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COURSE:	MA DISPUTE RESOLUTION
DISSERTATION TITLE:	EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES TO AVOID CONFLICTS IN THE WORKPLACE: How empowering all employees can diminish internal and external conflicts and create a better environment.
SUPERVISOR NAME:	JOHN DUNNE
WORD COUNT:	20476
DUE DATE:	20/05/2022
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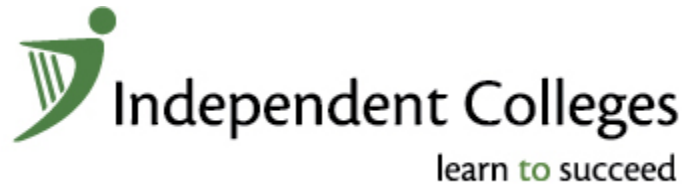
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EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES TO AVOID CONFLICTS IN THE WORKPLACE

How empowering all employees can diminish internal and external conflicts and create a better work environment.



EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES TO AVOID CONFLICTS IN THE WORKPLACE

**How empowering all employees can diminish internal and external
conflicts and create a better work environment**

by

LARISSA BEATRIZ FERREIRA

A dissertation presented to the

FACULTY OF LAW

INDEPENDENT COLLEGE DUBLIN

MA in Dispute Resolution

May 2022

Declaration

I hereby acknowledge that:

- The presented dissertation submitted is my own independently written work.
- The exceptions are the direct and indirect sources herein acknowledged as references. Also, such references have been properly acknowledged and herein formally described.
- I am also conscious that this dissertation can be examined in order to search for unauthorized assistance and compare it with other sources to determine whether there is plagiarism or not.

Signed
Larissa Beatriz Ferreira



19th of May, 2022

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Acknowledgements

I want to thank my sisters Adriana Paola and Marcella Leticia Ferreira who, even being in another country, are my strength and helped me not to lose my faith throughout this journey. I want to thank my father Jose Carlos Ferreira and my godmothers for their support and my friends who were an essential part of my journey during these three semesters of hard studying.

As part of my life in Ireland, I am thankful and grateful for my boyfriend Barry Kent and his family -who now is an essential part of my life – they were and are always there helping me, making me not give up in the most difficult times.

A special thanks to Irlana C.A. Azevedo, Nayara Almeida, Marcio Antonio and Joyce Castro without them and their support I certainly would not be able to finish this course.

I also want to thank my supervisor Professor John Dunne B.L., he had shared his knowledge and provide me with great assistance, and all the lectures in the Dispute Resolution course, who were incredible professionals and helped me during my studies.

Finally, I want to thank my colleagues. We all know how difficult it was and all challenges that we had faced. Therefore, we must be proud of ourselves and our journey.

Abstract

The present dissertation will explore workplace disputes and how they can affect an employee's performance and the work environment. The purpose is to discover if the empowerment of employees would diminish internal and external disputes. It also analyses organizational behaviour when linked to conflicts.

By utilizing the mixed methodology, the collected data was analyzed based on existing data from reliable sources. A questionnaire was made to collect more information related to workplace disputes and how employees deal with conflicts and their views of conflicts.

After the analysis of the literature review and data collection, the conclusion was that the appropriate training to deal with workplace conflicts and give the employees autonomy to make the best decision regarding their work environment.

Keywords: conflict, workplace, work environment, interpersonal conflicts, autonomy, empowerment.

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Introduction:

In the business environment, corporations are concerned with providing outstanding customer service. From construction and investments to retail companies, their main target is to guarantee that clients will have the most exceptional experience by utilising or hiring their services.

In the corporate world, please all external client is a challenge, and - now and then- they will not be delighted with the services offered, and such dissatisfactions might lead to complaints. In order to face those situations, companies often develop surveys to analyse the service provided and better understand the issues related to their services. Moreover, organisations want to strengthen their relations with customers, make the business more profitable, and reduce complaints.

However, some companies not only analyse clients' impressions about organisations through inquiries. Some still use the motto "The customer is always right" to deal with complaints – regardless of their nature – therefore, consumers will not feel disappointed.

Eager to accomplish every request made by purchasers, entrepreneurs tend to draw their attention to external clients and regularly neglect their internal clients- in other words: their employees.

To encourage consumers to purchase products and services, companies use all their expertise in business to please buyers and persuade them not to damage businesses' images and avoid a high number of complaints. On the other hand, just focusing on customer satisfaction and providing an excellent experience is not enough to maintain the quality of the services and products. It is also necessary to give the employees a better workplace environment and training to deal with adversities and avoid internal conflicts.

Companies have missions, visions, and values to indicate their aims and achievements. By creating such topics, corporations acknowledge the responsibility for their actions, healthy and safe workplace conditions, are committed to delivering a good quality of goods and services, respect diversity and different cultural aspects among employees, have a social responsibility, promote innovations, and preserve the corporate integrity. Therefore, it is possible to enhance their economic commodities and a good work environment.

The missions mentioned above, visions, and core values of a business aim to provide an outstanding or a “wow” customer service experience and transform corporation facilities into a pleasurable ambience to work.

Even though they focus on maintaining the goods and services, the central part of the companies forget about their workers’ needs and provide them with outstanding internal service and environment. Part of this situation has been increasing due to Covid-19 and lockdown. Because of it, companies needed to reinvent the way they offered goods and services and adapt themselves to a new reality during the imposition of the restrictions and after them.

Some businesses were urged to bring their customer back and recover losses. Others were trying to enhance online services. However, all were seeking to diminish complaints and provide a five-star experience. Despite all of that, internal pressure - to provide an excellent client experience - dissatisfaction and conflicts have arisen among employees, organisations, and customers. Thus, internal complaints may vary according to the business field and companies’ approach to solving their issues.

As being a fundamental piece of an organisation, employees - in their majority- are regularly trying to give their best performance at work to construct a solid career. With suitable training and experience over the months or years, workers fully understand and dominate their positions in a company. Most of them can make decisions independently without asking for the endorsement of their superiors. Employees know their duties in an organisation. Companies need to support their choices and encourage them to solve significant issues independently.

Even though employees need to want to be empowered, companies can and might enhance the services offered once they work to provide all support to them. Also, the work environment will be more secure, provide equality and be a friendly place. Therefore, diminish conflict and allow their workers to deal with problems and have the tools to solve them.

This dissertation’s objective is to investigate and study the impact of conflict in companies and the empowerment of employees to deal with disputes in organisations. To accomplish such a goal, Chapter 1, throughout the literature review, will provide an overview and critical analysis of conflict theory, how to comprehend conflicts and their different types, and conflict resolution. Also, analyse disputes in the workplace, their various forms, the reasons that lead to conflicted

situations, and how to manage them. In addition, how conflicts impact social and personal lives and an employee's performance.

Chapter two will discuss the research method and methodology. In this chapter, the philosophy, approaches, design strategies, and procedures adopted will be presented- it aims to give the directions that will support the solution to the research question.

In chapter 3 - the presentation of the data – will present the results of the qualitative and quantitative survey and its graphics which provide the structure for the analyses of the purposed research and support the dissertation objectives.

After collecting the data and its presentation, chapter four will present the analysis of an individual's understanding of conflict, conflict management, and empowerment.

The last chapter- chapter 5- discusses the empowerment of employees and how they manage conflicts; such discussion will be based on the findings and theoretical background of this research. In addition, the conclusion of the dissertation.

The empowerment of employees is subject of interest for companies. However, most parts of organisations are focused on the treatment of leadership to deal with conflicts. Employees who deal directly with the final customer of a company or are involved in projects- in which most parts of the managers are not directly involved in the process- may be able to solve disputes. For that reason, this research will contribute to studies previously made in the conflict area, likewise, the acknowledgement of workers' skills to diminish conflicts and stress and enhance creativity in corporations.

2. Aims, Objectives, and Backgrounds

Once this researcher started to study conflicts, it became more evident that conflicts are present in every sector of our lives. When you decide to live in a foreign country with different cultures, the first challenge is to adapt to your new reality. The various jobs that I have in my journey living abroad made me reflect on how employees are treated as numbers and sometimes accept the demands of their superiors- without questioning- and how the consumers and clients need to be pleased. Stress, lack of communication, poor training, difficult people, and an inappropriate ambient, among other issues, can lead to conflicts in the workplace. Hence, based on previous experiences and observations, the topic of the present dissertation was developed.

This dissertation aims to explore how the empowerment of all levels of employees in a company may avoid and diminish conflict- either internal or external. Consequently, enhance the provided goods and services, as well as a better workplace environment. Besides, analyse conflicts and their impacts on everyone's life and how companies and employees often deal with disputes. The present dissertation should expand the knowledge and understanding involving the subject of conflicts, empowerment of employees, and the appropriate training to manage disputes in organisations would diminish conflicts with the objectives below:

- Evaluate conflicts, situations, and reasons that lead to the competition. Also, how much does conflict influence and affect humans' lives.
- To assess the organisational management of disputes, different types of conflicts, and their impacts.
- A review of strategies for empowering a company's internal clients to entitle them to solve internal and external disputes according to their department.

The theoretical background will explore the relevant literature and research perspectives concerning conflicts, disputes in the workplace, and the empowerment of workers in the business world. The subjects will highlight the discussion around the competitions, workplace, and culture and give workers the power to make decisions or mediate and negotiate with colleagues when facing conflicts. The literature review will debate the viewpoint of this thesis's investigative studies.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. A critical evaluation of conflict and how it affects people

1.1 An overview of conflicts definition

Conflict can be defined as arguments, disagreements, divergent points of view, or a clash of opinions or principles among people, nations, and organisations. Accordingly, contradictions that arise from different ideas, backgrounds, perceptions, ideologies, and interests also lead to disputes.

Immanuel Kant (1775) states that war is part of human nature; thus, conflicts are as old as humans.

Also, conflicts have been present in all spheres of humankind's lives since our existence. As human beings, we have learned about competition throughout our development (Bartos and Wehr, 2002), either individually or in society. Conflicting situations are present in our daily life, either in family relations, politics, work, or sports.

A natural phenomenon that is natural, inevitable, and normal, conflicts are intrinsic in all levels of the society – therefore is, a product of social changes. To Webber and Marx, conflicts arise from different classes and tend to be an endemic characteristic of a capitalist society (Binns, 1977). The clashes of styles are part of political and economic life. Different people have the same power relations and how they can be structured in a civilisation. However, they will diverge in how they apply their action plan in society.

As well as Coser (1956) and Dahrendorf (1959/1967), some other authors have a critical view of how a conflict-free society has been regularly emphasised in sociology. From their point of view, conflict theory is a pattern of a sociological approach focusing on phenomena such as interests, power, persuasion, and disputes. To Lewis Coser (1956), "far from being necessarily dysfunctional, a certain degree of conflict is an essential element in group formation and the persistence of group life." (Coser, 1956, p. 31)

1.2 Conflict Theory

The theory of conflicts starts with the comprehension of ethnomethodology and ethology- which main focus is on behaviours (Rossel and Collins, 2001.)¹ The development of a theory can be based on a general grasp which meaning is:

[..] a conceptual model that defines a set of actors and conditions (such as intervention strategies, outcome conditions, and factors other than the intervention that affects the outcome) and postulates associations and causal relationships among them. To the extent that evidence is consistent with a theory and inconsistent with alternatives, confidence is increased that the postulated associations and casual relationships constitute *generic* knowledge about the actors or conditions (Stern and Druckman, 2000, p. 84)²

Also, the theory has realistic assumptions, which generate a reliable general knowledge of a subject that can be utilised alongside its specific understanding.

In theory, Wright (1990)³ describes conflicts as struggles or issues among civil bodies against one another where satisfying everyone is nearly impossible. When involved in a dispute, competitors usually are not aware of their opponents. (Cheldelin, S., Druckman, D. and Fast, L., 2008).

Theories related to conflicts describe civilisations that are structured by divisions of power and inequalities, which could lead to conflicts of interests; thus, Daherndorf (1959/1957) states that power, political interests - which led society to polarisation, and a social group controlling another is considered to be powerless. Also, he based on Marx's ideas of workers and owners as social groups. Its theory is directly related to sociology, a work developed by Karl Marx, who was concerned about how capitalism was addressed to the social classes. On the other hand, to these authors, Max Weber states that conflicts are directly related to oppression. Such oppressions needed to be legitimated by a particular group to be justified.

¹ Rössel, J. and Collins, R., 2001. Conflict Theory and Interaction Rituals: The Microfoundations of Conflict Theory. In: J. Turner, ed., *Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research: Handbook of Sociological Theory*. Boston: Springer, pp.509-531.

² Cited on Cheldelin, S., Druckman, D. and Fast, L., 2008. *Conflict*. 2nd ed. New York London: Continuum, p.2.

³ Wright, Q., 1990. The Nature of Conflict. In: J. Burton and F. Dukes, ed., *Conflict: Readings in Management and Resolution*, 1st ed. London: The Macmillan Press LTDA, pp.15-34.

With a different view from the authors, as mentioned above, Randall Collins's conflict theory vision is related to personal possessions and feelings, emphasising stratification and geopolitics. According to Gandhi's (1992)⁴ perspective, conflict is a non-violent reaction to oppression. To Gandhi, the definition of conflict is "to struggle with one's oppressor without spiralling violence and mutual harm that violent revolution produced." (Bartos and Wehr, 2002)

Although the field of conflict studies is not new, on the contrary, it has been studied for a long time- also, it is considered a rich area to be explored as an academic subject (Schellenberg, 1996). According to the authors, conflict theory can be difficult to perceive or vague because there is no precise definition. The view itself explains the outlined representations of conflicts in our society. Coleman, Deutsch, and Marcus (2014) suggest that conflicts are related to social-psychological processes, and each row has different phases, concepts, and needs. Also, competitions are associated with language, culture, religion, power, family, organisations, and emotions. These authors explain conflict theory based on progress made by Darwin, Marx, and Freud - who have been influencing writers. Until the explanation of conflicts as being a phenomenon caused by divergent:

[...] perceptions, beliefs, values, ideology, motivations, and other psychological states and characteristics that individual men and women have acquired due to their experiences and as these characteristics are activated by the particular situation and role in which people are situated. (Coleman, Deutsch, and Marcus, 2014, p.40)

The theory is generally linked to social conflicts and excludes any other types of conflicts or the coverage of conflict studies and its conception (Schellenberg, 1996). However, conflict theory has a different meaning to different people- such as interpersonal conflicts. In other studies, field conflict is seen as competition or game theory. Schellenberg's (1996) definition of conflicts is based on individual characteristics, social process and structure, and logical conflicts- a mathematical definition of a subject. To Cheldelin, Duckman and Fast (2003), the main challenge

⁴ Gandhi, M. Ahimsa, or the Way of Nonviolence. In: J. Fahey and R. Armstrong, ed., *A Peace Reader: Essential Readings on War, Justice, Non-Violence and World Order*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1992.

of the theory of conflicts is to comprehend their uncertain nature. Also, after the Great Depression, another area of conflict studies was stimulated by the joint negotiations once industrial conflicts had arisen (Bartos and Wher, 2002).

