive results were also found here from the perspective of respondents pointing this practice as the most beneficial for 37.04%.

Informal conversations and meetings

	Qtd	*%*
Beneficial	25	46.30%
Least beneficial	11	20.37%
Most Beneficial	13	24.07%
Not beneficial at all	5	9.26%
Total	54	100.00%

Informal conversations and meeting are usually the starting point to conflict management, especially when attempting to minimise conflictual situations. These conversations are

usually conducted between line managers and individuals and the responses show that this type of approach figures in the middle of the ranking being seen as beneficial (46.30%) while the incidence for "most beneficial" and "least beneficial" are fairly close.

Mentoring and/or coaching from HR	Qtd	%
Beneficial	26	48.15%
Least beneficial	10	18.52%
Most Beneficial	15	27.78%
Not beneficial at all	3	5.56%
Total	54	100.00%

Mentoring and/or coaching from superiors (managers, supervisors, bosses etc)	Qtd	%
Beneficial	30	55.56%
Least beneficial	10	18.52%
Most Beneficial	13	24.07%
Not beneficial at all	1	1.85%
Total	54	100.00%

The approach of offering mentoring or coaching to individuals is seen in literature as the one of modern strategies to manage conflict in workplaces, but, surprisingly, even though, it was considered by the respondents as beneficial, it was not pointed out as the most beneficial. In fact, a representative portion (18.52%) of the respondents classified this approach as the least beneficial of all.

For the purpose of this dissertation, the responses to this question enlighten which approaches have demonstrate more benefits from employees' perspective with the dispute resolution practices with the involvement of a third party such as mediation or arbitration being isolated voted as the most beneficial one.

12. Which positive outcomes emerged from the conflict resolution process:
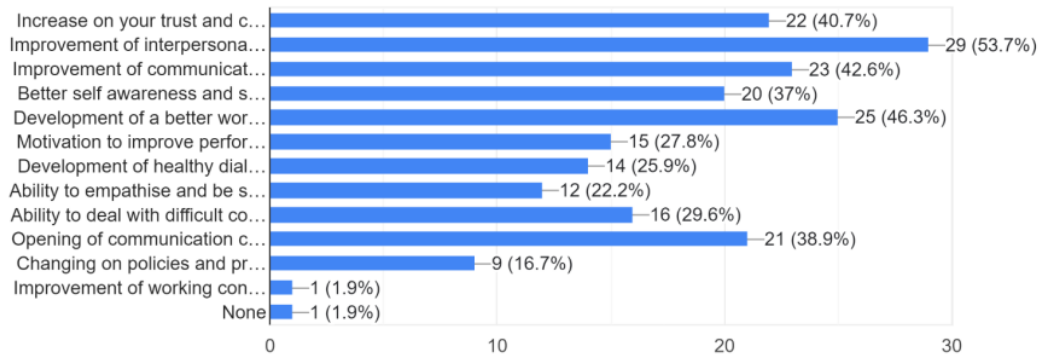
54 responses

Fig.14 – Question 12

12. Which positive outcomes emerged from the conflict resolution process:

	Qtd	%
Ability to deal with difficult conversations and confrontations	18	8.00%
Ability to empathise and be selfless	13	5.78%
Better self awareness and self knowledge	21	9.33%
Changing on policies and procedures	10	4.44%
Development of a better workplace environment	28	12.44%
Development of healthy dialogues and active listening	16	7.11%
Improvement of communication skills, being able to share your opinion and respect others' opinions equally	25	11.11%
Improvement of interpersonal relationships	31	13.78%
Improvement of working conditions and practices	1	0.44%
Increase on your trust and commitment to the company	22	9.78%
Motivation to improve performance and skills	16	7.11%
None	1	0.44%
Opening of communication channel with superiors	23	10.22%
Total	225	100.00%

Complementary to question 11, the question 12 aimed to investigate the positive outcomes that emerged from the conflict management and resolution on which the participants had been involved in. In this question, respondents were able to choose more than one outcome if they considered that multiple positive outcomes had contributed for their relationship with

the employer at the end of the conflict process. The top two responses to this question proved that there was an improvement of relationship between employers and employees with 31 respondents stating an improvement of interpersonal relationships and 28 pointing out to a development of a better workplace. It is even more clear that these responses prove a positive impact in the relationship between employers and employees when co-related to the responses to questions 6 which indicated an incidence of more than 77% of respondents saying that had been involved in the individual-organisation type of conflict with imbalance between the individual and organisation goals. The results from this question also contribute for responding to the research questions previously mentioned in the methodology chapter, especially in relation to how well managed conflicts creates a sense of fairness and engagement.

