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Effects of Mediation on Employee Efficiency in Human Services Centers and in Other Organizations that Serve Vulnerable Populations

Mariya Mironova

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Effects of Mediation on Employee Efficiency in Human Services Centers and in Other
Organizations that Serve Vulnerable Populations

by

Mariya Mironova

A Dissertation Presented to the
Halmos College of Arts and Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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**Nova Southeastern University
Halmos College of Arts and Sciences**

This dissertation was submitted by Mariya Mironova under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the Halmos College of Arts and Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to hundreds of thousands of social service providers, victim advocates, mental health and medical professionals, criminal justice employees, youth specialists, and other workers and volunteers who help adults and children in need overcome adversity, strengthen their life skills, and become self-sufficient and successful. The paper is also written in dedication to human services management and business owners who make critical decisions daily to protect their staff members and vulnerable populations. Thank you all for a profound difference that you make in our communities.

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List of Keywords

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Caring professions

Conflict Resolution (CR)

Human services

Mediation

Employee efficiency/productivity/performance

Vulnerable populations/people in need

Abstract

Social workers and other professionals who offer caring services to vulnerable populations are oftentimes exposed to stressful environments. Employee burnout, vicarious traumas, and other stressors jeopardize worker's efficiency. According to previously conducted research studies, organizational and interpersonal conflicts may be effectively addressed through mediation. However, the studies do not address the use of mediation for the resolution of workplace disputes in centers of human services. This study explores effects of mediation on worker's efficiency in such centers, and this study proposes that mediation positively affects worker's efficiency. The proposed methodology for testing this proposition involves a single case study with the mixed method design that entails quantitative and qualitative methods of studying documentation and the qualitative analysis of interviews. The goal of this dissertation is to enhance the understanding of the mediation potential in human services; thusly, advancing worker's improvement in human services. The findings of the quantitative study demonstrate visible declining tendencies of work stoppages with the continuous use of mediation. However, significant correlations are only recorded between four out of ten studied variables; causality may not be concluded. The findings of the analysis of three subcases show the connection between mediation and workplace performance. The findings of the interview analysis demonstrate positive effects of mediation but warn that other variables should be considered. This researcher intends for the findings to advance the knowledge of mediation for caring professionals.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Organizational Concerns and Ways to Address Them

Organizations must find ways to handle workplace issues at early stages to prevent conflicts escalation that results in significant business losses (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015). The survey report composed by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2015) shows that major constituents of workplace conflicts involve personality differences and work-style dissimilarities; moreover, issues related to employee performance, goal setting, support systems and employee resources are also vital indicators of conflict dynamics. The emergence of conflicts is primarily related to power dynamics and employment deals (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015). For example, the study pinpoints that negative influences of workplace disputes are more feasible for employees during their interactions with managers; conflicts “over promotions, contracts, ... and absence” appear to be very demotivating (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015, p. 18). The survey based on the study of over two thousand employees in Great Britain demonstrates negative outcomes of workplace conflicts such as decreased motivation, poor employee commitment, jeopardized employee wellbeing, and low productivity.

The threatening effects of workplace tensions are currently observed in both public and private organizations; at the same time, the research shows that interpersonal clashes are more pertinent to the public field and to voluntary services (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015). Workplace harassment and bullying behaviors are more common in public agencies (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015). The size of organizations also plays an essential role in conflict dynamics. Small

businesses that have less than 10 workers tend to address tensions at work informally with a high degree of efficiency. Larger organizations though seem to have a limited ability when dealing with conflicts due to the size and the complexity of companies' structures; these "organizations may be less social, and we may be less able to resolve our differences with open conversations, than we might like to think" (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015, p. 3). With this being said, the above listed consequences of workplace issues such as low motivation and decreased loyalty and poor health and professional efficiency are very likely to be caused by "seniority and power dynamics" and "issues at the core of the employment deal" (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015, p. 18). Moreover, the conflicts are dependent on a context and a company size; they cause a significant damage and pose serious concerns to organizations.

Conflicts may be approached through different lenses. Staff oftentimes attempts to resolve conflicts without involving any independent and neutral party. For example, employees may have informal discussions where issues are addressed with a manager, a human resource professional, or with someone else such as a family member or a friend (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015). While this method is widely used, the conducted study denies its visible efficiency. Employees also respond to workplace clashes by contemplating to quit their jobs and to start looking for new professional opportunities (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015). Another way of addressing workplace conflicts is to follow formal procedures; the conducted study highlights that staff members sometimes follow the formal protocol of filing grievances and complaints. However, the use of formal procedures while

addressing conflicts is quite uncommon (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015). Ignoring workplace issues is another strategy that is used by a quarter of workers; they prefer not to actively respond to problems in the workplace since conflicts are oftentimes not worth the battle (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015).

Sometimes conflicts are addressed with the support of organizational leaders. For instance, using mediation in workplace environment addresses different disputes; however, it is not a popular method of managing conflicts (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015). Another way of dealing with problems within organizations is to have company leaders intervene to improve workplace climate since “line managers play a central role in creating, avoiding or resolving conflict” (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015, p. 22). Finally, using appropriate organizational procedures to manage conflicts may be helpful, however, like mediation, such approach to the resolution of disputes is uncommon. (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015, p. 22).

Organizations that provide caring services are concerned with workplace issues as well. Problems are oftentimes related to the secondary traumatic stress phenomenon since “for therapists, child welfare workers, case managers, and other helping professionals involved in the care of traumatized children and their families, the essential act of listening to trauma stories may take an emotional toll”, which is likely to jeopardize employee productivity (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2011, p. 1). Workers exposed to hearing stories about traumatic episodes of their clients are dramatically affected, which is likely to decrease their professional functioning and self-

efficacy. Negative impacts are results of being hypervigilant and fearful, of feeling hopeless, angry, exhausted, and guilty, of suffering from insomnia, and due to having physical ailments (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2011). Vicarious traumas may emotionally depress and cognitively distress helping professionals to the point of being unable to provide services to clients; eventually, this results in quitting jobs or even leaving the field of human services (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2011). According to conducted studies, nearly 26 percent of clinicians who work with vulnerable populations tend to experience symptoms of secondary traumatic stress and related conditions that entail compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and burnout (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2011). The research stresses that highly empathetic individuals and female workers are more prone to suffer consequences from a secondary trauma.

The aforesaid workplace problem in the field of social services is pervasive; managers and company leaders address the issue through employing a variety of assessment tools to have a better understanding of how vicarious traumas are linked with professional functioning and of indicators associated with employee distress (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2011). Formal secondary traumatic stress assessments and reflective supervision models are utilized in many organizations aimed at providing services to vulnerable populations. Workplace issues related to employee exposure to secondary traumas are addressed through preventive measures including but not limited to psychoeducation, providing clinical supervision sessions, promoting trainings, self-care classes, advocating for reasonable caseloads, and highlighting the importance of workouts and a well-balanced diet. A variety of intervention techniques to

improve workplace situation among helping professionals entails cognitive-behavioral approaches, mindfulness, the adjustment of caseloads, informal meetings to process employee exposure to clients' crises, reviews and changes in job assignments, use of employee assistance services, etc. (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2011).

Many social services centers are seriously concerned about employee retention. Social workers are more affected by stress than other professionals who offer caring services since the former must deal with vulnerable populations that face serious life challenges daily (Morris, 2005). Stress is likely to have a deleterious effect on workplace environment resulting in absenteeism, decreased productivity, and problems related to the recruitment of employees and staff turnover (Morris, 2005). Organizations that offer social services tend to put pressures on their employees through a "high workload, short deadlines, experience of re-organization, lack of support from managers and negative experiences of complaints procedures", which adds to risks of low rates of retention (Morris, 2005, p. 348). Additionally, many social workers experience problems with interpersonal relationships and face conflicts between professional roles and ideals of social work due to the absence of sufficient resources, bureaucracy, social justice issues, and demotivating company culture (Morris, 2005).

Workplace conflicts among social workers are pervasive since everyone is overwhelmed with heavy caseloads, which results in employee inability to cover for an absent team member, blame and negativity towards the employee once he or she comes back to work (Morris, 2005). Moreover, it is not uncommon for social work centers to create the environment suggestive of sick leave disapproval and blame (Morris, 2005). The afore said leads to agencies' concerns related to maintaining high employee retention

rates. The problem with high rates of employee turnover in social work is addressed through stressing the importance of promoting healthy communication skills, promoting effective decision-making process, and attending to personal and professional needs of a team (Morris, 2005). If an organization shows a genuine interest in employee problems and offers appropriate support, it is more likely to improve retention rates and prevent the increased turnover of social workers (Morris, 2005).

Child welfare agencies are perturbed about high rates of staff turnover as well; employee emotional stress, their decreased performance, and feelings of depersonalization result in serious problems (Bednar, 2003). Today, the turnover percentage between 40 and 90 is not uncommon. The afore said leads to poor efficiency in child welfare organizations since increased turnover is likely to cause dramatic losses of well-qualified individuals and “result in a continual influx of inexperienced and inadequately trained workers, forcing abused and neglected children who need consistent relationships and care to adapt again and again to the unpredictable” (Bednar, 2003, p. 7). Therefore, child welfare agencies need to retain their professionals (Bednar, 2003). Turnover is highly correlated with employee job satisfaction and burnout. Additionally, workplace atmosphere in child welfare businesses is likely to affect employee turnover and efficiency ratios (Bednar, 2003). Child welfare agencies are also concerned about workplace conflicts that have deleterious impacts on employee performance, clients’ satisfaction, and potential risks of maltreatment (Bednar, 2003). Good climate at work is likely to have a positive correlation with employee job satisfaction, thus adding to decreased turnover rates and improved organizational productivity.

The problem of employee burnout and subsequent challenges for child welfare agencies may be effectively addressed through improved hiring strategies and through the creation of policies and procedures that would encourage promotions within organizations and sideways moves (Bednar, 2003). Workplace issues in child welfare are likely to be tackled when business leaders clearly define employee roles, motivate their staff, encourage teamwork, and reward creativity (Bednar, 2003). Supervisors who support and consult their personnel, who work on building trust, and who promote open interactions and integrity within child welfare organizations are likely to contribute to employee job satisfaction thus ensuring improved rates of retention (Bednar, 2003). Employers of human services centers along with child welfare often express their concerns related to stressful workplace environment; unhappy employees do not have the feelings of belongingness and commitment to their organization, and they contemplate quitting their jobs thus adding to the increase of turnover rates. Human services organizations are seriously worried since staff turnover hinders efficiency and efficiency of services (Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001). Turnover causes decreased productivity that is explained by “the weary cycle of recruitment-employment-orientation-production-resignation” and by the disruption of continuous high-quality services for vulnerable populations (Barak et al., 2001, p. 627).

Besides suffering from financial losses because of high direct costs due to employee resignation and expenses on replacements and trainings, social services agencies face significant indirect costs related to workplace issues that involve poor performance of workers before they resign, their harmful influence on team efficiency, and organizational losses after hiring new employees until they master the job (Barak et

al., 2001). Other workplace challenges that result in higher turnover rates and pose threats to organizational efficiency are unsupportive company leaders and employee stress that leads to burnouts (Barak et al., 2001). Burnout in human services is the result of ongoing conflicts between employer's unrealistic demands and employee professional ethics; it "may lead employees to keep up with their very demanding work commitments at the expense of their own emotional health" (Barak et al., 2001, p. 653). While addressing the afore-said pervasive problem in human services organizations, it is essential to understand major causes and precursors of staff turnover. Improvements in employee retention will take place once organizations become aware of key motivators for the staff to maintain their jobs and major reasons for employee resignation (Barak et al., 2001).

