



**“Peer Mediation: The Significance of Teaching Mediation Skills for Children in
School Settings”**

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ABSTRACT

Overall, literature affirms that conflict takes part in people's life from the very beginning. In regard to that, it was understood the significance of studying the implementation of Peer mediation skills in preschool settings. Starting from the comprehension of its definition to analyse its procedures and how the performances of this program have affected the students. Followed by the investigation of the benefits and detriments, making a parallel between early ages education and the result already achieved. Furthermore, a comprehensive observation is done on which abilities, based on Peer mediation, should be taught for children according to their level of understanding. Finalising the literature review with a comparison to conflict resolution approaches already merged to the public and the importance of prepared educators on this journey. In addition to that, a systematic study of the theme was done throughout a questionnaire.

The survey was raised involving teaching professionals in early childhood schools in Dublin to give effect to the method analysing the substance of teaching Peer mediation skills for preschoolers. Generating in its methodology a quantitative and qualitative design to the research.

The literature review disclosed some practices that already implement problem-solving and conflict resolution skills to the curriculum in Preschool settings, allowing the follow-up to the research. Gaining more concreteness with the data acquired in the questionnaire perceiving meaningful conclusions and suggestions to the topic.

Key Words: Conflict, Resolution, Peer mediation, Children, Preschool, skills.

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INTRODUCTION

Conflict situations between peers, such as bullying, physical or relational aggression, often starts from the first infancy coming, many times, from small disagreements; School environment is one of the main scenarios where these disputes are placed, as that is the location where children spend a great part of their days (Hay, Payne and Chadwick, 2004). In order to support children in dealing with those issues, diverse countries, mostly considered developed in the education field, for instance Canada, the United States of America and Australia, have implemented Peer mediation programs in Primary and secondary school, showing pertinent results, including a significant improvement on its students' behaviour and reduction of the conflictual issues (McWilliam, 2010; Vermander, 2000; Thomas, 2007).

Having its roots in the constructive approach, Peer mediation is considered one of the means to solve and prevent disputes that might arise among children and teenagers mostly in educational settings (Schrumpf et al. 1997). Furthermore, this method is contemplated by MII (Mediator's Institute of Ireland) as an ADR (Alternative Dispute resolution). By supporting and training children in educational settings, peer mediation skills are taught in order to guide them to prevent and manage conflicts. (Youth culture and violence: hearing before the Committee on the Judiciary, 1999)

Despite the fact that in the first years of life the lack of maturity presented by those youngsters is substantial, which creates barriers to deal positively with conflicts. It is also inferred that the brain's plasticity has its best potential in the first infancy, making these individuals more open and flexible to learn from birth to the age of five (Piaget, 1951; 1952 quoted in McLeod 2018). Thus, what is acquired by this phase will affect substantially in the future. Likewise, the essences and bases are crucial for every developmental area, encompassing human evolution. Studies confirm that the knowledge obtained by children in Early Childhood educational settings will considerably influence school and life. Intervention as a prevention shows a productive quotient (The Montessori Method,

2021; Campbell et al., 2000).

Throughout this analysis comes the matter of studying the implementation of mediation skills earlier than the traditional model of Peer Mediation programs already in course. Aiming to bring awareness to the children while teaching them techniques to manage their feelings and behaviour, raising a concern about subjects such as bullying and approaching more functional strategies of communication whether it is verbal or non-verbal.

Starting from the understanding that conflicts take part of life in every way, it does not matter what age you are, and knowing that great part of differences escalate in the first years of school, even if it is positive or not, it is foremost to develop abilities to manage it. Triggering the principal query to be investigated in this research “What is the significance of teaching mediation skills for children in schools?”, as much as understanding “Which conflict resolution skills can be effectively taught in early ages?”, and “What is the role of the teacher on the application of Peer Mediation skills?”. Focused on determining the level of importance of teaching mediation abilities as a preventive tool since the early ages in educational centers expanding the conception and awareness in terms of the subject. The main objectives of this research are:

1. Analyse Peer Mediation Programs in Schools: its impacts and results;
2. Identify the implications of teaching mediation SKILLS in Early ages;
3. Disclose Mediation Skills that can be applied in Preschool;
4. Pre School Children dealing with Conflicts through Mediation Skills and Teachers interventions.

In the first Chapter of this research, an analysis of studies is made throughout a literature review aiming to comprehend the general concept of Peer Mediation, and its contributions to the improvement and safeguarding of youngsters in conflicts making a parallel to other approaches that already involve conflict resolution in its curriculum. In addition, this chapter pursues enhancing abilities encountered in the topic, highlighting emotional intelligence; communication skills; Active listening skills; and Empathy Skills, to support children from early ages not to escalate disagreements,

and how teachers can support the application of those abilities throughout the Peer mediation Programs.

In the second chapter, the methodology used to develop this project is explained, seeking to show the path followed on this work, based on the research onion introduced in the book “Research Methods for business students” written by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007), by using quantitative and qualitative strategies. Also clarifying ethical issues in regard to research with children in Ireland.

For the third chapter, a presentation of the data acquired is done, based on the questionnaire answered by childcare practitioners in preschool rooms in north and south Dublin focused on launching the material obtained within the survey. Four of the childcare centers invited have authorised the conduction of this research and deliberately, 32 practitioners have accepted to contribute responding to the questions, however no identity will be disclosed on this work. In chapter 4 the findings in the analysis based on the answers of the participants will be expressed in more detail, followed by its discussion in chapter 5 making a parallel of the data found in the survey to the ideas from the authors brought up in the first chapter. Finally getting to a conclusion, seeking to answer the main questions in this study and describing the achievements within the research.

Active methodologies in the classroom like Peer Mediation are an innovative form of education (Active Learning, 2021). They have emerged to value student participation in building knowledge and developing their skills from the early stages (Early Childhood Development: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications, 2018). This research will explore what is the relevance of teaching mediation skills in preschool settings, through a literature review and the analysis of the data acquired via questionnaire answered by childcare practitioners, coming from the point that it might be crucial to attaining better outcomes in the Future, raising young Peer mediators.

“The Greatest gifts we can give to our children are the roots of responsibility and the wings of independence” Maria Montessori.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

1.1 - Peer Mediation Programs in Schools: its impacts and results

This section has as its goal to have an understanding of Peer mediation Programs, coming from its origins, to the application on schools worldwide. It also seeks to analyse how it has transformed the places where the approach was implemented.

1.1.1 Mediation

To truly understand Peer Mediation is crucial to comprehend mediation in its authentic way, as it has given life to the program. As described in the Mediation Act (2017), ““mediation” means a confidential, facilitative and voluntary process in which parties to a dispute, with the assistance of a mediator, attempt to reach a mutually acceptable agreement to resolve the dispute”. It clearly states that the people who find themselves in disagreement may apply for deliberately mediation sections, where the third party will facilitate the intervention, stressing that the outcomes belong to them, excluding the third party to give their own opinion or affect the decisions. The act also guarantees that the participants have the right to withdraw from the process whenever it is wanted in case they are not feeling comfortable and emphasises that everything done in mediation must be confidential, avoiding exposure to the involved.

Wander (2015) considers mediation as the first step on the path to resolution in the majority of the situations where people find themselves in a conflict. He also contextualises the idea that mediation is connected to conflict management and transformation, focussing on long-term decisions. In comparison, Beer and Packard (2012) outline mediation as a “joint way to resolve their concerns”, encompassing the matter of cooperation between the participants, who will engage in a conversation through a guided process. The authors’ ideas meet that there is more than one style and method to mediate. It happens because of the increasing number of diverse types of conflicts, even though its

main structure remains the same.

Chern (2014), stresses that mediation, same as negotiation, is a moment to focus on the problem, the issues that arose, instead of criticising or offending the person, following the method adopted by William Ury¹, a worldwide recognized negotiator and mediator.

Mediation is also considered an intervention, which can be done on many levels “from the individual through global”. The third party joins the parties helping them in the attempt to find optimum solutions in their quarrels. Furthermore, mediation can work as prevention. There is a vast field, possibilities, and strategies where mediation can occur, helping in conflicts that come from all nature (Fritz, 2014).

1.1.2 Definition of Peer Mediation

Recognised an ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) by the MII (Mediation Institute of Ireland), Peer Mediation is an approach based on the traditional mediation style, which is comprehended as a cooperative process, where the people who are involved in a conflict will work together with a neutral third party, which in this case will be a trained peer such as school children or teenagers, to find a solution to a conflict in a constructive way (Schrumpf et al., 1997).

Eddington (2002) reports that one of the pioneers in mediation in educational environment is NAME (National Association for Mediation in Education), created in 1984 at the University of Massachusetts by a team of specialists in the field, aiming to assist schools on the development of dispute resolutions Programs, for example, the Peer Mediation, however, by this time, the project was only focused in attending on middle school students.

Same as meditation, Peer Mediation programs can be presented in different configurations according to each site. Once more, the main objectives are maintained in all of them: de-escalation, avoidance, transformation, or prevention of conflicts between students. It is essential to notice that, usually, the

¹ <https://www.williamury.com/books/getting-to-yes/> [Accessed 02 September 2021].

mediator is chosen based on a similar background to the participants, which means that the social group, age and gender are analysed before pointing out who is going to intervene in the conflict. In this model, generally, peers are selected, trained and prepared to act as mediators in schools, learning skills to address issues and being impartial in order to assist other students in finding the best way to solve their quarrels (Cohen, 2005).

According to Crawford and Bodine (1996), the students trained to be peer mediators are motivated to put into practice what was learned in their daily lives, not only at school but in the playground, or any other circle that children participate in. Peer mediators are constantly encouraged to update their knowledge and skills, take extra courses, read books about the topic, or get advice from school staff to provide more quality to the process and support the parties involved on their individual needs.

Cremin (2007, quoted in Coakley 2019) observes Peer Mediation deeper, and she says it is a program that teaches students how to regulate their own conflicts. Once this autonomy is offered by the school, the pupils are stimulated to promote more positive behaviour. The tendency is to feel stronger and heard, allowing these children to become more democratic people and inclusive in a social way. Furthermore, school conflicts are individual, differing from disputes in families and communities, for example, raising the importance of applying specific strategies to reach more successful results in the resolution of those particular issues.

Regarding to the view above, Coakley (2019) infers that the main idea of Peer Mediation is to provide an improvement for the student's lives, aiming that schoolmates are able to understand each other's queries, identifying more quickly what matters to them, reframing in an adequate language, facilitating the communication offering more chances to get to an agreement.

As previously referred, schools all around the globe, including Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, have adopted Dispute Resolution skills, such as Peer Mediation, as one of the means to solve and/or prevent issues between students, teachers, parents and school administration presenting auspicious favourable conclusions (McWilliam 2010; Vermander 2000; Thomas 2007).

1.1.3 Peer Mediation as a Preventive Tool

Children find it hard to express themselves verbally, consequently not sharing their struggles in an acceptable way most of the time (Sachdeva and Dutta, 2012). Often, converting their emotions into aggressive behaviour against their acquaintances, turning it many times into conflicts. It is known that those disputes raised in school might affect people's lives in the long term, creating the need to develop strategies such as Peer Mediation, to help students deal with those conflicts (Gilhooley and Scheuch, 2000).

Cohen (n.d.) lists some of the issues that might be supported, minimized, even avoided by Peer Mediation, including "gossiping, name-calling, poor sportsmanship, not returning borrowed items, boyfriend/girlfriend". Even though these actions are considered small, they can result in severe damages to the children's cognitive and social lives. Moreover, He states the effectiveness of Peer Mediation in 85% of favourable enduring settlements, in consequence, preventing new disputes from arising.

Johnson & Johnson (1997) state that "Evidence shows that peer mediation fosters self-regulation, self-esteem and self-discipline in youth", therefore, bringing awareness and reducing the level of stress, which results in a lower number of disagreements. The authors also suggest that the knowledge in mediation by the youngsters will be transmitted to the people around them. The skills acquired will be naturally applied to their routine, supporting the peers at school, family and community disputes. Furthermore, when engaged in activities such as Peer Mediation, juveniles get a more profound comprehension of conflicts and learn skills to deal with quarrels, again, bringing preventive tools to their environment. It allows these youngsters to have more quality in their future, regulating their behaviour not only at school, but everywhere.

According to Strawhun et al. (2014), Peer Mediation can also represent a robust tool rather than disciplinary actions in schools. Students facing conflicts have the opportunity to be recommended to Peer Mediation, instead of getting suspension or any other punishment, reducing the level of massive

demand of cases in orientation and principal's office, and avoiding likely escalation of these issues, which may arise due to the punishment applied. Hence, not only the peers but the entire school body exploits the Peer Mediation projects, rejoicing in a better environment and improving the quality of the institution.

For Crawford and Bodine (1996), the effectiveness presented by Peer Mediation is related to the fact that the parties feel more understood and comfortable to open themselves with someone in the same age, where there is no fear to be judged by an adult, making the process more natural, empowering the peers and acquiring more respect, thus, creating a better atmosphere more likely to get to a positive outcome. In addition to that, the authors affirm that the vocabulary chosen by the mediator to reframe the feelings and attitude of the youth is well represented by the peer, building a great climate as much as addressing the issues more excellent and more precise for the involved, again, exerting positive influence in the outcomes.

Still, in regard to the authors above, Peer Mediation is an opportunity to expand conflict resolution abilities, making it necessary to be fully implemented in all school settings, attending all levels of students.

According to Schrupf et al. (1997), participation in Peer Mediation programs offers a great likelihood to leadership development. When engaging and practising the core skills for mediation, students presenting persuasive power over the others will be supported to expand in a positive way their proactivity and initiative to influence their peers.