1.3 Understanding Conflicts and Their Causes

The nature of humans is socialisation; therefore, socialisation leads to issues, and humankind struggles with hierarchy, diversity, supremacy, and power while establishing relationships among communities (Hicks, 2018). As part of human socialisation, situations that lead to conflicts arise from our different cultural backgrounds, needs and interests, fears and behaviours, and all humans' interactions are made with the intention to survive in the environments and our world. To understand conflicts, it is necessary to comprehend the different natures of a dispute. Situations that lead to disputes have other roots, meaning, types, and causes (Väyrynen, 1991). Such disagreements could be defined as variations of tensions, polarisations, and emotions among different groups. Also, to Väyrynen:

Types of conflicts can also be distinguished by such other attributes as the nature of the interdependence existing between the conflicting parties, the kinds of strategies and tactics they employ, the nature of the conflict, and types of conflict outcomes. (Väyrynen, 1991 p 26)

As an inevitable phenomenon in our lives, conflicts can emerge from different situations in our daily life as individuals or groups; it occurs while interacting with our family, working, studying, travelling, etc. Because of the various reasons that might lead to conflicts, their leading causes can be categorised as conflicts over relationships, values, external moods, interests, structure, information, and values (Moore, 2014).

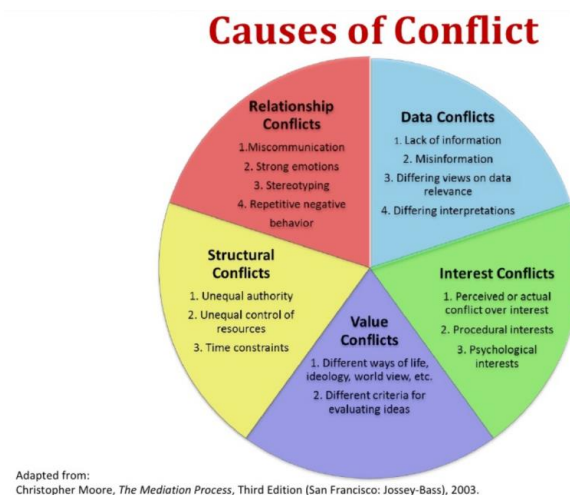


Figure 1

Relationship conflict happens when participants of a dispute have harmful and negative experiences with one another. Feelings and emotions may inflame the previously mentioned conflict, the general idea held by its opponent, lack or poor communication, resentment, hostility, and antipathy. In some cases, participants are not aware of such feelings; hence interventions are needed.

Based on control, excess, lack, and inaccurate information and the different views and interpretations of gathered data define data conflicts. And this conflict may also arise from false information and ambiguous facts or news.

Another cause of conflict is the conflict of interest, which is related to individuals' positions and their wants. Similar to the conflict of interest is the value conflict, once it is based on the divergent values and beliefs of participants of a dispute. Then, the structural conflicts are related to power inequality, fights over restricted resources, and various interests inside a group (Moore, 2014).

Knowledge and acknowledging a conflict's origin, course, and duration are crucial for its escalation and de-escalation (Sandole, Byrne, Sandole- Staroste, and Senehi, 2009)., Jeong (2008) links conflicts' roots to economic and material sources, and conflicts can also be related to people's needs. Moreover:

Substantive competition issues can be tied to a range of contested objects (namely, wealth, power, and prestige) and their availability conditions. In addition, reasons for the struggle may be based on feelings of deprivation, injustice, inequity, and frustration beyond incompatible roles and positions. (Jeong, 2008, p. 15)

Resources are also causes of conflict due to competition for available resources, which may not always be distributed equally. The lack of resources and their distribution enhance Marx's vision of conflicts wherein capitalism, there is always a dominant and a subordinated class. Another cause is related to needs and the thinking of superiority (Maslow, 1954); each individual or group needs to reach its satisfaction or accomplish its goals. When involving values, conflicts are connected to people's romantic ideas, beliefs – usually related to religion- and social background, such as culture.

1.3.1 Conflict and Culture

Not always culture was related to conflicts, and it is not easy to find a definition of culture. Therefore, culture may

“(...) consist of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and behaviours acquired and transmitted by symbols, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may be considered as products of actions and as conditioning elements of further action.” (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952, p. 181)⁵

Culture can also be defined as “the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.” (Masumoto, 1996, p.16). It is an intricate idea, previously related to arts and intellectuals and later became a popular and broad configuration of ways of life (Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht and Lindsley, 2006).

Recently, culture has been recognised as one of the reasons and a vital part to be studied to understand and solve conflicts. The way we show our emotions, how they are accepted, our mother language, how we communicate and our values- are all part of our culture and will vary according to individuals. In conflicts, we must recognise that every person has a different culture and cultural background- it needs to be taken into account in a dispute. Culture should not be stereotyped and acknowledged as a cause of conflict (LeBaron, 2003).

Another factor linked to culture is the idiom and how it may rise and interfere in a dispute. The language barrier can be considered a reason for arguments due to false friends between idioms, lack of communication, and interpretation of a subject (Pillsbury and Meader, 1928). Nonetheless, manipulation of information and the spread of false information- is nowadays known as fake news. It is becoming common to disseminate lies to society or individuals in contemporary society. Media and social media are responsible for determining opinions and

⁵ Cited on Bidney, D., 1954. Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions. A. L. Kroeber, Clyde Kluckhohn. *American Journal of Sociology*, [online] 59(5), pp. 488-489. Available at: <<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/epdf/10.1086/221402>> [Accessed 1 May 2022].

decisions by manipulating their audience. It is necessary to find a balance between the information spread and the cultural context (Fowler and Manktelow, 2005)

1.3.2 Types of Conflicts

In order to understand conflicts, it is mandatory to analyse the causes of discontentment, opponents' relationship and their different phases, the escalation of their issues, and if their cycle of misunderstandings and disagreements could eventually be resolved peacefully (Jeong, 2008). Recognising the different types of conflicts; is essential to comprehend them. Conflicts might happen internally and individually. They may be between two or more individuals as well. They may occur within families and friends, groups, a company department, unions, etc. Therefore, conflicts can be interpersonal, intrapersonal, intra-group, inter-group, intra-organizational, and inter-organisational (Cupach, Canary, Spitzberg, 2010).

Intrapersonal conflicts can be defined as when someone is struggling with personal choices. It happens with the person itself and usually arises from dilemmas; make decisions (Chand, 2009). Decisions such as: changing jobs or moving to another country, or someone's ambitions and aspirations. On the contrary, interpersonal conflicts are issues between two or more people about one or more problems. These types of conflicts are considered more popular and often associated with disputes in organisations. (Green and Charles, 2012)⁶. Conflicts between families, classes, and clubs adequately define intergroup conflict. Intra-group conflict happens inside a community, for example.

Another type of conflict is the international and national nation which involves more than hostile disputes among or inside countries. It can be related to ethnic and complex relations among divergent political forces and terrorism (Jeong, 2008). Also, international conflict is associated with disputes of recourses, religious dominance, and economic sanctions among nations, and these conflicts can lead countries to war.

⁶ *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENTIFIC & TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH*, 2020. Conflicts: Their Types, And Their Negative and Positive Effects On Organizations. [online] 8(8), p.11. Available at: <<https://www.ijstr.org/final-print/aug2019/Conflicts-Their-Types-And-Their-Negative-And-Positive-Effects-On-Organizations.pdf>> [Accessed 2 May 2022].

1.4 Conflict Resolution

An additional part of conflict studies is the conflict resolution, which is considered to be the central subject as the aim of conflict studies is to find solutions or solutions for a battle. Therefore, conflict resolution can be defined as a “marked reduction in social conflict resulting from a conscious settlement of the issue in a dispute.” (Schellenberg, 1996). If conflicts are considered to be wrong, conflict resolution is the peacemaker. The resolution or management of conflicts is when guided tasks aim to address the root of a dispute, either structural or cultural, and after finding the causes of an issue, find a solution to it.

Humankind faces conflicted situations daily in the most diverse field in life, either personal or social. Because of that, people tend to find themselves good at dealing with conflicts. However, not just a tiny part of society states knows how to handle conflicts (Moore, 2014).

Christopher Moore (2014) states that when facing a dispute, the initial step is to understand the argument and determine the reasons that led to a conflict and what it is about. That means diagnosis of a battle. After the diagnosis, the following step is to act on the root of the competition.

There is some process that could affect conflicts, and it is essential to understand such process to understand then, therefore, manage disagreements (Coleman, Deutsch, Marcus, 2014). The authors define these processes as:

- Cooperation-competition: the destructive phase of a conflict. In this phase, disputants are more focused on winning, losing, or competing in a row.
- Social Justice: Parties involved in a dispute initially have different views of fairness, which means the most adequate and fair resolution for a problem.
- Motivation: Parties have different needs and interests, these can motivate a conflict, and such differences could perpetuate a conflict?
- Trust: destructive or not, lack of trust is present in most conflicts.
- Communication: misunderstandings happen due to the lack of communication leading to conflicts. Also, because of disputes, little communication may come to an end.

- Language: It can have an essential role in a dispute. It is part of someone or a nation's background. Speeches, images, and metaphors are all related directly to conflicts and how they can influence the peace course.
- Attribution processes: how much people can blame others for their attitudes in a conflicted situation. Also, how much someone's action influences the other reaction.

Moreover, emotions, persuasion, self-control, power, violence, bias, judgments, personality, development, and cultural other processes such as moral, religious, family, gender, and organisational conflicts (Coleman, Deutsch, Marcus, 2014).

According to Mayer (2012), we can comprehend and identify the causes of a conflict; therefore, a map should be created for us. This map will be our guide during a conflict process. We can understand different reasons that lead us to a conflicted attitude toward the map. It is possible to distinguish various reasons and select a more suitable approach to solve them. Thus, his studies consider the wheel of conflict by Christopher Moore (2003)⁷ To better understand the reasons for a competition. Disputes involve perception as incompatibility of interests, needs, and values. The feeling is the other factor and is associated with fear, sadness, frustration, and betrayal. Besides, an action which is a literal manifestation of discontentment may vary from verbal communication to violence (Mayer, 2012).

As stated in advance by Moore (2003), the wheel of conflict is based on five main components: relationship values, external moods, structure (organisation/home/system), interests, data, and values (moral/ethics/standards). Then, Mayer (2012) will divide the conflict into stages. Stage one or the part outside the circle is personality, power, culture, and information. The circle's second stage or middle part is the emotions, background or history, values, and structure. The central part of the circle or third part is the basic needs, identity needs and interests (Mayer, 2012).

⁷ Moore, C., 2014. *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict*. 4th ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

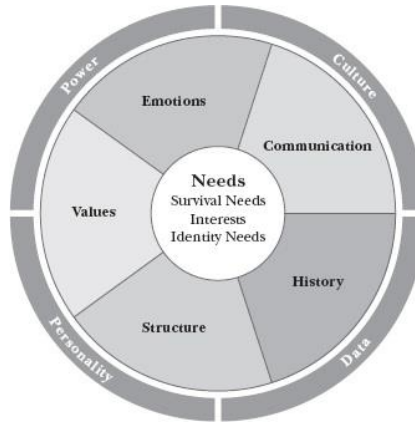


Figure 2

Conflict resolution refers to the various forms of reaching an agreement for disagreements, and such disputes are presented in different formats and levels in society. In *Peace Conflict and Violence – Peace Psychology for the 21st Century*, the writers confirm their vision of conflict resolution based on Ann Sanson and Di Bretherton's⁸ point of view. Their definition of conflict resolution is *peace psychology*, whose aim is to clarify the psychological process that involves conflicts in their prevention and mitigation (Christie, Wagner, and Winter, 2001). According to the writers, conflict resolution "maximises the positive potential inherent in a conflict and prevents its destructive consequences" throughout a psychological process (Christie, Wagner, and Winter, 2001, p. 193).

Conflict resolution utilises techniques to handle disagreements and misunderstandings, which may lead to disputes. The approach is non-violent and avoids the dominance of the oppressor against the oppressed- it aims to meet all parties' needs and interests.

The authors, as mentioned earlier, also state that "(1) conflict resolution is a cooperative endeavour, (2) the solutions sought are integrative ones, (3) the foundation is an understanding of all parties' interests, and (4) both process and its outcome are non-violent" (Christie, Wagner, and Winter, 2001 p. 143).

⁸ Sanson, A. and Bretherton, D., 2001. CONFLICT RESOLUTION: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES. In: D. Christie, R. Wagner and D. Winter, ed., *PEACE, CONFLICT, AND VIOLENCE Peace Psychology for the 21st Century*, 2nd ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

In conflicts resolution, more than understanding the reason and addressing the causes of disputes, it is necessary to make suggestions to the participants as to what is most essential to be outlined and discussed; how they may reach an agreement, how to settle the arrangements that were made among parties (Peter Wallensteen, 2019). To Wallensteen (2019):

Conflict resolution is approached based on the insights generated in contemporary peace research. This means drawing conclusions from the study of causes of war, issues of disarmament and arms control, and conflict dynamics. This involves quantitative and qualitative studies. (Peter Wallensteen, 2019, p.5)

Another essential factor in solving conflicts is communication; miscommunication can lead to disputes. Clear communication can help solve the problem, even with language as a barrier; utilising an adequate idiom helps improve communication between conflict participants. Another essential communication factor is that if the parties involved can express their needs and interests throughout the conversation, the other party in a conflict needs to avoid criticism. Therefore, parties need to be willing to understand their opponent's perspective in a dispute and or disagreement by utilising active listening, which means listening carefully to what someone has to say and paying attention to the details. Then, it is possible to all parties to meet their interests (Christie, Wagner, and Winter, 2001).

As individuals, we have different approaches and manners of dealing with problems. As a society, the way we handle a conflict is expertise thought throughout generations (Bartos and Wehr, 2002). For that reason, managing conflict is an ability that has been learned and practised over the centuries.

Because of studies in the conflict resolution field, civilisations learned how to manage and comprehend conflicts, especially after the Cold War. Conflict resolution is know-how, an ability, a cause, and a profession. We are participants, mediators, and negotiators (Mayer, 2012). Practitioners of conflict resolution use their knowledge to de-escalate disagreements. Many conflicts could and would be avoided once and for all as people know how to deal with divergent points of view, needs, and interests. To Mayer

We bring to this endeavour the totality of who we are—our life experience, our values, our natural talents and limitations, our personality, our training, and our professional background (Mayer, 2012, p. 1)

Professionals in conflict resolution are usually people whose primary work is to find solutions to conflicts. They can be negotiators, lawyers, mediators, and social workers, among other practitioners (Moore, 2003).

Although conflict resolution is helping with the studies to define the best ways to solve disputes and battles, Mayer (2004) states that this is a field in crisis. The way practitioners face such concerns can determine and dictate how new forms deal with conflicts. This critical situation is due to the failure in the way the conflict resolution address conflicts- it should have been addressed in a more profound and more effective form. To Retzinger and Scheff (2000)

We learn about ourselves through knowing others and vice versa. Impairment of knowledge of the other damages self-knowledge, and vice versa. Our practice follows the promise that intractability arises from a lack of understanding of self and others, from denial of suffering. In order to begin to resolve a stuck conflict, acknowledgement of alienation and/or hidden emotions in a way that leaves some dignity intact is key for real negotiation to occur (Retzinger & Scheff, 2000, p. 78).

Also, practitioners are not engaged with the major conflicts, “not involved at the centre of the conflict or decision-making processes” (Moore, 2004a p. 4). Those directly involved in a row are not conflict-resolvers by nature. Consequently, in order to find a solution or solutions to disputes, professionals in the conflict resolution field need to reinvent themselves and think beyond the third-neutral party role in a debate.

1.4.1 Conflict Escalation: Glasl's Nine-Stage Model of Conflict Escalation

Friedrich Glasl's conflict escalation model is utilised as guidance and a tool for conflict resolution practitioners and provides awareness to individuals to recognise an escalation of conflict. The author develops nine stages which will assist in preventing, avoiding and or the escalation of a dispute. The objective of Glasl's (2000) model contributes to a theoretical acknowledgement of conflict escalation, enhancing the tension and adversity that acts upon parties implicated in a dispute. The model is focused on highlighting the existence of individual reasons for disputes in relations. It is necessary to make a deliberated attempt with the intention to confront the escalation methods.