Theoretical Underpinnings

This dissertation is supported by systems theories. Workplace conflicts in human services and in other caring professions are also viewed through the prism of conflict management design, which is a part of a larger organizational system. System theories are characterized by sets of components connected with one another, marked by coherent organization, and aimed at achieving certain goals (Meadows, 2008). The constituents of system theories comprise "elements, interconnections, and function or purpose"; systems are very flexible, easily adaptable, dynamic, and constantly developing (Meadows, 2008, p. 11). Goal-seeking and self-preserving behaviors are part and parcel of systems, systems' essence is "self-organizing, nonlinear" and "inherently unpredictable" (Meadows, 2008, p. 167). The systems approach acknowledges the complexity of studying reasons of conflict, conflict's dynamics, and conflict resolution strategies (Meadows, 2008).

The reason for struggling with finding appropriate conflict resolution methods lie within individual mindsets; specifically, they want to predict the future so they can prepare for it and they want to be in control of everything and come up with solutions to disputes based on personal conclusions oftentimes drawn from erroneous assumptions (Meadows, 2008). The systems approach denies the possibility to foresee and to control since “we can never fully understand our world”; additionally, “we can’t find a proper, sustainable relationship to nature, each other, or the institutions we create, if we try to do it from the role of omniscient conqueror” (Meadows, 2008, p. 168). The systems approach underlines the importance to relinquish the illusion of control and to acknowledge the idea that our future cannot be predicted; however, “it can be envisioned and brought lovingly into being”, “systems cannot be controlled but they can be designed and redesigned” (Meadows, 2008, p. 169). Systems theories point to the element of uncertainty in people’s life. While we can learn from the uncertainty and benefit from it, “we cannot impose our will on a system”, all we can do is to “listen to what the system tells us, and discover how its properties and our values can work together to bring forth something much better than could ever be produced by our will alone” (Meadows, 2008, pp. 169-170).

While conflicts are diverse in nature, and their contexts vary dramatically, system designers follow similar steps to address emerged problems (Rogers, Bordone, Sander, & McEwen, 2013). There are four steps that system designers use to create efficient systems: to take initiative and clarify roles, to evaluate the situation, to generate conflict resolution processes and systems, and to administer appropriate designs (Rogers et al., 2013). System designers start addressing problems with the establishment and

clarifications of designers' roles. The following step involves the analysis of the problem situation including the improved understanding of stakeholders, their purposes, interests, and relations with one another and the assessment of the settings (Rogers et al., 2013). While creating processes and systems, designers encourage disputants to highlight their concerns; designers analyze "the fit between system/process and context and stakeholder interests and goals", address interests, and promote collaboration (Rogers et al., 2013, p. 106). During the last step, a new design is implemented that supports the system's functioning and its responsiveness to changes (Rogers et al., 2013).

There are bountiful opportunities to produce efficient systems, so that conflicts can be prevented and/or effectively addressed. (Rogers et al., 2013). Systems help make meaningful changes; designers' work may save lives and improve the quality of living (Rogers et al., 2013). Organizations can be viewed as big systems that consist of smaller systems, for example, legal and political systems, human resources system, informational system, work and reward systems, etc.; each system is characterized by unique goals, roles, cultures, and populations. (Constantino & Merchant, 1996). All small systems add to the creation of the larger organizational system; each system aims at contributing to the organizational efficiency.

Conflict management design is one of many other systems in organizations that is interconnected with other components; adequate and effective functioning of the conflict management element is likely to positively influence other systems within the organization (Constantino & Merchant, 1996). Using the conflict management system promotes a deeper understanding of workplace disputes, encourages parties to see new opportunities for the resolution of such disputes, and helps achieve company goals

(Constantino & Merchant, 1996). Looking at workplace issues through the lens of the conflict resolution system helps explore what is happening in the organizations and assess interactions with other systems within the organization (Constantino & Merchant, 1996).

The conflict management system involves several key features such as boundaries, purpose, inputs, transformation, outputs, and feedback (Constantino & Merchant, 1996). Boundaries involve “the human resource and legal components”, defined as tangible or intangible borders that separate systems from each other (Constantino & Merchant, 1996, p. 24). Purpose implies the presence of certain reasons for being. Inputs involve copious resources that organizations would assume for the fulfillment of the purpose such as raw supplies, information, humans, financial resources, etc. Transformation occurs when conflicts can change into resolutions, and stalemate can turn into actions (Constantino & Merchant, 1996). Outputs are oftentimes defined as conflict closures that include “withdrawals of cases, decisions, agreements, and settlements” (Constantino & Merchant, 1996, p. 25). Feedback helps determine how well systems accomplish their goals. Feedback is usually received from clients and workers; it is related to the quality of provided conflict resolution services, to the cost of services, and to the fairness of the services and results. (Constantino & Merchant, 1996).

It is essential to treat conflict management designs as open systems. Viewing the conflict management system from the perspective of openness helps identify the potential for meaningful changes; moreover, the open systems prospective helps reveal “dissonance, dysfunction, and dissatisfaction” (Constantino & Merchant, 1996, p. 26). The foregoing is likely to help see a bigger picture, thus shedding light on conflict interactions, expenses, and outcomes (Constantino & Merchant, 1996).

The lens of conflict management systems is on the encouragement of attaining knowledge as to how to identify disputes, explore their dynamics, and involve parties to intervene to diminish dissatisfaction and dissonance (Constantino & Merchant, 1996). Moreover, conflict management systems contribute to the successful realization of companies' goals (Constantino & Merchant, 1996).

Focus of Research

This dissertation focuses on researching mediation in the context of human services and other helping professions. The lens of this project is on studying mediation activities and their potential connection with employee efficiency in human services agencies and in other caring centers. What is addressed here is the nature of workplace conflicts and their feasible precursors and consequences for helping professionals and for social services centers. Furthermore, what are included here is the idea that mediation, as one of alternative dispute resolution processes, explores its role and impacts on organizational conflicts, studies effects of mediation on employee performance, and examines the potential of mediation activities, their limitations and recommendations for future research in human services and in other caring professions.

Author's Position

Workplace issues result in significant personal and organizational losses. Emotional distress and jeopardized physical wellbeing along with poor employee motivation, loss of their loyalty, decreased performance, and high turnover rates raise a significant concern when it comes to the aftermath of conflicts in organizations. Social services centers and other agencies that offer caring services are very likely to face substantial losses since helping professionals in such organizations work with vulnerable

populations, which results in employee stress from secondary traumas, compassion fatigue, and employee burnout. Work-related stress negatively affects interpersonal relationships, which engenders hostility and workplace conflicts.

Managing workplace conflicts in human services and in other caring professions is essential to improve employee' wellbeing and their efficiency. While traditional ways of conflict resolution that include the enforcement of official company policies and procedures and the administration of disciplinary strategies are more common, organizations that offer caring services may benefit from using alternative ways of conflict resolution as well. Interest-based dispute resolution methods are likely to help promote and maintain healthy workplace environment and better staff performance in organizations aimed at providing social work and other caring services.

Dissertation Outline

Chapter one (the introduction) discusses reasons for workplace issues, consequences of such issues for organizations, and approaches that agencies are likely to employ to manage problems at work. Chapter one also describes the theoretical perspective (the dissertation project is supported by systems theories), highlights the focus of the research, and describes the authors' position and the major terms that are used in this paper. Chapter two (the literature review) encompasses the analysis of previous studies related to workplace issues and employee productivity in caring professions and highlights findings about the effects of system theories on the resolution of conflict. The use of mediation and its efficiency in different settings, the critical analysis of the reviewed studies, and the problem and purpose statements are also covered in this chapter. The focus of chapter three is methodology, and it discusses the

use of case studies in different contexts, delves into the appropriateness of the research method for this dissertation project, points to the research question and the proposition, and to the case study design. Ethical considerations, case study protocol, data collection, data analysis, and tentative timelines are also part and parcel of the chapter three. Chapter four focuses on the case study's findings and describes the outcomes of the quantitative and qualitative research methods. The use of mediation when addressing work stoppages, workplace disputes in three organizations that offer caring services to people in need, and eleven interviews with mediators is reviewed and analyzed; the results are documented in this chapter. Chapter five is the conclusion, and it focuses on summarizing and reporting the findings and on calling attention to implications, limitations, and recommendations for future studies. The chapter also discusses the application of systems theories and pinpoints major ideas, concepts, and concluding thoughts. The appendices include the participant recruitment letter and the general informed consent form.

Definition of Key Terms

Alternative Dispute Resolution: “any procedure, agreed to by the parties of a dispute, in which they use the services of a neutral party to assist them in reaching agreement and avoiding litigation. Types of ADR include arbitration, mediation, negotiated rulemaking, neutral factfinding, and minitrials. Except for binding arbitration, the goal of ADR is to provide a forum for the parties to work toward a voluntary, consensual agreement, as opposed to having a judge or other authority decide the case. In addition to serving as a potential means of avoiding the expense, delay, and uncertainty associated with traditional litigation, ADR also is intended as a vehicle for improving communication between the parties. ADR provides a forum for creative solutions to

disputes that better meet the needs of the parties” (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d., para. 1-2).

Conflict Resolution: “incorporates two components. The first component is conflict analysis, during which the parties move beyond positions to understand the underlying interests. The second component is resolution, in which the parties employ a conflict resolution model that leads to problem solving and agreement. Most conflict resolution models integrate analysis and resolution” (Katz, Lawyer, & Sweedler, 2011, p. 113).”

Human Services: “the field of Human Services is broadly defined, uniquely approaching the objective of meeting human needs through an interdisciplinary knowledge base, focusing on prevention as well as remediation of problems, and maintaining a commitment to improving the overall quality of life of service populations. The Human Services profession is one which promotes improved service delivery systems by addressing not only the quality of direct services, but also by seeking to improve accessibility, accountability, and coordination among professionals and agencies in service delivery” (National Organization for Human Services, 2020). Moreover, “human service workers provide a variety of services aimed at improving clients’ lives. The type of assistance they offer varies by client group, the type of organization that employs these workers, and their role in the organization.” (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011, p. 23).

Caring/Helping Professions: in this dissertation, the term *caring professions* is used interchangeably with the term *helping professions*. Occupations that fall under the definition of caring professions are as follows: “nurses, child life specialists, licensed

clinical social workers (LCSW), psychologist, counselor, marriage and family therapist, behavioral management aide, case management worker, child advocate, community economic development officer, community outreach worker, crisis intervention counselor, disaster relief worker, emergency management specialist, grief counselor, public health educator, grief counselor, hospice and palliative care social worker, human services worker, public policy consultant, probation officer, rehabilitation case worker, social and community services administrator, substance abuse counselor, geriatric social worker, medical social worker, school social worker, sociologist, sociological survey researcher, youth worker” (HumanServicesEDU.org, n.d.).

Mediation: “... assisted negotiation. In mediation, a trained, neutral third party helps two or more parties negotiate to resolve their dispute. Mediation typically employs a problem-solving approach to address conflict rather than the traditional, adversarial method. Mediators are trained in communication and problem-solving skills, which they use to help parties make the best possible decisions about whether to, and how to, resolve their dispute. Mediation is a voluntary, informal process. Rules of evidence do not apply. Testimony is not taken. Mediation allows parties to control the dispute resolution process, rather than having a judge or some other official control it for them.” (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2019, para. 1-2).