13. From your point of view, does your employer know how to well handle and manage day-to-day conflicts, such as miscommunications, gossips and jealousy or personality and work style clashes?
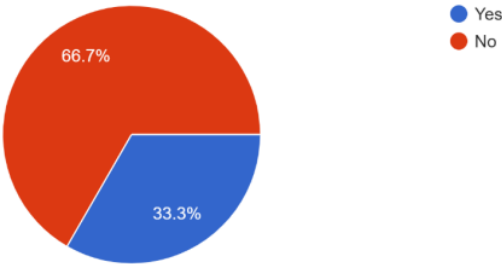54 responses

Fig.15 – Question 13

13. From your point of view, does your employer know how to well handle and manage day-to-day conflicts, such as miscommunications, gossips and jealousy or personality and work style clashes?		
	Qtd	%
Yes	45	83.33%
No	9	16.67%
Total	54	100.00%

The aim for question 13 was whether organisations operating in Ireland have been well handling conflicts from the point of view of employees and give a response to the research questions previously mentioned in the methodology chapter in relation to the perspective of

employees about their employees capabilities to manage daily conflict. The massive majority of respondents stated that they believe that employers know how to well manage day-to-day conflicts (83.33%).

14. In your opinion, in order to improve the management of everyday conflicts, create a healthier workplace environment and build trustworthy relationship with employees, your employer should:
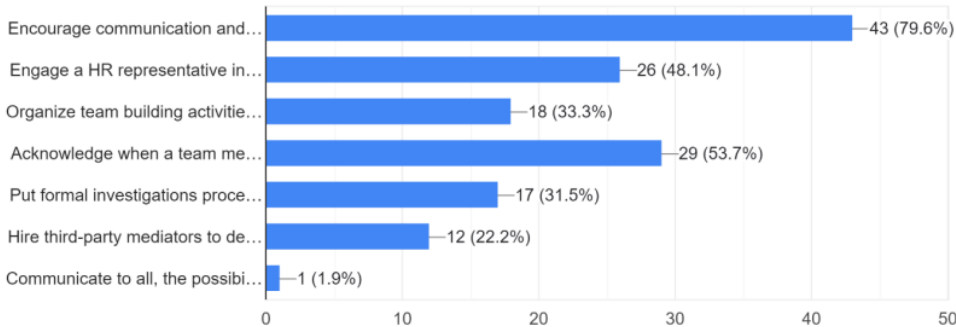54 responses

Fig.16 – Question 14

14. In your opinion, in order to improve the management of everyday conflicts, create a healthier workplace environment and build trustworthy relationship with employees, your employer should:

	Qtd	%
Acknowledge when a team member is causing stress to others and act on the spot to correct behaviour	31	20.13%
Communicate to all, the possibility of a formal process in court in case of misconduct and/or abuse	1	0.65%
Encourage communication and give everyone the same opportunity to speak out	43	27.92%
Engage a HR representative in the resolution process	27	17.53%
Hire third-party mediators to deal with it professionally;	13	8.44%
Organize team building activities where people can interact out of work	19	12.34%
Put formal investigations procedures and policies in place	20	12.99%
Total	154	100.00%

Moving to the end of the questionnaire, in question 14 the respondents were given a list of actions to select from, which ones they believed that their employers could implement as an approach to manage conflicts in a day-to-day basis and in question 15 they were given the opportunity to state in their own words to an open question which piece of advice if they

were to give, they would do to show employers which benefits of effective management of day-to-day conflicts could bring to organisations.

15. From your perspective, employers could also benefit from well dealing with minor day-to-day conflicts, instead of neglecting them and only seeking for resolution once they have escalated to a greater level? If you could offer advice to your company, what would you say?

Build healthy interpersonal relationships and encourage conversations!

Communication between both side is crucial way to creat relations.

Do not involve personal relationship when dealing with conflicts between employees.

Do not wait until the employee decide to leave to take action

Dont know, hire a professional and do training for the managers

Employees should support their employees and value them

Encourage communication and team building activities. Do regular one to one meetings. Do performance achievement plan and meetings.