The author divided it into nine stages: hardening, debates and polemics, more action and fewer words, images and coalitions, loss of face limited destructive blows, the fragmentation of the enemy and together into the abyss (Glasl, 2000). These nine levels can be divided into three groups: win-win, win-lose and lose-lose.

Glasl, in the first level of the conflict escalation, defines that it is possible for the participants to withdraw from a conflict peacefully. There is no damage in relations, dominance from one part to another, and no negative result at this level. It comprehends three stages of conflict escalation: hardening or tension, debate and polemics, and actions and not words (Fisher and Ury, 1991).

The first stage is named hardening or tension - a conflict begins with the rise of tensions and divergent opinions. In this stage, conflict escalation is due to divergences when facing a problem and disappointment in relationships. The non-exposure to the feeling leads to irritation. The constant effort to resolve differences cannot work. The failure in trying to solve conflicts is due to the lack of flexibility to reach an agreement between the parties involved. Their values, beliefs and opinions will not change. It is necessary to investigate the natural causes of a conflict which may have deeper roots. However, the differences may still be solved throughout conversations in this first stage.

The second stage is related to debates and polemics. It is rooted in sensible subjects and discussions that may turn into an inflamed verbal argument. The participants of a conflict will be forcing their points of view and will not cede to their opponents. The objective is to destabilise the opponent's feelings. They are considered to be inflexible in their standpoints. Participants' thoughts are authoritarian, black-and-white, right and wrong, and may lead to intense arguments and verbal violence (Moore, 2014).

Actions and not words are the third stage of this method, which means conversations will not bring the expected result to a conflict. Parties are not concerned about their opponents' general interests. Their position and points of view are correct and valid; hence, the pressure and pushing against the opposite part increases. The parties involved are seeking domination of their opponent. The impediment to the adversary's progress is the focus- impeding them from reaching their objectives. At this stage, verbal communication does not exist anymore, worsening the conflict.

In the second level, named win-lose, one of the participants of a dispute needs to be the winner and satisfy their issues regarding the conflict (Burgess, 2013). Just one part of the dispute will reach a positive outcome; therefore, one of the parties must be the losing part of the battle. In the second level, the escalation stages are images and coalitions, loss of face, strategies of threats, and limited destructive blows or treat.

The fourth stage is named images and coalitions or coalitions. In this stage, the issue is not the central focus, and it is about winning or losing. Participants are seeking to find people who approve of their opinions and aims and also cooperate with them during the conflict process. In other words, they are searching for allies, sympathisers, and supporters.

Once parties have their groups, they will act in opposition to one another. The stereotyped images formed about their opponents in the previous stages are nearly impossible to be modified. The constructed image plays an essential part in this process. Parties have the sense that they know what they foresee from the ambient. The involved ones will accredit negative

characteristics to their rivals- either to one member or to a group. The spread of a negative image consists of prejudices and dictates how the parties see each other. The built image does not change; thus, parties cannot see different points of view, truth, and complex individuals.

Stage five is the loss of face. The loss face stands for loss of moral trustworthiness or reliability – loss of credibility. The constant criticism against the opponent may be transformed into lies and insinuations. There are personal and direct attacks- exposing the opponent. The image that rivals have from each other is extremist and radical. Parties reinvent the conflict scenario- they interpret the different strategies as immoral. There is the good and the evil. The image constructed is harmful, and there is no space for trust. Such a stage leads to loss of face, forcing parties to rebuild their public image.

The next stage of the escalation, stage six, is the Strategies of Threats. One of the parties will try to dominate the other party by threatening them. The objective is to force the other party to make concessions. The Threats strategies show that parties will make mutual threats and no retreatment. The aim is to gain full attention to themselves and create their agenda by demonstrating their independence. Also, force the opponent to agree with determined rules by intimidating with sanctions. Then, threatening will be close to becoming a concert. If parties retreat from their statements, they will lose their integrity and reliability, increasing the tone of the threats toward their opponents. The last phase of the threat's strategy gives the opponent an ultimatum. Consequently, the other party need to decide. This stage's dynamics will make parties lose control throughout the dispute, and their perception of reality is distorted.

At this stage, conflicts are more complex and challenging to control and comprehend.

The last level of conflict escalation, which comprehends limited destructive blows, fragmentation of the enemy and together into the abyss, is a lose-lose level. Both parties involved in a battle will lose, and on some occasions, the parties involved comprehend that losing is unavoidable (Burgess, 2013).

The seventh stage is the Limited Destructive Blows or simply Limited Destruction. At this stage, opponents will use all strategies and tools to harm their rivals and will no longer be seen as humans. They believe their counterpart is capable of damaging or catastrophic behaviour and survival is their central concern. As enemies, they undermine the opponent's resources and control their occupations and operations as well as their judicial proceedings. The rivals are prepared to lose. However, they expect their enemies suffer more significant losses. Communication at this stage no longer exists. The party's objective is to survive and suffer as minor damage as possible.

The eighth stage, known as Fragmentation of The Enemy, is focused on the annihilation and collapsing of the opponent's vital system. The attacks are intensified, and as the enemy's essential sources are damaged, their capability to make decisions crumbles. Aiming and concerned with their own survival, destroying the enemy is the target.

The last stage of the conflict escalation is named Together into The Abyss. The ninth and final stage is concentrated on the participants of a battle's total confrontation. Self-destruction may be established once you and your enemy are dragged down into the abyss—parties involved in the fight and third parties suffer from such destruction. Wars are the reflection of the last stage (Jordan, 2000).

1.5 People and Conflicts: How conflicts affect lives

As conflicts arise from different reasons and contexts, they, directly and indirectly, affect our lives. A conflict can occur at various levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, organisational, national, and international- for example (Coleman Deutsch and Marcus, 2014). In some cases, conflicts can escalate and broaden the competition, thus becoming destructive due to their violence, hostility, and lack of communication. Intimidation, persuasion, and negotiation are the tools utilised by

one of the parties involved to influence those interested in a conflict's behaviours and thoughts. However, a third party can assist people engaged in a battle to de-escalate it (Pearson, 2001)⁹. Disputes, in their majority, are challenging for everyone involved in it. Some of these battles can be settled through good communication; in others, the solution cannot be found easily due to the lack of communication. Such conflicts might reach "high levels of destructiveness, volatility, and complexity can be challenging to manage" (Coleman, Bui-Wrzosinska, Vallacher and Nowak, 2006), have a long-lasting duration, and affect people's lives directly or indirectly. However, not only protected conflicts influence and change lives- but all disputes may also change how we think, act, and behave when facing clashes, competitions or battles.

People face conflict in different forms. One person's approach and vision of a battle differ from another. We will react to each row according to the time and type. The path to a conflict derives from how we have been taught throughout life about conflicts, past and present experiences, environments that we are used to frequent, cultural background, and personality (Mayer, 2012). Usually, we focus more on our beliefs and values than on our principles and faith. While facing a dispute, our point of view on an issue and how we approach it may suffer external influences- depending on where, when, how, and why a conflict happens. For example, a person who grew up in the 1990s has a different vision of the world from a person who grew up in the 1950s, and it also changes according to someone's religion, culture, country, work, etc. Ford (2020) compares conflict to a cloud of smog everywhere, and even when you change your habits to avoid it, others will not, and the pollution will be present in your life. The smog metaphor defines conflict as being limited and hard to deal with. Also, it is the consequence of an external power that we cannot avoid.

It is hard to believe that we could live a life without conflicts. We would always agree with everything; we would have the same taste for food and like the same colour. Conflicts are part of our lives as humans and social living beings; all conflicts impact our lives. On some occasions,

⁹ Pearson, F., 2001 'Dimensions of conflict resolution in ethnopolitical disputes' cited on Byrne, S. and Senehi, J., 2009. Conflict analysis and resolution as a multidiscipline A work in progress. In: D. Sandole, S. Byrne, I. Sandole-Staroste and J. Senehi, ed., *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, p.4.

people define it according to their own experiences, culture, and views, such as karma, the universe, divine will, and external force or entity (Mayer, 2012).

Conflicts bring us to traumas, hopes, negative experiences, creativity, and new possibilities (Wallensteen, 2019).

In disputes where arguments and violence escalate, leading to wars, a population suffers the consequences of being deprived of their essential needs such as water, food, safety, and health and educational systems. Youngers and children raised in this ambient may be disturbed their entire life. In addition, consequences can vary, and to Policinski and Kuzmanovic (2019) they:

[...] are varied, including the cumulative effects of hostilities on infrastructure and health-care systems (among other methods), prolonged displacement, increased barriers to accessing services and support for groups facing specific risks among the population (including persons with disabilities), and interruptions to education, to name just a few. (Policinski and Kuzmanovic, 2019, p.986)

The impact will be harmful at an organisational level when it affects an individual's psychological and behavioural side. However, it may also impact in a positive form, and the effects will lead to creativity and social changes (Hussein and Al-Mamary, 2019).

As behaviour and feeling are relatively connected, emotions are connected to a conflict and its consequences. This is due to the immense diversity of feelings and emotions we have as humans and how it reflects in our complex and diverse connections (Lindner, 2006)¹⁰.

When conflicts are related to family conflicts, like divorce, and involving kids, usually they are the ones who suffer more consequences from broken homes (Stewart, 1998). When a dispute ends with one of the parties committing a crime, it is damaging for all parties involved in a crime to try to diminish the harm caused. To deal with such violence and diminish the harm caused, the Restorative Justice:

[...] it seeks to move forward collaboratively to repair the damage to all parties involved in the offence, which includes supporting and making reparation to the victim, resolving

¹⁰ Lindner, E., 2014. EMOTION AND CONFLICT Why It Is Important to Understand How Emotions Affect Conflict and How Conflict Affects Emotions. In: P. Coleman, M. Deutsch and E. Marcus, ed., *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice*, 3rd ed. San Francisco: JosseyBass A Wiley Brand, pp.268-293.

conflict between the victim and the offender, resolving disputes involving families or communities affected by the offence and giving the offender the opportunity to express remorse and make amends for his or her action (Zehr, 2002).

As conflicts are directly linked to human history and may always be present somehow in our lives, they can be violent and non-violent, personal or social conflicts. They are also classified according to their scale, structure, intensity, and parties involved in a battle. The escalation of non-violent conflicts can potentially lead to violence, leading to wars. Civil wars are considered to be the most irreparable type of dispute. However, conflicts have their good side. Different competitions promote social changes, and the usage of forces is not necessary or inevitable (Jeong, 2008). Hence, either traumatic or not, conflicted situations change humankind's behaviour and draw new compartmental patterns in society.

1.6. A critical review of conflict in the workplace and how it impacts productivity and attitude workplace

1.6.1 Defining and Understanding Issues in Corporations

Conflicted situations are natural, essential, imminent, and usual (Mayer, 2002). Its root is our own needs, concerns, objectives, and priorities. In the workplace, diversity and interdependence are the causes of conflicts. A dispute is the interconnection of interdependent individuals who see incongruence and the probability of obstructions from others and the outcome of this inconsistency (Folguier, Poole, and Stutman 2013).

People have different professional and personal goals and interests. Also, people with other objectives and backgrounds have to work as a team in a company. They reach their personal goals and the organisation's objectives (Landau, 2001).

Conflicts are a mixture of uncertain, reasonable, and bad situations about perceptions. When disputes are between individuals, not all of us are ready or want to face a battle. Most people are not comfortable with conflicts or have the skills and tools to manage conflicts.

While facing a battle, we usually have two different behaviours while facing a conflict: either aggressively facing the opposing party or avoiding a conflicted situation.

In the business world, technically, disputes should not arise. In the recent past, the word conflict was avoided, and it would be an embarrassment for companies if it became public (Landau 2001). Also, it was difficult for companies to accept diversity; people have diverse and divergent interests and perspectives either in their personal or professional lives (Yarbag, 2015).

Conflicts were always part of an organisational environment. Disagreements can occur in companies because the corporate environment is composed of people whose goals, values, culture, and perspectives are different. Individuals with varying styles of communication, personality, and beliefs- together in the same ambient working and sharing experiences in a place where they spend one-third of their day. Thus, workplace conflicts have been studied for an extended period as well much research has been done around the field of organisational disputes (Robbin, 1978). It has been part of the interest of companies to discuss conflicts and their effects on the organisations.

As we directly relate the word conflict to a hostile act, it is related to the decrement of production inside the corporate world (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). On the contrary, conflicts have various impacts on companies. According to researchers, the diverse types of disputes can negatively or positively impact workers' performance (De Wit et al. 2012).

Corporations are always trying to diminish internal and external complaints, disagreements, divergences, and employee disputes. Therefore, analysing the roots and impacts of conflicts is essential, as well as managing them. Also, the culture of an organisation may be one of the issues in a company and also needs to be studied alongside the causes of conflicts among workers in a workplace (Bell, 2007; Harrison et al., 2022; Peeters, M., Wattez, C., Demerouti, E. and de Regt, W., 2009).

As conflicted situations can be a problem in corporations and may create impasses that impact directly and indirectly on relationships and productivity, the forms that we understand and different approaches to managing them will provide significant results in an organisation; that means a business can either cease its operations, grow or be stagnant according to its visions and actions towards disputes. The efficiency in dealing with and managing issues, conflicts, and decision-making will determine a business's success or failure.

Moreover, as they are inevitable inside the organisation, conflicts can be either functional or dysfunctional. If it is functional conflicts, performance conflicts can be improved by disputes that provide constructive debates on the issues workers face; it works on problem-solving and decision-making. Trace new strategies and be open to stimulating changes to support the healthy growth of companies. On the other hand, dysfunctional conflicts can be destructive and negatively impact corporations and deteriorate workers' and organisations' interpersonal relations and efficiency. Dysfunctional conflicts affect corporations in such a manner that lack of communication, disagreements, fights, and arguments impact the central part of companies. (Mujtaba and McCartney, 2010)

In the workplace, we can face situations such as missing a meeting, or a deadline, misunderstanding a task, or even disagreeing with them, feeling undermined by a colleague, and

disagreeing with the form that some colleagues or managers behave and treat others. Such situations can be defined as task conflicts, relationship conflicts, and value conflicts, considered the three main conflicts in a workplace (Shonk, 2021).

1.6.2 The different types of conflicts in the workplace

Conflicted situations have their positive and negative side. It can happen between colleagues and head departments in the corporate world, as mentioned before. Their cause may also vary and can be related to values, performances, conduct, management, etc. (Amason and Schweiger, 1994). Disputes may be categorised according to their types regarding their directions and levels (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2008; Green, 2012). Conflicts in the workplace also can be divided into inter and intrapersonal conflicts, inter and intragroup, and intra or inter-organisational (Hussein and Al-Mamary, 2019).

Sometimes in life, we as individuals can face difficult decisions or even cannot make any decisions. In the workplace, intrapersonal decisions happen when a person needs to act. However, some roles or decisions in a corporative environment go against someone's values and beliefs. For example, a receptionist lies to a visitor or persuades someone with the intention to help his or her's superiors- such actions go against this professional principle once lying is against its values (Chand, 2009). On other occasions, individuals need to change their way of conducting themselves and attitudes incompatible with their principles to get a promotion.