Productivity/Efficiency/Performance: in this dissertation project, the word *productivity* is used interchangeably with *efficiency*, and *performance*. “Productivity is a measure of economic performance that compares the amount of goods and services produced (output) with the number of hours worked to produce those goods and services” (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.).

Vulnerable Populations/People in Need: in this dissertation project, *vulnerable populations* are used interchangeably with *people in need*. “Vulnerable populations include the economically disadvantaged, racial and ethnic minorities, the uninsured, low-income children, the elderly, the homeless, those with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and those with other chronic health conditions, including severe mental illness. It may also include rural residents, who often encounter barriers to accessing healthcare services. The vulnerability of these individuals is enhanced by race, ethnicity, age, sex, and factors such as income, insurance coverage (or lack thereof), and absence of a usual source of care. Their health and healthcare problems intersect with social factors, including housing, poverty, and inadequate education” (Vulnerable populations: who are they? 2006, p. 348). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011), the following individuals are also considered vulnerable: immigrants, people with addiction problems, individuals with a criminal history, veterans, patients with medical and/or mental disabilities.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

The literature review explores previous studies on workplace conflict, sheds light on impacts on employee efficiency in helping professions; it also discusses prior research on theories and their relation to conflict studies. The review of literature also includes the summary of conducted studies on mediation practices and reveals the discussion of the efficiency of mediation when it is applied to tackle organizational disputes. Additionally, the review of literature highlights the critical analysis of the previously conducted research and subsequent conclusions that bring to light key landmarks to justify research for this dissertation project.

Workplace Issues and Employee Productivity in Caring Professions

Organizational conflicts are likely to have negative consequences for employee emotional and physical wellbeing (Filippelli-DiManna, 2012). Filippelli-DiManna (2012) in her dissertation project stresses the essential role of peaceful resolution of conflicts in people's lives; healthy interactions in the workplace add to success of organizations. Bad communication within organizations contributes to conflicts that result in "stress, increased health concerns, increased absenteeism, increased litigation, ... and extreme violence" (Filippelli-DiManna, 2012, p. 1). Other shortcomings of dysfunctional interactions involve decreased employee productivity and business losses. Filippelli-DiManna (2012) underlined several problems related to conflicts in businesses. For example, employers' failure to address workplace issues leads to high expenses; according to Filippelli-DiManna (2012), in the US, the annual cost of employee stress is over \$200 billion. This figure is the result of absenteeism, poor efficiency, and health care expenses; "approximately \$25,000 of a \$60,000 salary is unproductive due to

unresolved conflict” (Filippelli-DiManna, p. 2). The other curse of organizational conflicts highlighted by Filippelli-DiManna (2012) is that they are very time consuming. The author’s research demonstrates that over 19 percent of worktime is spent on conflicts; about 25 percent of managerial time is dedicated to focusing on different workplace issues.

The Filippelli-DiManna (2012) study offers the implementation of conflict resolution skills to effectively tackle organizational conflicts. They initiated a phenomenological analysis to explore ways to strengthen dispute management skills; the research was narrowed down to studying problem solving capabilities among administrative personnel in institutions of higher education. The findings showed that it is essential to eliminate fear of retribution, to enforce “expectations and use of disciplinary action”, to update hiring policies, to address decreased staff efficiency and health, and to welcome trainings (Filippelli-DiManna, 2012, p. 68). While the aforesaid research was focused on exploring opportunities for effective disputes resolution in the field of higher education, the findings of the conducted study are likely to be relevant to other workplaces as well (Filippelli-DiManna, 2012).

Unhealthy workplace environments can be the result of different stressors that are likely to lead to decreased productivity or poor productivity in helping professions; moreover, a connection was found between psychological stressors and reduced job satisfaction (VonDras, Flittner, Malcore, & Pouliot, 2009). Their research was conducted in a non-profit nursing center and their data was obtained from nursing staff through the method of correlation analysis and “a two-phase, empirically based categorization procedure” showed that the personnel experienced stress at work (VonDras et al., 2009,

p. 328). The study results highlighted such sources of nurses' stress as other employees and management, communication with clients and their families, and interpersonal and intrapersonal issues (VonDras et al., 2009). According to the authors of the study, the reported ethical issues are related to patients' autonomy, justice, and benevolence. The research highlights the need for appropriate interventions such as different trainings for employees to positively address the above-mentioned stressors thus adding to the improved workplace environment (VonDras et al., 2009).

Acker (2008) also highlights workplace stress among social service providers and discusses its connection with employee burnout. The study emphasizes that the stress originates from both demographic factors and policies and procedures within companies (Acker, 2008). When addressing the workplace environment, Acker (2008) maintains that the field of mental health counseling is primarily controlled by managed care companies, this places constraints on employee abilities to appropriately serve clients (Acker, 2008). Counselors are affected by the demands of managed care and they become devoid of the power to determine the length of services and an appropriate type of treatment. Moreover, counselors are unlikely to use the full scope of their professional knowledge given the imposed by managed care agencies administrative responsibilities (Acker, 2008). The inability to make decisions based on corresponding trainings, skills, and experience negatively impacts mental health providers since it leads to the failure to maintain their professional identity; we observe the abrasion of "advocacy and counseling roles" (Acker, 2008, pp. 65-66).

Mental health providers also experience role conflicts when they are pressured to act in a way that threatens clients' autonomy. (Acker, 2008). Many workers face role

ambiguity given that they become confused about their responsibilities, goals, and objectives (Acker, 2008). The author studied the sample of 259 workers in the field of mental health to measure their degree of role conflict, role ambiguity, and burnout. The findings demonstrated a statistically significant correlation between the employee role conflict and role ambiguity with the burnout variable. While demographic factors may have an impact on the degree of burnout among mental health providers, workplace pressures are more likely to add to the emotional stress and exhaustion affecting employee productivity (Acker, 2008). As highlighted in the study, a supportive workplace environment is likely to decrease stress among mental health professionals (Acker, 2008).

Workplace conflict is likely to be a predictor of employee burnout and negatively affect job performance in social services (Kozak, Kersten, Schillmöller, & Nienhaus, 2013). Kozak, et al. (2013) researched the nature of employee burnout in agencies aimed at helping individuals with disabilities. The conducted study pinpoints that managing workplace conflicts along with being committed, having the sense of belonging, maintaining social relationships, and possessing leadership qualities, is an essential aspect of organizational culture that is likely to influence people's productivity (Kozak et al., 2013). Establishing healthy working atmosphere that involves the encouragement of leadership, adequate communication related to professional roles, feedback on completed assignments, and words of appreciation helps minimize risks for employee burnouts and poor productivity (Kozak et al., 2013). As argued by the authors, when it comes to providing services for clients with intellectual disabilities, "a work environment that supports the development of energy, vigor, involvement, dedication, absorption and

efficiency among its employees should be successful in promoting their general well-being and productivity” (Kozak et al., 2013, p. 113).

Difficult workplace environment related to low salary, inadequate caseloads, feelings of not being appreciated by organizations and community oftentimes results in a turnover (Ejaz, Bukach, Dawson, Gitter, & Judge, 2015). Turnover rates are high for service workers, which leads to decreased productivity (Ejaz et al., 2015). A turnover is a concerning factor since it negatively impacts workplace relationships and jeopardizes the quality of delivered services (Ejaz et al., 2015). The conducted study of 360 participants that were randomly selected involved a questionnaire to explore workplace stress and support systems, employee satisfaction with their job and with their employer, as well as a turnover; descriptive statistics was used to analyze questionnaire results (Ejaz et al., 2015). The findings demonstrated that stressful work environment, difficult working conditions, and employee burnout were predictors of a turnover that was very likely to disrupt the quality of professional services in long-term care centers aimed at helping older and disabled people (Ejaz et al., 2015).

The study highlights that it is essential to decrease turnover rates to improve productivity; considering the foregoing and the authors suggest that the predictors of a turnover should be addressed appropriately (Ejaz et al., 2015). For example, increasing employee wages and offering good health care benefits may improve retention rates within social service centers (Ejaz et al., 2015). Offering support services for employees is helpful to tackle work-related stress; administering conflict resolution methods such as the improvement of communication skills among service workers, management, and

clients is likely to improve working conditions and to reduce professional distress (Ejaz et al., 2015).

Another research conducted by Shier (2018) discusses work-related violence in social services. The study addresses negative interactions among social workers and other personnel in social support centers and linked them with occupational outcomes. Shier (2018) combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies and utilized interviews and surveys to take a closer look at the problem of interpersonal conflicts among human service employees. The findings highlight that negative communication that occurs in the workplace multiple times is likely to have strong negative effects on employee productivity (Shier, 2018). It is stressed by the author of the study that employees should change the way they behave to improve their efficiency. The research suggests that companies may benefit from administering procedures that will decrease workplace violence; it is essential to raise the employer's awareness of conflictual dynamics on the job and to ensure that workplace conflicts are unsupported (Shier, 2018). As argued by the author, organizations should be able to educate employees on precursors of negative interactions and to promote "alignment among workers at all levels within the organization" (Shier, 2018, p. 542).

The problem of workplace violence is also highlighted by Heugten (2010) in her research project that explores bullying dynamics in the field of social work. Grounded theory was used to collect and analyze information related to violent demeanors in social service centers; in-depth interviews were conducted with 17 participants that had been previously bullied on the job (Heugten, 2010). The findings highlight that effects of bullying are deleterious for both employees and organizations. Social workers and

managers experience emotional and physical distress, which significantly impacts their interpersonal relationships, interactions with clients, and their personal values related to the professional field and work environment (Heugten, 2010). Moreover, dealing with abusive clients is likely to result in burnout that negatively affects employee behaviors; staff oftentimes becomes uncivilized and aggressive (Heugten, 2010). When discussing impacts of workplace bullying on organizations, the study contends that many social service centers tend to instigate violent dynamics to encourage employees to complete projects timely and to have low-performing personnel resign. However, workplace bullying is costly for organizations due to decreased productivity, employee failure to provide appropriate services to clients, and high turnover rates (Heugten, 2010).

Heugten (2010) maintains that many companies are focused on preventive and remedial methods to promote violence-free workplace environment. Moreover, bullying is recognized as a work hazard according to the employment law in some countries, for example in Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom; in many European countries, employees are protected from workplace bullying by law (Heugten, 2010). It is argued in the study that the prevention of bullying and intervention methods may be effective if companies introduce zero tolerance policies for violence on the job (Heugten, 2010). At the same time, the concern of this author is that the aforesaid policies may not appropriately address the confusing dynamics of workplace conflicts wherein victims may not be easily identified, and they may even be accused of violence (Heugten, 2010). The study highlights that the most constructive way of improving workplace environment in social services centers is through a thorough examination of key reasons for bullying; conflicts are likely to be successfully managed through communication within

organizations where employees are encouraged to participate in negotiations and to add their input to the decision-making process (Heugten, 2010).

Nair and Bhatnagar (2011) discuss deviant behaviors at work in nonprofit organizations. Workplace deviance is defined as deviations from organizational norms; it is a temporary process since norms may change with time, thusly, certain patterns of deviance behavior may be considered normal with time (Nair & Bhatnagar, 2011). The article stresses the importance of attending to patterns of deviant behaviors since they are likely to lead to significant financial losses, decreased productivity, and low employee satisfaction. They maintain that for-profit and nonprofit organizations are “fundamentally different” and highlight peculiarities of workplace deviance in the latter (p. 291). The unique nature of nonprofits encompasses several factors that differentiates such agencies from profit-driven businesses: differences in ideology and values, in organizational structures, accountability, and ambiguity, as well as in employee “motivation, satisfaction, ... commitment”, and leadership styles (Nair & Bhatnagar, 2011, p. 293). Although the nonprofits’ lens is on promoting non-monetary values, ethics, and morality, workplace deviance among such organizations persists and threatens employee performance and agency’s productivity (Nair & Bhatnagar, 2011).