Mc. William (2010, p.13), after interviewing peer mediators who take part in the program called "EmpoweringKids", which is an adaptation of Peer Mediation Programs, in a public school in Australia, attested that:

"Some therapeutic effects that were consistently mentioned by the peer mediators were: Feeling proud and responsible for helping their peers; Feeling good about

themselves as they are making the school safer and more fun; Increased empathy; Decreased stress; Increased satisfaction with school processes; Improved communication skills; Preserved and enhanced relationships between students; Mediation skills that can be applied to different situations; Enhanced school environment".

Agreeing with the idea, Cohen (n.d.) concludes that "When peer mediation programs are implemented effectively, student mediators are excited to offer their services, student parties are grateful for the help, and educators wonder how they got along without the program. Peer mediation can become a vital and important part of school life." Therefore, belongingness is an essential factor in preventing disputes in schools, making the peers more willing to cooperate, generating a positive attitude, preventing and healing conflicts in this environment.

1.2 The Implications of Teaching Mediation SKILLS in Early Ages

At this point, the research, based on the literature, looks to disclose "if" and "which" conflicts children experience in Preschool environments. Followed with a study on the most famous authors of the child's learning process. Finally, building a bridge to the advantages and disadvantages of teaching a topic, such as Peer Mediation at this phase, reflected in the previous sections.

1.2.1 Conflicts Children Face in Preschool and Their Consequences in Long Term

Henderson (2020) explains that conflicts inherit from interactivity, appearing in any social experience, with no exceptions. The author adds that it implicates disharmony, competition, and confrontation, indicating the need for changes or adaptation in some cases, varying on its intensity and the number of people involved. He discusses that even though disputes are feared, it is still considered a natural matter. Conflicts are likely to happen frequently in everybody's lives, at any

stage, having a crucial role in defining what characteristics the individual will acquire and reproduce in adulthood, helping the individual to mature.

As revealed by researchers, the level of probability that social conflicts faced in the first years of life will drastically affect the human being is relatively high, generating several problems such as "delinquency, emotional and mental illness, and job and marital problems when they reach adolescence and adulthood". (Kupersmidt, Coie, & Dodge, 1990; Parker & Asher, 1987, quoted in Hashimoto 1996).

From the early ages, conflicts take part in people's daily lives, for example, when a wobbler cries protesting to have a toy that another child is holding, or a toddler pushes a friend to fight over space (Eastern Connecticut State University, n.d.).

The school environment provides for children to begin to learn how to behave in a society, consequently being exposed to conflictual issues. The conflicts faced in this phase are mostly related to belligerence and Peers exclusion, implicating in struggles that, when unwell managed at this stage, they are able to increase the level of further problems for those individuals' futures. On the other hand, those conflicts are described as a chance to regulate the children's behaviour (Sebanc, 2003; Engle, 2011).

Observe in the studies above, conflicts are often seen as unfavourable, yet, Henderson (2020) says, "Conflict is not good or bad", he calls attention to what these disagreements can teach us, providing tools to the parties involved to reach self-understanding, giving the knowledge to avoid or handle other disputes with the exact nature or similar.

As observed by Dresden (2020), in adulthood, the individual tries to avoid conflicts or, most of the time looks to solve them diplomatically, as it is comprehended that it is learned to control emotions within the years. On the contrary, as mentioned by Andrews (2017), the child is more likely to solve their disputes using violent behaviour, kicking, biting, pushing, and hitting the opponent and showing antisocial behaviour towards those situations. However, the quarrels are compatible with age, being

the child also able to be taught skills to deal with the type of conflict they face.

1.2.2 The Child and the Learning Process in Preschool Age

Piaget (1951; 1952 quoted in McLeod 2018) on the theory of preoperational stages affirms that a child in Preschool age, between three to five years old, is in an egocentric phase, which means that they are not able to act empathetically to the people around them. He believes children's cognitions are more related to the imaginary, and the "self" is more important in that world created by them, and it is expressed by the manner they think and communicate.

Vygotsky (1934 quoted in McLeod 2018) contradicts this idea, stating that the child's cognitive development is more connected to the environment and the experiences lived so far. Nevertheless, Vygotsky confirms that adults have the most critical role in children's life, resulting in a determinant factor on their personalities; in counterpoint, Piaget says that peers will affect it. Still, both Piaget and Vygotsky agree that the child is an active individual in the learning process, and the comprehension will be given by doing something.

Maria Montessori, the mother of the famous approach fostered in preschool worldwide, relies on children's independence to do things. She explains that the mind absorbs a high level of information at this stage, and for her, this process happens consciously. The Montessori approach defends that the infants need support and supervision, other than having someone doing something for them. However, understanding that every child is singular, having their own time to develop skills differently (The Montessori Method, 2021).

Kusnanik (2017) signs that some core skills are expected in each phase of life; among those, she mentions "cognitive, language, social emotional" where its maximum potential must be explored at each correspondent moment. Defending the purpose that children have to be exposed to activities that stimulate their development.

As affirmed by Lillard (2014) that a "Symbolic play is the signature form of play in early childhood,

and it continues into middle childhood and beyond." Thus, she concluded that learning through play supports children's cognitions, and the new methodologies applied throughout ludicit support the improvement of academic skills of those individuals.

In Ireland, the "aistear" is the program that supports the children's learning process at the ages 0 to 6, including in its curriculum 4 basic principles to be developed in childcare centers in order to assist the group, it includes well-being; Identity and belonging; Communicating, and Exploring and thinking. Practitioners use this model to observe the children's progress. It also indicates the importance of play, rejoicing in the process, as it has significant implications for the future in this phase, as much as encouraging the children's autonomy (Early Childhood, updated, 2021).

Between some contradictions, varying in the social and intellectual sphere, the most recognised authors in theories of child development assume that it is relevant to start introducing significant subjects for preschoolers, bearing its positive long-term effects in life. As explored by the authors in this section, the implementation of new ideas has to be done to preserve the essence of this phase, presented through the ludic, giving space to playing and stressing the child as a center of the learning.

1.2.3 Implications on Teaching Peer mediation Skills in Preschool Settings

Pre School has a significant impact on the aptitude and attitude of the child later in life (K-12 STEM Education: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice, 2017). Kaushik and Marwaha (2020) affirm that there are numerous benefits in early interventions for children, bringing favourable results for the person's entire life. Early interventions empower children to reach their better potential, as much as mediator skills. However, it is crucial to be aware of the way it is addressed, adequating the topics to the children's reality and level of understanding. This idea is reinforced by McLeod (2018) when he says, "In symbolic play, young children advance upon their cognitions about people, objects and actions and in this way construct increasingly sophisticated representations of the world".

In congruence to the quote above, Berger (1994; cited in Eddington, 2002) indicates that a child can grow new cognitions throughout reproducing productive abilities, which means that the effectiveness of these practices is substantial when merged to these youngsters' natural world. Thus, promoting more chances for this child to become an adult more resilient.

Beaulieu (2013; cited in Heim 2018) mentioned the benefits of the Peer Mediation interventions in Early Childhood classes, affirming that "teaching children peer reminders and praise improved compliance with classroom and teacher expectations", notoriously collaborating to these children's cognitive advance, covering collective and individual spheres.

On the other hand, Burke (2019) criticises Peer mediation, which treats as a conflict situation like bullying, which is a crime. Even though the author supports the program, she disagrees with the way it is guided. Therefore, if children grow up with a different understanding of the situation and present different abilities to face conflicts, those issues at a higher level can be avoided.

Milward (2016) recommends children to participate in mediation-based programs². A pragmatic analysis understands that it is beneficial regarding multiple areas, as much as representing fairness to the child that will be affected by the outcomes of the dispute, respecting not only inclusiveness but the child's age and the level of comprehension. Although this is not within a school setting, it is still clear academic support for the notion that children have the capacity to engage in and use mediation as a tool, having valuable aggregation for the process and offering children the opportunity to be heard.

² Milward (2016) Children Need Families, Not Courtrooms: Alternatives to Adversarial Litigation in Child Welfare A Special Report by the Office of the Children's Advocate Manitoba. p. 39. Available in https://cwrp.ca/sites/default/files/publications/en/families_not_courts_mb.pdf [Accessed 18 September 2021].

1.3 Mediation Skills that can be Applied in Preschool

After having a comprehension of the mediation skills, this section focuses on finding in the bibliography the most appropriate abilities to Peer mediation associated with young children's curriculum core competencies. Revealing key concepts such as Communication, active listening, empathy and emotional intelligence as part of both processes, consequently outlined in the paragraphs below.

1.3.1 Mediation Skills

There are some people that naturally present a mediator's characteristics acting as an intervener in the disputes that happen around them. Often, these are known for being wise in the group they belong to. Others have developed those skills from the experiences they have lived. Still, mediation skills are essential to be studied and improved, encompassing all spheres of the field, magnifying the potentiality of encountering solutions in favour of the mediator and the parties. (Beer and Packard, 2012)

According to Johnson and Jonhson (1996), in Peer Mediation Programs, students learn negotiation and mediation skills, gathering capacity in communication, active listening, problem-solving, and conflict resolution abilities. For the authors, it must be presented with no exceptions to every student, offering the chance to act as a mediator, being able to contribute to their Peers in disputes as much as improving their own attitude. These competencies are also known as a win-win process. Complying with them, Vankoughnett (1998), who investigated small samples involving high school students, describes key topics that are taught in Peer Mediation training covering "understanding conflict, communication skills, dealing with anger, reducing prejudice".

McAuslan (2015) explored the idea of training children to develop conflict resolution skills while analysing the application of the method throughout an observational research in a school in the Republic of Ireland. For her, social and emotional abilities are joined to negotiation strategies creating

a way to find common sense. Among these resources the researcher mentions S.A.L.T³ (Stop; Ask; Listen; and Talk) strategies used as an additional tool to resolve queries, basically the process is to train the educators to mediate the children's issues, teaching them to solve it more effectively by applying those skills.

Kaçmaz (2011), after observing and interviewing a sample of students in two primary schools in Turkey, inferred that the level of empathy and communication skills and self-awareness between these children have increased within the program.

Even though several skills are included in the mediation process, based on the studies mentioned above, the authors reach an agreement that communication skills and social skills as determinants in the resolution of conflicts. In the following sections, these skills will be dissected in communication skills, active listening skills; Empathy; and Emotional intelligence, then explored in order to be taught to preschool children by educators.

1.3.2 Communication Skills

Communication⁴ is defined as a transmission of information, it needs a message, the sender and the receptor to be completed. This process can be done in several manners, such as in speech or simply in a facial expression. Even though the exercise of communication is powerful, when the information is misunderstood by the recipient, it can be harmful, causing conflicts or impeding its resolution. Therefore, Holt (2007) informs that disputes should not be avoided as they offer a chance to children to improve their communication skills.

Cloke (2006) uses a bridge to describe the communication process; the two opposite sides on it

³ **The S.A.L.T. Programme: Creative Solutions to Conflict**

This resource contains a conflict resolution process for schools, used in the classrooms, in playgrounds, and in staff and board rooms, and is based on the everyday skills and concepts from the world of Alternative Conflict Resolution.

⁴“Communication.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communication>. Accessed 3 Oct. 2021.

separate people and their perceptions in the conflict that are dissimilar. These gaps, represented by the bridge, are intended as people's backgrounds that hardly ever are similar. Each point of view is going to be different. The huge challenge to communicate is to "step outside the issue", as he states. On the other hand, the author wonders the way it could be done, if it is only seen with the previous learning, and these conflicts come according to humans' ability to resolve them, bringing evolution to the person who has been through it.

Hollombe (2013) highlights communication as the key to conflict resolution, whether it is verbal or non-verbal. She also describes in her training for peer mediators that the communication needs to happen in a practical way, associated with active listening and empathy skills, to broaden the probability of a win-win agreement. Same as defined by Vankoughnett (1998) that "Communication is the key to cooperative interaction. Effective communication in conflict is proactive and produces win/win results". Notwithstanding the fact that the two researchers mentioned above were guided over a decade of difference, the comprehension of this skill as a tool remains precisely the same, having strong, if not the most vital, power in transforming conflicts of any nature.

McIver (2018) goes further, saying that "Communication is the main driving force of mediation", rating this skill as the number one in reconciliation.

Children are also communicators. In preschool, they are already able to demonstrate their feelings and receive messages, in general, by speaking and gesturing. "Children continue to develop during the preschool years. They increase their vocabulary, use longer and more complex sentences, engage in problem solving, and talk about more than just what is happening at the moment." (Communication: Children | VLS, n.d.). In this way, children are ready to develop and begin to use this skill, revealing their issues and simplifying the resolution of problems among peers. On the other hand, the article emphasizes that the way children communicate as much as its progression will be individual, which does not affect its effectiveness.

Lockhart (n.d.) reinforces the importance of adults in the efficacy of children's communication, not

only in the spoken language but encompassing all means. She adds the importance of the teacher's attentiveness to the messages they wish to transmit, developing trust between them. Same as concluded by Finch and Wirtanen (2012), "With the support of knowledgeable adults, children are able to learn the skills necessary for effective communication within peer groups".

1.3.3 Active Listening Skills

Active Listening is one of the tools used to facilitate communication, but it involves a more specific aspect. It is when the receptor is required to be attentive to comprehend the message entirely. Hence, Listening is more than just hearing what is being said, but paying serious attention to the information without taking the conclusion in advance while thinking about it (Hoppe, 2018).