When a task needs to be developed among a group of people or supervisors competing for a promotion, many other situations involving two or more people can lead to interpersonal conflicts. Interpersonal conflict is a complex conflict, and this conflict cannot be related just to a disagreement that is easy to be resolved. It is about two individuals who have their vision and objectives while facing a dispute (Selman, 1980). We were born and raised with different values, cultures, and education and had our personalities. Thus, interpersonal conflicts are "clashes of values and interests, power and status differences, lack of information, role incompatibility, stress and scarce resources (Whetten and Cameron, 2012)¹¹" Also, with time, our goals, values, and conduct can change (Cupach, Canary, and Spitzberg 2010).

Another conflict inside a workplace is the intragroup conflict. Intra-group conflict occurs when a clash of objectives happens inside a group at an organisational level (Barki and Hartwick, 2004). Social convention determines that participants involved in a task must follow the rules defined

¹¹ Cited on *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENTIFIC & TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH*, 2019. Conflicts: Their Types, And Their Negative and Positive Effects on Organisations. [online] 8(8), p.10. Available at: <<http://www.ijstr.org>> [Accessed 14 April 2022].

by the contract. Sometimes, individuals may not agree with the group's goals or strategies traced by the group to achieve an accomplishment, and such disagreement may happen at all levels in a company. It may occur among individuals that belong to the same group. However, the intragroup conflict has different forms: relationship, task, and process conflict (Amason, 1994; Jehn, 1995; Pinkley, 1990).

Some theoretical have subdivided intragroup conflict into task conflict, relationship conflict, and process conflict (Amason, 1994; Jehn, 1995; Pinkley, 1990). Task conflicts sometimes might not be so complex to resolve, as colleagues argue over who should perform a task. However, they can be challenging to comprehend one another (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003). Also, task conflict has a positive side and can bring excellent outcomes for a company; therefore, it can enhance creativity and employees' performance (Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven, 1990). However, few empirical studies support the fact that task conflicts have positively influenced this group conflict; such studies are inconclusive (De Dreu and Van de Vliert, 1997).

Relationship conflicts happen due to divergent personalities, preferences, visions of a situation, and how to deal with such differences- as people who would never be friends outside of a company need to work together on a project (Jehn, 1997). Process conflict is the disagreement around the methodology that should be applied to a task.

To Jehn (1994 and 1997), De Dreu and Van de Vliert, 1997 and Pelled et al., 1999, even though task conflicts have a positive influence, relationship and process disputes will have a negative impact on a corporation and its employees once it is related to a decrease of good performances affecting the workers' commitment and satisfaction in the workplace.

Also, according to De Dreu and Weingart (2003), task and relationship disputes can be disruptive, causing trouble for the involved ones. These authors state that research results have shown that a bit of conflict is beneficial; however, it can escalate, leading participants to a breakdown.

Another type of intragroup conflict is the value conflict- different values and identities associated with various "politics, religion, ethics, norms, and other deeply held beliefs." (Shonk, 2021). However, exists concepts and imbricates among the previously described forms of intragroup conflicts (Dirks and Parks, 2003).

While intra-group conflict happens among members of a group, intergroup conflicts can be defined as divergences among different groups which aim to reach their objectives. To set an example, superior-subordinated conflicts are among the most common types (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2008). Lack of communication, different approaches, lack of resources, and misunderstandings lead other active groups inside an organisation to clash. Each company has its division – units of work- responsible for the part of the organisation as administrative, marketing, financial, sales department, etc. Also, each of these departments has its style of work, supervision, and achievements (Jones, Gareth, George and Jennifer, 2008).

When a conflict arises between different levels of an organisation, they are an intra-organizational conflict. They can be divided into horizontal, vertical line-staff, and role conflict. Disagreements that happen among superiors and subordinates are the vertical conflicts- when a boss wants total control over his employees. On the other hand, horizontal rows are when different departments are involved in a disagreement or even staff according to their hierarchy (Jones, Gareth, George and Jennifer, 2008). The team and the line department often face disputes. This is due to the age of the distinct background. The different personalities usually come from different cultures and faith; therefore, conflicts are almost inevitable (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2008)

1.6.3 Organisational Behaviour and Communication

Organisational behaviour studies a business's structural and managerial part, the workplace ambient, and individuals' and groups' interactions, actions, and reactions. Organisational behaviour directly influences our personal or professional lives and dictates standards in our society and work environments. A corporation has impacted our lives on different levels – we change how we behave to adapt to an organisation. It interferes in our sleeping, dressing code, personal and professional choices, etc.

The behaviour in a corporation can be distinguished at macro and micro levels, i.e., problems related to a group or an individual (Heat and Sitkin, 2001).

Inside, a corporation will face many problems, either internally or externally. However, sometimes the internal client –a worker - is to blame if any issue arises. To set an example, if we are not satisfied with a service provided by a company, we blame the employee and its behaviour, which we can define as non-acceptable comportment. Notwithstanding, there are many other reasons leading to poor customer service, such as lack of proper training, insufficient number of staff, long shifts, low payment rate, and not appropriate conditions to work, among other issues. Attribute errors to one individual are not correct. Our experiences in an environment, good or bad, involve different circumstances. Understanding it is not that simple once there are many factors to attribute, such as managerial, group, and structural context. (Buchanan and Huczynski, 1996).

Organisational behaviour is not the behaviour of an organisation; it is how individuals interact inside the corporative world. Corporations are made of people. Also, people have different cultures, political positions, and economic statuses. And each corporation has different job positions to offer, goods and services to provide, creating their own ambient and communities. It is essential to comprehend how organisational and social conditions affect someone's behaviour (Buchanan and Huczynski, 1996). To Buchanan and Huczynski (1996), the behaviour can be attributed to some factors. These factors can be context, individual, group, structural and managerial. To Allen and Meyer (1990), commitment is related to workers' behaviour also absence. The commitment is related to how an employee is emotionally connected to the

company. They can be firmly committed or the opposite; their low commitment can lead to absence and resignation because they may face unwanted conflicts (Gaziel, 2004).

Another factor that has a connection to behaviour in a workplace is communication. It can be the main factor for us to comprehend some organisational behaviour. Organisations need communication to work, hire, and training of employees, also to deal with conflicts.

As an essential part of our lives, communication is vital in different fields of our lives whenever there is human interaction. The exchange of goals, feelings, messages, ideas, and information in verbal, non-verbal, visual, and electronic forms of communication in the workplace and our life (Encarta, 1999). The information transmission and the mutual understanding between people can be defined as communication (Keyton, 2011). Constructing and maintaining relations in the workplace are primordial.

In the workplace, workers use their sources and form of information. Employees often get information from other employees that they consider trustworthy sources of information (Brennan, 1974). Gossip and distorted information is part of the communication system and the workplace environment, leading to conflicted situations.

With the rise of social media, communication has become simpler. However, it highlighted difficulties between virtual and face-to-face communication if we cannot distinguish between non-verbal and lack of communication while using digital media to communicate (Moser and Axtell, 2013). Also, according to Karin Moser and Carolyn Axtell (2013), the virtual workplace needs more clear communication than the traditional form, which requires more effort than the conventional workplace presential exchange of information.

Another essential part of communication is listening to enhance the way workers transmit information. In order to help to fill the gaps of unclear communication, it is necessary to build some skills such as active listening, working around criticism as a good tool, making intentions clear, using correct words with the right audience, and presuming people will take responsibility for their comments (Fourtune, 1994).

Like every other human being, workers need to express their feelings and thinking; thus, not expressing themselves is not a positive outcome for a company. The culture of each worker is

also important to define how they will interpret the others' information. On some occasions, employees use other methods to be able to communicate with their superiors and organisations. According to Brennan (1974), employees will search for competent government bodies such as Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)- in Ireland; they are responsible for assuring employment rights. Also, the unions provide all the assistance for workers, and they may utilise their representatives as a form to be heard. On other occasions, an employee of an organisation may change their behaviour by presenting a passive-aggressive attitude. To the author, denying, ignoring, and being rational all the time will show us how and where we fail while communicating. Thus, rationalising functionality and/or non-functionality compromises the performance and outcomes of a company (Brennan, 1974).

1.6.4 How conflicts impact employee's productivity

As considered to be inevitable and part of our nature, conflicts are a part of humans' interactions; therefore, they are present in social groups. Trying to find an end to them cannot be justified (Robbins and Judge, 2010). Disputes are based on individuals who "hold discrepant views or have interpersonal incompatibilities" (Jehn, 1995, p. 257). Also, there is diverged support on how conflicts such as process, relationship, and task conflicts can affect a group and worker's productivity (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003).

The traditional view of conflicts is directly related to violence, and negativity thus needs to be avoided (Robbins and Judge, 2010). Also, it has a simplistic analysis of organisational groups and behaviours inside an organisation and presumes that all conflicts are dysfunctional, reinforcing the downsize of disputes (Hamm-Kerwin and Doherty, 2010). In addition, just identifying the roots of a battle would determine the end of a conflict and its adverse effects. In order to diminish conflict and try to find the best solution to it, it is crucial to provide employees with conflict management strategies (Robbins and Judge, 2009).

Jehn (1992) has an interactionist approach, and she states that conflicts are not good or bad; it all depends on the type, outcomes, and impact of disputes on the corporative world. Each group of individuals will face a conflict, and each row will have a different result and influence.

As mentioned before, task and relationship conflicts may lead to a not positive outcome. Cognition can impact how employees will behave and produce in the workplace. Also, cognitive loads interfere with creativity and thoughts and then influence a negative production of an employee (Probst, 1998).

However, a positive impact and the enhancement of productivity and creativity are possible for workers facing conflicts. The use of creativity to resolve disputes in the workplace is essential to reach a win-win outcome in an argument, instead of using the compromise resolution to cease conflicts, which aims to narrow the differences and find the most acceptable solution.

Another alternative is that collaboration opens a path to a win-win resolution. This approach will generate new options, and such ideas and opportunities are not biased and have no relation to the participants; thus, they have more to win than lose.

The interested-based procedure has been utilised for a long time to prevent, avoid, or find solutions to disputes. It allows the disputants to think outside the box, diminish polarised positions, and create alternatives to a battle (Landau, 2001). Creative solutions to conflicts enhance ideas and connections, consequently increasing productivity in the corporate world.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

2. Introduction

Research can be defined as systematic inquiries or investigations that gather, evaluate, study, and interpret information or data. Comprehending, understanding, predicting, describing, and controlling is "an educational or psychological phenomenon or to empowering individuals in such contexts" (Mertens, 2005, p.2). It goes further; in research, it is required to study and analyse, not only describe. We search for explanations, make predictions, and build relations among subjects, comparisons, standards, and theories when doing research (Philips and Pugh, 2015, p.47). To Wisker (2012):

Research is the fundamental human learning activity involving enquiry, problem solving, diversity, flexibility and decision-making. It enables the development of creative thinking, problem-solving strategies and abilities, which in turn help others to approach everyday life as well as professional, local, national and international questions (Wisker, 2012, p.5)

Also, research will gather hypotheses, suppositions, and beliefs that can be numbered and categorised. It can be classified according to how our background and knowledge interfere and influence our interpretation, the strategies utilised, philosophical and social concepts or values, bias, and intuition. In other words, epistemological, ontological, axiological, or methodological (Sauders et al. 2009). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), "ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions; these, in turn, give rise to methodological considerations; and these, in turn, give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007, p.5).

The research aim is "to establish relationships between or among constructs that describe or explain a phenomenon by going beyond the local event and trying to connect it with similar events" (Mertens, 2005, p.2).

Also, part of the research field, research methodology, and method are interchangeable for some authors and different subjects to others. To Sauders et al. (2009), the method is related to phases, stages, steps, or processes followed for a researcher to acquire and study the information and

data that will give base and access to more details during an investigation. The methodology correlates to theory, ideology, or idea of how the research subject will be addressed.

The present research method and methodology objective contribute to a delineating guide of the initial research and clarifying how it will be conducted.

2.1 Research Approach

The research approach for this dissertation was the qualitative and quantitative approach, which means a mixed or integrated system. The mixed or integrated method is the quantitative and qualitative blended. Combining both methods will provide the adequate structure to investigate, gather and study the data collected to answer the research question.

Described as a third methodological approach (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003), the mixed method once was criticised for highlighting the difference between the two traditional research-oriented methods. To Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 14), quantitative and qualitative systems should not be integrated or joined. However, Creswell, Gutmann, and Hanson (2003) define the approach as:

A mixed-methods study involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research (Creswell, Gutmann, and Hanson., 2003, p. 212).

The multimethod system might include several studies related to a qualitative and quantitative approach, but it does not always involve studying both methods. Also, according to Creswell et al., there are four types of mixed methods: Triangulation Designs, Embedded Designs, explanatory designs, and exploratory designs (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011).

For more accurate results and fill in the gaps found during the investigation of the main subject, quantitative and qualitative research combined will bring a new perspective to the research result and highlight the main focus of the final analysis. Therefore, know if employees know how to manage conflicts and if they have the ability to deal with disputes that may arise in their work environment, they will be able to solve them once they have the proper training to deal with conflicted situations.

2.2 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy is the structure that will show the method of how an experiment or investigation should be analysed according to the notions about facts and kind of knowledge (Collis and Hussey, 2014). Positivism and Interpretivism are the predominant forms of philosophical research. These primary forms illustrate the different states in that we basically see the world that surrounds us.

According to positivism, the real world or reality exists. They do not depend on us for that; thus, researchers will examine and study reality more objectively, which means without bias. Its root is based on natural sciences, and it is concentrated on hypothesis tests and discovering a logical proof of facts that originated from the analytical investigation (Collis and Hussey, 2014).

On the contrary, Interpretivism interprets reality more subjectively; in this research philosophy approach, our perceptions and views about the truth will outline the research (Collis and Hussey, 2014). In Interpretivism, researchers will not be totally detached from their beliefs and values. Therefore, the form they collect, investigate and study their data will be appraised. According to Bryman (2008), four main methods of Interpretivism exist Hermeneutics, Verstehen, Symbolic interactionism, and Phenomenology.

Hermeneutics is associated with a profound interpretation and comprehension of literature and/or documents (Heidegger, 1962). Whereas Verstehen explores the perception and understanding of participants of a study's opinion, then it is possible to comprehend their beliefs, views, and behaviour (Weber, 1947).

Symbolic interactionism will focus on people's behaviour, social interactions, and how people adapt to different situation and their perceptions about an experience (Blumer, 1969). The fourth approach is phenomenology, which is based on the understanding and explanation of someone's experiences- it is rooted in philosophical predictions (Wilson, 2015).

As well as the mixed paradigm for research, post-positivism will be the equivalence between interpretivism and positivism methods. The investigation is focused on the matter in question or issue, which will consider the experiences and opinions of the majority. Thus, the obtained result will reflect the significant part opinions, and such a result is the acceptable result (Wildemuth,

1993; Fischer, 1998; Phillips and Burbules, 2000). The new paradigm is rooted in the ideas of researchers who combined positivism and Interpretivism (Petter and Gallivan, 2004; DeLucca, Gallivan, and Kock, 2008).

Therefore, this dissertation research is based on the post-positivism methodology, once it is the balance between positivist and interpretive approaches. The data analysis will be based on the vast majority opinion and points of view on how to better solve and deal with conflicts in their workplace.

2.4 Research Design and Methods

The dissertation research method is defined by the process in which the collection and interpretation of data will provide an accurate result for the research question.

How to answer the research question settled by the researcher is the aim of this study.

The strategy adopted in this research is the collection of a large number of books, literature, and references, which will give the structure to corroborate and validate the fact that by providing the appropriate training and tools to their employees, companies may diminish internal and external disputes. However, such investigation will be extended to all company employees, not focusing only on the executive department.

With the intention to obtain more information throughout the research, a questionnaire was created. The questionnaire objective is to understand an employee's level of knowledge and their understanding of conflict, how to deal with and if empowered to solve it, moreover, if their work environment would transform into a better place to work, and if disputes would be resolved lessened.