When addressing elements that affect workplace dynamics in non-profit agencies and are negatively or positively correlated with deviant behaviors, the article differentiates between individual and organizational predictors (Nair & Bhatnagar, 2011). The highlighted in the article individual predictors involve gender factors, the role of education, age, and personality traits such as anger, anxiety, impulsivity, idealism,

involvement, attachment, and commitments, conspicuousness, conformity, and agreeableness (Nair & Bhatnagar, 2011).

As for organizational predictors, the article reflects on the managerial engagement in workplace deviance and on managers' tolerance of dysfunctional behaviors; moreover, the ongoing pressure to conform and the violation of employee trust are also determinants of workplace defiance. Additionally, defiant role models, poor structures of work assignments, excessive control and unreasonable surveillance on the job that oftentimes results in trust-related issues and aggression against management are likely to add to confrontation at work (Nair & Bhatnagar, 2011). Ambiguous work roles, role conflict, heavy workloads, rigidity of companies' rules and regulations, and the emergence of interpersonal disputes add to job stressors that are likely to result in workplace defiance (Nair & Bhatnagar, 2011). Another contributor to deviance is the companies' failure to promote an ethical environment. According to Nair and Bhatnagar (2011), we encourage deviant behaviors if there are no appropriate strategies to address workplace conflicts deviance. Furthermore, the article pinpoints that stress is likely to result in workplace issues such as violence and sabotage (Nair & Bhatnagar, 2011).

While defiance at work may not necessarily be destructive since potential consequences "may have several positive outcomes such as providing a safety valve and serving as a warning signal to organizations", negative outcomes of workplace issues are very common (Nair & Bhatnagar, 2011, p. 298). Nonprofit businesses are likely to face significant monetary losses, decreased employee performance, and reputational risks (Nair & Bhatnagar, 2011).

According to Shier, Nicholas, Graham, and Young (2018), workplace environment in social services is under significant pressures due to organizational changes. The study highlights that employees in human services have overwhelming caseloads; moreover, staff oftentimes must work with the law enforcement and media scrutiny. Other constituents of workplace issues involve employee inability to be flexible when making decisions, confusions related to work roles, disparities between what clients need and what government's policy can offer, inadequate social support on the job, and unsafe work atmosphere (Shier et al., 2018). Since the stressors are unlikely to stop affecting the workplace environment, Shier et al. (2018) highlight that it is essential to explore and develop appropriate strategies to improve a healthy workplace environment.

The study discusses the prevalence of violence at work among providers of social services that can be the result of both clashes with clients and conflicts among employees and managers (Shier et al., 2018). The identified workplace violence involves physical force and the use of weapons in order to threaten, humiliate, harass, and harm people. The highlighted instances of violence entail sexual and non-sexual harassment, "interference, name-calling, false allegations, and bullying" and the researchers maintain that providers of social services may be negatively treated for an extended time period (Shier et al., 2018, p. 4). Conflicts at work are likely to lead to a poor emotional and physical wellbeing related to feeling burned out and to not being satisfied with life (Shier et al., 2018).

Shier et al. (2018) offer a settings-based approach to explore the work environment in terms of predictors conflicts on the job and violent behaviors; the aforesaid approach highlights the influence of work climate on employee interactions and

behaviors. The ecological model is used to address violence on the job; such framework includes the analysis of multiple systems to identify factors that lead to workplace conflicts in human services (Shier et al., 2018). They conducted mixed-method study points to some attributes of violent workplace dynamics. Shier et al. (2018) conclude that demographic factors, gender, and age show statistically significant results for workplace violence. It has also been highlighted in the study that treating personnel equally and being attentive to employee needs is likely to decrease violent dynamics on the job. Moreover, “experiences related to intrapersonal and interpersonal team functioning” are likely to show lower chances of “worker-to-worker workplace violence” as well (Shier et al., 2018, p. 14). The study also pinpoints the role of workplace culture and physical environment when exploring predictors of violent conflicts on the job (Shier et al., 2018). The findings promote a better understanding of constituents, processes, and methods to cure human services of violent workplace dynamics and to open doors to new opportunities to discover preventative measures (Shier et al., 2018).

Dellve and Wikström (2009) describe the complex nature of workplace issues in their study that is aimed at finding ways for managers in healthcare companies to effectively contribute to the resolution of workplace problems. The research highlights that the working environment in organizations that offer healthcare services is stressful and poses serious problems for the management. Healthcare leaders face severe pressures “with high demands but low decision latitude and limited space for acting” (Dellve, & Wikström, 2009, p. 932). The working conditions are marked by ambiguous roles and ongoing stress related to dealing with conflicting interests. The complexity of interests oftentimes involves the necessity to handle different logics such as strategic,

administrative, and team building logics; such logics appear to be contradictory in nature (Dellve, & Wikström, 2009). Being restricted in their ability to make decisions and having little support to handle workplace challenges and personal problems add to the disturbance of leaders of healthcare companies. The management of healthcare organizations is oftentimes dependent on cultural values of those who oversee the business; however, Dellve and Wikström (2009) maintain that the aforesaid strategy is unlikely to be productive. The study implies that workplace environment in helping professions appears to be stressful, and healthcare leaders have difficulty resolving issues on the job, which is likely to jeopardize staff efficiency and organizational productivity.

The lens of Dellve and Wikström's (2009) project is on raising the awareness of key problems that the management in healthcare companies tends to experience. The study also explores ways to help the management cope with these problems on both professional and personal levels. The authors use grounded theory that involves in-depth interviews of 39 first line and second line managers in caring businesses such as nurses and physicians. The research examines the complexity of workplace issues and feasible strategies to assist healthcare leaders in managing them (Dellve & Wikström, 2009). Their study highlights major workplace issues that may negatively affect workplace environment. One of the key problems involves facing ethical dilemmas that result from conflicts between personal values and business norms and demands. According to the research, it is possible to minimize the dilemmas through designing appropriate supportive structures in caring professions such as strengthening the ethical competency of leaders (Dellve & Wikström, 2009).

The other issue that is likely to add to the complexity of the workplace dynamics involves the confusion of roles related to professional identity of healthcare leaders. For instance, physicians that were interviewed for this study faced identity clashes when managing other physicians. The former acted as healthcare leaders that were not supposed to be focused on providing direct care to patients. However, the clinical aspect of knowledge was nevertheless the essential feature of the leaders' professional identity (Dellve & Wikström, 2009). Moreover, when assuming the leadership roles, providers of caring services may not be appropriately trained to handle financial matters, which is likely to significantly decrease the leaders' efficiency and the organizational productivity. The enhancement of the managerial competency may help appropriately address workplace issues related to identity conflicts and "create a new arena of expertise: 'medical management'" (Dellve & Wikström p. 939). Based on the results of the study, it is paramount for healthcare leaders to be supported by employees and through networking with other professionals (Dellve & Wikström, 2009). The research also highlights that it is essential to address workplace issues and to support healthcare leaders' efficiency through the development of clear decision making process and through the encouragement of interactions among different leaders such as business executives, "human resource departments and subordinate leaders" in caring businesses (Dellve & Wikström p. 940).

Theories and Conflict

Barsky (2017) contends that a systems theory belongs to social theories that examine inter-and intra-group relationships. Dynamics within and between companies, families, communities, and countries are explored by systems theories as well. Viewing

conflicts through the prism of helping professions, Barsky (2017) argues that we should not see systems theories as mere sums of separate elements due to the complex dynamics within systems. The interconnectedness of systems' participants results in the emergence of new entities that are characterized by own sets of rules, beliefs, cultural norms, and ways of interaction. System theory elements have different roles based on "expectations of themselves and others"; elements within systems are dependent on each other (Barsky, 2017, p. 74). The author highlights that individuals affect each other through their behaviors within systems. In view of the aforesaid, when looking at conflicts through the lens of a systems theory, it is essential to remember that although each of us can only be in charge of own actions; we should nevertheless make attempts to act in ways that are likely to result in positive outcomes in other people (Barsky, 2017). When discussing ways of making improvements within systems, Barsky (2017) holds that changes are not easily introduced. Systems are marked by constantly striving for attaining equilibrium; altering previously assumed roles, expected behaviors, and communication patterns takes a lot of effort. Barsky's premise is that assisting to resolve disputes requires seeing beyond instant needs of systems' participants. Disputes are found in every social system, Barsky (2017) argues that our lens should be on introducing changes within social systems "rather than simply asking individuals to make changes" (p. 75).

Li, Zhu, and Gerard (2012) address similarities between systems theory and the field of conflict resolution, argue that the latter informs the former, and stress that both disciplines are tightly intertwined. While examining features of systems thinking and conflict studies, Li et al. (2012) argue that despite past research, the nature of the link between both fields is not sufficiently explored; that being said, the authors investigate

similarities, interconnectedness, and implications between the afore-said branches of knowledge. Conflict is defined as the result of having competing demands to limited resources of influence, social position, etc. (Li et al., 2012). Conflict is also likely to arise when individuals hold different beliefs and interests (Li et al., 2012). As asserted in the research, conflicts are part and parcel of human interaction. When discussing different types of disputes, the authors argue that workplace conflicts along with “interpersonal conflicts, organizational conflicts, labor management conflicts, ... public policy disputes, environmental conflicts, international conflicts and so on” can be explored through various conflict resolution approaches (Li et al., 2012, p. 210). Conflict resolution in its turn is an overly broad and constantly developing discipline that we can explore from the systemic angle. Themes that involve workplace dispute attract more and more attention today; the development of conflict management systems to address on-the-job issues keeps gaining popularity (Li et al., 2012).

Systems thinking and conflict resolution have similar features. Some systems theories contain classifications that involve levels of human beings; the field of conflict resolution explores human beings and their interactions as well. (Li et al., 2012). Moreover, systems theories oftentimes focus on the exploration of purposes, the promotion of fairness, and support diversities; the aforesaid elements “involve conflicts, either real or conceptual” that are addressed within systems (Li et al., 2012, p. 214). Conflict resolution studies examine conflicts and work on resolving disputes (Li et al., 2012). Li et al. (2012) claim that the fields of systems-thinking and conflict resolution have similar goals to address and tools to manage problems. Furthermore, systems theories and conflict resolution also have similar problem-solving methods; both

disciplines use “group formation, assumption surfacing, investigative debate and synthesis of views” (Li et al., 2012, p. 215). Finally, systems workers and conflict resolution professionals share the methodological belief of learning and have the tenets of partnership and openness to new ideas (Li et al., 2012).

When discussing interactions between both fields, Li et al. (2012) argue that conflict resolution theories contribute to systems theories by helping address complicated disputes through “a deeper understanding of the sources of situational conflicts” (p. 216). Systems workers may also benefit from assuming a variety of interventions from conflict resolution professionals, so that systems theory could observe “potentials for developing a contingent model of systemic intervention, which could serve as a toolbox for systems workers to elaborate and select context-adapted interventions” (Li et al., 2012, p. 217).