In the resolution of conflicts, mindful Listening is one of the first principles. As explained by Beer (2012), the goal in mediation is "to get the parties to listen to each other". Thus, Listening is fundamental to understanding the issue and encountering its outcomes thoroughly. A good listener has the power to show to the sender of a message the value of his words several times, de-escalating the disputes.

According to Perkins (2021), active Listening supports people to "open up, reduces the chances of misunderstandings, and helps to resolve problems and conflicts, and builds trust". For Crawford (1996), the conflict needs to be understood to be successfully resolved, making the attentive listening power a high priority to reach more efficient solutions.

In regard to children, Verdick (2008) talks about teaching them to use their "listening ears' ". For it, she advises that the adults need to be the example, acting calmly and showing that you have interpreted their signals. Pupils usually closely observe the teacher's behaviour, often taking it as a model that can represent their future attitude.

Shoerning's article stresses the importance of active Listening – it is a part of negotiation that is just as important as speaking. Students need to feel what they say is essential, and while listening actively to teachers is taught, students do not always listen actively to peers. Asking students to summarize each other's speech can be a helpful way to encourage listening actively to peers (Shoerning, 2013; quoted by Heim 2018 p.7).

Furthermore, a child who feels heard will share more of their struggles, emulating boundaries between them and avoiding conflicts. The same as Mcauslan (2015) emphasized while saying that "Listening carefully, with real attention, can connect people."

1.3.4 Empathy Skills

Empathy is the action of putting yourself in other people's place in the matter of validating how they feel or think, not feeling pity, but considering their side of the story. Thus, empathy is linked with active listening on the matter that the person needs to comprehend the issue deeply while listening to have the capacity to have a sensitive view of the context, associated with numerous communication and social skills, supporting the individuals in diverse scenarios of life, including mediation of conflicts (5 Tips for Cultivating Empathy — Making Caring Common, 2021; McIver 2018).

For Susheela (2020), "Empathy is considered as the Soul of Mediation"; thought that reinforces what was said a few years before by Golden (2009) that "in conflict resolution empathy is a central tool and way of being".

Dewar (2020) states that empathy can be considered a natural process, even for young children, which does not mean it is an easy job. Additionally, the author says that the level of empathy will be influenced by the environmental and social exposure of the human being, and teaching them some

steps⁵ may facilitate its understanding, assuming that teachers will impact it.

Garnett (2017) draws to a conclusion that a child who learns how to "put themselves in the other's shoes" will act with no bias, not only reducing social problems but behaving positively towards the diversity among them. Moreover, the empathetic attitude tends to change the way young children deal with conflictual issues. Again, the author raises the idea that the educator's role is crucial in the guidance of this skill for early years students and empathy should be the base on this path.

Eisenberg et al. (2011) agree that empathetic feelings are essential for all in every site. On the other hand, the writers imply that the recognition and appliance of these emotions are more superficial in regard to infants. They also conclude that empathetic skills should be explored in mediation programs, even though they bring to attention that it can trigger 'personal distress', which might be harmful to the executor of this action.

1.3.5 Emotional Intelligence

The first time the term Emotional Intelligence was brought up into question, in the 90s., it was intended to make a relation to the educational field, embracing abilities linking to self management and social skills, considering smartness a vaster domain than just being able to execute successfully the average school demands or having a high IQ level. The idea took over and, within the time, became more popular, several sectors appropriated and applied its skills. Additionally, the literature highlights the contrasting of these two characteristics as opposites, suggesting that when a child has an elevated level of IQ, their emotional intelligence drops, and vice versa, considering the second one more advantageous than the first (Goleman 2009).

Schreeier (2002) makes a paradox between conflict and emotions, getting to the conclusion that self-awareness supplies the self regulation, addressing the emotional intelligence as a primordial skill for

⁵Dewar, G., 2021. *Teaching empathy: Evidence-based tips for fostering empathic awareness in children.* [online] PARENTING SCIENCE. Available at: <<https://parentingscience.com/teaching-empathy-tips/>> [Accessed 11 October 2021].

a mediator in the invention, balancing the feelings for all the parties. Agreeing with that Kelly et al. (2016) says that the effective mediator acknowledges the emotions, bringing to an understanding and regulation; the author also draws a connection to empathy and active listening skills, same as done in the sections above. Thus, both authors conclude that a positive intervention needs to work on the people's feelings.

Salovey & Mayer (1990) say that more than the academic background, emotional intelligence allows people to deal positively with emotions, and are more likely to achieve better results at school, have more confidence, empathy and engage in positive relationships. Affirming the power of this skill in the regulation of conflicts.

In the view of Gershon and Pellitteri (2018), the abilities required in emotional intelligence ought to be taught in Preschool, endorsing these children's growth. Nonetheless, the authors draw particular attention to the fact that the infants will comprehend and find a balance in their emotions within the time, meeting positive outcomes.

1.4 Preschool Children Dealing with Conflicts Through Mediation Skills and Teachers

Interventions

In order to consider Peer Mediation skills for preschool children, this section is to inspect different approaches that apply conflict resolution skills, having a brief overview of its results while enquiring about the teachers' position in the intervention.

1.4.1 Pre School Children Dealing with Conflicts Through Mediation Skills

Although everyone somehow, at any point, acts as a mediator in life, to become a mediator, it is necessary to develop a series of skills and participate in training. "Peer mediation skills involve a conflict resolution process in which students apply learned skills to solve their own problems more constructively. Core training includes understanding conflict, communication skills, dealing with

anger, reducing prejudice” the to change their perspectives; therefore, abilities such as communications skills, self-awareness, self-regulation, decision making, social awareness already make part of the core competences being already applied in preschool settings, same skills used on the training for peer mediators that can be introduced earlier avoiding further conflicts (Jones & Bouffard 2012).

Hashimoto (1996; quoting Cheatham, 1989) wonders, “While kindergarten and primary grades are usually included in school-wide, K-12, peer mediation programs, the developmental appropriateness of training young children to be peer mediators has not been questioned”, showing that this idea is not being firstly enquired, as the approach was already promoted three decades ago.

A research conducted in the education department on building young children’s conflict resolution skills, at St. Joseph College in Connecticut, by dr. Schechter suggests that children need to be given a chance to solve their quarrels, as it is seen as a moment to promote problem-solving skills. On the other hand, she states that sometimes it needs to be intervened, for example, in situations that a child gets hurt, but always using skills to bring the involved to reflect about the issue, as the conflict is seen as an episode to acquire knowledge. Thus, conflicts do not have to be stopped but taken as an occasion to prepare children. (Eastern Connecticut State University, n.d.)

A famous approach called high scope⁶ embraces as one of its strategies a design from conflict resolution skills for children in early childhood. It aims to offer children independence in solving their conflicts. An adult will intervene in the dispute, providing tools to stimulate the parties to find a solution by themselves, the same outcomes expected in peer mediation.

1.4.2 The Role of the Teachers in the Application of Mediation Skills

Preschool teachers play an essential role, being the first individual to influence people’s educational lives. Studies affirm that this attachment will strongly determine the children’s achievements later in

⁶ <https://highscope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/152.pdf> [Accessed 12 October 2021].

school settings (Howes, 1999; Pianta, 1993). Primary interventions come from the educator, supporting the child to develop skills such as the ones we find in mediation. However, educators need to have previous training to familiarise themselves with those skills agreeing with approaches to support children's learning. (Early Childhood Educator Peer Mediation, 2019). In accordance with that, Seed (2018) observes that the ability to resolve conflicts is indispensable in childcare centers, not only for the carer but for the children.

Ly (2018) states that the child is not able to create logical reasoning by themselves, as much as engaging in steps while resolving a dispute, being the educator, responsible for sharing the knowledge in a positive way, supporting the infants patiently and carefully.

Harris (2009, quoted by Heim 2018), after studying Peer Mediated Intervention in Preschool, endorses the active role of the educators in this process providing the tools to the learners.

Heim (2018), describing her own experience in a classroom, explains that teachers had to suggest Peer mediation several times, mainly when it comes to more than to students involved in the conflict, reinforcing the participation of the adults. Moreover, it implies that managing conflict is a current segment of teachers' work. Cole et al. (2001) endorses a number of positive characteristics found in teachers, among organisation, fairness, consistency, respectful, adaptable, stimulating, contributing to the resolution of conflicts that happen in their classroom and improving their relationship with children.

In a high scope approach, teachers and childcare practitioners are encouraged to act as a mediator in children's conflicts. This philosophy adopts six distinct steps, fostering a passive style while offering skills to reach a standard solution acceptable for both parties, often de-escalating or solving the conflict. According to THE HIGH/SCOPE PRESCHOOL EDUCATIONAL APPROACH⁷: A Prospectus for Pre-Kindergarten Program (n.d.) these steps are crucial to be covered in order to

⁷ Ncn.ie. n.d. *THE HIGH/SCOPE® PRESCHOOL EDUCATIONAL APPROACH: A Prospectus for Pre-Kindergarten Programs*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.ncn.ie/images/headers/earlychildhoodmodels/UPKFullReporthighscope.pdf>> [Accessed 28 September 2021].

achieve a problem-solving solution, as follows:

1. **“Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.** Place yourself between the children, on their level; use a calm voice and gentle touch; remain neutral rather than take sides.
2. **Acknowledge children’s feelings.** Say something simple such as “You look really upset;” let children know you need to hold any object in question.
3. **Gather information.** Ask “What’s the problem?” Do not ask “why” questions as young children focus on that what the problem is rather than understanding the reasons behind it.
4. **Restate the problem.** “So the problem is...” using and extending the children’s vocabulary, substituting neutral words for hurtful or judgmental ones (such as “stupid”) if needed.
5. **Ask for solutions and choose one together.** Ask “What can we do to solve this problem?” Encourage children to think of a solution but offer options if the children are unable at first.
6. **Be prepared to give follow-up support.** Acknowledge children’s accomplishments, e.g., “You solved the problem!” Stay nearby in case anyone is not happy with the solution and the process needs repeating.”

As it is noticeable, the sequence mentioned in High Scope for resolving conflicts is really similar to the explanation in the first chapter about the mediation section. Where the third party will engage in a neutral negotiation empowering the involved to find outcomes by themselves, however, it is necessary to take into consideration the language barriers, commitment and time provided to attain the objectives. Although, in this case involving preschoolers, the practitioners will assume the role of mediator intervening in the dispute. Cohen (2005) expounded that only a qualified mediator can

instruct other mediators, therefore, teachers ought to be trained.

Chapter 2: Research Methodology and Methods

The methodology is the heart of any research, and it has the role of identifying, giving structure, and explaining how the studies are going to be conducted. It also provides due guidance to the project that will be studied, supporting better chances to find its results or get to a conclusion.

In this chapter, the layers in the research onion will be assessed to get to a better understanding, finding in epistemology its most concrete foundation. It will be enquired the most suitable and trustable way to this process, answering the principal research question “What is the significance of teaching mediation skills for children in schools?”, supporting the goals primarily exposed and studied in the previous chapter.

1. Analyse Peer Mediation Programs in Schools: its impacts and results based on the Peer Mediation Conflict Resolution in School Program Guide.
2. Identify the implications of teaching mediation SKILLS in Early ages
3. Disclose Mediation Skills that can be applied in Preschool
4. Pre School Children dealing with Conflicts through Mediation Skills and Teachers interventions.

2.1 Research Design

As recommended by Lawson, Allen Knight and Busch (2016), before choosing the design to be used in the research, it is needed to adequate criterion and set the tactics for the study. According to this idea, the creation of this research will be based on the onion model developed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill; the steps given on this style will be taken as a pattern to this analysis (Saunders et al., 2007).