Ensure that policies, rules and practice are applied in the same manner to all staff levels

Have an independent way to report problems

I believe that when my employer is more engaged and is present during shifts and handles the same job I have to provide or help me out, I am more willing to do more for the job. On the other had when my employer isn't present or is without putting work in while taking a position (pay) where someone else could have helped me, I get demotivated and feel unappreciated. I enjoy working as a team and helping out others as well as them helping me it's a more positive environment.

I would say, keep everything clear, and speak out anything that's bother you

Invest in the employees. A happy and satisfied employee is the greatest investment for the company.

Listen to both sides of the conflict

Listen to the employees

Listen to your workers, everyone deserves to be heard

Maybe a suggestion box where all employees could ask or complain about whatever they consider an important subject.

More in person conversation and less emails. We are in the company daily and instead of "solving" conflicts by only sending emails, superiors should try a more human approach, as employees complain the lack of communication in my workplace.

Periodically, be available to talk to your employees. It is very important to know what they are thinking about the job and the company

That she would care more about the employees, from the small problem to the biggest. Because often from small conflicts, larger conflicts arise within a while.

To put formal investigations procedures and policies in place and encourage communication and give everyone the same opportunity to speak out.

View each situation as a micro problem, with a micro solution, instead of waiting for problems to develop over the long term.

Weekly meetings to expose day to day conflict and find solutios between everybody.

Yes

Yes! Making a most rigorous hiring process making sure that candidates are psychologically fit to work with others specially on management and senior roles.

A variety of suggestions came out of the responses given to question 15, but, still, many of them states the importance of improving communication, being open to listen to employees and work on small daily clashes in order to prevent them from escalating to major issues.

4.RESEARCH FINDINGS

There are three main findings that will presented below in this chapter, while the data analysis was already presented together with the presentation of the data in chapter 3, some key information mentioned needs to be introduced again with the findings. In this chapter, this researcher aims to demonstrate the findings making connection between the data gathered through the results of the survey with the research questions and hypothesis.

The results of the survey revealed that there was a strong connection between the review of literature, the methodology chosen and the problem formulated and hypothesis predicted, which will now be presented as the findings of this research, as follow:

4.1. Connection with research objective

The broad topic of this study falls into the topic of conflict management practices and resolution in the Irish workplaces and the research problem is drawn around to what extent developing strategic and effective management of workplace conflict can have a positive impact on the relationship between employers and employees in Irish businesses. The results from the second section of the questionnaire, where the demographic questions were placed, were directly connected to the research broad topic as it was necessary to delimit the sample of population to those that had been employed or were currently employed to Irish organisations as well as to ensure that they had experienced conflict. In this sense, the results were positive for the research.

The research objective stated in the chapter 3 was to investigate the disputes resolutions practices seen as the most beneficial from the perspective of both employees and employers, what was directly connected to the results of questions placed in the third section of questionnaire specifically about the respondents' conflict experiences and perspectives on their employers' abilities to manage conflicts and the benefits that they experienced in the entire process of going through workplace conflict. The findings related to the research objective showed that:

- In question 5 results demonstrated that, even though, conflicts are a significant part of the daily dynamics of workplace, the sample of population had experienced conflict

less than 3 times during all their work experiences and 1/3 of them had only been involved once in workplace conflicts;

- Results for question 6, 7 and 8 provided information on the types of conflict that these respondents employees face in a workplace environment, resulting in a better understanding of how conflict looks like in a day-to-day basis demonstrating that the predominance of interpersonal conflicts rather than other types;

- The results from question 9 showed that more than 50% of organisations considered in the sample do not have formal procedures in place or do not communicate them to employees;

4.2. Connection with research questions

The problem formulation and research objective led to the elaboration of research questions:

To what extend the conflict management practices in Ireland have been beneficial for employers and employees' relationship?

The results connected to this research question come from the responses to questions 10, 11, 12. Here, the findings enlightened that:

- There are still a great number of companies that ignore the conflicts happening in the workplace applying the avoidant style once that almost 20% from the sample pointed that;

- It was found out that dispute resolution practices with the involvement of a third party such as mediation or arbitration is seen as the most beneficial approach from the perspective of the respondents;

- It was evident through the results that there is a connection between effective management of conflicts and the relationship between employers and employees with respondents stating positive outcomes such as improvement of interpersonal relationships and development of a better workplaces;

Do employees believe that organisations have management strategies to handle day-to-day conflicts or that they are only doing afterwork by using conflict resolution methods?