A descriptive design will be taken as an approach for this research. The purpose of the descriptive design is to describe a phenomenon, episodes, and circumstances faced by individuals. The objective is to reach accurate results without any intervention. As the subject of the study is workplace dispute, the descriptive approach will provide the characteristics of individuals and organisations when involved in conflicts and highlight the variances reached in the data collection.

CHAPTER 3: PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

3. Introduction

In this chapter, the collected data will be presented. The strategy adopted to obtain and provide more information that would help with the investigation of the current research topic was a survey/ questionnaire.

The questionnaire was developed after a profound study of conflicts, conflict in the workplace and conflict resolution. The survey was designed to be replied to through the web and email; the participants answered an online survey.

Electronic surveys can be divided into surveys based on the web, email surveys or point-of-contact surveys. However, in literature, these different approaches are treated interchangeably (Simsek and Veiga, 2000; Stanton, 1998). In electronic surveys, the computer is the main character, and it is responsible for delivering and collecting data from the participants. Also, Schaefer and Dillman (1998) state that the term mixed-mode survey is used to explain questionnaires and surveys that provide different opportunities to respond to it. The use of e-surveys has increased, and their format is easy to be comprehended by the participants. And additionally, the researcher is benefited from the feasibility of this method.

3.1 An Overview of the Data Collection

One hundred fifty-four participants answered the presented questionnaire. All participants answered through the web, which configures an online survey.

1. They identify as 59.7% female (92 people) and 40.3% male (62 people).

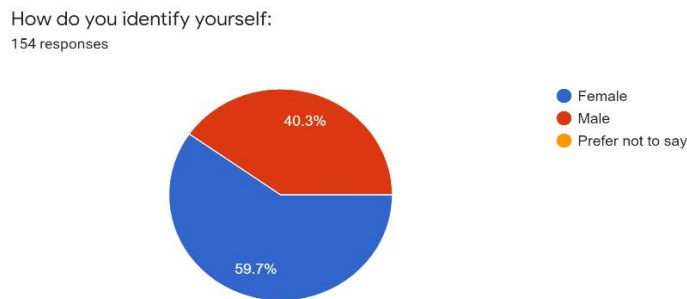


Figure 3

2. Percentage of age:

39.2% (60 pp) 26-33 yo.

35.9% (55 pp) 34-41 yo.

11.1% (17 pp) 18-25 yo.

9.8% (15 pp) 42-49 yo.

3.9% (6 pp) over 50 yo.

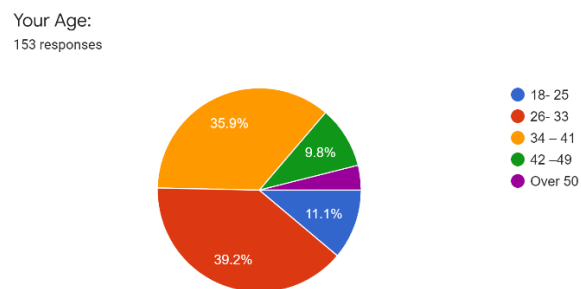


Figure 4

3. People who know what “interpersonal conflict” is:

Yes 73.2% (112 pp) – No 26.8% (41 pp)

Do you know what is interpersonal conflict?
153 responses

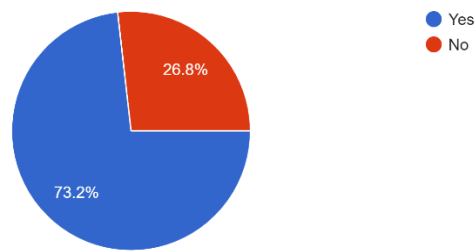


Figure 5

4. When asked what "interpersonal conflict" is, people answered:

Most people said in the survey that it is any sort of conflict or disagreement between two or more people. Some added that it takes place at work. Two people stated that "interpersonal conflict" is an internal conflict that a person might have. A few others simply answered by saying that they have no idea of what "interpersonal conflict" means/stands for.

5. When asked about what causes "interpersonal conflicts":

44.4% (68 pp) lack of communication

32% (49 pp) different interests and goals

15% (23 pp) personality clash

5.2% (8 pp) lack of trust

3.3% (5 pp) other

In your opinion, what is the main cause of interpersonal conflicts?
153 responses

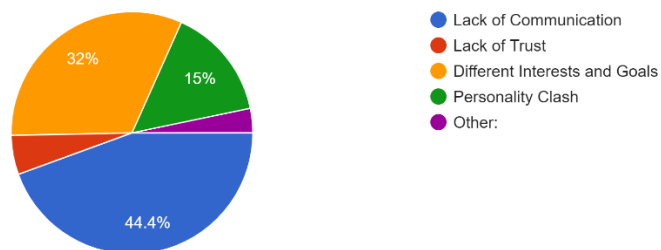


Figure 6

6. When asked if they know how to identify “interpersonal conflict”:

66.2% (100 pp) - YES / 33.8% (51 pp) – NO

Do you know how to identify interpersonal conflict?
151 responses

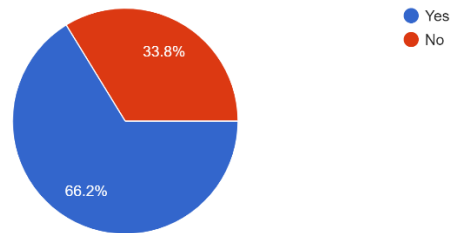


Figure 7

7. When asked about the main cause for “interpersonal conflict” at a workplace:

34.6% (53 pp) – Fact conflict: divergent opinions about the same topic

28.1% (43 pp) – Ego conflict

22.9% (35 pp) - Policy conflict: different approach for a situation

8.5% (13 pp) – Value conflict

5.9% (9 pp) – Pseudo conflict: have the same objectives but cannot realise it

In your workplace, what is the main reason for interpersonal conflicts?
153 responses

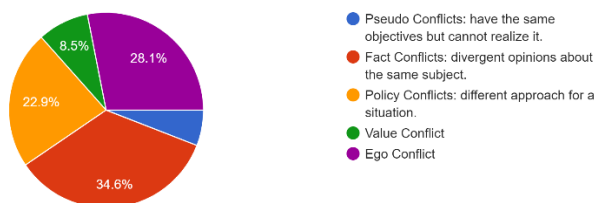


Figure 8

8. When asked if they had ever been involved in a conflict in their workplace:

73% (113 pp) YES / 26.1% (40 pp) NO

Have you ever been involved in a conflict in your workplace?
153 responses

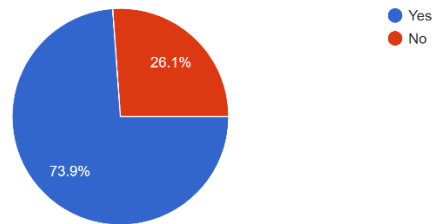


Figure 9

9. When asked how often they witness conflict at their workplace:

45.1% (69 pp) – Occasionally

24.8% (38 pp) – Rarely

24.8% (38 pp) – Frequently

3.3% (5 pp) – Always

2% (3 pp) – Never

How often do you witness conflicts in your workplace:
153 responses

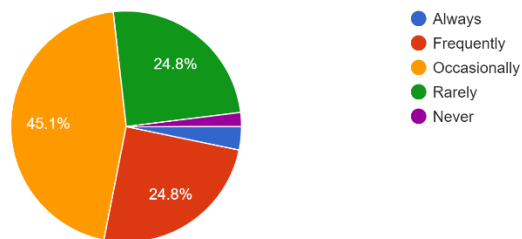


Figure 10

10. When asked if they had ever witnessed a colleague suffering:

28% (35 pp) – Bullying

27.2% (34 pp) – All above

12.8% (16 pp) – Harassment

10.4% (13 pp) – Gender discrimination

7.2% (9 pp) – Cultural discrimination

4% (5 pp) – Xenophobia

4% (5pp) – Racism

3.2% (4 pp) – Religious discrimination

1.6% (2 pp) – Sexual Harassment

1.6% (2 pp) – Homophobia

In your workplace have you witnessed a fellow employee suffering:
125 responses

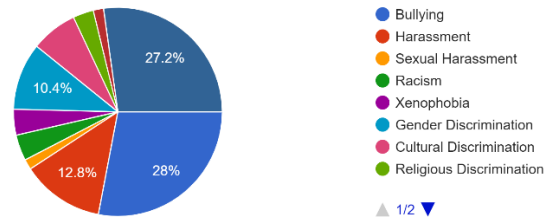


Figure 11

In your workplace have you witnessed a fellow employee suffering:
125 responses

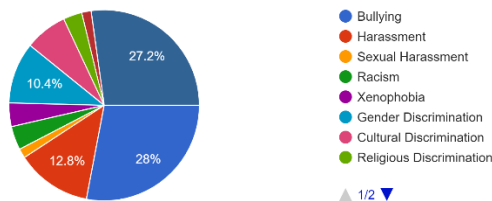


Figure 12

11. When asked if they had witnessed any other types of violence, people said:

More than one person mentioned physical violence, and others just stated once again some – or even all – the types mentioned above. Few participants described political divergences as a factor that led to violence in the workplace. One, however, mentioned language discrimination.

12. When facing conflicts at work:

42.9% - (66 pp) report to a superior

29.9% - (46 pp) try to solve on their own

13% - (20 pp) report to Human Resources

9.7% - (15 pp) do not report

And the rest (1 person each) offered other solutions, but most of them sounded very much like one or other of the given options.

When facing conflicts at work, you:
154 responses

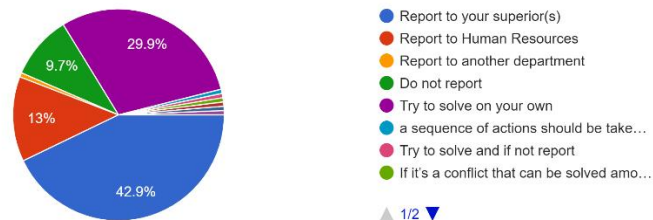


Figure 13

13. When involved in a conflict, the form of participants manage conflict is:

53.6% (82 pp) – Analyse the causes and workout on a solution favourable for the parties

26.8% (41 pp) – Avoid conflict/prefer not to get involved

9.8% (15 pp) – Stand for their own interest, and the conflict is just solved if you win the dispute

5.9% (9 pp) – Analyse the issues and work to find a solution favourable to a third party

3.9% (6 pp) – Other

When involved in a conflict in your workplace, you:
153 responses

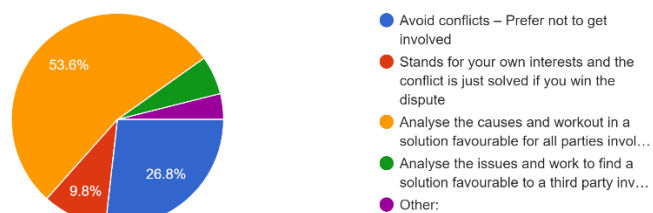


Figure 14

14. If the participants Have ever needed to solve a conflict/disagreement in their workplace:

74.7% (115 pp) – YES

25.3% (39 pp) – NO

Have you ever needed to solve a conflict/disagreement in your workplace?
154 responses

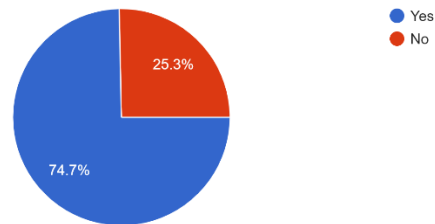


Figure 15

15. This question is linked with the question before. Therefore, the aim is to know if participants who ever need to solve a dispute did it successfully or not:

72.9% (94 pp) – YES

27.1% (35 pp) – NO

If yes, did you succeed in finding a solution?
129 responses

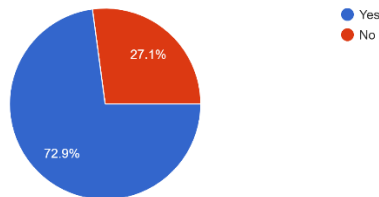


Figure 16

16. This question was to know if good communication can be used as a tool to avoid and solve a conflict:

64.7% (99 pp) – Strongly agree

30.1% (46 pp) - Agree

4.6% (7 pp) - Neutral

0.7% (1 pp) – Disagree

0% - Strongly disagree

Is good communication a tool to avoid and solve conflicts?
153 responses

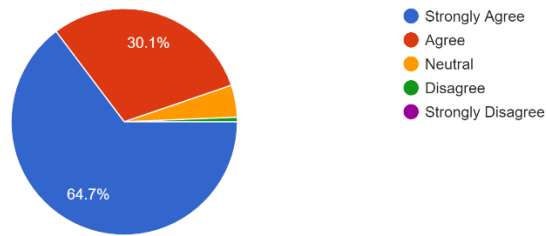


Figure 17

17. Participants were questioned if they knew the meaning of active listening:

80.4% (123) – YES

19.6% (30) – NO

Do you know what active listening stands for?
153 responses

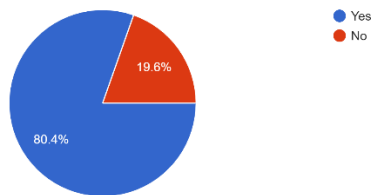


Figure 18

18. In case they know what active listening stands for if active listening provides better communication at work:

89.6% (121) - YES

10.4% (14) – NO

If yes, would active listening enhance communication in your workplace?
135 responses

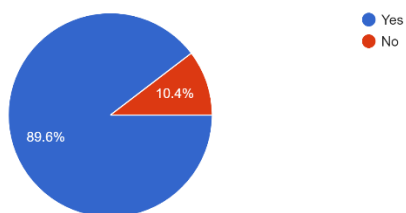


Figure 19

19. This question aims to know if participants have ever been trained to deal with conflict in their jobs:

60.3% (91) - YES

39.7% (60) – NO

Have you ever been trained to deal with conflicts in your workplace?
151 responses

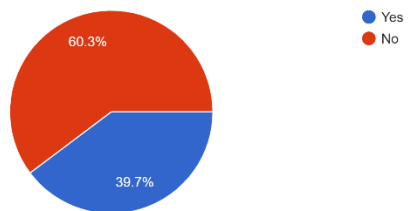


Figure 20

20. The objective of this question is to know from the participant's point of view how important it is to be trained to deal with conflict in their workplace:

16.6% (25 pp) - Strongly disagree

0.7% (1 pp) - Disagree

5.3% (8 pp) - Neutral

31.8% (48 pp) - Agree

45.7% (69 pp) - Strongly agree

Being trained to deal with conflicts in the workplace is important?
151 responses

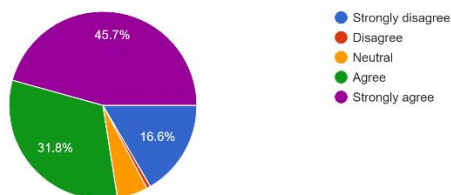


Figure 21

21. The questioning is to identify if being empowered would improve the participants' work environment:

43.4% (66 pp) - agree

40.8% (62 pp) - strongly agree

11.8% (18 pp) - neutral

2.6% (4 pp) - disagree

1.3% (2 pp) - strongly disagree

Being empowered in your work would provide a better work environment?
152 responses

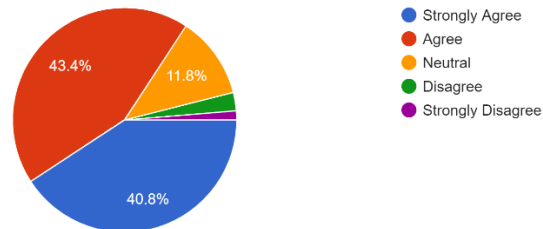


Figure 22

22. Also, it is crucial to question participants if empowerment would avoid conflicts:

42.8% - agree

26.3% - neutral

24.3% - strongly agree

4.6% - disagree

2% - strongly disagree

Would the empowerment of employees avoid internal and external conflicts in your workplace?
152 responses