With contributions of the conflict resolution discipline, systems theories are capable of addressing not only traditional elements of public disputes; systems thinking covers a broad spectrum of societal issues and can be effectively implemented to address global problems (Li et al., 2012). Similarly, the conflict resolution field of study continues expanding and promises to have an impressive impact on tackling different issues. The fast-growing systems approach that currently embraces “philosophy, sociology, political science, and organization studies” effectively manages social and other problems at different levels (Li et al., 2012, p. 217). Adding influential elements of conflict resolution to the afore-mentioned interdisciplinary field will encourage further affiliation with other sciences (Li et al., 2012, p. 217). Finally, the authors highlight that along with the fact that systems and conflict theories share a lot of similarities and are intricately connected; conflict resolution adds to the systems’ potency of dealing with

disputes. It has been recommended in the article to pay close attention to the interconnectedness between the fields and to further examine the link since systems thinking is very likely to learn a lot from conflict resolution studies (Li et al., 2012).

Workplace conflict is discussed by Pondy (1966) through the lens of system's theory. Pondy (1966) defines conflict as both an interpersonal clash and a lack of agreement or a perceived discord among individuals. The definition of conflict also involves people's failure to resolve problems and "incompatibilities among several formally defined jobs" (Pondy, 1966, p. 246). The author of "A Systems Theory of Organizational Conflict" highlights four different subsystems within organizations: "informational, political, functional, and social" (Pondy, 1966, p. 246). The informational subsystem within companies involves such variables as decision making, data processing, discussion of elements of a greater goal, search process, the flow of information (Pondy, 1966). The article highlights that people's role within the informational subsystem is to resolve problems and to process information (Pondy, 1966). According to the author, conflicts within informational subsystems tend to occur due to the inability resolve issues, or in case of people's disagreements or of the incompatibility of personal choices (Pondy, 1966, p. 246). The political subsystem includes the formation of coalitions, the use of gaming and bargaining, the implementation of strategies, etc. The human role within this subsystem is to promote a collective spirit and to establish the structure of goals (Pondy, 1966). Conflicts are the results of personal inflexibility that impedes the creation of effective coalitions (Pondy, 1966).

The functional subsystem involves such variables as the organizational structure along with "job descriptions ... formal interdependence of jobs, formal incentive plans",

etc. (Pondy, 1966, p. 246). The personnel role is to perform assigned tasks and to adhere to formal job responsibilities (Pondy, 1966). Conflicts are likely to occur when employees compete to have the access to limited resources. Contradictory job activities are also likely to result in conflicts within functional subsystems (Pondy, 1966). He maintains that social subsystems are based on employee motivation and their social abilities; the variables include nonmonetary stimuli, interactions, the formation of informal groups, employee attitudes and emotions, etc. Social conflicts stem from personal animosity, feelings of frustration with each other, with a company, with work assignments, with nervousness, and with feeling stressed (Pondy, 1966). The article explores the influence of interdependence on workplace disputes. According to Pondy (1966), a higher degree of interdependence among employees leads to the emergence of conflicts in the informational subsystem. Another factor that leads to conflicts involves goals, which the author describes as decision making criteria; differences in goals are likely to facilitate tensions within the aforesaid subsystem. Perceived discords also add to conflict situations; disagreements are likely to increase if goals are different, and employees have interdependent roles (Pondy, 1966). It has been also argued in the article that conflicts within the informational subsystem may be influenced by other subsystems. Informational disputes may affect the political, functional, and social systems as well (Pondy, 1966).

When exploring elements that are likely to result in organizational conflicts in other subsystems, Pondy (1966) highlights the influence of autonomy on disputes within the political subsystem. Moreover, conflicts in the functional subsystem are positively

correlated with the variable of employee status (Pondy, 1966). Finally, personality types are likely to result in conflicts in the social subsystem (Pondy, 1966).

Conbere (2001) in his article “Theory Building for Conflict Management System Design” claims that workplace conflicts can be destructive, and it can lead to high turnover rates; many organizations have difficulty retaining workers due to the failure to appropriately address disputes. When discussing appropriate methods of approaching conflicts, Conbere (2001) holds that systems are effective ways of addressing workplace issues. The creation and subsequent employment of conflict management systems starts organizational changes and empowers employees to manage workplace disputes. Conflict management systems involve structures for resolving issues and the administration of such structures in the workplace.

The study discusses several system models, compares them, and highlights similar patterns. The author argues that although conflict management models may have different foci, all of them show that the process of conflict resolution moves from low to high expenses; the expenses are of emotional and financial nature (Conbere, 2001). The other similarity is that all models stress the importance of educating workers on systems and of providing trainings on resolving disputes (Conbere, 2001). For example, the models stress the idea that using guidelines is essential to appropriately employ alternative dispute resolution methods. The other example is that the models suggest that parties should “have some degree of control over choice of the process that is used” (Conbere, 2001, p. 225). Furthermore, Conbere (2001) maintains that the explored in his article models support honest and retaliation-free conflict management systems. Finally, the

discussed models emphasize benefits of evaluation to ensure systems improvement (Conbere, 2001).

Along with the discussion of systems models, Conbere (2001) highlights the process of theory building; he argues that it is incumbent to ensure that a theory is reliable and empirically supported since it sheds light on how a system operates. Theories develop as the result of the combined effort of both practitioners and research workers; they constantly test emerging theories throughout research to refine evolving models (Conbere, 2001). Conflict management systems are designed by specialists from different fields such as legal consultants, mental health workers, human resources managers, financial professionals, researchers, and other providers. Conbere (2001) argues that the multidisciplinary character of systems that are built through theories and designed by the alliance of practitioners and researchers adds to the systems' efficiency. Conflict management systems effectively deal with disputes at work; thus showing "undeniable value for the organization" (Conbere, 2001, p. 234).

Bendersky (2003) discusses the efficiency of dispute resolution systems in organizations. Dispute resolution systems have three major components that complement each other, thus adding to the efficiency of conflict management. Right-based, interest-based, and negotiation-based components are part and parcel of any effective organizational conflict resolution system (Bendersky, 2003).

According to the author of "Organizational Dispute Resolution Systems: A Complementarities Model", the right-based component involves arbitrations, grievances investigations, and peer-review processes and aims at resolving disputes through the attraction of a third party. Organizational disputes that are likely to be resolved through

the right-based approach involve disagreements related to contracts, laws, and behavioral standards (Bendersky, 2003). The article highlights benefit of using the afore-said component when addressing union and non-union disputes to reduce the risks of severe power-imbalances in organizations and potential lawsuits.

The interest-based component is characterized by the ability to resolve workplace disputes by empowering disputants to arrive at mutually beneficial agreements. The interest-based approach requires the participation of an impartial third party, an ombudsman, a facilitator, a mediator, or a coach and serves as a precursor or an alternative to the right-based approach (Bendersky, 2003). The interest-based component is highly likely to encourage the resolution of interpersonal disputes that may not be effectively addressed through the right-based model (Bendersky, 2003). He describes the negotiation-based component as the one that does not require the involvement of a third party to attend to organizational conflicts. Negotiations are interest-based and focus on encouraging opposing parties “to achieve more integrative outcomes that optimize joint values by ‘expanding the pie’” (Bendersky, 2003, p. 645).

When addressing the dispute resolution systems in workplace, Bendersky (2003) highlights limitations of using each component individually and claims that the combination of the afore-said components helps effectively resolve conflicts in organizations. The author argues that the discussed in the article complementary dispute resolution system is characterized by the ability to address any type of organizational conflict since the combination of components rules out potential limitations that may be present if we use each component separately (Bendersky, 2003). Moreover, Bendersky (2003) explores how the dispute resolution systems may influence employee demeanor

and attitudes. The examination of the systems' influences is viewed through the lens of the organizational behavior and industrial relations theories. While the theory of organizational behavior primarily focuses on the examination of horizontal disputes in companies, the theory of industrial relations points to the vertical nature of conflicts between employee and their supervisors (Bendersky, 2003).

Based on the afore-said theories, the author proposes that the complementary dispute resolution system is likely to better people's attitudes and behaviors through the improvement of their motivations. The system enhances decision making processes, thus increasing employee productivity and their job satisfaction. The author also proposes that the discussed complementary dispute resolution system promotes efficient conflict management practices through enhancing employee collaborative and cooperative skills thus adding to the formation of productive group affiliations. Moreover, the complementary dispute resolution system is likely to encourage employees to voice their thoughts and concerns in various ways to ensure that their opinions are heard by the management (Bendersky, 2003). Finally, Bendersky (2003) argues that the complementary dispute resolution system improves employee understanding of procedural justice and helps create the workplace environment where staff authorities can be trusted. The author also holds that the system helps workers remain in charge of the process of conflict management, "which imparts a higher degree of security" (Bendersky, 2003, p. 652). In sum, Bendersky (2003) describes dispute resolution systems and their efficiency when addressing conflicts in organizations. He casts light on the nature of the systems' components and discusses potential effects of the systems on conflicts' outcomes based on the theories of organizational behavior and industrial relations.

Systems theories are also described by Roche and Teague (2012) in their study that explores the power of conflict management systems and their impact on outcomes for organizations. The article provides with the review of literature, which is based on data backed by qualitative research that highlights the claim that outcomes of conflict management systems are substantial. Roche and Teague (2012) discuss major concepts of the systems through the lens of contributors' works and conduct their own research testing the claims advanced throughout the analysis of the reviewed literature. They explored through "the exemplary case studies" and "descriptive and prescriptive surveys" premises highlight the following: the number of interest-based methods employed by companies is directly related to the efficiency of conflict management systems, and the involvement of company management positively impacts the efficiency of conflict management practices (Roche & Teague, 2012, p. 254). Moreover, the efficacy of conflict resolution practices is dependent on "the coexistence or interaction of interest-based options" and on "proactive line and supervisory management engagement" when addressing workplace conflicts (Roche & Teague, 2012, p. 239). Finally, the results of the reviewed literature highlight that complementary relationships among different components within conflict management systems have a more salient effect on outcomes than the quantity of systems' components. They tested the aforesaid premises using quantitative approaches. The results of the conducted research confirmed the previously highlighted by the qualitative studies proposition that company's outcomes are positively related to the engagement of managers and supervisors if they previously received trainings in conflict analysis and resolution.

Speakman and Ryal (2010) also view conflicts through the lens of the conflict management design that is characterized by the complex dynamics of conflict episodes. The authors compare the traditional conflict theory with the new multi-dimensional conflict management design (Speakman & Ryal, 2010). The former is based on the idea that our dispute resolution behaviors are caused by our own needs and by needs and interests of others; whereas the latter discusses copious factors that determine conflict management behaviors (Speakman & Ryal, 2010).

When defining conflict, Speakman and Ryal (2010) contend that it is a broad phenomenon that embraces a wide range of different social interactions. Debates related to the emergence of conflicts, their nature, and structure are ongoing; prior research highlighted that conflicts can be viewed as intergroup, intragroup, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Speakman & Ryal, 2010). As for workplace disputes, previous studies explore various conflict dimensions including but not limited to “content, relational, situational”, etc. (Speakman & Ryal, 2010, p. 188). According to the present conflict management theory, difficult relationships in organizations appear to be the result of three types of conflicts: affective, cognitive, and process. While the first type is related to interpersonal relationships that embrace such dimensions as trust, interdependence, and status, the second type involves disputes related to employee professional responsibilities; process conflicts are associated with the workplace environment (Speakman & Ryal, 2010).

When addressing conflicts through the prism of the conflict management theory, the authors discuss the complexity perspective that “has enabled researchers to examine the point at which behavioral style is changed and the effect on the conflict episode....

and to look at how different behaviors are combined” (Speakman & Ryal, 2010, p. 187). As argued in the research, when viewing conflicts from the complexity standpoint, it is incumbent to explore their potential consequences, their essence, frequency, and simultaneity, and patterns of adaptive behaviors that constantly change the dynamics of workplace conflicts (Speakman & Ryal, 2010).