The results connected to this research question come mainly from the response to questions 13, with the massive majority of respondents stating that they believe that employers know how to well manage day-to-day conflicts. In addition, the results from questions 10 and 11 also showed that employees do see traditional approaches to conflict resolution as positive when they responded that mediation and establishment of policies and procedures are beneficial to both organisations and individuals.

How well-developed management systems can help organisations to maximise number of functional conflicts that creates a sense of fairness and engagement to employees?

The results connected to this research question is seen in the response to question 12 where it was pointed out by respondents' positive outcomes such as improvement of interpersonal relationships and development of a better workplaces, which is clearly a positive finding in this research in the sense that it shows how well managed conflicts creates a sense of fairness and engagement.

4.3. Connection with research hypothesis

The research statement and title of this study summarises the main hypothesis that this study seeks to investigate:
- Effective management of conflicts can bring positive outcomes to both employers and employees

The findings of this research obtained through the results of the survey elaborated and distributed to employees of organisation operating in Ireland where fair enough to test the predicted hypothesis mentioned above and stated in the third chapter of this dissertation. The outcome of this study demonstrated a positive result to the hypothesis that effective management of conflicts can bring positive outcomes to both employers and employees. That was clear from the responses to question 11 where the respondents had to classify each approach in a rank which included the option "not beneficial at all", which was only mentioned in 0.07% of the total number of responses when considering that 54 respondents answered to 5 different approaches. To this particular question, the rate of responses was largely linked to beneficial and most beneficial approaches 65%. Moreover, respondents pointed out many different positive outcomes of the conflict management approaches in

question 12 with the top two responses to this question proving that there was improvement of relationship between employers and employees and development of a better workplace.

4.4. Discussion

For this study, an in-depth review of literature combined with empirical experience was chose as the research methodology to investigate the experiences of employees facing day-to-day conflicts in the Irish job market and the outcomes of these processes for them gathering evidence of what they considered to be the benefits of it via an online survey.

The study demonstrated a co-relation between the initial formulation of the problem and objectives of this research with the data collected and the findings. In line with the hypothesis, the results showed that effective management of conflict can be beneficial for the relationship between employers and employees and that positive outcomes may come from a well established management system. The data gathered, presented and connected to the findings reaffirmed the relevance of this study considering that the investigation brought up results in resonance with the literature reviewed and the hypothesis predicted, which is seen in detail in the chapter 4 of this research.

The results provided a confirmation of what was seen in the review of literature in regards of the larger applicability of conflict resolution approaches to managing conflict and provided a new insight in the arguments of prominent scholars in relation to the need of more focus on management of conflicts rather than resolution. Obviously, the results should be interpreted with caution as the reliability of this result may be affected by the size of the sample studied once that it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of this research in regards of reaching a significant small number of employees of Irish business when compared to the number of people employed in Ireland.

In sum, the construction of this research was a process of learning and development in conjunction with a structured methodology that supported the objectives and strategies to reach a conclusion in the investigation proposed.

4.5. Reflection

The studies of dispute resolutions methodologies and practices comprises a wide range of different and complexes conflict analysed in the spectrum of multiple disciplines, which makes this subject even more intriguing and enriching. For the purpose of this research, one of the choices made was to limit the studies to organisational and people management literature. The review of literature was a process of learning that boosted the motivation and keenness to follow with the investigation and search for an outcome to the proposed hypothesis and answers to the questions formulated. While going through the review of literature a lot was learnt in relation to Traditional, Contemporary and Interactionist School of Views and how these views influenced the traditional and modern approaches to conflict over the years and along with all the transformation that employment relations has gone through not only in the last decade but from the last century to the current century. Furthermore, more learning came from the discoveries of how prominent scholars consider that the approaches to workplace conflict are limited to an afterthought of how to resolve and eliminate conflict instead of what they consider to be inevitable on managing conflict and even more positive and constructive in the right amount. There was still another amount of learning, when it came to conflict management in Ireland and how the influence of a historical background of collective disputes involving trade unions led to the implementation of alternative disputes resolutions as the most common approach to managing and resolving conflict.

For the reflection session of this research, I have chosen to use the Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1998) model.

Reflective Title: How the development of this research has influenced my learning and knowledge and personal growth

Description: what happened?
The construction and development of my research project made me to reconnect with my professional background in Human Resources. I've been used to deal with people's relationships and conflicts for almost 2 decades, but had never studied this specific topic in profundity as I have done now and working in this dissertation has helped to improve and expand my knowledge in this subject not only academically but professionally.