Even though the anatomy of the process is based on assumptions, it seeks to act in accordance with the facts found in the material dissected in the literature review and all areas of knowledge explored, continuing the investigation throughout the questionnaire applied to the childcare practitioners in creches based in Dublin and the analysis of the data acquired. Thus, carrying a mixture of quantitative

and qualitative characteristics. The process will follow as represented in the following figure, having an overview in the next sections:

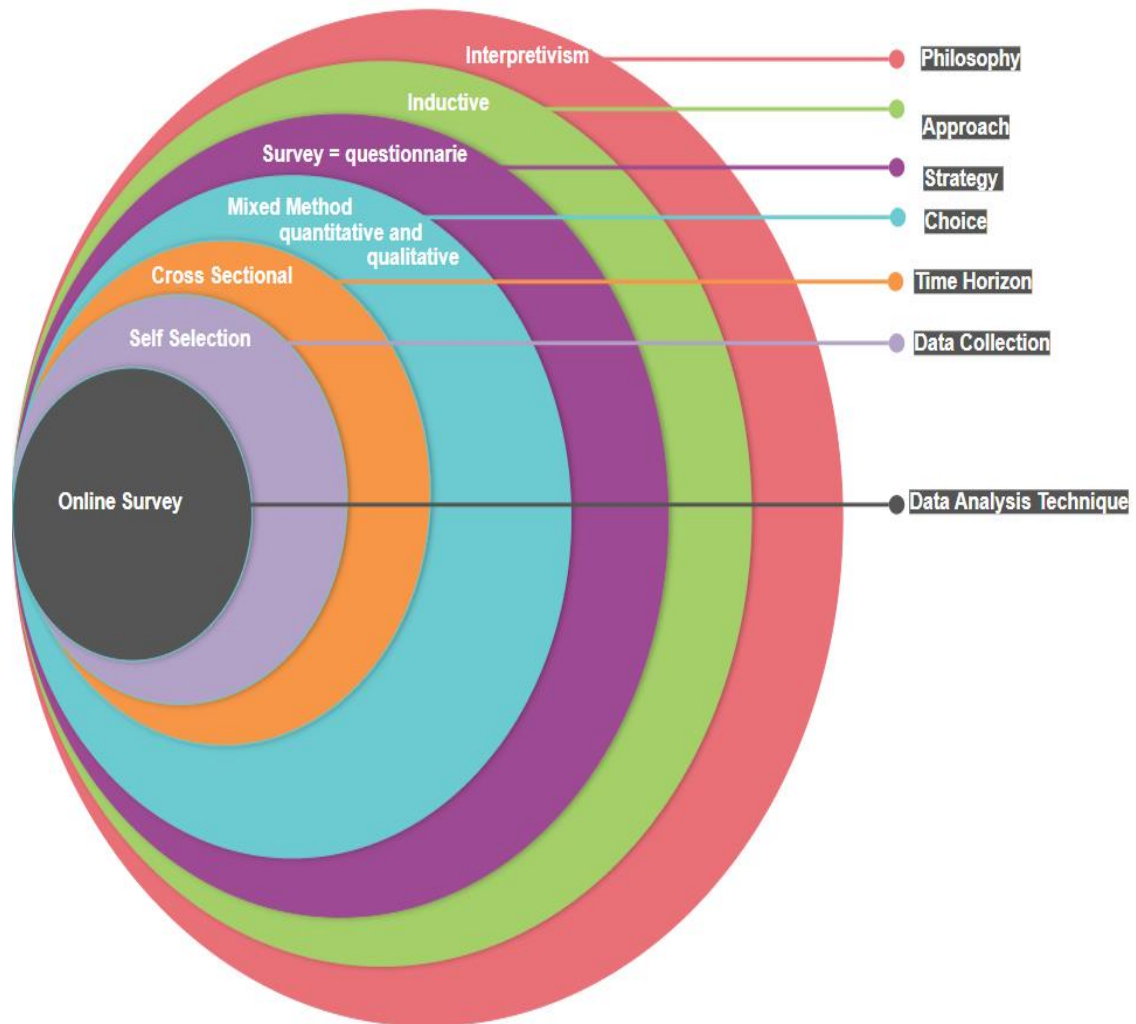


Figure 1 - The Research “onion” (adapted from Saunders et al, 2007, p.132)

2.2 Research Philosophy

The philosophy is to explore the phenomena that better suit the research. Three main philosophies can be considered while carrying out a study, Philosophy of Ontology, Philosophy of Axiology, and the Philosophy of Epistemology. Ontology embraces the nature of reality and incorporates positions more related to the line of objectivism, subjectivism or pragmatism. At the same time, axiology is

inclined to the position and values adopted by the person who conducts the work rather than the studies. Epistemology, in its turn, considers the proper knowledge in a specific field of study (Assignment Help UK 2017).

Since this research focuses on analysing adequate knowledge addressing the facts related to it, which is demonstrated in the epistemology concept, epistemologically, the philosophy can be defined as Interpretivism, positivism, among other styles. Interpretivism connects to the social construction, comprehension. It allows more interactivity, which relates more to the topic agreeing to the skills found on Peer mediation and the significance of teaching its skills in school Settings, bringing up what the population, children, in this case having the sample from childcare practitioners, interpreted from their own actions. Positivism could also be considered for this study, as it is more related to scientific methods. However, it is not a general truth, not fitting in the aims of this analysis because of the likelihood of the results.

2.3 Research Approach

For Saunders et al. (2007), the approaches to research can be defined as Deductive or Inductive. For the present study, as the principal objective is to explore Peer mediation and the significance of teaching the skills found in the approach in school settings, the Inductive method would be more recommended, as the idea is to gather some data and develop a theory from the material acquired. It differs from the deductive approach, which has as its goal to test the hypotheses. Moreover, this inductive approach is associated with the philosophy chosen for this work. As shown in the figure below, they are comprehended in divergent manners.

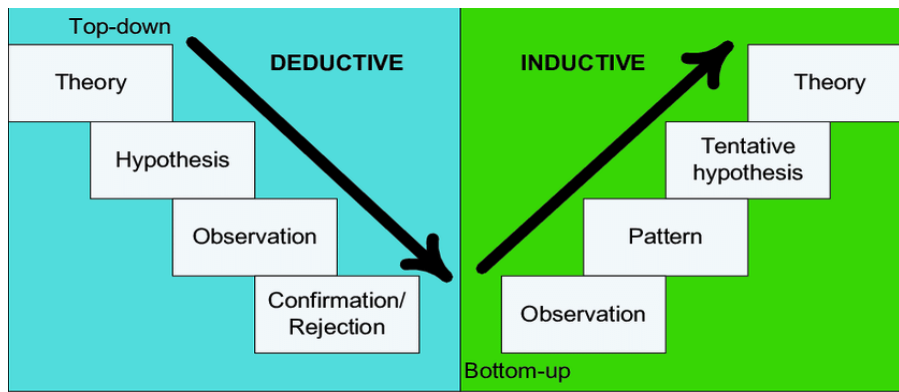


Figure - 2 Distinction between deductive and inductive approach Adapted from Burney (2008:6)

2.4 Research Strategy

According to Saunders et al. (2007), a variety of Strategies can be incorporated, for example, experimental, action, archival research, case study research or a grounded theory, which will be related to the approach presented before. In order to choose the best strategy for the research and the purpose of the study, it is necessary to analyse the appropriate data. In this case, a survey meets with the type of information and the main objectives that are desired, exploring primarily the literature review. The survey will take the form of a questionnaire aiming to obtain the knowledge to get to the answer wanted, testing the hypothesis that arose. Moreover, it seeks to agree with the time horizon described in section 2.7.

2.5 Choice

The choices for conducting a research can be mono-method, which focuses on only one method for the study, whether qualitative or quantitative; while the mixed method comprehends the use of both methods or even more; there is also the multi-method that encompasses several methods. (Saunders et al. 2007)

The most suitable for this research was the Mixed - Method, following the qualitative and quantitative lines in order to achieve better results. On the literature review, a qualitative line was traced, analysing previous works to get to an understanding and develop an idea in a detailed comprehension of the

topic. Further, applying a survey in the form of questionnaires to childcare practitioners, who deal or have dealt with these conflicts on their quotidian, using quantitative methods for data gathered and analysed. However, the analysis of the answers taken, once again, influences the qualitative approach, as it will be compared to previous works to get to a conclusion, seeking to balance the strategies.

2.6 Time Horizon

Setia (2016) explains cross-section studies are usually faster, do not need financial investment, and provide the necessary information to develop a research. On the other hand, it may produce a particular bias due to its target and time balance.

Despite the implications, the cross-sectional style was the best alternative for this study, as it is used when talking about a point of time, like in most surveys. Contrarily, to Longitudinal data, which might take even a year or more to get to a conclusion. The choice was also affected by the timetable provided for the development of the dissertation.

2.7 Data collection and Data analysis Technique

The research will be done by comprehending conflicts children face in school settings, analysing some conflicts and skills that may be taught at this stage, aiming to understand its applications and effectiveness. Although, the questionnaire will be responded to by childcare practitioners who deal with these infants on a daily basis. The sample would be based on self-selection. A range of childcare centers will be invited to participate in order to collect more accurate data congruent with the limitation of time stipulated, respecting the professional's that will share the information.

Firstly, a literature review will be done to have a deeper understanding of the peer mediation already implemented worldwide; which are the principal skills for a mediator, among them, which skills would be efficient for preschoolers; how they would be applied earlier; and which advantages and disadvantages might arise through teaching this knowledge in preschool.

After formulating the hypothesis based on the studies, a questionnaire will be developed and sent via email to as many childcare centers based in Dublin, north and south in the county, requesting authorisation from its management through a security clearance form to get the responses from their practitioners. Having it filled, the company will be asked to share the informed consent with an explanation in the topic followed by a questionnaire to their employers, respecting their desire to participate or not.

2.8 Research Limitations

The low number of studies in Peer Mediation related to children in Preschool, as well as conflict resolution skills for young children, represent the need to be more cautious with the topic. Although the subject has been getting more popular among practitioners in the past few years, it is still new, presenting most of its research in the last two decades.

Therefore, the ethical issue that might present the main limitation for the research is that the population aimed in the study are children. As a consequence, some people might not answer the questionnaire to avoid the exposure of minors. However, their freedom to participate in the process, confidentiality, integrity and honesty will be respected at all moments.

Moreover, the main population of research, children, will not be cognitively able to provide their point of view on the subject or answer the questionnaire, hindering the achievement of more robust results.

Another issue to be considered is the willingness of the companies to engage in the process, which often face enormous demands of work, which has increased in the pandemic time, not offering time for reading the amount of documentation necessary to conduct a study in this matter, reducing the sample number, as it affects the number of practitioners reached.

The current crises in childcare, with the shortage of practitioners and the lack of interest of the majority of these professionals in expanding their knowledge and professional development in the

field due to the devaluation, can affect, again, the willingness to participate.

2.9 Ethical Considerations

Acknowledging children's vulnerability, specific criteria are entailed when developing a research for this group, minimising the risk of harm and following the policies applied. "Ethical considerations in research with children and young people occur at all stages of the research process. They should be considered as an ongoing and reflexive part of the research process throughout the life of a research project and not just as the first hurdle to be overcome." (ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, n.d.).

This topic deserves close attention and care in its lapse in order to protect children's rights. Contemplating TUSLA and DCYA, as the research is being carried out in Dublin, Ireland. (DCYA's Guidance for developing ethical research projects involving children, 2012:8; Guidance for Research Participants Under the Age of 18Tusla - Child and Family Agency, n.d.).

It is important to note that this research is being conducted adequately. All participants will be respected. The ethics form will be filled previously in accordance with the Independent College Dublin ethics committee and its supervisor's guidance. The participation is voluntarily done, as much as confidentiality and anonymity of the participants in all steps. The security clearance filled by the institution, followed by the informed consent for teachers, will be in appendix A and B of this dissertation, previously to the appliance of the questionnaire (Appendix C).

Chapter 3: Presentation of the Data

Regarding the sensitivity of the target audience in line with the cross-sectional style for the research, a survey was carried out through a questionnaire, as explained in chapter 2. The investigation was designed based on the findings of the literature review aiming to answer the central questions in the research "What is the significance of teaching mediation skills for children in schools?"; "which conflict resolution skills can be taught in early ages?" and "What is the role of the teacher on the application of Peer Mediation skills?".

Seeking to cover the Ethical procedures, a security clearance form was developed and sent online to managers in childcare institutions in the form of an invitation to collaborate on the research, available in appendix A. The links were distributed via email and social media directly to the administration team. After filling the form with e-signature and checking the verification box, authorizing the educators to participate in the research, they were requested to redirect two more links with their team members. The first document was the informed consent, available in appendix B. It contained an in-depth explanation about the theme, the way the research was to be conducted, their rights, and a requesting confirmation to participate while filling their names in the gap, date and checking the verification box, followed by the final document, the questionnaire, presented in appendix C, again, having a verification box, implying the willingness to proceed before starting.

All documents were forwarded and can be assessed via the Survey Monkey platform. This website is popular and commonly used to facilitate the creation and acquisition of data, supporting the analysis in various projects, generating links that go directly to the desired web page. In the case of this work, three links were developed, following the pattern described in the previous paragraph.

The questionnaire counted with a balanced mix between closed and open questions, starting with an understanding about the participants' background, followed by an analysis of the conflicts they have witnessed in their classroom, but also allowing the participants to share their own ideas, linked to the

objectives for this research. Thus, the data was provided by a variety of samples in childcare centers in Dublin, having a critical observation of its practitioners, who individually shared their own conclusions about their experience in the field regarding conflicts between peers.

3.1 Questionnaire to Childcare practitioners

The present section will illustrate the questions and their responses demonstrated throughout graphs while describing the questions raised during the primary studies, the objectives aimed with each of them and the answers achieved within its dissemination. Having 4 different childcare centers in Dublin allowed access to the information required, giving confirmation in the company security clearance document, achieving 32 childcare practitioners answering the questionnaire. Even though the number was lower than expected, all the participants showed engagement and completed all the questions.

3.1.1 Current field of work confirmation

From the questionnaire, 100% of the population confirmed that they are currently working in childcare centers. In contrast, no (0%) participants declared to be active in the field.

Question 1- Are you currently working in childcare?

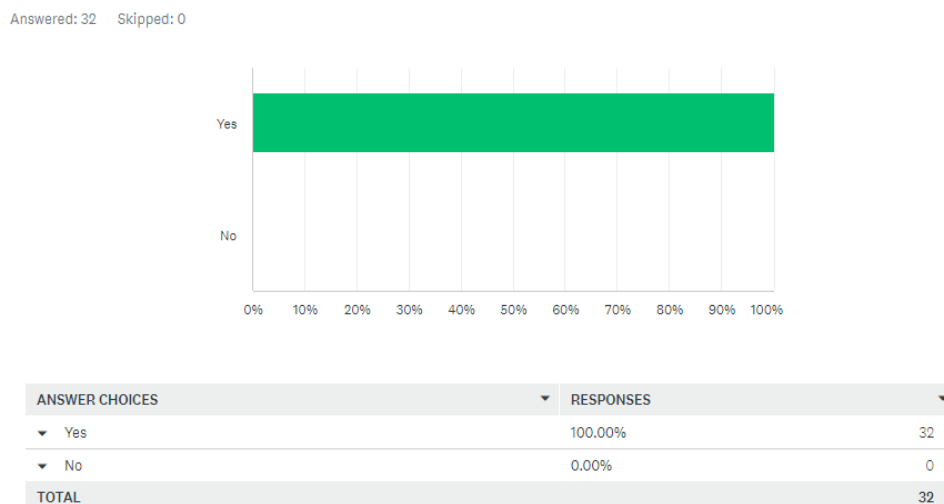


Figure – 3: Graph - Question 1

3.1.2 Region

Only 6.25% of the involved were working in the north side of Dublin, while 93.75% were based in the south part of the county, as demonstrated in graph 2.