While the traditional approach to the conflict theory highlights the healthy and unhealthy nature of disputes and primarily stresses the deleterious aspect of tensions in the workplace environment, the conflict management theory argues that conflict consequences are likely to be very beneficial for organizations (Speakman & Ryal, 2010). If we can accept and effectively addressing the inevitability of conflicts without avoiding and suppressing them, the consequences of these conflicts will be positive for agencies (Speakman & Ryal, 2010).

As for behaviors to address conflicts, it is argued in the paper that the traditional conflict theory relies on treating conflicts through collaborative behaviors or through matching behaviors with situation (Speakman & Ryal, 2010). The present conflict management theory moves beyond and highlights the so-called “sequential contingency perspective” according to which series of adopted behaviors are reliant on various elements of the system, on the quantity and the nature of conflict episodes, and on behavioral changes of participants (Speakman & Ryal, 2010). In order to tackle workplace conflicts, managers should employ a combination of different behaviors adapting them to many influencing factors since intraorganizational disputes are “dynamic and multi-dimensional” (Speakman & Ryal, 2010, p. 193). The conflict management theory stresses that the nature of workplace conflicts is continuing and ever-

changing; the way we address ongoing disputes is causally related to the outcomes and to the characteristics of following issues (Speakman & Ryal, 2010).

To better the understanding of the complexity of conflict episodes, the study pinpoints that it is essential to employ a “three-dimensional representation of conflict” that provides with the visual picture of disputes and is based on the idea that “conflict is an inherent feature of organizational life” (Speakman & Ryal, 2010, p. 194). This tool helps see multiple and simultaneous conflict episodes characterized by intensity, frequency, and duration. The visualization of the aforesaid complexity can be handy when assessing and choosing organizational strategies to address interpersonal conflicts within organizations (Speakman & Ryal, 2010). Successful outcomes of conflict management behaviors are likely to relate to the essence of disputes, the characteristics of actors, the nature of people’s relationships, and previous conflicts’ dynamics (Speakman & Ryal, 2010). Conflict management designs are also addressed by Aula and Siira (2010). According to the authors, while there are many definitions of this approach, its essence involves major principles of systems theory. Models of conflict management systems may vary; at the same time, all designs “offer basically the same venues for conflict management” (Aula and Siira, 2010, p. 128).

When defining conflicts, it is essential to note that they are components of our conscious mind; conflicts are pervasive in people’s daily lives (Aula and Siira, 2010). The writers highlight such features of conflicts as commonness, complexity, inevitability, and even desirability; on that account, many organizations are closely focused on choosing appropriate conflict management tools. Conflict management systems may be

especially useful when it comes to addressing different types of conflicts within companies (Aula and Siira, 2010).

While disputes have been traditionally regarded as obstacles to the balance of the organizational climate, the modern approach views tensions as essential for healthy functioning within companies and utilizes interventions that are strategic and proactive in nature (Aula and Siira, 2010). Some of the emphasized by the authors merits of company disputes involve potential growth and meaningful changes in people's mindset that are likely to result in creativity and positive consequences. Conflicts are powers that can make significant changes in "the whole social environment" (Aula and Siira, 2010, p. 126).

Traditional conflict management systems address organizational conflicts through the negative lens and aims at eliminating issues of "incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities" (Aula and Siira, 2010, p. 126). New systems approach to disputes is broader in nature and promotes "the opportunity to rethink conflict management beyond the limits of ... systematic resolution and the reduction of emerging conflicts" (Aula and Siira, 2010, p. 132). The authors view conflict management systems from both the conventional standpoint and through the prism of the revolutionary perceptions of conflicts as unavoidable and not necessarily negative. Aula and Siira (2010) argue that unlike the traditionally monolithic use of conflict management systems that is characterized by "strengthening the deep-seated power structures and belief systems", the modern use of the conflict management theory stresses the importance to be flexible and to adapt to different conflicts' scenarios (p. 137).

Conflict managements systems may be effectively used once they are capable to overstep formal right-based strategies, welcome disagreements, encourage rapport, and support the development of trust and constructive dialogues (Aula and Siira, 2010). The efficiency of conflict management systems may be also facilitated through the encouragement of employee trainings and empowerments. Moreover, utilizing the new philosophy of conflict management systems enables “a broader look at organizational conflict management” (Aula and Siira, 2010, p. 138). The understanding that disputes at work and personal problems are oftentimes indistinct enables us to timely address the blurs through appropriate models of conflict management systems; that being said, new and exciting results may be achieved while resolving workplace disputes (Aula and Siira, 2010).

Mediation, Use and Efficiency

Barsky (2017) asserts that mediation presupposes the process of assisted negotiations where disputants discuss their concerns with a trusted party. The challenge of providing a universal definition of mediation is that the term embraces a variety of qualities depending on a particular culture, time, and environment. Nevertheless, when exploring mediation through the prism of helping professions, Barsky’s characteristics of mediation involve the following: mediation is a confidential and voluntary process encouraged by an impartial party that promotes mutually acceptable agreements between opposing parties. Mediation is characterized by being non-adversarial and by the requirement that disputants should have “equal bargaining power” (Barsky, 2017, p. 241).

When addressing mediation through the lens of helping professions, Barsky (2017) argues that social services significantly contribute to this alternative method of dispute resolution by using facilitative methods, active listening skills, and other strategies. Mediation benefits from contributors that bring to the table knowledge and experience from helping professions, thus adding to the contexts of family mediation and child welfare, to the resolution of cultural conflicts and workplace disputes, and to handling conflicts in the healthcare system, criminal justice, and social policy (Barsky, 2017). The book reflects four primary mediation methods such as settlement-based, interest-based, therapeutic, and transformative through the lens of social services and other helping professions. According to Barsky (2017), settlement-based methods aim at encouraging the prevention of overt clashes through assisting disputants to quickly arrive at agreements. Interest-based approaches encourage the exploration of disputes in greater depth in order to address interests that lie behind seemingly overt conflicts; the method promotes win-win agreements between mediation participants. Therapeutic model is used to address mental and social problems that add to a conflict and make it impossible to effectively resolve them. (Barsky, 2017). As for transformative methods in mediation, they facilitate the encouragement and acceptance between participants; thus, transforming how participants manage disputes; parties are empowered to “develop mutual understanding and self-efficacy” (Barsky, 2017, p. 240).

Moreover, in his book, Barsky (2017) identifies informal - emergent, and formal – contractual types of mediation in helping professions. When using the former type, individuals in helping professions tend to maintain the “professional identification” of being healthcare providers, social workers, and educators (Barsky, 2017, p. 249). While

they do not proclaim themselves as mediators, they administer various mediation strategies and techniques to resolve on-the-job problems acting based on their professional ethical norms and standards (Barsky, 2017). The latter type requires the hire of a professional mediator; mediation is guided by a mediation agreement that highlights the roles and outlines the process. Mediators adhere to their own professional codes of ethics; that being said, if a provider of social services assumes the role of a contractual mediator, to prevent a potential dual relationship and a conflict of interests, he/she may not intervene or make decisions based on ethical standards in his/her helping profession. (Barsky, 2017).

Finally, while comparing mediation with different strategies used in helping professions, Barsky (2017) identifies similarities and differences. For example, the author maintains that lawyers, providers of social services, and mediators share the role of a client advocate; however, unlike helping professionals, lawyers and mediators favor neutrality. Moreover, while lawyers, helping professionals, and mediators stress the importance of autonomy, it is common in the legal field to force solutions on disputants. Barsky also draws a parallel between professions and types of administered interventions. For instance, transformative and therapeutic approaches to mediation involve strategies and techniques “that are similar to those used by clinical social workers, psychologists, and other mental health professionals” (Barsky, 2017, p. 265). Settlement-focused approaches show similarities to models used in legal settings. When connecting social services and other helping providers with mediation, it is incumbent for specialists to regard how this alternative method of conflict resolution may correlate with caring professions, and if any adjustments should be done to act as a mediator (Barsky, 2017).

Mediation can be defined as an extension of negotiations wherein there is an involvement of a neutral third party, which presence is accepted by disputants, and which uses interventions to promote a resolution of disputes (Moore, 2014). The author of *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflicts* maintains that mediation is a process of conflict resolution in which the impartial third party helps opponents make improvements in their relationships and interactions and assists in employing efficacious problem-solving approaches to arrive at “voluntary and mutually acceptable understandings or agreements on contested issues” (Moore, 2014, p. 20). Parties tend to administer mediation strategies and techniques when it does not seem feasible to interact constructively since prior negotiations ended in a stalemate. Moore (2014) highlights that mediation becomes more and more popular due to people’s growing dissatisfaction with the traditional model of dispute resolution through the legal system. The shortcomings of taking cases to court are related to high costs, loss of time, adversarial procedures, win-fail tactics, and enforced settlements that oftentimes do not appropriately address positions and needs of opposing parties.

Moore (2014) stresses the potency of mediation and discussed its widespread use across the United States and the exponential growth of mediation practices in the international arena. For example, the application of this method of conflict resolution is popular in such countries as New Zealand, Australia, Canada, in the United Kingdom, and South Africa. When addressing the rapid growth of mediation within the United States, Moore (2014) points to its efficiency by highlighting the application of this dispute resolution method in different communities to resolve multicultural conflicts and various public disputes, in educational organizations and financial institutions, in criminal

justice and while handling civil cases, etc. He underlines the popularity of mediation practices to resolve workplace issues. The author discussed the initial use of mediation to handle labor disputes in the United States and in Canada to promote peaceful relationships in different for-profit organizations. According to Moore (2014), mediation techniques were used to steer clear of “costly strikes and lockouts”; thus, ensuring wealth and safety of the American society (p. 70). Canadians use mediation to settle labor-related conflicts to promote individual and national economic stability (Moore, 2014).

Cloke (2001) in his book *Mediating Dangerously: The Frontiers of Conflict Resolution* also stresses the weight of mediation practices. Unlike Moore (2014) who emphasizes the neutrality of the third party, Cloke’s (2001) argument is that the concept of neutrality is a solely legal term although what is known in the law as being neutral and or objective “exists neither in the solitary decision-making power on the part of the judge, nor in the partiality and subjectivity that flow from an adversarial, advocacy-based system” (p. 13). Mediation is an alternative method of resolving conflicts marked by equality wherein disputants have the power to reach a consensus; both parties are entitled to dismiss any agreements that may be construed as unequal. Being neutral in mediation is not essential; what is important for a mediator though is to be able to contact participants and enhance the qualities of being empathetic and honest among them (Cloke, 2001). As opposed to Moore (2014), Cloke’s view of mediation implies the use of subjectivity during a conflict resolution process.

To demonstrate the efficiency of the aforesaid alternative conflict resolution method, Cloke (2001) discusses the power of its transformative nature and its intuitive and integrative features. According to the author, mediation can be successfully applied

when addressing different forms of aggression including fascism, oppression, and harassment. When analyzing different fields where conflicts oftentimes take place, Cloke (2001) concludes that it is highly beneficial to use mediation when resolving legal and political disputes, when managing domestic and international conflicts, and when settling a plethora of issues from local to global and from interpersonal to organizational. Cloke (2001) stresses such qualities of mediation process as the promotion of empathy, honesty, and responsibility. He also describes different techniques that help create collaborative environment and shift “power- and rights-based contest” and adversarial approaches to the resolution of disputes to constructive dialogues (p. 154).