To start with, the process of defining a research problem in a too broad topic like this made me to recall my experiences acting as "mediator" in conflicts that emerged in organisations that I have worked for. However, I had to take into consideration that I only have little experience in the Irish job market as a foreigner professional, that led me to an eager to understand the same scenarios I had experience in my home country in the Irish context. Having gone through the brainstorm process for definition of research problem, question and research title, I started the process of review of literature, which was a long journey and very time consuming as there is an immense source of literature and scholarship material available and there is a huge need of reading and filtering the ones that are most suitable to the objective of the research. The following stage of making choices for the methodology to be applied was relatively easy once that one step leads to other but, also, very technical. Data collection and analysis demanded loads of work and time with the expectation that the selected sample of people would return the questionnaire with a frustrating rate of only 1/3 of returns.

Feelings: what were you thinking and feeling?
During the entire process, anxiety was a constant companion feeling. There were many other feelings involved in a loop of up and downs. Excitement, motivation, fascination, curiosity, frustration, disappointment, tiredness and insecurity to name only some of them.

Evaluation: what was good and bad about the experience?
Undoubtedly, the best thing about this process was the learning and skills acquired that will be carried on throughout my professional and personal journey. The bad side was the lack of available time to dedicate to a full time course with a full time academic project when you are also working full time hours.

Analysis: what sense can you make of the situation?
From my point of view, I believe that I have earned a lifetime learning with this expeience.

Conclusion: what else could you have done?
Analysing this journey of the last past months, I would have managed better the time for each of the stages of writing a dissertation as well as I would have followed sequentially all the stages as I have learnt that one helps to build the next one.

Action plan: if the situation arose again, what would you do?

I would not change it that much in the way I have done because I believe it was the best I could do with the resources I had access and the time I had available.

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Appendix

Conflict management and resolution in Irish Workplaces: an investigation of which approaches have demonstrated more benefits to employers and employees

I am Cibele da Silva, student at the Independent College Dublin and completing my dissertation for a Masters degree in Dispute Resolution (MADR), being supervised by Nadia Bhatti.

You are being asked to voluntarily take part in this research study as part of the investigation of which methods of conflict managament and resolution currently in use by organisations in Ireland have demonstrated more benefits to both employers and employees.

The purpose of this research is to initiate an examination of the practices for management of day-to-day conflicts on workplaces in Ireland and to provide informed recommendation on those more beneficial for the employee vs. employer relationship. As the topic is broad, this research will seek to focus more on the conflict management approaches in use by employers in the Irish job market to the degree that the available data permits.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF THIS SURVEY

The answers will remain confidential and anonymous and will be used solely in this research; no personal information will be gathered.

INFORMATION ON TARGET AUDIENCE AND HOW THIS SURVEY WORKS

The target audience for this research are people who were or have been employed by organisations with operations in Ireland at any point in time. You will be asked to respond to a series of questions, from your employee perspective, and share experiences on workplace conflicts you might have been involved and how they were managed and resolved within the company as well as how effective and beneficial you believe the process were for yourself and your relationship with the company.

This survey will take around 5 minutes to be completed.

PARTICIPANTS RIGHTS

You have the right to omit or refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of you.

You may decide to stop being a part of the research study without an explanation required from you. You have the right to ask that any data you have supplied to that point be withdrawn/destroyed.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

I and Nadia Bhatti, will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time.

You may contact my supervisor at nadia.bhatti@independentcolleges.ie or call +353 1 8773900.

*Required

Consent Question: Do you agree to take part in this survey? *

Yes

No

1. Do you reside in Ireland? *

Yes

No

2. Have you ever been an employee of an organisation, local or multinational,   *

operating in Ireland?

Yes

No

3. Considering the total length of employment that you have had in Ireland,   *
including current and previous jobs, how long have you been employed in Ireland?

Less than 1 year

Between 1 and 2 years

Between 2 and 5 years

Between 5 and 10

More than 10 years

4. Conflict, disputes and disagreements are likely to arise from any human interaction. The focus of this research is management and resolution of conflicts emerging from workplace relationships. Having that in mind, please answer:

Have you ever been involved in or experienced conflicts on workplace environment?