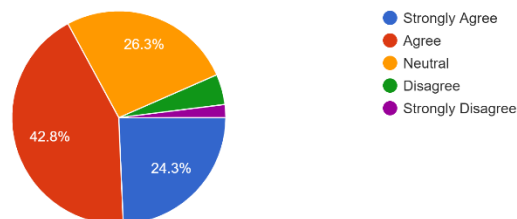


Figure 23

23. In this question, it is essential to realise if the empowerment could diminish conflict in the workplace:

76.8% YES

23.2% NO

Empowering employees would diminish the conflicts in your workplace?
151 responses

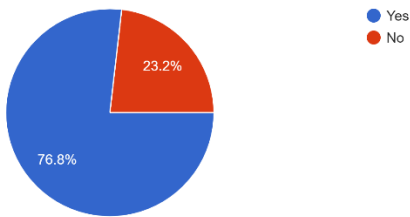


Figure 24

24. Questioning if the participants know the difference between empowering and delegating is essential at this stage of the questionnaire:

78.8% YES

21.2% NO

Do you know the difference between empowering and delegate?
151 responses

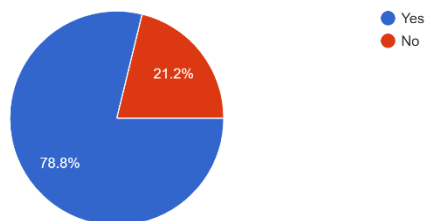


Figure 25

25. And to complete this survey, it is essential to know if, by being empowered, participants could and would resolve disputes in their work easier and faster:

50.3% YES

48.4% MAYBE

1.3% NO

Being empowered would help you to deal with problems at your workplace and solve them in a faster and easier manner?
153 responses

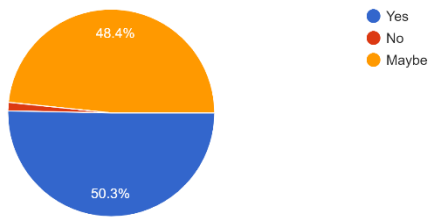


Figure 26

3.2 Presentation of the Collected Data

As previously mentioned in this dissertation, the whole research process was mixed qualitative and quantitative, done through an online questionnaire using the Google Forms tool. From it, the data was collected.

This sort of research, which has become rather popular in recent years, enabled the researcher to acquire the necessary knowledge in terms of data, information, and percentage to carry on with the development of this dissertation. Also, this type of research, which is made entirely remotely, allows the surveyed individuals to answer with no feeling of judgment. It naturally leads them to respond more freely and sincerely. In this survey format, the researcher has no direct contact with the participants. Thus, it complies with ethical considerations, and such concerns are also available on the cover page of the research questionnaire.

With twenty-five (25) questions, through answers as simple as “yes” or “no” but also through other questions, slightly more complex and with different alternatives, the interviewed individuals responded about the subjects of “Conflicts at the workplace” and “Empowerment of employees”. In addition, the fourth and eleven were designed for the participants to give their statements and opinion in accordance with their knowledge of the researched subject.

Furthermore, the complete questionnaire, the consent form for the survey, and the necessary information on the way that the presented study was conducted will be found in Appendix A and B.

The targeted surveyed are professionals from all sorts of backgrounds and of different ages who experienced situations that are relevant to the survey, the research, and the dissertation itself, such as witnessing conflicts based on all sorts of behaviour, being themselves directly involved or not in disputes and also having to deal with the mentioned conflicts. All of that will be seen in a more specific way in the description of the survey below.

The first part of the questionnaire focused on gathering information about participants' awareness of conflict and conflict in the workplace. The survey asked about participants' personal information, such as gender and age. Then in this block, the primary focus is to know their knowledge about interpersonal conflicts.

The results have shown that one hundred fifty-four people were questioned, being 59.7% female (92 people) and 40.3% male (62 people), with the ages predominantly around the late twenties and early thirties (39.2% of them). Most of the interviewees (73.2%) stated that they knew what "interpersonal conflict" meant and also that they had to be involved themselves (72%).

The second part of the research focuses on investigating workplace conflicts. That means if the participants had already been involved in disputes and the frequency they witness and/or are involved in disputes, how they deal with conflicts, and if they know how to solve them.

When involved in a conflict, it is necessary to investigate the leading causes in the organisations they work for. Thus, the participants also elected fact conflict and ego conflict (34.6% and 28.1%, respectively) as the major reasons that lead to interpersonal conflict in workplaces.

When asked how often they witnessed interpersonal conflict in their workplaces, a vast majority (45% of the interviewees) answered that they had seen it happen "occasionally". In addition, among the options given, bullying (28%) and all above (27.2%) – which included options such as harassment, gender and cultural discrimination, xenophobia and racism, etc. - topped the list. Filling the option of "other", many named "political disagreement/discrimination" as reasons for many of the conflicts they had witnessed. Also, it is vital to highlight that more than one person

mentioned physical violence, and others just stated once again some – or even all – the types mentioned above. One, however, mentioned language discrimination.

When asked about how they deal with conflict at work, 42.9% said they opt to report to a superior, and 29.9% said that they try to solve it themselves. Other options, such as reporting to Human Resources, scored very low. Nevertheless, the rest (1 person each) offered different solutions, but most of them sounded very much like one or other of the given options.

When they were asked how they dealt with conflict once directly involved in it, 53.6% responded that they analysed the situation to solve it in order to reach an agreement that would benefit both quarrelling parties. On the other hand, 26.8% of the interviewed people said that they would rather avoid conflict instead of get involved in it.

Of the 74.7% of those who confirmed that they had to solve a conflict at work, 72.9% affirmed that they actually managed to solve it, whereas a small number of them (27.1%) said that they failed in solving the conflict.

Considered by the researcher as the third block of the survey, the questions were designed to analyse participants' knowledge about communication and how it may or may not influence disputes in the workplace.

Then, the interviewees were asked if good communication could help solve conflicts, and the positive response was massive, with 64.7% saying they strongly agreed with it and 30.1% agreeing. Only 0.7% of them disagreed, and no one went so far as to disagree strongly.

Also associated with communication as a subject of investigation, the following question was related to “active listening”, in which most people (80.4%) replied that they knew what it meant. Still, in the same subject, 89.6% of the people showed they believed that “active listening” could improve communication within their workplaces.

The last block of questions in the survey, or the fourth block, is crucial for this dissertation once it focuses on the central part of the research and will dictate the investigation results and provide

the answer to the research question. The objective of these questions is to gather complementary data regarding conflict resolution and the empowerment of employees.

Although most participants in the last part of the questionnaire believed that communication is a crucial tool to avoid and or solve conflicts, the vast majority of 60.3% said they had received no training in dealing with disputes. What is interesting is that 45.7% strongly agreed, and 16.6% agreed that good training could help solve conflicts.

In the sphere of the training and the subsequent empowerment that comes from it, 43.4% and 40.8% agreed and strongly agreed that empowerment would improve the working environment. Also, the majority (42.8%) stated that empowerment could avoid conflicts; besides, within huge numbers (76.8%) said they believe empowerment diminishes conflicts.

At last, people were also questioned if they knew the difference between being empowered and being delegated to deal with something such as conflict since this is a crucial topic in the development of the relationship between people in a healthy workplace, and 78.8% said yes.

To conclude, the twenty-fifth questions were about the possibility of empowerment helping people to deal with conflict in their respective workplaces, and people were somewhat optimistic over it since their numbers pointed to 50.3% saying "yes" and 40.4% answering "maybe", and only 1.3% showing their disbelief and answering "no".

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS/FINDINGS

In this presented dissertation, the method adopted by the researcher mix both qualitative and quantitative. The mixed-method approach to analysing collected data enhances the investigation of the studies and extends their scope.

Quantitative data is the gathering o quantifiable information, and its analysis may be done through a mathematical approach; the intention is to measure the number obtained through the survey. On the other hand, the qualitative approach to collecting and analysing data allows the in-depth investigation of individuals' behaviours, feelings, and motives, for example. It will be based on experiences and interactions (Pope, 2002).

Therefore, to do a more complete analysis of data utilises a combined qualitative and quantitative approach; it is the combination of meaning and the structure (Bryman and Burgess, 1994) in all stages of the present research; thus, the mixed method will promote a better understanding and insights of how the data collected will be elucidated and addressed.

4.1 Conflict: Employees' views and perceptions about interpersonal conflicts

Most of the people that interacted with the research are in their late 20s and early 30s, which makes it clear they are halfway through their careers; they are neither at the beginning of it (teens – early 20s) nor towards the end (40s and 50s). Those people offer an interesting insight with their answers.

The initial questions were related to interpersonal conflicts. The aim was to investigate if people who participated in the survey knew what interpersonal conflict stands for and how they would define it. Thus, they knew how to identify interpersonal conflicts and the reasons that would lead to such disputes.

A significant part of the participants that means 73.2% (seventy-three point two per cent) stated that they knew the meaning of interpersonal conflicts and such conflict was linked to relationships. The vast majority described interpersonal conflict as a conflict between two or even more people who have divergent points of view on a subject; also no clear communication among people, different interests or a bill that needs to be paid. Their opinion about

interpersonal conflicts is related to their workplace or personal lives. As interpersonal conflicts are examples of relationship conflicts (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003), even if not related just to the workplace, most people have the knowledge about these conflicts. In contrast, few people attribute such conflict to internal conflicts and doubts associated with making decisions and how they would affect their lives.

Those who associate interpersonal conflicts with the workplace stated that they could be attributed to a company's mission, disagreement in the workplace, co-workers' disputes or a task that needs to be done.

Identifying conflicts is essential to understanding how to address them when necessary. Comprehending how we manage them is vital because it will determine how much could and would affect our relationships – either positively or negatively.

A high number of participants have shown that they know how to identify interpersonal conflicts, and little less than half of the participants (44.4%) stated that poor communication is the leading cause of the conflicts in their workplace- followed by the difference of interest and objectives (32%) as the second main reason.

Interpersonal conflicts can be divided into pseudo, simple or fact, policy, value, and ego conflicts. Simple or fact conflicts can be defined as disputes that arise from a disagreement over a piece of information (Verderber and MacGeorge, 2016); in other words, this conflict happens when co-workers disagree about a subject or given information. In the survey, 34.6% of the participants have chosen fact conflicts as the main reason for interpersonal conflicts in the workplace. The second reason for interpersonal conflict in organisations is ego conflict (28.1%). The third reason determined by the participants was the policy conflict- a different approach to a task or issue.

Therefore, the questionnaire results have shown that poor communication is the initial cause of conflicts in the workplace, and because of the lack of it, conflicts may arise. However, identifying the communication as one of the leading causes is the first step for the employees to recognise interpersonal disputes and try to resolve them by enhancing communication among their colleagues.

4.2 Employees and Organisations Behave Towards Conflicts

Many authors have stated that conflicts are part of our lives and that a life without conflicts it would be unimaginable. One of the survey questions aimed to realise if participants have ever been involved or faced a conflict. A large percentage of contributors – 73.9%- answered that they were directly involved in a conflict in their workplace.

Conflicts inside organisations can be divided into the most common conflicts: interpersonal, intrapersonal, intragroup, and intergroup. They are disputes that may happen between two people in a workplace (interpersonal), in a group of co-workers (intragroup) or between two different groups (intergroup) (Madalina,2015). Moreover, individuals facing internal dilemmas, values and emotions lead to intrapersonal conflicts. All different types of disputes in a workplace have different roots and will affect employees' performances.

Although a large number of people answered that they were involved in conflicts in their work environment, the opposite happened when questioned about the frequency that they testify a disagreement in their workplace. Interestingly, and in accordance with the percentages, the number of conflicts witnessed by the same people is relatively small in terms of frequency. A little more than forty-five per cent - 45.1%- of the participant answered that they witness disagreements, arguments, and disputes in their workplace every now and then.

Another interesting finding is that the results have also shown that 24.8% (twenty-four pint eight per cent) regularly witnessed conflicts, and the same percentage seldom saw a workplace dispute. The options always and never have a low rate, not even reaching 5.3% together.

Even occasionally witnessing conflicts in their work ambient, once they see a divergence, results have shown that bullying is the most common, followed by all given options that included: harassment, sexual harassment, gender, culture and religious discrimination, and racism, among others. In addition, political divergences, misogyny, sexism, and economic, social and age discrimination were mentioned as other factors that lead to heavy arguments or violence- either

verbal or physical. This part of the research outcome has provided an essential view of the leading types of conflicts faced and witnessed by employees.

When we face a conflict on some occasions, more than just acknowledging it is necessary to be aware of how we deal with it and where to report it if necessary- depending on the nature of the conflict, it is essential to be aware of it your rights as employees. In the survey, almost 43% of participants stated that they would rather report an issue/a conflict to a superior to solve it by themselves (29.9%) or ignore it (9.7%). Only 13% of participants would report to human resources. This presents another relevant part of the research once the human resource department once this department is technically responsible for dealing with employee conflicts in the workplace, among other duties.

It is common to report issues to another department or superiors not to compromise your or someone else's work. In addition, report to leaders and/or human resources, for example. It is vital because conflicts may escalate and take a significant proportion leading to aggressions or other more severe types leading to dismissals.

As a significant part of the participants were involved in a dispute in their workplace, how we respond to a conflict is essential. It shows how we deal with problems either personally or in our work environment.

Some individuals (26.8%) prefer to avoid conflicts, and the lack of dialogue or gathering more information about an issue may be jeopardised. According to the questionnaire, 53.6% of the people who answered the survey said they would analyse the causes of the conflicts and try to find a favourable solution for everyone involved in a conflict. That reveals that people usually opt for an integrative approach to managing conflicts in the workplace.

Integrating or compromising is a method of managing conflict in which the focus is to make those who are involved in a conflict come up with a solution that suits all parties. The aim is to maintain a good relationship among opponents, and it is necessary to parties to cede or concede part of their goals to reach the best agreement. Such an approach is the most suitable for dealing with social conflicts (Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993).

Other important questions about conflicts had the objective of finding out if participants as employees needed to solve disagreements, arguments, divergences, or any other type of workplace conflict. And if they have found a solution or solutions. In both questions, more than seventy per cent (70%) of the participants stated that they needed to solve conflicts, and they succeeded in it.

Almost seventy-five per cent -74,7%- of the answers revealed that employees at least once manage conflicts in their workplace. It is an important result compared with the numbers related to their approach to disputes. Also, almost 73% that find solutions to the conflicts have adopted a strategy of either avoiding, compromising, collaborating, avoiding, or accommodating. This reveals that, even without proper training, employees use their skills and knowledge to bargain in order to deal with conflicts and solve them.

4.3 Conflict and Communications

Communication is vital to human interactions. According to Folger, Poole and Stutman (2012), “every message conveys not only substantive content but also information about the relationship of the speaker and hearer” (Folger, Poole and Stutman, 2012, p.32)¹². The way we express ourselves, the tone of voice, the words that we choose, our body language, and the clothes we wear all send messages of what we want to express and are interpreted by the receiver. Communication can be either verbal or non-verbal, and they determine the course of our present and future relations. Especially inside organisations, interactions are fundamental—also, as avoidance and rising misunderstandings among individuals.