Cloke (2001) as well as Moore (2014) discuss the application of workplace mediation. While Moore (2014) primarily focuses on the historical aspect and the burgeoning of mediation practices, Cloke (2001) highlights the up-to-date dynamics of organizational disputes that involve clashes between management and unions and their effective resolution through mediation. Management roles are likely to contradict union roles since the goal of the former is to ensure employee productivity whereas the goal of the latter is “to prevent companies from abusing their power” (Cloke, 2001, p. 154). The demonstrated by Cloke (2001) mediation model aims at bridging the gap through finding commonalities in seemingly different positions of employers and labor organizations. Cloke’s argument is that it is essential to approach disputes between management and unions by openly discussing problems. Mediators’ task is to facilitate the active participation of both parties in settling disputes in order to arrive at mutual solutions; denials, belittling behaviors, rationalization, and ongoing blaming should be avoided (Cloke, 2001). Finally, he highlights that workplace disputes can be effectively resolved

if mediation process involves “interest-based, mutual gain, collaborative, or win/win negotiations, the qualities each side really cares about are not lost in the quantities each side is fighting to achieve” (p. 155). He claims that employment-related disputes are likely to be successfully resolved through mediation since it encourages responsibility, improves motivation, strengthens partnership, and develops competency.

Bush and Folger’s (2005) premise is that mediation presupposes interventions in order to assist parties in resolving their problems. It is essential for mediators to determine appropriate help that disputants expect to receive and “the phenomenon of conflict” (Bush & Folger, 2005, p. 41). The aforesaid is likely to be realized through the transformative type of mediation. When describing transformative mediation, Bush and Folger (2005) point to the importance of viewing it as a transformation of disputes. The process of such transformation involves the improvement of parties’ competence and their connectedness; moreover, disputants make changes to the dynamics of conflicts. Parties start recovering positive communications and proceed with constructive interactions to make agreements. In transformative mediation, conflict dynamics tend to change from weak and self-centered to strong and responsive (Bush & Folger, 2005). As highlighted in the book, conflicts transform through “empowerment and recognition shifts” moving from “negative, destructive, alienating, and demonizing” to “positive, constructive, connecting, and humanizing” interactions although a discord may persist” (Bush & Folger, 2005, p. 56).

While employers voice their concerns related to settling workplace disputes through traditional mediation, they nevertheless highlight the need to use mediation in order to improve communications between employees. The transformative aspect of

mediation is likely to add to the improvement of conflicts on the job through bettering employee interactions (Bush & Folger, 2005). Moreover, organizational disputes benefit from the capacity of transformative mediation to enhance self-determination of involved parties. Bush and Folger (2005) discuss the potential of transformative interventions to effectively resolve disputes in organizational settings. While many companies encourage to address workplace disputes through the department of human resources, team management is highly likely to benefit from acquiring conflict resolution skills that pertain to transformative mediation. Using a mediator in the team building and team development process will promote constructive interactions among employees and will shift negative conflicts to the enhancement of empowerment and to the recognition of opportunities (Bush & Folger, 2005).

Carpenter and Kennedy (1988) in their book *Managing Public Disputes. A Practical Guide for Government, Business, and Citizens' Groups* approach work-related conflicts through the prism of involving a professional mediator. While the authors' lens is on the comprehensive description and analysis of dispute resolution strategies for management and other professionals who are not trained as conflict resolution specialists; the book also discusses the beneficial involvement of the nonpartisan party. While most conflicts are still independently addressed by disputants, outcomes are likely to be very positive once we invite mediators since they are impartial and knowledgeable of handling conflicts and of dealing with sensitive data (Carpenter & Kennedy, 1988).

Attracting mediation services to settle disputes within companies is essential when adversaries discontinue a constructive dialogue, when they seem to be stuck in negativity and mutual accusations, and there is no evidence of progress in parties'

communication. Moreover, Carpenter and Kennedy (1988) emphasize the power of mediation “when sensitive information is involved”, “when negotiations are threatened by disagreements inside groups”, and “when a process is not working” (pp. 190-191). Mediating disputes in different fields including workplace environment is extremely helpful since mediators are equipped with appropriate skills. The involvement of the neutral third party is also likely to encourage disputants to become more willing to manage conflicts that previously seemed unmanageable to them (Carpenter & Kennedy, 1988). The authors’ argument was that thanks to mediation, disputants become capable of perceiving an impartial specialist without the feelings of anger and retaliation, which significantly adds to resolving conflicts successfully.

The value of mediation in workplace environment is also stressed by Asebedo (2017). The key point of her study is the positive influence of mediation process on the efficiency of financial planners. Mediation training provided by companies equips workers with dispute resolution skills; as the result, staff address challenges of communication with clients in a constructive manner (Asebedo, 2017). For example, seemingly apparent financial planning goals may be hard to identify and achieve with couples given that different people are likely to have different values, wants, and needs. Asebedo (2017) argues that acting as a mediator in this case helps arrive at mutually beneficial goals for couples interested in financial planning.

While discussing how mediation helps workers succeed, and how it results in improved employee-client relationships, the author highlights dispute resolution framework that encompasses conflict theory and mediation techniques. The former aims at building appropriate environment to effectively address issues; the latter relies on

“well-established principled negotiation techniques. These include separating the people from the problem, focusing on interests instead of positions, generating mutually beneficial options, and establishing objective criteria” (Asebedo, 2017, p. 16). Using conflict theory assists in turning workplace issues into solvable situations; parties develop and grow. The simultaneous application of mediation techniques adds to a positive change during negotiations marked by alignment and synergy (Asebedo, 2017). In sum, the framework of conflict theory and mediation techniques combined with professional field knowledge is likely to improve employee efficiency in the field of financial planning (Asebedo, 2017).

Saundry, Bennett, and Wibberley (2018) view mediation as a process where a neutral third party assists two or more individuals in arriving at agreements. As argued in the study, mediation is a voluntary and confidential practice that is dissimilar to traditional conflict resolution methods where the decision-making responsibility pertains to the management. In mediation disputants oversee resolving problems “with the mediator playing an impartial role in helping the parties to examine the issues underlying the dispute” (Saundry et al., 2018, p. 1159).

Using mediation to resolve workplace disputes is much more efficient than following traditional litigation procedures; however, it is also essential to explore interpersonal subordinate-manager dynamics while addressing conflicts (Saundry et al., 2018). Saundry et al. (2018) in their study focus on both managerial interactions and on examining mediation process from employee perspectives. As argued in the research, employers are interested in the application of mediation to build productive relationships thus improving companies’ efficiency (Saundry et al., 2018). Managers’ choice of

mediation is primarily driven by organizational concerns about harmful effects of employee conflicts and fears of lawsuits (Saundry et al., 2018). The findings also underline that mediation encourages employee input; mediation is likely to facilitate equal discussion and contest managerial authority and treatment. During mediation, workers feel they have an equal potential when it comes to participating in mediation with senior executives who possess greater power outside negotiation meetings (Saundry et al., 2018). This study does not demonstrate any risks for a power imbalance during workplace mediation that may put limits on the potential of a weaker party (Saundry et al., 2018). While applying this method of alternative dispute resolution to improve workplace efficiency, those who participated in the research reported a positive experience (Saundry et al., 2018). Moreover, subordinate workers responded that they were able to effectively challenge the executives' authority through "confronting managerial mistreatment" (Saundry et al., 2018, p. 1173).

Beneficial effects of mediation on workplace environment are also highlighted in the report written by Aramark Corp (2015). The company made the decision to administer the alternative method of disputes resolution in lieu of formal disciplinary procedures that were ineffective when addressing workplace conflicts. Aramark Corp (2015) funded training programs to educate the management on mediation tools and techniques; the company also invested in the promotion of mediation as an informal method of tackling disputes through the human resources department. The HR executives were trained to act as mediators to assist in resolving employee disputes as well.

The results of employing mediation in place of prior formal investigations of workplace issues were highly satisfying for both the employees and the company

(Aramark Corp, 2015). First, seemingly unsolvable long-term problems among the employees were successfully resolved (Aramark Corp, 2015). Second, the company management gained confidence to approach workplace issues without initiating formal procedures for every complaint (Aramark Corp, 2015). Moreover, the process of disputes resolution became less time consuming and resulted in improved productivity within the company (Aramark Corp, 2015). Finally, using mediation helped define clear policies to address workplace disputes, to create realistic expectations for the staff, and to encourage informed decision-making process across the organization (Aramark Corp, 2015).

Mantle's (2002) definition of mediation involves its differentiation from other methods of alternative dispute resolution such as negotiation and arbitration. The former is a way of managing conflicts without the involvement of a third party, the latter presupposes the use of external resources to settle disputes; whereas mediation is positioned "within a conceptual framework of ascending degree of external intervention: negotiation, mediation, arbitration ..." (Mantle, 2002, p. 64). Mediation assists with reaching not legally binding agreements and finding settlements wherein concerned parties significantly contribute to the process.

Although mediation appears to be a popular way of decreasing the intensity of conflicts and managing disputes at individual, public, and organizational levels, contemporary studies do not seem to address the use of mediation in the field of social services (Mantle, 2002). Mantle (2002) in his essay links social work and the aforesaid method of alternative dispute resolution and highlights opportunities of mediation for care services. While effects of mediation on social work are not sufficiently explored, it would be appropriate to use mediation as a professional skill and as a way to intervene in

the field of social services or “at different ‘levels’ of practice; and as a method associated with a particular approach to social work” in the UK (Mantle, 2002, pp. 66). The author discusses multiple uses of mediation as a part of social work across different professional settings such as communities, agencies, family courts, and criminal justice (Mantle, 2002).

Social work implies frequent uses of mediator skills by highlighting advocacy, conciliation, encouragement, collaboration, and empowerment as key components of human services (Mantle, 2002). The essay indicates that social workers would benefit from administering mediation to intervene alongside other methods such as counseling techniques and crisis management (Mantle, 2002). Moreover, it is strongly suggested in the essay that social workers should assume mediating roles at different levels while working with clients to help resolve individual issues, while helping address family conflicts, and while serving communities acting as peaceful liaisons between individuals and human services centers (Mantle, 2002).

When addressing workplace environment, Mantle (2002) asserts that the role of a supervisor is to oversee healthy dynamics within a company. Mediation should be one of key components that a manager should possess to handle workplace difficulties (Mantle, 2002). As for tackling interorganizational problems, it has been implied in the essay that mediation is likely to be beneficial while resolving disputes and building and maintaining effective professional connections and partnerships (Mantle, 2002). It is implied in this essay that court mediation oftentimes involves elements of social work. For example, Mantle (2002) argues that there is a connection between social services and the juvenile justice system in the UK since “‘social work’ is still practiced with victims of crime”

(Mantle, 2002, p. 69). Moreover, family court mediation is likely to be strongly impacted by the field of social work particularly when the focus is on children; in this case, conciliation comes into play, which is associated with social work (Mantle, 2002). The inferred connection between court mediation and social work brings to light the importance of considering the use of mediation in social services in the future (Mantle, 2002).

Kruk (1997) in his book *Mediation and Conflict Resolution in Social Work and the Human Services* defines mediation as a process of resolving disputes wherein disputants get help from a third party that is characterized by impartiality and by being neutral. Kruk (1997) argues that the third party encourages disputants to arrive at settlements that are mutually acceptable. The mediator's role is to structure and facilitate mediation whereby the opposing parties reach decisions and decide on mutually beneficial outcomes (Kruk, 1997). When discussing a diversity of mediation models, Kruk (1997) links the use of mediation with the field of social services and argues that the employment of this alternative dispute resolution method among social workers and other providers of human services continues growing. While the focus on mediation in social services has been already determined, the author asserts that the potential for using different mediation methods within the field is nevertheless considerable "as a formal practice model and in an informal manner, incorporating mediation methods into one's generic practice, applying them liberally to meet the particular circumstances of client systems in conflict" (Kruk, 1997, p. 15).