Question 2- If yes for the question above, which area of Dublin?

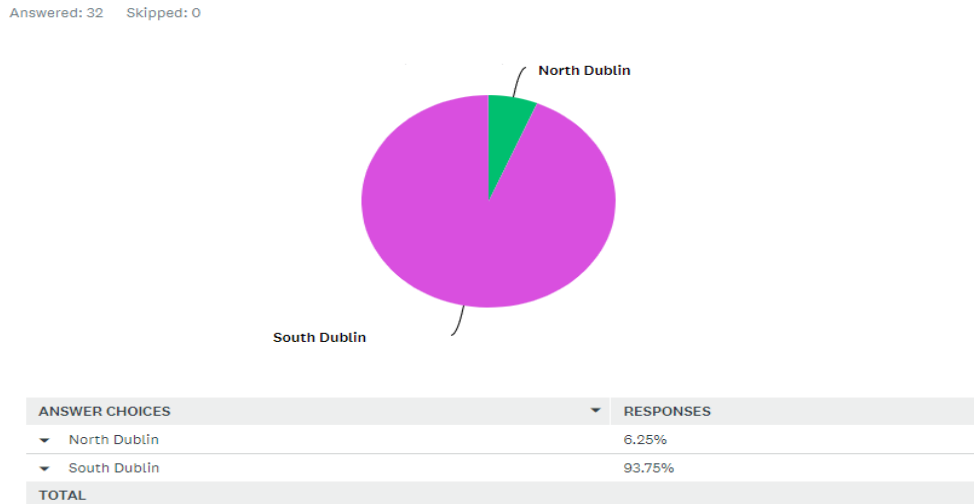


Figure – 4: Graph Question 2

3.1.3 Qualifying hours

18 (57.25%) practitioners affirmed to spend full-time hours in the classroom, only 4 (12,50%) declared to work on a part-time basis, and 10 (31.25%) said that both services are provided by the center they work for. As it is possible to observe in the graph below:

Question 3 - The service offered is

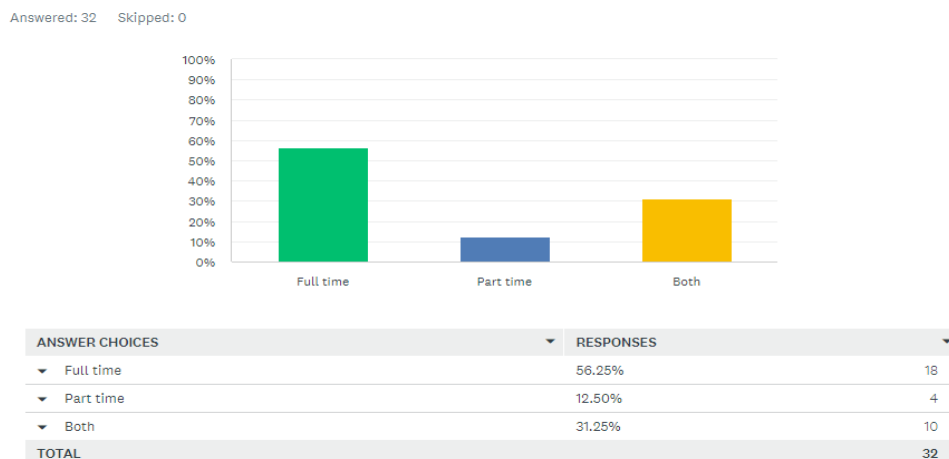


Figure – 5 Graph - Question 3

3.1.4 Type of service offered

As shown in graph question 4, most of the participants work for a private center (53.3%), followed by the community based (25%), and the minority that offers both services (21.88%).

Question 4- The center you work is:

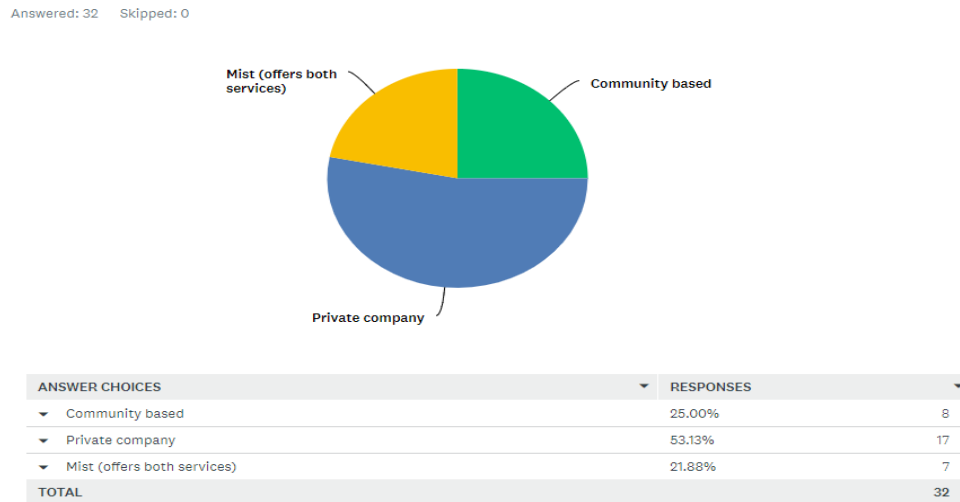


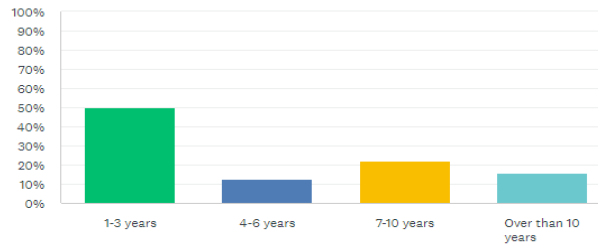
Figure – 6 Graph - Question 4

3.1.5 Professional experience

Regarding the professional experience, as appears in the graph Question 5, just 15.63% of the participants have worked more than 10 years in the field, 12.5% are in the area for 4-6 years, 21.88% have completed 7-10 years as practitioners, which is a low number compared to the half (50%) of the participants that have been worked in childcare only for 1-3 years.

Question 5- How long have you worked in the field?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
1-3 years	50.00% 16
4-6 years	12.50% 4
7-10 years	21.88% 7
Over than 10 years	15.63% 5
TOTAL	32

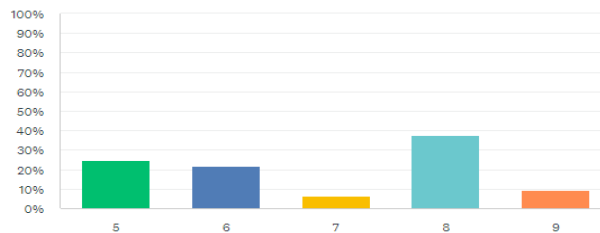
Figure – 7: Graph Question 5

3.1.6 Professional qualification

According to the graph Question 6, 25% of the participants are level 5 in childcare, 21.88% completed level 6, 6.25% are level 7, and 37.50% are undergraduates having done the level 8, 9.38% are level 9, which represents a post-graduation level.

Question 6- What is your FETAC/ QQI level?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
5	25.00% 8
6	21.88% 7
7	6.25% 2
8	37.50% 12
9	9.38% 3
TOTAL	32

Figure – 8: Graph Question 6

3.1.7 Conflicts between peers

In graph question 7, 84.38% affirm that conflicts between peers take part in the routine of the children they work with, while only 15.63% do not have the same thought.

Question 7- Do you think the children you work with face conflicts between peers?

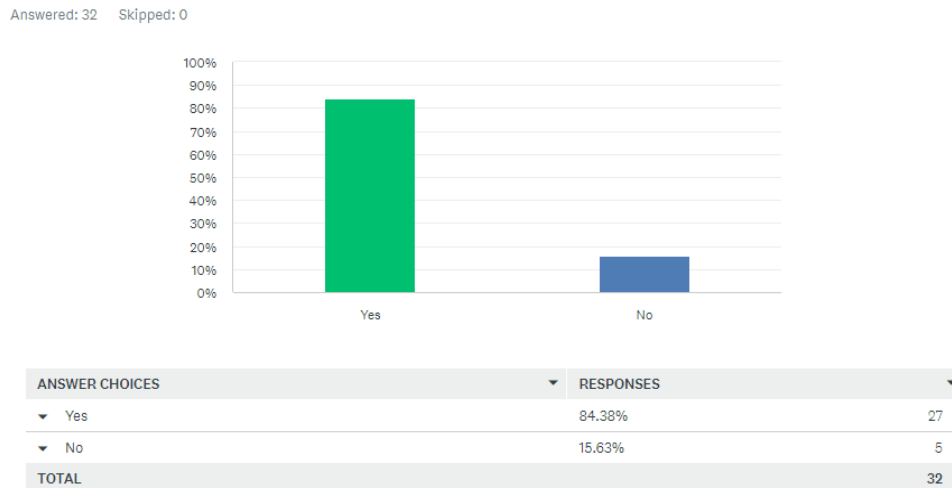


Figure – 9: Graph Question 7

3.1.8 Types of Conflicts in Preschool Rooms

According to the survey, 75% of the conflicts in preschool are triggered by the dispute for toys, 53.13% say children’s disputes are the result of disputes taking turns, 28.13% added that it happens because of the dispute for space, 12,5% have found different reasons for the disputes, as follows in the graph Question 8.

Opened responses that were added by the educators:

“Bullying, physical aggression, communication skills”

“Not listening to each other, whispering and taking sides”

“All of the above”

“All of the above in equal measures. It seems to have more to do with being with other children”

Question 8- Are there conflicts more related to:

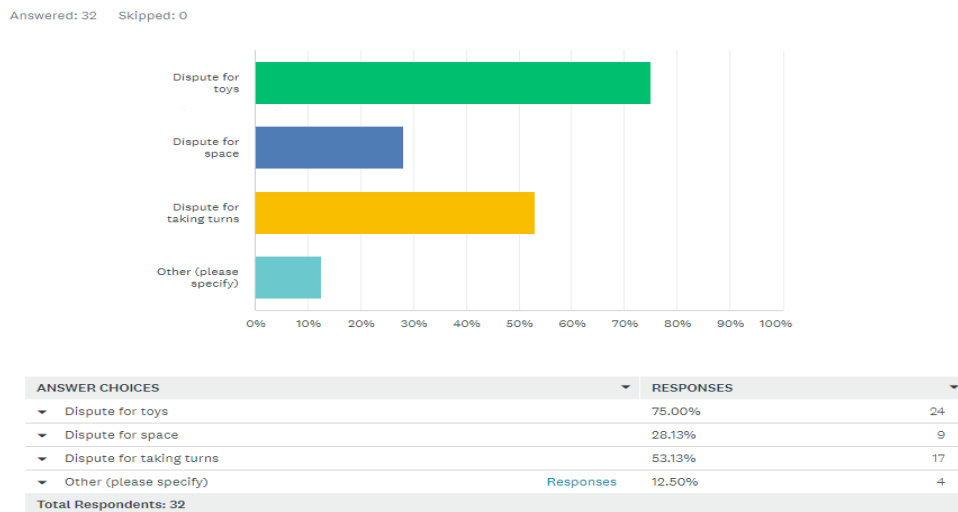


Figure – 10: Graph Question 8

3.1.9 Conflict interventions

Only 3.13% of the participants have denied to get involved in the conflicts faced by children, having the great majority (96.88%) said yes, they step in the quarrels. As the graph Question 9 certifies.

Question 9 - Do you intervene in those conflicts?

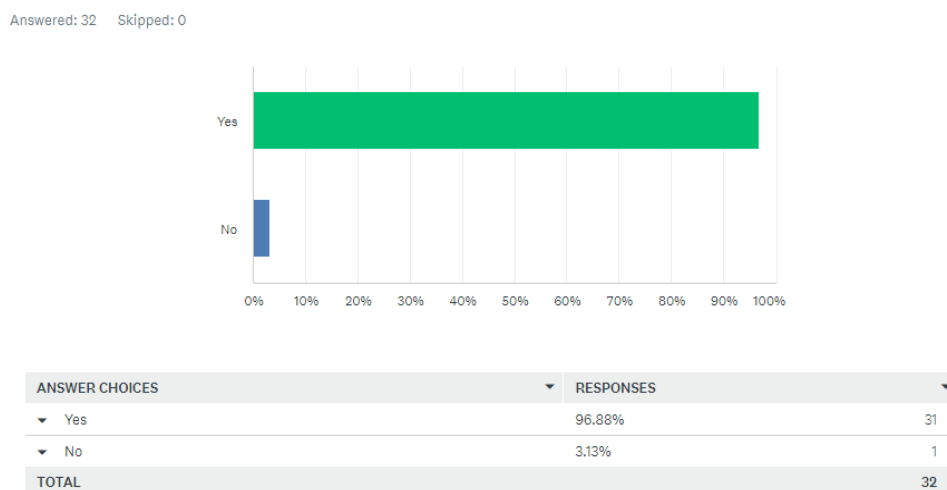


Figure – 11: Graph Question 9

3.1.10 Peer mediation skills

Graph question 10 in the survey manifested the answers in the following way.

Communication skills are known by 93.75% of the participants.