The vast majority have concluded that lack of communication significantly influences conflicts in the workplace. This conclusion comes attached to the high percentages of answers- 64,7% have strongly agreed, and 30.1% have agreed- that stand for more communication at workplaces.

The results have shown that people firmly believe that a lack of communication causes most issues in the workplace. Additionally, such problems can be resolved/avoided through improved communication (Singleton et al., 2011). In organisational disputes, a slight improvement in

¹² Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson, 1997 cited on Folger, J., Poole, M. and Stutman, R., 2013. *Working Through Conflict - Strategies For Relationships, Groups, and Organizations*. 7th ed. New Jersey: Pearson, p.32.

communication is essential once it may change relations among employees and corporations (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2005).

Another essential part of communication is active listening. Created by Carl Rogers and Richard E. Farson (1957), active listening is a technique to deal with issues that may daily rise in our works. It consists of the increasement in understanding or empathy toward the speaker. This means listening carefully and comprehending the speaker, and replying in careful form – reassuring that what is being stated by the speaker is being understood by the listener. It is a skill developed, and it shows how it is essential for the listener to comprehend the speaker's perceptions of the world and their background.

In the research questionnaire, 80.4% of participants declared to be familiar with the definition of active listening, and 89.6% stated that active listening would be a determinant factor in enhancing communication in their workplace. Active listening plays a vital role in promoting changes in individuals. Furthermore, group members may listen more actively to one another; thus, the likelihood of argument and criticism is lessened.

4.4 The Empowerment and Workplace Dispute Resolution

The last questions in the survey were directed to discover the employees' views of acquiring knowledge on how to manage and deal with conflicts in the workplace and how being empowered would change the conflict scenario in an organisation.

Almost eighty per cent (80%) of the participants answered that they strongly agree (45.7%) or agree (31.8%) that being trained to manage conflict in their jobs is crucial. That shows how vital conflict resolution is in all spheres of our lives, especially in the workplace.

Despite this practice of reporting, most people believe that being empowered at work would actually improve the work environment and help solve problems/conflicts. Among those who answered that they agree and strongly agree, reaching together almost eighty-five per cent (85%) of total the answers, stated that a better work ambient can be provided with the empowerment of the employees. The result reveals the importance of managing conflicts in the workplace by the employees. Also, more than seventy-five per cent – 76.8% – agree that the empowerment of workers would diminish conflict in their work environment. Hence, it also shows how

empowerment is essential. By being empowered, a worker has the autonomy to deal with conflict directly without the need to report it every time.

Power may be associated with the capacity to make and do things in a different or particular manner. In the workplace, employee empowerment is a tool to enhance an employee's job performance to obtain better management and results for an organisation (Seibert et al., 2004; Menon, 2001; Bowen and Lawler, 1992).

The empowerment of workers permits workers to take the initiative to manage tasks or disagreements and make the best decisions according to them. On the other hand, delegation is associated with allowing an employee to be in charge of tasks and replace their superiors. By delegating specific tasks given to employees by their managers, the executive department expects them to conclude the job. Based on their work experience, almost eighty per cent -78.8%- of the workers are aware of the difference between delegating and empowering. Such acknowledgement is crucial to differentiate when employees need to delegate a task or a conflict or have received the proper training to manage them.

Thus, once empowered, workers tend to take more action concerning disputes. Then, when directly involved in a conflict, most people apparently take a more direct approach towards it in trying to solve it instead of ignoring the issue or trying to leave it to someone else.

All in all, most answers, nearly seventy per cent (70%), were positive towards the management and solution of conflicts at workplaces which might be aligned with some positive reflection on how people deal with conflicts/issues on a daily basis. Only 6.6% disagreed with the fact that employee empowerment would avoid organisational conflicts.

The last and one of the most important questions to determine the course of this dissertation have shown that ninety-eight point seven per cent (98.7%) of the participants think that being empowered issues and conflicts in their workplace could be or maybe would be solved faster and in an easier way. That shows that employees' empowerment is essential to organisations.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This dissertation research aim was to understand the reasons that lead to conflicts in the workplace and challenges faced by employees. Also, how workers could resolve problems if they were aware of the workplace nature of disputes and if they have received adequate training to deal with them. Furthermore, discover how workers resolve issues, conflicts and arguments better once they are the ones who usually face customers and clients directly.

Hence, empowerment is an essential tool to manage and resolve conflicts, and by empowering their employees' organisations may diminish and avoid disputes escalating. The organisational ambient becomes a better place for workers to develop their jobs.

5. A critical appraisal of how employees can manage conflict better

5.1 Managing conflicts in organisations

In our globalised world, we are constantly facing social, economic, and technological changes. Such changes affect our lives and organisations because changes bring uncertainty. These changes and uncertainties may lead to conflicts.

In the workplace, disputes may arise from the lack of communication; it can be among groups, between two individuals, or between organisations. Also, the different points of view and approaches on how a project, a job, or a task should be executed (Tjosvold, 2008; Wright et al., 2017).

In the workplace, the conflict also has a connection with anger- it is normal for people to be angry at their work. Daily, co-workers, colleagues, managers, supervisors, team leaders, and customers are mad at each other, disappointed, or have an argument, which could escalate and become violent or not. Such hatred can affect a team's productivity and also teamwork. Abhorrence among employees will create a hostile, threatening, and not welcoming environment. This enhances the pressure in organisations to prevent legal procedures and conflicts- also, workers do not feel comfortable working in such a hostile atmosphere. It is necessary to learn and know how to deal with this sentiment in order to transform anger into a less aggressive emotion while working (McClure, 2000). Dealing with disputes that arise from different causes is still challenging for corporations.

Conflicts in a corporation and how a conflict is managed and resolved have influenced the efficaciousness of individuals, groups, and business productivity (Choi, 2013). Disputes, either escalated or not, have a positive side inside organisations and can increase healthy discussions, innovations, and the sharing of knowledge and decisions (Lu et al., 2011).

There are different strategies and approaches to handling, managing, and dealing with organisational conflicts. The conflict styles or methods may be determined by observing repeated and typical behaviour. It can also be influenced according to our deep or low concerns about relationships and personal goals – in other words, how someone involved in a conflict wants to collaborate to resolve it, how much individuals care about maintaining the relationship with the other participants of a dispute, and the assertiveness in reaching goals. Analysing conflicts is vital to comprehend individuals and their behaviours individually—moreover, each person and group's compartmental responses and attitudes.

According to Blake and Mouton (1964), forcing, withdrawing, smoothing, compromising, and confrontation are different ways of managing conflicts. In his studies, Thomas (1976) states that two measurements for conflict resolution existed: cooperativeness and assertiveness. Disputes management can also be described as integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising (Chan et al., 2014). Other authors, such as Thomas and Kilmann (2015) and Madalina (2016), will develop different styles of managing conflicts. Types include forcing or competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating.

The competing approach is aggressive or pushy, and there is no cooperation in such a style- it is a power-oriented style. An individual who deals with conflicts following the competition method is more concerned about himself and his own objectives. The person will do everything necessary to win a battle and utilise all his knowledge, position in a corporation, eristic, and sanctions. There is no room for losing, and the person will stand up for his/her's rights and beliefs.

Being the opposite of competing, there is no assertiveness in the accommodating method. However, cooperativeness exists. In this approach, individuals tend to forget and/or neglect their major worries and unsettlement to satisfy the other parties involved in a dispute. Such individuals are concerned about others' aims and objectives and seek approval. It is also related to receiving orders and obedience, even if they do not agree with the other party. It is the acceptance of the

opponents' points of view. Furthermore, how to please them- thus, they are sacrificing their wants and needs.

Unlike the accommodating, the avoiding approach is neither cooperative nor assertive nor pushy. Individuals who opt to avoid style shun conflicts. They will use diplomacy to avoid or escape from a dispute by deferring, adjourning, or even withdrawing from conflicted situations. It is hard to maintain a dialogue once these individuals refuse to do it, including gathering information that could help solve such a threatening situation.

The collaborating style uses cooperativeness and assertiveness/ competition to solve a problem in a collaborative form. People whose approach to solving conflicts is collaborating will not be going to avoid conflicts. Their goal is to work with their opponents and other parties involved in an argument to develop the best solution that entirely fulfils participants' interests. Such an approach will look deep into a dispute and underly the parties' wants and needs. Parties may learn from others' points of view and insights by analysing their divergences; consequently, the best solution for a disagreement may be created.

The compromising approach may be confused with the collaborating process. However, in the compromising style, the cooperativeness and assertiveness are milder or moderated. People involved in a conflict who try the compromising approach to solve their issues will try to reach an acceptable agreement for both parties. It is not going to avoid the problem. However, it will not do broad research and gather the most information about a dispute as collaboration. Furthermore, it may be considered an intermediate style if it is not as aggressive as competing and not giving in as the accommodating approach. This method is going to find a middle term to solve disputes. The parties involved are willing to make some concessions aiming to find a solution that suits all participants (Thomas-Kilmann, 2015).

The factor that must be considered is how different genders deal with disagreements-the conflict management can differ according to gender (Rahim and Katz 2019). For example, the competing and avoidance approaches are most related to the masculine and feminine gender and their method of solving conflicts (Brewer et al. 2002); but, in their studies, Caputo et al. (2018) did not find any relation between competing and avoiding styles, and genders. Also, people will choose

their conflict management style according to their cultural background, i.e., different nationalities tend to deal with conflicts in various forms (Van der Zee and Hofhuis, 2018).

5.2 Diminish conflict and enhance performance throughout empowerment

Employee empowerment is not a brand-new phenomenon. Historically, it started in the 1920s, when Frederick Winslow Taylor (1910), creator of the principles of scientific management, had divided jobs inside a company into several other minor duties and determined the most suitable method to perform each task. According to Taylor's approach, employees should not use their own initiative to perform and complete tasks. Be creative, take the initiative, and any new ideas would only be allowed by management.

This method was prosperous in enhancing organisational productivity; however, there was a worry about how workers' indifference would lead to disputes, turnovers, and increasing the number of absences. Such an approach was criticised by scholars. Also, employees should be self-sufficient and able to perform their best without the necessity to be supervised (Rose, 1978).

In the sixties, workers were able to have more control of their jobs and receive feedback related to their performance in the workplace (Buchanan, 1979). In the next decade, corporations will become more democratic, and employees will have the right to participate in structural and organisational decisions, but they must agree with managerial decisions.

Then in the 80s, the meaning of empowerment as we are familiar with nowadays appeared; Peter and Waterman (1982) changed organisational views and missions, and their publication was vital to the empowerment of employees. To the authors, "...any intelligent approach to organizing had to encompass, and treat as interdependent, at least seven variables: structure, strategy, people, management style, systems and procedures, guiding concepts and shared values (i.e. culture), as well as the present and hoped-for corporate strengths or skills." (Peter and Waterman 1982, p.10). Also, before being associated with organizations and management, empowerment was related to politics, feminism, and social sciences.

Empowerment can be defined as a process of incentivisation and the sentiment of being capable (Corsun and Enz, 1999). Empowering employees can improve their performance, and companies

would achieve the desirable figures related to complaints. The word empowerment can be defined as To Zimmerman, 2000:

Empowerment suggests a distinct approach for developing interventions and creating social change. It directs attention toward health, adaptation, competence, and natural helping systems. It includes the perspective that many social problems exist due to unequal distribution of, and access to, resources. (Zimmerman, 2000. p. 44)

In addition, empowerment can be divided into different perceptions such as meaning, self-determination, impact and competence (Thomas and Velthouse,1990). Such cognitions are associated with how workers as individuals are aware of their objectives as a team and the form in which they will successfully perform their activities using their knowledge and expertise (Thomas and Velthouse,1990). Furthermore, how an employee's initiative and sense of responsibility while performing tasks and how previous experience will influence strategies and outcomes in the work environment.

The corporative environment is essential that organisations and businesses successfully reach their objectives. As in our globalised world, every sector, from economic to technological, suffers from fast and constant changes, and organisations need to trace strategies to maintain the quality of the provided services. Thus, the empowerment of workers plays an important role in people's efficiency and production in their jobs. Workers will be more focused and committed (Spears, 2004), believe and invest in themselves (Page and Wong, 2000), and, as a consequence, become more conscious of their capability and potential, leading their colleagues also to be more productive, delivering the best results for a company.

Authors have described empowerment as a method to share the power given to a manager with their staff and then, as a result, boost individuals' confidence by making them believe in themselves, contributing to a company's positive feedback from customers and clients (Bateman and Snell, 2003). For other scholars, empowerment is a tool that permits corporations to build an ambient where workers are encouraged to show their essential qualities and abilities and amuse and please consumers (Cook and Macaulays, 1997).

Empowerment is not only beneficial to employees but also to organisations once it assists in the progress of a company by helping it to achieve its objectives. Empowerment permits a worker to innovate, deliver a good performance, be aware of his or her's responsibility and become more motivated, promoting a better work ambient. Consequently, it can be adopted by companies as a strategy to increase their positive result,

In order to empower employees, companies need to be prepared to implement the necessary training and provide their workers with suitable apparatus, structure, and tools—also, the support needed to inspire and motivate their staff. It is a time-consuming process and produces a good quality of services and goods with time.

When managers and supervisors trust their team, share substantial information, delegate suitable tasks to individuals and give them authority to find solutions and solve issues that may arise, they are empowering them- and not centralising activities. Moreover, it provides autonomy and independence for employees. When workers are satisfied with their jobs, work environment, and team, they will perform better customer service; consequently, the organisations benefit from such empowerment. Therefore, internal and external conflicts are lessened, and companies enhance the service and goods provided.

Empowering employees is associated with transferring responsibility and power according to an organisation's hierarchy. This transferral comes from higher to lower levels and is linked to a team and individual's interests and needs. Also, it is a form for employers to show that they can and will provide a more democratic environment to their employees.

If managed correctly by companies, the empowerment of employees not only brings the wanted excellent and optimistic results but also will increase the number of recommendations by their customers. Also, it is more likely to diminish absenteeism once workers are entitled to make decisions on behalf of their employers and are more engaged with their tasks. As a consequence, they will be more committed, enhancing their capacity to make decisions. Employees will also demonstrate loyalty to their employers and best abilities and capability when requested to perform a task. Their values will be in accordance with their employers' values, and they will positively influence other staff members, and all team members will become more involved in tasks.

As mentioned before, the empowerment of employees is essential to manage conflicts in the workplace once they have more autonomy, independence and authority to make decisions. With the correct training provided and the awareness of dealing with disputes. Hence, employees will be able to figure out which approach is more suitable for resolving issues.

Conflict resolution is suggested to find alternatives to solve issues. By using creativity, employees can reach a win-win solution or compromising approach to their problems. Not every dispute in a workplace needs to be dealt with as black and white, where one part is a winner and the other is the loser. Individuals “feel a lot more creative when they see themselves working on a problem with colleagues than when they are resolving conflicts with adversaries” (Landau, 2001).

Therefore, the empowerment of employees will also enhance their creativity in the workplace. Either to solve problems or to increase the productivity of their jobs.

6. Conclusion

Conflict is an essential part of our lives. Inside organisations, they may happen for the most diverse reasons and between different individuals, departments, and companies. They are usually related to a clash of personalities, other goals, interests, values, cultures, idioms, approaches to a task, etc.

To a conflict happens, the parties involved need to be aware of it. This is because conflicts are linked to human interactions, thereby the interdependent interaction of individuals with incompatible points of view. Also, conflicted situations “are constituted and sustained by the behaviours of parties involved and their reactions one to another, particularly with verbal and non-verbal communication” (Folguer, Pole, Stutman, 2013 p.4). Each dispute needs to be dealt with differently and individually solved- mainly because they have the most diverse forms and nature. The manner in which conflicts are addressed inside companies is vital. Also, it would enhance the relationship between customers and corporations. Not knowing how to manage disputes has negative consequences, such as escalation and constant conflicts, that could damage an organisation’s image.