Yes

No

If your answer for the previous questions, number 2 and 4, was "No", your participation on this survey is terminated. We really appreciate your interest and time spent up to here. If you have responded "Yes" to the previous question, please follow up with the survey, clicking on the bellow bottom "Next".

Workplace Conflicts Experience

Based on your lifetime work experience, especially concerning to your relationship with managers and superiors in general, work colleagues and your awareness of company's policies on disputes, grievance and disciplinary procedures, please respond:

5. How many times would you consider that you have been personally involved   *

in a workplace conflict?

Only one time

At least 2 times

Between 3 and 5 times

Between 5 and 10 times

Several times

6. In the workplace, conflicts are likely to arise due to an imunbalance between employee and employer goals, for example different expectations in relation to salary, benefits, working hours or performance. In literature, these are examples of individual-organisational interface of conflicts (Burke, 2006). Based on this information, would you consider that you have already experienced the type of conflict mentioned above:

Never

Yes, at least once

Yes, at least twice

Yes, at least three times

Yes, several times

7. The subordinate-boss relationship is the cause of a large number of resignations in organisations, in literature they are known as part of the interpersonal interface of conflict (Burke, 2006).

Have you ever faced any kind of conflict ionin your relationship with your superiors (team leader, supervisor, manager or others in a superior role as compared to yours in the organisational chart):

Never

Yes, at least once

Yes, at least twice

Yes, at least three times

Yes, several times

8.   Conflicts that arise from inter-relationships with work colleagues are mostly   *
related to competition in the for resources, power, recognition and group acceptance. In
addition, disputes may emerge from corporate politics in relation to favouritism, influence,
status and gossips. Furthermore, individual differences of personality, ethnic backgrounds,
culture and overlapping roles are also common causes of disagreements (Burke,2006).

Based on this information, would you consider that you have already experienced
interpersonal conflicts in your relationship with work colleagues (in the same or inferior roles
than yours in the organisational chart):

Never

Yes, at least once

Yes, at least twice

Yes, at least three times

Yes, several times

9.   Does the organisation you worked/work for, have formal conflict management policies
and practices in place (such as Employee Handbook, HR Policies, Grievance and
Disciplinary Procedures etc):

Yes, they do and I am aware of them

Yes, they do but they are unknown to me

Yes, they do but they are not communicated or explained to employees

No, they don't

10. Choose from the types of conflict resolution approaches mentioned bellow , * the ones
that you know that are assume to be most frequently used in the organisation you have
worked for:

Tick all that apply.

Informal conversations and meetings

Mentoring and/or coaching from HR

Mentoring and/or coaching from superiors (managers, supervisors, bosses etc)

Application of established grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures

Dispute resolution practices with a third party/facilitator such as mediation or arbitration

Litigation/Case Taken to Workplace Relations Commission

No action was taken and the conflict was ignored or unresolved

Other:

11. From your employee perspective, classify the conflict resolution * approaches you are of the view are you are of the view are more effective ion resolving the disputes and more beneficial to your relationship and satisfaction with the company, management and colleagues   in the conflicts you have experienced:

12. Which positive outcomes emerged from the conflict resolution process after *

all:

Tick all that apply.

Increase on your trust and commitment to the company

Improvement of interpersonal relationships

Improvement of communication skills,

share and respect opinions

Better self-awareness and self-knowledge

Development of a better workplace environment

Motivation to improve performance and skills Development of healthy dialogues and active listening

Ability to empathise and be selfless

Ability to deal with difficult conversations and confrontations

Opening of communication channel with superiors

Changing on policies and procedures

Other:

13. From your point of view, does your employer knows how to well handle and manage day-to-day conflicts, such as miscommunications, gossips and jeaulosyjealousy or personality and work style clashes?

Yes

No

14. In your opinion, in order to improve the management of everyday conflicts, create a healthier workplace environment and build trustworthy relationship with employees, your employer should :

Encourage communication and give everyone the same opportunity to speak out;

Engage a HR Manager/have a HR Department

Focus on facts and never take sides ;

Organize team building activities where people can interact out of work;

Acknowledge when a team member is causing stress to others and act on the spot to correct behaviour;

Put formal investigations procedures and policiesand policies in place;

Hire third-party mediators to deal with it professionally;

Other:

15. Do you believe that dealing with day-to-day conflicts   could also bring benefits to employers? Why?

_____

_____

_____

You've completed the questionnaire. Please, click to submit your response. Thank you for your participation.