Active listening skills are known by 90.63% of the participants.

Empathy is known as a skill by 87.50% of the participants.

Emotional intelligence is known as a skill by 87.50% of the participants.

Question 10 - Do you know those skills below?

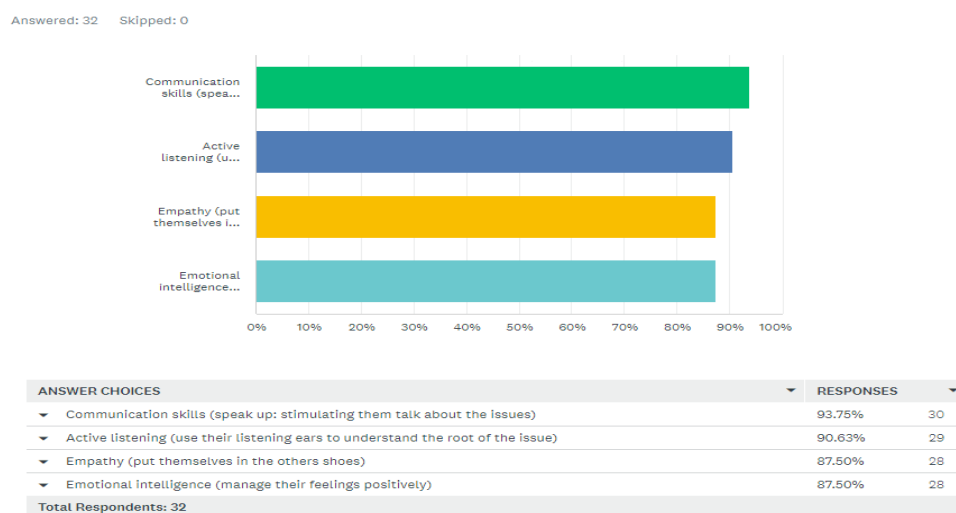


Figure – 12: Graph Question 10

3.1.11 Peer mediation skills used by childcare practitioners

At point participants were free to choose more than one of the options this. As illustrated in graph 11:

96.88% of the professionals affirmed to make use of communication skills while dealing with conflicts in their room;

90.66% of the professionals affirmed to make use of active listening skills while dealing with conflicts in their room;

84.38% of the professionals affirmed to make use of empathy while dealing with conflicts in their room;

84.38% of the professionals affirmed to make use of Emotional Intelligence while dealing with

conflicts in their room.

Question 11 - Have you ever used the following skills to deal with those conflicts? (Click the one(s) you have used)

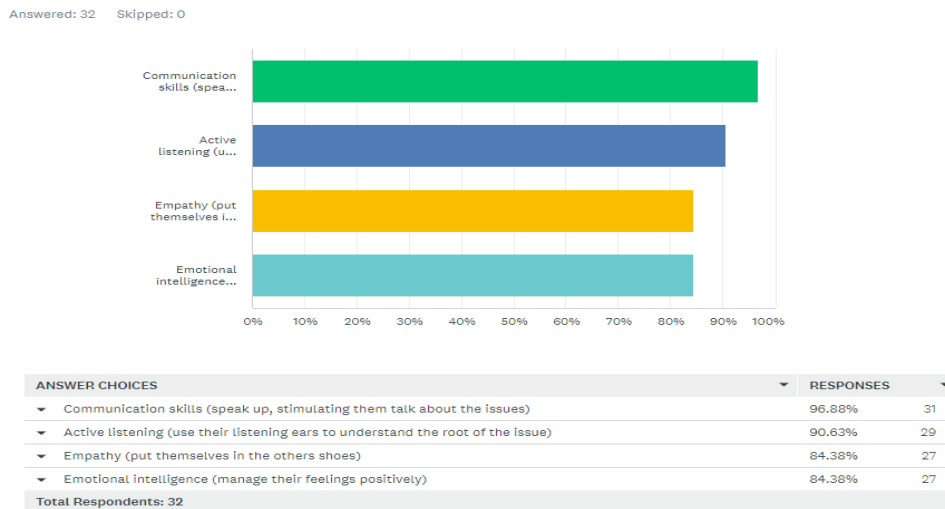


Figure – 13: Graph Question 11

3.1.12 Effectiveness on the application of Peer Mediation Skills

Having been enquired by the effectiveness of Peer mediation Skills:

40.63% of the participants have confirmed the substantiality of the topic,

37.5% of the participants think it is helpful in most of the cases;

21.88% of the participants did not show much faith, saying that it is efficient in some of the cases;

0% of the participants believe that those skills can never be productive.

Question 12- If yes for the question above, did you notice effectiveness in its practices?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 0

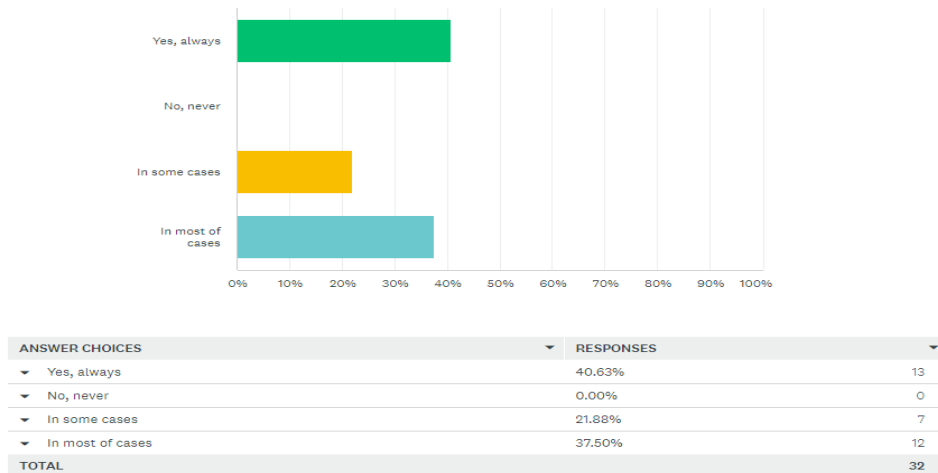


Figure – 14: Graph Question 12

3.1.13 Teaching Peer Mediation skills in Preschool settings

Questioned about the application of mediation skills the educators:

90.63% said yes, they think children are capable of learning those skills;

3.13% answered “I do not know”;

6.25% rely on some of the skills.

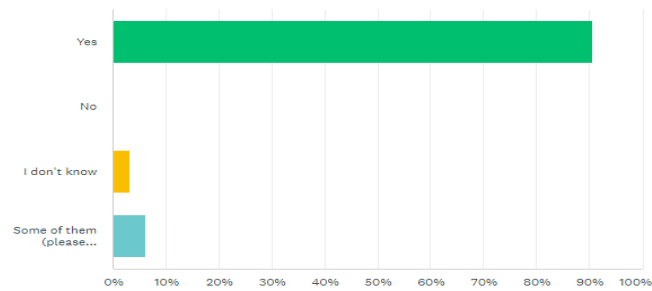
Opened responses:

“Empathy”

“Different strategies for different children. You cannot put them in the same basket”

Question 13 - Do you believe the use of the skills above could be taught for preschoolers in order to reduce conflicts?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	90.63%	29
No	0.00%	0
I don't know	3.13%	1
Some of them (please specify)	6.25%	2
TOTAL		32

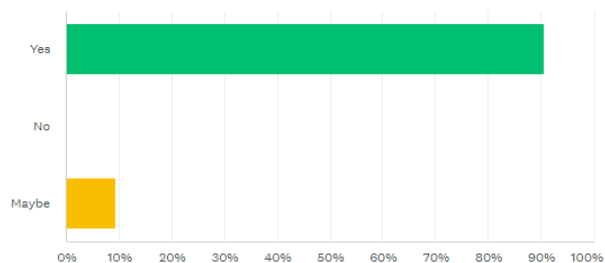
Figure – 15: Graph Question 13

3.1.14 Peer Mediation skills as a preventive practice

Presented in the research (graph question 14) 90.63% of the respondents, could agree that skills to mediate, as mentioned above, can prevent or support children in resolving conflicts now and in the future; for 9.38% it seems to not be clear enough; 0% showed no faith in the approach.

Question 14 - Do you believe the practice of the skills mentioned above can prevent or support children in resolving conflicts now and in the future?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	90.63%	29
No	0.00%	0
Maybe	9.38%	3
TOTAL		32

Figure – 16: Graph Question 14

3.1.15 Peer Mediation Programs popularity between the practitioners

As demonstrated in graph question 15, only 43.75% have been introduced to the practice, versus more than half of them (56.25%) who affirmed not to know about the initiative.

Question 15 - Have you heard about Peer Mediation Programs?

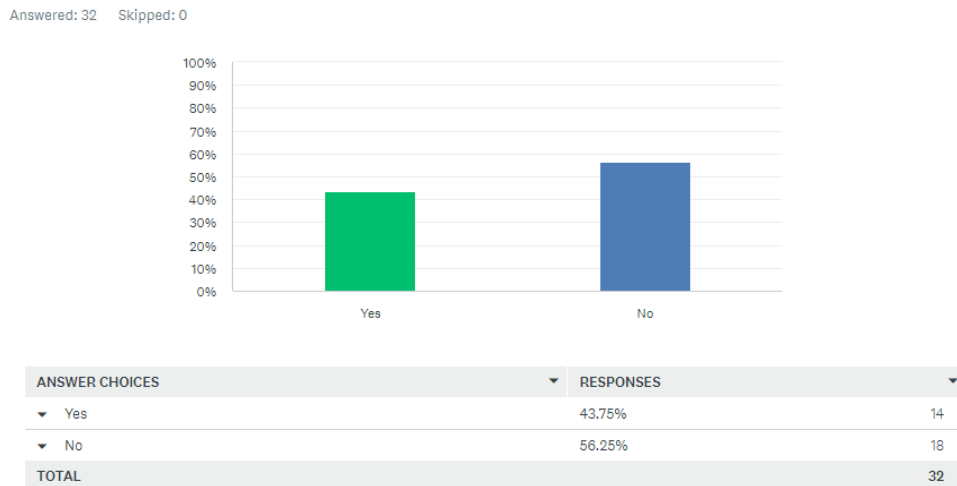


Figure – 17: Graph Question 15

3.1.16 Peer Mediation Programs popularity

For the contributors in the research, peer mediation programs became known as follows in graph question 16:

34.62% had heard about Peer mediation programs in College;

15.58% had their contact with the topic in training courses;

23.08% had found out about the program while doing their own research

26.92% have completed that they had their first contact with Peer Mediation programs in other places.

Opened responses (Others):

“Social media”

“have never heard before”

“no”

“Friends”

“n/a”

“nope”

“from Vanessa”

Question 16- If yes for the answer above, where?

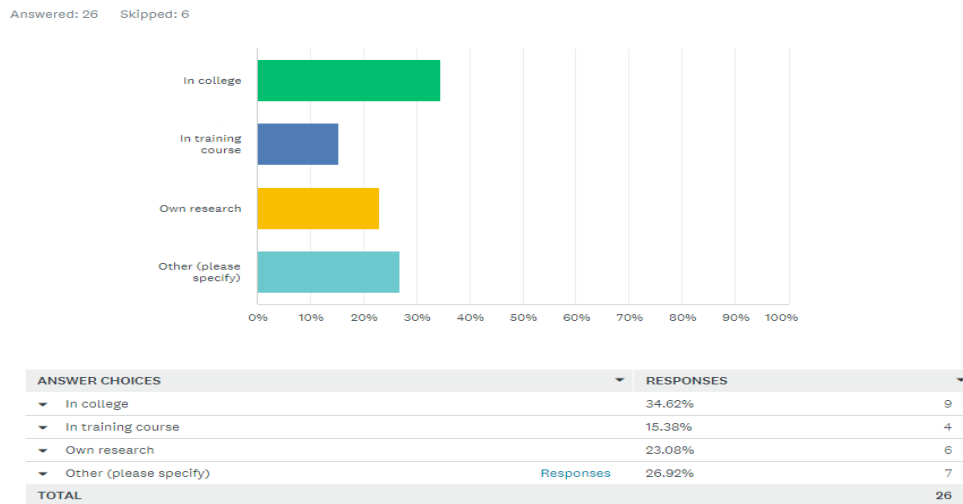


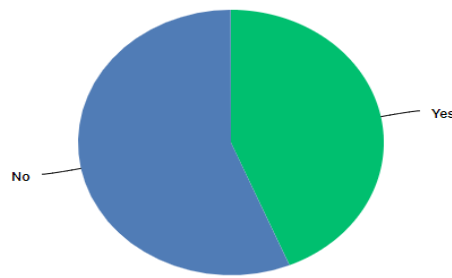
Figure – 18: Graph Question 16

3.1.17 Conflict skills connected to Peer Mediation programs

As appears in the pie below (graph question 17) linking Peer mediation to the conflict skills were revealed in 43.75% of the cases, however a massive number of people (56.25%) has not done any analogy to the topics together.

Question 17 - Do you know the skills mentioned take part in mediation programs?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	43.75%	14
No	56.25%	18
TOTAL		32

Figure – 19: Graph Question 17

3.1.18 Peer Mediation trainings for teachers

Graph question 18, based on the survey, indicates that

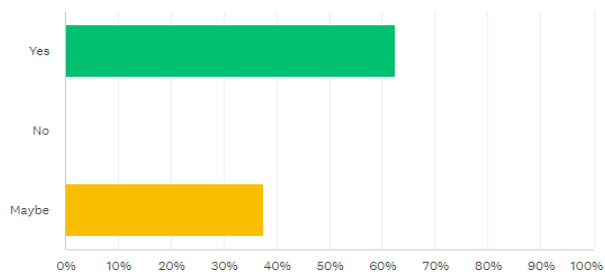
62.50% of the teachers wish to have further training in Peer mediation;

37.50% of the teachers are not sure about its desire;

0% show themselves opposed to the program.