Whether in big or small companies, conflicts may arise every day, and their roots need to be acknowledged in their early stage, which is essential – once a minor disagreement can become an enormous dispute. Workplace disputes can increase the number of absenteeism, and it is more likely for individuals to seek other opportunities in another company, affecting business competitiveness.

Dispute results can be positive and negative and directly impact workers’ performance. Positive outcomes for conflicts may improve the relationship among co-workers once they know how to manage each other differences and learn with them.

The research results of the present dissertation have demonstrated that employees will manage better conflicts in their workplace if they have the correct and adequate training for each position. Also, communication is a determinant factor in diminishing and avoiding disputes. Even though not facing or witnessing conflicts regularly, workers are aware of the types of conflicts in the organisation, their leading causes, and those who have been involved in disputes and need to solve them have successful and positive outcomes.

Giving employees authority is essential to them, as they use their autonomy and independence to make decisions. Undoubtedly, the empowerment of employees is reached when a corporation makes internal changes- especially structural transformation- therefore, workers will positively influence one another and become better decision-makers.

By the time a company decides to empower their employees, it should be taken into account worker interests and needs, and they must be in accordance with organisational missions and visions. However, companies may face resistance from their employees. Such resistance by the workers can be related to comportment towards following orders from superiors or co-workers and being unwilling to take risks and assume responsibility inside a corporation. These characteristics are linked to the number of employees who do not agree with empowerment, and its approach to conflicts may be avoidance. Although according to the research, a small number of employees do not want to be empowered or think that empowerment would not help solve conflicts, such a small number should be considered when an organisation focuses on taking empowerment as an approach to managing issues and improving their performance. Such avoidance by part of employees can be overcome if they show their pros and cons to those in denial and do not accept empowerment.

Also, managers and supervisors may feel comfortable with their staff empowerment. Some superiors may feel frustrated when they need to share tasks with their subordinates. Thus, it may generate interpersonal conflicts between them. Superiors and workers' disputes may be a barrier to empowering employees. These barriers can sometimes be associated with an organisation's hierarchy, which does not allow better integration among bosses and their teams. Also, obstacles can be built by authoritarian managers and superior who does not want to share vital information or tasks with their subordinates.

A workplace dispute can be functional and enhance workers' relations and performance which is beneficial to organisations, or dysfunctional and lead to disputes escalating conflicts in organisations directly affecting employees and companies' performance.

To have successful empowerment of employees may be challenging for organizations. They should make their workers feel self-sufficient and provide an environment where they would not feel capable of making decisions, intimidated, restless, and under pressure.

Empowering employees became essential for companies. It is no longer acceptable for companies to be understaffed and or staff demotivated or constantly under pressure. Businesses and organisations must promote job enrichment and suitable training; it is also vital to support and motivate their employees. Moreover, provide career plans and performance rewards by acknowledging workers' achievements and efforts and more participative management. Besides, one of the most powerful tools, which allows the achievement of the organisation's objectives, is the employees' suggestion system; such a system enables workers to do creative solutions and suggestions to resolve disputes and tasks that may benefit companies and provide empowerment of employees. Another important factor in promoting empowerment is throughout effective teamwork and good leadership.

Other initiatives such as information sharing, active listening and good communication, upward problem solving, labour and task independence and autonomy, self-management and attitudinal shaping (Jones et al., 1997) are vital to the empowerment of a company's workers.

The empowerment of employees is not a new phenomenon, as most of us may think. Its nature is due to changes in labour scenario after the industrial revolution and constant changes throughout the decades. There is no single form to promote the empowerment of employees to solve disputes. It is a daily task that requires teamwork and employees' awareness of their capability, autonomy, knowledge, and willingness to learn. It also requires companies' training, instructions and decentralisation of power and task delegation.

Empowerment of employees is not focused only on managerial, and dealing with conflict should not be only exclusive to some departments such as Human Resources.

The empowerment of workers is vital to a company's growth, diminishes conflicts, enhances customer services and equity among employees, and increases creativity and better performances.

Nowadays, organisations face a competitive environment that forces companies to seek investments to maintain their employees by providing the best workplace environment. A significant number of employees want to be empowered to resolve minor and escalating conflicts

in their jobs. Therefore, companies must pay more attention, invest in their workers, and prepare them to deal with adversity and disputes.

Reflections

Study Dispute Resolution is an excellent opportunity to know yourself better, acknowledge situations that may trigger you and overcome the main challenges in foreign student life. As an international student whose language and culture barrier is an ongoing intrapersonal dispute, being able to produce a dissertation for a master's degree is overwhelming and rewarding. Learning about conflicts and conflict resolution is essential and knowing the different types of disputes that we are exposed to is vital to better deal with them.

Being a student of how to identify, understand and deal with conflicts has opened my mind and made me think outside the box. I was able to recognise in my different jobs how conflicts arise and how I was my reaction accordingly. I have learned how to manage conflicts and how important we for me to be empowered and share my knowledge and learn with my colleagues. In Ireland, I executed different types of jobs, totally different from what I used to work back in Brazil. Hence, these diverse workplaces and work environments were the inspiration for my dissertation research.

Learning Alternative Dispute Resolution made me aware of the suitable approaches for dealing with conflicts in the workplace- moreover, I realised that Ireland has broader employee rights, and most of us are not aware of it. Designing the research survey made me understand the importance of workplace dispute resolution and empowerment of employees much more than I expected.

Not only as written in the books, disputes, disagreements, and conflicts indeed are present in our daily lives. It can be internal dilemmas, family disagreements, competition for a job or a position or between nations. I have learned that minor differences can escalate, be challenging to resolve differences and lead to wars. Our interests, needs and positions must be taken into account; however, we also must be open to listening and comprehending our colleagues' or opponents' different points of view.

Studying and researching the empowerment of employees made me comprehend and recognise the richness of this subject and how much we still have to learn. I was able to find the gaps that

it was my objective in this research and be aware that there is still loads of study to be done in such areas.

As a society, we have constantly been facing changes; therefore, workplaces and the way that we interact also change. Thus, the empowerment of employees and work dispute studies soon may change.

Recently, the world faced an enormous challenge- a widespread disease that resulted in a pandemic named Covid-19. As a society, we met the loneliness of quarantine away from our beloved ones and were worried about our jobs and studies. To be able to continue with their business, organizations needed to restructure themselves, and some needed to provide a home structure to their employees to keep their business on track.

After a long period of extended restrictions, the manner in which we used to work is being normalised, and companies need to be restructured again to bring back their employees to the offices. Many staff did not want to be back to the old structure provided by their employees. Many companies were forced to change and start to empower their employees; they are the frontline of their business and responsible for the good results and growth of organisations.

To conclude, researching and analysing our current scenario as a society and organisations and our behaviour inside and outside the work environment made me acquire more knowledge regarding conflicts and conflict resolution.

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APPENDIX A: THE COMPLETE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How do you identify yourself:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other: _____

2. Your Age:

- ☐ 18 - 25
- ☐ 26 - 33
- ☐ 34 – 41
- ☐ 42 – 49
- ☐ Over 50

3. Do you know what is an interpersonal conflict?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4. What is interpersonal conflict, In your opinion?

5. In your opinion, what is the main causes of interpersonal conflicts:

- ☐ Lack of Communication
- ☐ Lack of Trust
- ☐ Different Interests and Goals
- ☐ Personality Clash
- ☐ Other:

6. Do you know how to identify interpersonal conflict?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. In your workplace, what is the main reason for interpersonal conflicts:

- ☐ Pseudo Conflicts: have the same objectives but cannot realize it.
- ☐ Fact Conflicts: divergent opinions about the same subject.
- ☐ Policy Conflicts: different approach for a situation.
- ☐ Value Conflict
- ☐ Ego Conflict

8. Have you ever been involved in a conflict in your workplace?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9. How often do you witness conflicts in your workplace:

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

10. In your workplace have you witnessed a fellow employee suffering:

- ☐ Bullying
- ☐ Harassment
- ☐ Sexual Harassment

- Racism
 - Xenophobia
 - Gender Discrimination
 - Cultural Discrimination
 - Religious Discrimination
 - Homophobia
 - All above
11. Can you mention other types of violence that you witnessed that was not mentioned above:
12. When facing conflicts at work, you:
- Report to your superior(s)
 - Report to Human Resources
 - Report to another department
 - Do not report
 - Try to solve on your own
 - Other:
13. When involved in a conflict in your workplace, you:
- Avoid conflicts – Prefer not to get involved
 - Stands for your own interests and the conflict is just solved if you win the dispute
 - Analyse the causes and workout in a solution favourable for all parties involved
 - Analyse the issues and work to find a solution favourable to a third party involved
 - Other:
14. Have you ever needed to solve a conflict/disagreement in your workplace?
- Yes
 - No
15. If yes, did you succeed in finding a solution?
- Yes
 - No
16. Is good communication a tool to avoid and solve conflicts:
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
17. Do you know what active listening stands for:
- Yes
 - No
18. If yes, would active listening enhance communication in your workplace?
- Yes
 - No
19. Have you ever been trained to deal with conflicts in your workplace:
- Yes
 - No
20. Being trained to deal with conflicts in the workplace is important:

- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
21. Being empowered in your work would provide a better work environment?
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
22. Would the empowerment of employees avoid internal and external conflicts in your workplace:
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
23. Empowering employees would diminish the conflicts in your work would:
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
24. Do you know the difference between empowering and delegating?
- Yes
 - No
25. Being empowered would help you to deal with and solve problems at your work in a faster and easier way?
- Yes
 - No
 - Maybe

APPENDIX B: DISSERTATION ETHICS AND DISCLAIMER

EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES TO AVOID CONFLICTS IN THE WORKPLACE -How empowering all levels employees can diminish internal and external conflicts and create a better work environment.

RESEARCH DISSERTATION:

MASTER OF ARTS IN DISPUTE RESOLUTION

IMPORTANT NOTES

Purpose

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

Confidentiality

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

Aim

Organizations should, not only support and encourage a decision-making environment to their worker. Also, it is necessary to give employees tools and knowledge to come up with the best solutions when facing difficult or unusual situations. Therefore, this present research project has the aim to find how important is to empower employees to manage conflicts and solve them. Therefore, internal and external conflicts would and could be avoided. Also, the workplace would become a better ambient for workers and enhance their performance and creativity.

Declaration

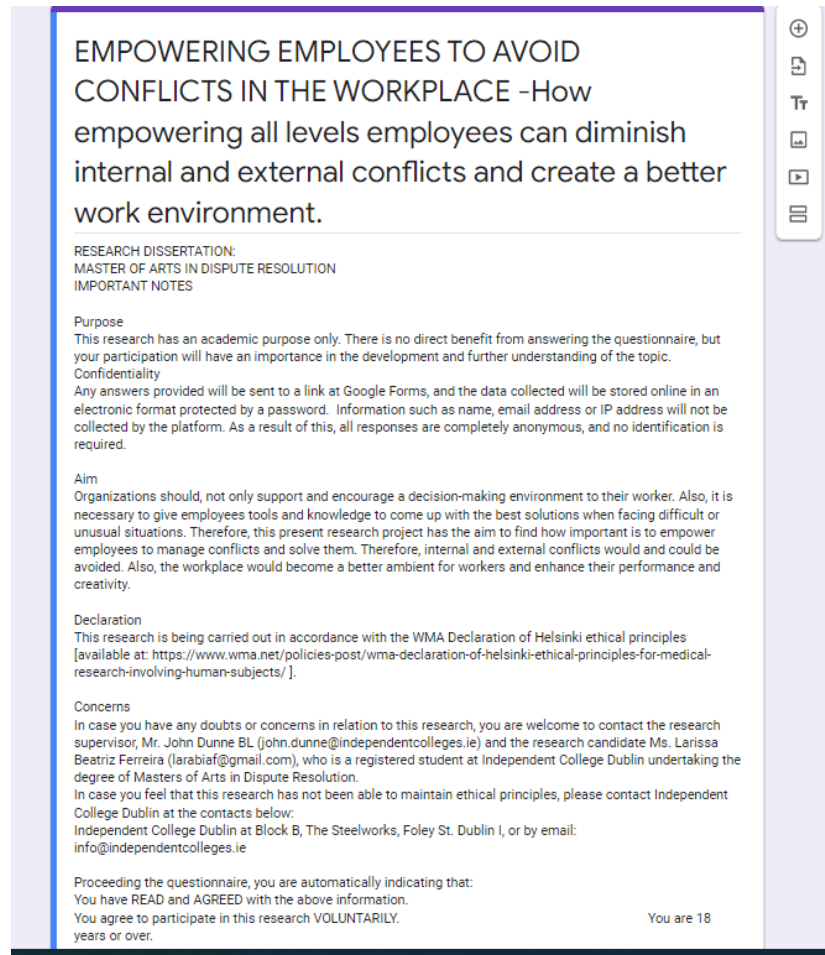
This research is being carried out in accordance with the WMA Declaration of Helsinki ethical principles [available at: <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-declaration-of-helsinki-ethical-principles-for-medical-research-involving-human-subjects/>].

Concerns

In case you have any doubts or concerns in relation to this research, you are welcome to contact the research supervisor, Mr. John Dunne BL (john.dunne@independentcolleges.ie) and the research candidate Ms. Larissa Beatriz Ferreira (larabiaf@gmail.com), who is a registered student at Independent College Dublin undertaking the degree of Masters of Arts in Dispute Resolution. In case you feel that this research has not been able to maintain ethical principles, please contact Independent College Dublin at the contacts below:

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

Proceeding the questionnaire, you are automatically indicating that:
You have READ and AGREED with the above information.
You agree to participate in this research **VOLUNTARILY**.
You are 18 years or over.



The image shows a digital questionnaire form with a purple header and a light purple sidebar on the right containing icons for zoom, print, translate, and other functions. The main text area is white with a blue border on the left. The title is 'EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES TO AVOID CONFLICTS IN THE WORKPLACE -How empowering all levels employees can diminish internal and external conflicts and create a better work environment.' Below the title, it says 'RESEARCH DISSERTATION: MASTER OF ARTS IN DISPUTE RESOLUTION IMPORTANT NOTES'. The form is divided into sections: Purpose, Confidentiality, Aim, Declaration, and Concerns. The Purpose section states the research has an academic purpose only. Confidentiality states that answers will be sent to a link at Google Forms and stored online. Aim states that organizations should support a decision-making environment. Declaration states the research is carried out in accordance with the WMA Declaration of Helsinki ethical principles. Concerns states that if you have any doubts or concerns, you are welcome to contact the research supervisor, Mr. John Dunne BL (john.dunne@independentcolleges.ie) and the research candidate Ms. Larissa Beatriz Ferreira (larabiaf@gmail.com), who is a registered student at Independent College Dublin undertaking the degree of Masters of Arts in Dispute Resolution. At the bottom, it says 'Proceeding the questionnaire, you are automatically indicating that: You have READ and AGREED with the above information. You agree to participate in this research VOLUNTARILY. You are 18 years or over.'

EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES TO AVOID CONFLICTS IN THE WORKPLACE -How empowering all levels employees can diminish internal and external conflicts and create a better work environment.

RESEARCH DISSERTATION:
MASTER OF ARTS IN DISPUTE RESOLUTION
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Purpose
This research has an academic purpose only. There is no direct benefit from answering the questionnaire, but your participation will have an importance in the development and further understanding of the topic.

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Figure 27