Question 18 - Would you be willing to take training to learn more about Peer mediation?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	62.50%	20
No	0.00%	0
Maybe	37.50%	12
TOTAL		32

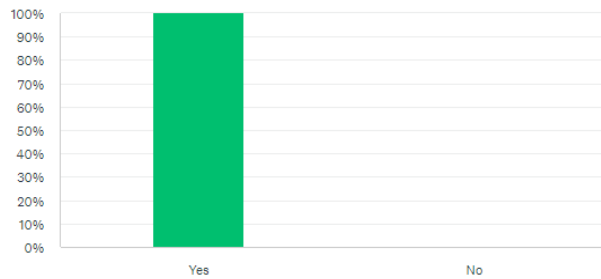
Figure – 20: Graph Question 18

3.1.19 Inclusion of Peer Mediation skills in the preschool curriculum

As shown in graph question 19, all the participants (100%), with no exceptions, agree that these skills are essential and should be added to the curriculum. 0% of the public denied the importance of the inclusion of the practice in preschool settings.

Question 19 - Do you think Peer Mediation skills should be included in the curriculum supporting educators in preschool settings?

Answered: 32 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	100.00%	32
No	0.00%	0
TOTAL		32

Figure – 21: Graph Question 19

Chapter 4: Data Analysis /Findings

This chapter reveals a structured analysis of the data found in the questionnaire answered deliberately by the participants who were supported by the institutions to share their ideas. The primary purpose of the survey was to get an understanding of the substance of implementing Peer Mediation skills for preschool children from the teacher's point of view, investigating the most common conflicts encountered in this stage, and disclosing teachers' level of comprehension in relation to the subject, measuring their beliefs in the implementation of these skills.

As shown in the previous chapter, the survey was forwarded to several institutions in North and South Dublin, but only four childcare centers have completed the security clearance form accepting to take part in the project remaining in the research, achieving the number of thirty two childcare practitioners in total, who successfully engaged in responding to the questionnaire. Observing that the survey was available for three weeks from the 19th of September 2021 to the 8th of October 2021, providing an appropriate time to reach a major population as possible congruent to the research deadlines. Due to this amount of answers and the style observed, qualitative and quantitative analysis can be speculated in this chapter.

4.1 Questionnaire

At first, the questionnaire went through the professional background of the respondents, which can be observed in the graphs question 1 to 6, questions 7 to 9 aimed to discuss about conflicts in preschool rooms, while questions 10 to 14 comprehend skills to mediate for the infants, finalizing in the questions 15 to 19 with an investigation about peer mediation programs, integrating the following analysis:

4.1.1 Background of the respondents

The first question aimed to verify and make sure that all the population would be kin to the topic in the actual moment harmonious to the sample desired. Moreover, understanding that children's behaviour changes regarding the time, as much as the kind of conflict, which would affect the next questions. As represented in the extract, Graph - Question 1, all the professionals affirmed to be actively working in the sector, reaching the aim of this work, to get to the childcare professionals so that they could share the current situation on this site.

In agreement with the initial question, the target public was again verified. However, in this case, it was intended to comprehend also the specific location where the childcare practitioners work. As usual, the North side of most of the cities is seen as underprivileged compared to the South, affecting the level and amount of conflicts. Regarding the areas of Dublin, a poor number of childcare practitioners in the survey work in the north side (only 6.25%). This number weakens the initial intention to compare the types of conflict in both areas.

At this point, it was to understand how long the children and the practitioners spent in the service. Considering that conflicts are likely to initiate and escalate due to the tiredness and stress of spending many hours in the same environment, with the same group and far from the comfort of their families. The numbers of qualifying hours of the participants were balanced; 56.26% work in full-time services, consequently spending the most part of the day with children, which is more likely to generate conflicts.

The purpose of question 4 was to know about the public who attended this place. Concerned that it is more common in community places to find children deprived of essential needs, such as hunger, lack of hygiene, or even exposure to any kind of abuse, one of the factors that trigger conflicts. As shown in graph question 4, the majority of the services achieved are private companies (53.3%) which also affects the comparison to the other services as only 25% is community based. It was also raised to analyse if the experience of the professional might infer or not on the way they see and approach the

conflicts between the children they work with.

Graph question 5 reveals that half of the participants have only 1-3 years of experience. The professional qualification can be a determinant aspect of the expertise of the participants in order to deal with conflicts and knowing strategies to approach them. In the graph Question 6, 25% of the sample has acquired level 5, which meets the minimum standard to initiate a career in the area, 21.88% finished level 6 in childcare, 6.25% have achieved level 7, being the majority of the participants (37.50%) undergraduates, while 9.38% have made it to level 9.

4.1.2 Conflicts in preschool between Peers

In the survey, as validated in the graph question 7, 84.38% believe that conflicts between peers take part in the routine of the children they work with. Notwithstanding, 15.63% do not believe that there are conflicts inserted among the preschoolers attending their classroom. Question 7 aimed to reveal the understanding these professionals have in the definition of conflict as much as the amount of disagreement faced by the children, and their awareness of the issue, which is shown as high in the figure 9 (graph question 7).

To a deeper analysis of the conflicts and their roots, question 8 was set. Although some suggestions were made at this point to support the flow of the questionnaire, it was also offered the chance to the participant to add his own view, as much as select the previous options, as it is possible to observe most of the participants have relied on more than one option. Resulting in 75% of the conflicts in preschool being provoked by the dispute for toys, 53.13% think children's disputes are caused by the disagreement of taking turns, against 28.13% in dispute for space, as follows in the graph Question 8. In addition, it was added that "bullying, physical aggression and communication skills" are also noted in the classrooms. Another participant recommended that "not listening to each other whispering and taking sides" should be considered. Two of the participants stated that "all of the above" issues are seen as ordinary conflict situations in a preschool room, one of them adding that "it

seems to have more to do with other children ". Revealing, again, the huge amount of conflicts in this site.

Question 9 was developed to comprehend whether the childcare practitioners opt to mediate or not on the issues faced by the youngsters they work with. At this point, a single participant has declared to not intervene in the conflicts, while 96.88% said yes, they step in. As the graph Question 9 certifies, verifying teachers as mediators as a topic to be discussed.

4.1.3 Skills to mediate

Question 10 aimed to estimate if the skills encountered in Peer Mediation are individually known by the childcare practitioners demonstrating their familiarity with the topic, having the freedom to select one or more options. Being all the skills famous among most of the participants in the survey, counting with more than 87.5% and above rates.

Complementary to question 10, the practitioners were enquired regarding the application of the skills in order to measure the importance of these practices isolated or in joint in the classroom (Graph question 11).

96.88% of the professionals affirmed to make use of communication skills while dealing with conflicts in their room, encouraging the children to speak up, sharing the issues they are facing, and talking about it;

90.66% of the professionals affirmed to make use of active listening skills while dealing with conflicts in their room, reminding the children to use their listening ears, facilitating the accurate comprehension of the problem;

84.38% of the professionals affirmed to make use of empathy skills while dealing with conflicts in their room, helping the children to try to understand the other party point of view;

84.38% of the professionals affirmed to make use of Emotional Intelligence while dealing with conflicts in their room, stimulating them to manage their feelings positively.

Having confirmed the application of the skills in the question above, they were enquired about its effectiveness, generalizing the cases, and it was asked to estimate the advantages it may perform in the resolution of the disputes. As demonstrated in graph question 12, 40.63% have confirmed the substantiality of the topic, 37.5% think it is helpful in most of the cases, 21.88% did not show much faith, saying that it is efficient in some of the cases. None of the participants believes that those skills can never be productive.

For question 13, it was to find out if the preschool teachers trust that Peer Mediation skills can be taught to their pupils in order to support them in mediating the disagreements between their peers. As seen in graph question 13, the great majority of practitioners (90.63%) expressed no doubt that children are competent enough to learn mediation skills; 3.13% answered: “I do not know”, demonstrating a certain level of worries in this relation; 6.25% rely on some of the skills, being one of them specified that it is “empathy”, and the other one argued that “different strategy for different children, you cannot put them in the same basket” expressing that some skills should be addressed in accordance to the children’s characteristics, but not in generalities.

Again, in question 14, exploring the educators' opinion, it was queried in regard to the results that the exercise of those abilities may have in the present and the long-term of their students' lives. 90.63% have responded affirmatively to this idea, while 9.38% said maybe, expressing to be in the middle for the topic. And (0%) none of the participants present to be utterly incredulous at the practice, as appears in graph question 14.

4.1.4 Peer Mediation Programs

At this stage, it was appraised if the childcare practitioner were familiar with the Peer mediation programs. It was seeking to evaluate the popularity of the program between the participants. As exhibited in graph question 15, only 43.75% have been introduced to the practice, versus more than half of them (56.25%) who affirmed not to know the initiative.

Supporting question 15, it was intended to have a view in the places where Peer Mediation programs are more common and if they are already taught to educators to reproduce the knowledge to their students. The question, as is seen in the graph below, was answered by 26 of these professionals. Having 34.62% of those attesting that they heard about Peer Mediation programs in College, 15.58% had their contact with the topic in training courses, 23.08% had found out about the program while doing their own research, others (26.92%) have completed that they had their first contact with Peer Mediation programs in “social media”, or “friends”.

To the ones who are kin to the program, it was asked if they know the relation of the skills mentioned to the program (graph question 17) to make sure of their level of understanding in the program associated with its abilities. 43.75% affirm to be aware of the connection. However, the majority (56.25%) did not know the interrelation.

Ascertaining their inclination to it. As demonstrated in the graph question, 18 was targeted to evaluate the disposition of these professionals to participate in training to develop these abilities and apply them in their classroom. While 62.50% of the responses were positive, 37.50% were uncertain about this wish, and 0% showed themselves opposed to the program.

As the final question, it was to measure the educators' awareness regarding Peer Mediation skills as a base for all children. As shown in graph question 19, all the participants (100%), with no exceptions, agree that these skills are essential and should be added to the curriculum. 0% of the public denied the importance of having Peer mediation skills as part of the core aims in the early years of education.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, the data presented and analysed in the preceding parts (chapters 3 and 4) in regards to the answers obtained from the childcare practitioners from a small sample in Dublin, works towards meeting the points exposed as crucial in the commencing phase of this research, where it was explored the Peer mediation skills to be introduced for children in Preschool, in line with the methodology indicated, the Mixed - Method standards.

5.1 Preschool Children and conflicts

Initially believed and a stated fact in the foregoing writing, children are also protagonists in conflictual situations since the young phases (Eastern Connecticut State University, n.d.). Additionally, the survey verified this idea in the childcare Centers in Dublin, increasing the perception that those quarrels come mainly from a variety of forms, calling attention to disputes for toys, or taking turns, in consequence of the poor communication encountered among those individuals.

It was inquired that young children would not be able to learn strategies to handle conflicts, putting a question mark in the initial objectives launched in this work. This criticism was not in accordance with the author's beliefs. In spite of that, the investigation brought up a range of active methodologies that have established the child in the center of academic attainment (The Montessori Method, 2021; Early Childhood, updated, 2021), congruent to the modern neuropedagogy observed in Piaget's original analysis (1951; 1952), revealing that preschool children can and have to be acquainted with abilities to solve conflicts, supporting them to be the main characters of the learning process.

5.2 Children in Preschool learning peer mediation skills

In addition to the anterior thought and explored in the first chapter, Crawford and Bodine (1996) affirm that Peer mediation should be attending all levels of students. As it does not exclude young

children, it assumes, again, the central question of this study, inquiring about the introduction of Peer Mediation skills from the early ages.

Although not known from the beginning, problem-solving skills are considered one of the foremost matters to be taught from early ages, included in the curriculum and defined as one of the core competencies in this stage of life, as referred to in the studies above by Jones & Bouffard (2012). Thus, going further than only peer mediation programs, but encompassing a vast group of approaches that aim to work on the practices of conflict resolution for young children, such as the high scope method that seeks to guide children to solve their issues with peers, as introduced in the bibliography noted (Eastern Connecticut State University, n.d.).

As mentioned in the previous chapters, Mediation, more specifically, Peer mediation, helps the children in schools in developing some key skills in the resolution of conflicts, stressing communication as one of the requirements and understanding that these practices may be shared in the first years of life. As a result, they are becoming one of the most effective practices to avoid and prevent future disagreement, observed in critical connection to the authors cited in the literature review (Coakley, 2019; Johnson and Jonhson, 1996).

However, the concepts of peer mediation are famous and were in the first instance designed for primary and secondary students (Eddington, 2002); It was disclosed in the survey that half of the preschool teachers did not recognise this theory corresponding to the few references found in regards to children and peer mediation. On the other hand, it is almost unanimous among the contributors that interventions are necessary, meaning that they usually act as mediators towards children's disagreements. This brings to reflection that these interventions may not be guided appropriately in these centers, and do not offer, many times, the chance for young children to start to wonder possibilities to manage outcomes for these conflicts. In this way, the new methodologies are taken apart, turning back to the teacher-led context. Turning evident, once again, the substance of the initial goals of this research, where children should be taught mediation skills, regulating the level of

conflicts in preschool settings.

Beer and Packard (2012) perceived several abilities which may help the mediator during the intervention. Johnson and Johnson (1996), equivalent to Vankoughnett (1998) thoughts, contemplated negotiation and mediation skills for peers, giving prominence to communication, active listening, problem solving, and conflict resolution abilities, attested later in the survey.

The skills to mediate considered in the course of this research were communication, active listening, empathy and emotional intelligence skills, as it aligns Peer Mediation abilities to the proficiency accepted by the methods already shared in the childcare settings (Communication: Children | VLS, n.d.; McAuslan, 2015; Eisenberg et al., 2011). Its accomplishment was endorsed by the professionals in Dublin, who responded to the questionnaire, which often use those skills to address the disputes faced in their classroom.

5.3 Preschool Teachers as Mediators

In regard to Howes (1999) and Pianta (1993) opinion, as explored in the reports of this work, the teachers' interventions are really important in students' lives. Highlighting the value of what is learned in early childhood can affect this generation for their entire lives, addressed by Kaushik and Marwaha (2020). Yet, the questionnaire demonstrated that a significant part of these professionals is not prepared to deal actively with conflicts as they are not familiar to Peer mediation. It becomes clear the lack of confidence in the participants in that sense, even though they have a certain level of education and experience in the field.

Furthermore, the data obtained attests to exhibit disposition of childcare educators in having more training to promote their abilities and corroborate to the resolution of the conflict between peers, straightening this field. As well as give rise to more arguments to peer mediation and other conflict resolution methods as a requisite to amplify this idea.

Conclusion

Based on the general findings in this study, conflicts between peers are a recurrent matter in Preschool settings, confirming the importance of teaching these youngsters skills to learn how to deal with these issues. (K-12 STEM Education: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice, 2017; Kaushik and Marwaha, 2020)

Many practices to reduce, prevent and treat conflicts between peers are already included in the kindergarten curriculum in the majority of the approaches are designed for early ages around the globe, as discussed in the previous chapters (Eastern Connecticut State University, n.d.; Early Childhood, updated, 2021). However, some of them do not clarify its substance, presenting some gaps in the literature, consequently, not providing the necessary tools for the application of the method.

Peer mediation itself focuses more on the primary and secondary school students, according to the literature encountered (Schrumpf et al. 1997). However, the researcher observed that peer Mediation skills could be successfully taught in preschool settings for the sample in the questionnaire aligned to the authors mentioned throughout this work (Coakley, 2019; Johnson and Jonhson, 1996).

Generally, the methods to resolve conflicts, such as Peer mediation, adopt social and communication skills, including active listening, empathy and emotional intelligence as it is seen as necessary and possible to be introduced from this age. Very often teachers play the mediator role, applying skills found in the programs supporting the students in resolving conflicts. Still, a significant part of the time, these professionals are not aware of it, as observed in the survey.

Further training is compelled in this field, enabling the qualification of these educators to work more accurately in the resolutions of these disputes. As much as providing an understanding of the stages to mediate, which can be installed in subsequent achievements. In summary, this means that the childcare practitioner is the one to act as a mediator empowering children to come up with its

outcomes, comprehending that children in preschool are not mature enough to take the role, but the skills can be aligned to other skills already designed to this stage.

It is essential to notice that further studies are required to comprehend how these concepts can be introduced on a daily childcare basis, respecting children's activities and level of cognition. Introducing the topic through role play using puppets or the children, games, and books could be supportive in this matter; again, an observatory analysis would be more solid to clarify it.

Another issue to be highlighted is that children are singular individuals. Their potential can be externalized in a variety of ways, as much as some of them could have more comprehension of the topic than the others. Thus, Peer mediation skills are not mandatory at this phase but can work in favour of children and adults around them.

This research was firstly designed to be conducted in the observational style, aiming to investigate closer and in-depth, inside a voluntary classroom in Dublin while analyzing the most punctual conflicts faced among preschool children, the reaction of the practitioners towards it, further exploring the introduction of Peer Mediation skills at this phase, which could have resulted in more realistic data, being more recommended style in subsequent reviews. Therefore, it was not possible regarding the time horizon provided to its completion together with the ethical issues raised by the Ethical committee.

The sample analyzed could have been more prominent as well as the population. Still, significant findings were achieved within the methodology approach, where the childcare practitioners could address the topic and its implications. Still, it is noteworthy that the observational model would allow more consistency in the final findings. The author suggests larger samples and longitudinal data for future studies, analysing in a more extensive manner, observing and investigating the changes achieved within the approach when taught to preschool children by well trained educators, as much as it is proven to be positive for other levels.

Besides not being viewed in this research, Dublin hosts a multicultural population (All non-Irish

nationals in Ireland - CSO - Central Statistics Office, 2021), culminating in professionals and children coming from a variety of countries, which raises this importance to be taken into consideration for future analyses.

Reflection

I have been teaching for over the past ten years. For seven years, I worked as a language teacher in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools in Brazil. Moreover, since I came to Ireland almost three years ago, I have worked in childcare centers, having the opportunity to meet and deal with children from several groups of age and a variety of nationalities. Throughout this experience, I could note some conflicts dealt with daily by this group, which may consequently affect their future behaviour.

After studying more profoundly about the ways of conflict resolution, reading, and doing some self research, I found some studies in "Peer mediation". I have learned that Peer mediation programs are already adopted in some countries, such as Canada, Australia and the United States of America, to support children and teenagers, providing them training to develop skills and autonomy to face conflicts and make interventions in schoolmates quarrels. Furthermore, the same style was implemented in early ages settings in Australia, when one child used mediation abilities to support additional need classmates, having fantastic outcomes for all parties involved, helping children in their current and future development, which caught my attention.

There are many contradictions on what should or should not be taught for Preschoolers. On the other hand, most of the researchers agree that what is learned at this stage is going to be taken for life. I believe that children can be introduced to peer mediation skills and present brilliant results.

At the beginning of this work, several ethical issues arose by the ethical committee, which has changed the course of the research. However, I can understand it is a sensitive topic, I believe it was covered entirely, ensuring the children's safeguarding in all matters in the case of observational research. Undoubtedly, these complications have negatively influenced the development of this work, not only in time but also in my emotions and conviction regarding the accomplishments, as I still believe that the observational style would have presented more substantial results. It's also worthy to note that the support

I had from my supervisor, Genn Lynch, who supported me from the beginning, helped me to overcome these obstacles, and achieve new goals.

I could realise within this dissertation that this area is vaster than I thought, where problem-solving skills, not only Peer mediation, are developed inside the classrooms, counting with several approaches, encompassing a range of abilities. However, the ones mentioned in the survey presented throughout the work to be critical in training, as much as well designed to be passed to children.

Comparing these studies to the questionnaire, I have realised that in Dublin, the professionals in this field have multiple paths on the understanding of these methods, which deserves more attention and investment from the companies. I believe that this work will be valid in supporting this matter, awakening many professionals to engage in further qualifications to help young children in dealing with peer conflicts.

As an international student, I faced several personal and social obstacles during this work, which I can say have taught me along, mainly, developing emotional intelligence. I am not sure if I will become a recognised mediator, as first desired, but certainly, I will apply the knowledge acquired in every sphere of my life. As a teacher I am going to work based on the Peer Mediation principles, offering to my pupils the opportunities to solve their own conflicts, teaching them all the skills mentioned above. I am confident that these abilities will support them as much as they support me.

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Appendicies

Appendix A Company Security Clearance

INDEPENDENT COLLEGE DUBLIN

Company Security Clearance

Name: Vanessa Goncalves da Silva

Learner Number: 51710447

Dissertation Title: “Peer Mediation: The significance of teaching mediation skills for children in school settings”

Company Security Clearance

I/We agree that the above-named learner may undertake a dissertation of the nature indicated above and that she will be given access to appropriate information sources within our Organisation related to conflict situations children may face in preschool, however there will be no disclosure of private information, no names will be revealed. Only the data collected in the questionnaire will be analysed and used for the research purpose.

I/We agree that copies of the finished project will be made available for assessment by staff of Independent College Dublin and/or relevant external examiners

Company Name:

E-signature:

- I agree

Position:

Date:

Note to Learner:

Appendix B INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Peer Mediation: “The significance of teaching mediation skills for children in school settings”

Dear Practitioners,

I am Vanessa Goncalves da Silva, a student in the Master degree program in Dispute resolution at Independent College Dublin; this project is supervised by Glenn Lynch. The Research Ethics Committee has approved the project.

“Peer mediation” is a kind of Dispute resolution already adopted in some countries to support children, providing them training to develop skills to face conflicts and make interventions in schoolmates quarrels showing fantastic outcomes for all parties.

This research aims to analyse the significance of introducing mediation skills, seen in those training for children. Studying the earlier interventions to avoid conflicts between peers, such as bullying and physical or relational aggression, often starts in schools from infancy. Children may become great mediators when stimulated and guided, reducing the level of stress in the classroom and children’s environment. Studies show when a friend of the same age, same language intervenes, the results are positive.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

In this study, you will be asked to answer the questionnaire regarding your experience.

The research consists of 3 steps.

1. The company will be invited to participate in the research, if accepted, the management team will fill the document of security clearance.

2. The childcare practitioners will receive the online questionnaire. However, no one will be addressed.

No names will be mentioned.

3. The practitioners will send back the online questionnaire to be analysed.

TIME COMMITMENT

The study typically takes 10 days to be sent, approved, filled and sent back.

September 20: Security clearance form to be sent to creche.

September 22: Release the questionnaire to practitioners

September 23 to 30: Receive the questionnaire answered.

PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

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

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

You have the right to have your questions about the procedures answered (unless answering these questions would interfere with the study's outcome. A full de-briefing will be given after the study)

If you have any questions as a result of reading this information sheet, you should ask the researcher before the study begins.

CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY

The data I collect does not contain any personal information about you or your child. [describe as appropriate. Describe your intentions regarding use of the data, for use in your dissertation and e.g., presentation at conferences, publication, etc. In doing so, make clear the extent to which individual participants will or will not be identifiable, as appropriate]

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

I and/or Glenn Lynch will be glad to answer your questions about this study at any time. You may contact my supervisor at glenn.lynch@independentcolleges.ie or (01) 877 3900.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE: “Peer Mediation: The significance of teaching mediation skills for children in school settings”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

- (1) you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet,
- (2) questions about your participation in this study have been answered satisfactorily,
- (3) you are aware of the potential risks (if any), and
- (4) you are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion).

Learner Name:

VANESSA GONCALVES DA SILVA

Learner’s signature:

- I agree

Participant’s Name:

- *I agree*

Date:

Appendix C - Questionnaire

RESEARCH DISSERTATION:

Peer Mediation: The Significance of teaching mediation skills for children in school settings

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 Survey Monkey, and the data collected will be stored online in an electronic format protected by a password. Information such as name, email address or IP address will not be collected by the platform. As a result of this, all responses are completely anonymous, and no identification is required.

Aim

The research aim is to understand the significance of teaching mediation skills in school settings.

Declaration

This research is being carried out in accordance with the
Guidance for Research Participants Under the Age of 18

(available at: <https://www.tusla.ie/research/tusla-research-office/guidance-for-research-participants-under-the-age-of-18/>)

Concerns

In case you have any doubts or concerns in relation to this research, you are welcome to contact the research supervisor, Mr. Glenn Lynch B.L. (glenn.lynch@independentcolleges.ie) and the research candidate Miss Vanessa Goncalves da Silva (vanessa.mfr@gmail.com), who is a registered student at Independent College Dublin undertaking the degree of Master 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 with the questionnaire, you are automatically indicating that:

You have READ and AGREED with the above information.

You agree to participate in this research VOLUNTARILY.

You are 18 years or over.

Thank you for your time and for assisting me in the completion of my master's degree.

1. Are you currently working in a childcare setting in Dublin?

Yes

No

2. If yes for the question above, in which area?

North Dublin

South Dublin

3. The service offered is

Full time

Part time

Both

4. The center you work is

Community based

Private company

Mist (offers both services)

5. How long have you worked in the field?

1-3 years

4-6 years

7-10 years

Over than 10 years

6. What's your FETAC / QQI level?

5

6

7

8

9

7. Do you think the children you work with face conflicts between peers?

Yes/ No

8. Are these conflicts more related to

Dispute for toys

Dispute for space

Dispute for taking turns

Other (please specify)

9. Do you intervene in those conflicts?

Yes

No

10. Do you know those skills below?

Communication skills (speak up: stimulating them talk about the issues)

Active listening (use their listening ears to understand the root of the issue)

Empathy (put themselves in the others shoes)

Emotional intelligence (manage their feelings positively)

11. Have you ever used the following skills to deal with those conflicts? (Click the one(s) you have used)

Communication skills (speak up, stimulating them talk about the issues)

Active listening (use their listening ears to understand the root of the issue)

Empathy (put themselves in the others shoes)

Emotional intelligence (manage their feelings positively)

12. If yes for the question above, did you notice effectiveness in its practices?

Yes, always

No, never

In some cases

In most of cases

13. Do you believe the use of the skills above could be taught for preschoolers in order to reduce conflicts?

Yes

No

I don't know

Some of them (please specify) _____

14. Do you believe the practice of the skills mentioned above can prevent or support children in resolving conflicts now and in the future?

Yes

No

Maybe

15. Have you heard about Peer Mediation Programs?

Yes

No

16. if yes for the answer above, where?

In college

In training course

Own research

Other (please specify)

17. Do you know the skills mentioned take part in peer mediation programs?

Yes

No

18. Would you be willing to take training to learn more about Peer Mediation?

Yes

No

Maybe

19. Do you think Peer Mediation skills should be included in the curriculum, supporting educators in preschool settings?

Yes

No