Kruk's (1997) book is the compilation of articles composed by different contributors to address the interrelation between social services and mediation. The

chapters highlights the use of mediation in different areas related to social work and human services from mediating conflicts within families to advocating for children's rights, from adoption to mediating disputes related to healthcare, aging, and disabilities, from administering mediation to resolve community-related disputes to deploying mediation in education and social policy areas, etc. (Kruk, 1997).

The efficiency of mediation in workplace is highlighted in Kruk's (1997) book in one of the chapters written by Mares-Dixon that discusses harassment at work. According to Mares-Dixon, workplace harassment seriously affects many organizations in the US since more than 2 million of employees "experience workplace violence each year, and over 4 million employees report that they have felt threatened in some way by a fellow employee" (Mares-Dixon, 1997, p. 263). Consequences of this growing issue involve higher levels of employee stress, their decreased productivity, and their failure to maintain loyalty to the company (Mares-Dixon, 1997). Mares-Dixon highlights that mediation can be effectively used to address workplace harassment thus improving environment in organizations. Claims related to harassment at work may be appropriately addressed by mediators with the professional background in social work or human services (Mares-Dixon, 1997). The popularity of mediation practices in resolving the afore-stated workplace disputes is explained by low costs and fairly informal procedures, by the focus on maintaining disputants' confidentiality, and by the potency to raise the harasser's awareness of how his or her actions affect a victim, and what steps need to be undertaken to resolve the problem. Moreover, Mares-Dixon asserts that using mediation is likely to preserve and advance relationships and professional careers.

Conflict resolution studies may be naturally incorporated in the work of helping professionals; thus, adding to the efficiency and productivity of social care services (Mayer, 2018). The implementation of such core principles as “empowerment, autonomy, community building, and a commitment to diversity” are reliant on the use of strong mediation skills; workers daily apply the afore-said principles while addressing problems related to family conflicts and interpersonal disputes (Mayer, 2018, p. 446). However, the role of conflict resolution including mediation in social work and other helping professions have always been badly underestimated if not overlooked (Mayer, 2018). It is highlighted in the article that while individual workers may consistently apply mediation skills, agencies do not hurry to officially merge conflict resolution with social work and other helping services (Mayer, 2018).

Mediation still lies within the domain of law, and the ability of other areas including human services to introduce conflict resolution interventions is limited (Mayer, 2018). Mayer (2018) also asserts that we disregard the role of mediation in social services due to the common belief that advocacy and mediation may not coexist. The article points to the fallacy of this statement given that helping professions require some neutrality to effectively advocate for clients’ interests; mediators’ impartiality, in its turn, should incorporate advocacy skills to promote successful resolution of conflicts (Mayer, 2018).

Alongside the description of potential benefits of mediation in social services, Mayer (2018) also highlights Allan Barsky’s contribution to the study of the role of conflict resolution in caring professions. Mayer (2018) states that Barsky stresses the value of conflict theory and practical interventions and explores employee ways of

addressing own conflicts and managing clients' disputes and "how these ideas and reflections translate into day-to-day interactions that define ... work, whether as mediators, advocates, managers, or counselors" (Mayer, 2018, p. 448).

Brubaker, Fincher, Park, and Press (2014) assert that mediation along with other means of alternative dispute resolution has become a popular way of addressing workplace disputes in non-profit organizations, for-profit businesses, and governmental agencies. Managers continue exploring cost-efficient methods of dealing with organizational conflicts. Due to the growing popularity of alternative approaches to the resolution of disputes, many conflict resolution professionals support the creation of "integrated conflict management systems to combine interest-based, right-based, and power-based conflict resolution options" to improve the efficiency of such methods for organizations (Brubaker et al., 2014, p. 358). Brubaker et al. (2014) define mediation as a way of consensually resolving conflicts with the help of a third party that encourages interactions, promotes reflections, and intervenes to improve disputants' mindfulness. It is essential that no decisions are enforced on opposing parties by a mediator.

When discussing the application of mediation in a workplace environment, the writers of "Conflict Resolution in the Workplace: What Will the Future Bring?" differentiate between "the mediation of interpersonal or team issues" and "the mediation of litigated (law-based) matters" (Brubaker et al., 2014, p. 365). Workplace conflicts that do not require lawyers' participation are oftentimes caused by personal tensions, by disputes related to financial matters, and by personnel or company strategies. Interpersonal conflicts are likely to occur between two workers one of which is a supervisor and the other one is a supervisee, whereas several employees may be involved

in team disputes over the group productivity and efficiency (Brubaker et al., 2014). The aforesaid conflicts negatively affect organizations. Handling such disputes is essential, however, disputants are unlikely to participate “in part due to a lack of familiarity with the process and a preference to deny the problem exists or requires attention” (Brubaker et al., 2014, p. 365). The authors highlight that mediating interpersonal and intragroup disputes is oftentimes imposed by an employer and presupposes ongoing relationships within the company. When discussing the future of the above stated disputes, Brubaker et al. (2014) expect that more agencies will encourage conflict resolution through mediation primarily focusing on team disputes. The other prediction is that mediation will be in demand as a tool to resolve interpersonal and intragroup conflicts; mediators will value self-determination and time to ensure the efficacy of the mediation process.

In contrast, law-based conflicts involve statutory claims related to discrimination cases, workplace violations, breach of contract, etc. Litigated cases require the presence of lawyers; disputants are interested in mediating such disputes to avoid lawsuits (Brubaker et al., 2014). Brubaker et al. (2014) describe such mediation as “caucus driven with the mediator shuttling between the parties with offers”, and the process is not predicated on the value of self-determination; parties are oftentimes pressured to make decisions, and the level of trust in the mediation reliability is fairly low. (Brubaker et al., 2014, p. 366). Brubaker et al. (2014) do not predict any changes in law-based mediation arguing that mediation of litigated matters will remain strictly evaluative and settlement-based. At the same time, the chances are the lens of such workplace mediation will be on restoring relationships (Brubaker et al., 2014). Despite the aforesaid challenges of mediating legal cases, the process effectively addresses workplace disputes given that

individuals are willing to participate because the resolution is legally required, and the costs of bringing issues to court are extremely high (Brubaker et al., 2014).

Katz and Flynn (2013) in their article “Understanding Conflict Management Systems and Strategies in the Workplace: A Pilot Study” explore the nature of workplace conflicts and explore the potency of alternative dispute resolution. The review of literature stresses the importance to consider conflicts on the job as a weighty component that affects “workplace productivity, efficiency, and overall success” (Katz & Flynn, 2013 p. 396). While exploring roots of workplace disputes, the authors stress that most conflicts arise from personal disagreements, confusions related to company structures, scarcity of financial resources, dismissals, interorganizational competition, etc. (Katz & Flynn, 2013). The key elements of workplace conflicts involve power, companies’ demands, and worth, which means “self-esteem and other emotional needs” (Katz & Flynn, 2013, p. 398).

While we should be aware of the significance of the conflict variable, a company is likely to benefit from workplace disagreements and tensions if they are constructively addressed by methods of alternative dispute resolution. The article differentiates between functional and dysfunctional disputes; the former presupposes effective handling of workplace clashes, whereas the latter is characterized by hurt feelings and negative emotions that jeopardize employee job satisfaction and agencies’ productivity (Katz & Flynn, 2013). Moreover, while exploring the nature of workplace conflicts, the authors acknowledge the significance of organizational culture and its influence on the management of organizational disputes. In the company context, culture is a significant variable to be considered when addressing workplace conflicts. It involves norms, values,

beliefs, actions, “and social structures that define reality and guide everyday interactions” (Ford, as cited in Katz & Flynn, 2013, p. 398). The role of leadership in the resolution of conflicts is highlighted as well. As argued in the article, leadership styles are interrelated with cultures in organizations and with conflict management strategies and techniques. Katz and Flynn (2013) explore the potential of conflict management to understand and effectively address the complex dynamics of workplace disputes including the positive and negative impacts of conflicts, organizational culture, and leadership styles.

Katz and Flynn (2013) point to the benefit of using alternative methods of resolving organizational conflicts and to the importance of raising people’s awareness of such benefit. The article discusses the findings of “a pilot study conducted in Broward County, Florida, of workplace leaders’ and managers’ awareness, perception, and use of conflict management systems and strategies” (Katz & Flynn, 2013, p. 393). The results of the study highlight the need for developing systems of conflict management to effectively tackle workplace issues in for-profit businesses and non-profit organizations. Their pilot study documents the extensive use of traditional practices of resolving workplace conflicts that entail “executive denial, managerial avoidance, formal grievances, and litigation or threats of it...” and the public lack of the awareness that conflict resolution professionals such as negotiators, facilitators, and mediations can help resolve organizational disputes (Katz & Flynn, 2013, p. 406). The results of the pilot study also show that many companies are not knowledgeable of the availability of different conflict management methods and strategies that are likely to effectively address workplace disputes. They pinpoint that employing mediation for the resolution of organizational conflicts saves money, decreases employee turnover, improves morale, and boosts

productivity. Mediation as well as other methods of conflict resolution adds to the mindset that workplace differences and conflicts may not be avoidable; and they should be viewed as opportunities to better organizational efficiency (Katz & Flynn, 2013).

Goldman, Cropanzano, Stein, and Benson (2008) argue that the role of mediation as a method of resolving disputes with the involvement of a third party is influential when it comes to addressing conflicts within organizations. The authors provide with a comprehensive review of literature that describes informal approaches to resolve conflicts, managerial roles in addressing clashes within companies, appropriate behavioral patterns and strategies, formal conflict resolution, and ways of handling formal disputes in organizations.

While exploring the aforesaid, the writers emphasize the significance of mediation in managing various issues within companies. According to Goldman et al.' (2008) review of literature, mediation can be described as a viable component of the social psychological approach to resolving disputes. Per the discussed approach, the resolution of disputes involves process and decision stages, where the former involves evidence and arguments, and the latter presupposes judgement. Additionally, disagreements occur among opponents and a third party; "either the ... disputants or the third party could exert control", which may show during the process and/or decision stages (Goldman et al., 2008, p. 292). When viewed through the lens of the social psychological approach, the authors maintain that mediation is an intervention that involves a third party, which has control over the process stage while opponents exert control over the decision stage.

Another informal approach to resolve disputes views mediation through the lens of managerial resolution of problems (Goldman et al., 2008). Like the social psychological approach, mediation is defined as an intervention wherein “the third party retains process control but does not exercise decision control” (Goldman et al., 2008, p. 294). The difference is that the managerial conflict resolution model precisely highlights the role of mediation in organizations. The analyzed by the authors literature addresses similarities and differences between mediation and facilitation. The paper stresses that unlike the latter, the former is oftentimes preferred when dealing with organizational disputes, particularly if there is enough time, and opponents are bound to work together once conflicts are addressed (Goldman et al., 2008). When discussing peculiarities of managerial tactics to resolve conflicts, the authors contend that managers’ roles may involve not only the mediation of disputes, but also acting as a facilitator, performing adversarial and autocratic functions, promoting motivation, and avoiding or ignoring certain issues if needed.

As for appropriate behaviors and strategies, Goldman et al. 2008 primarily focus on effective actions and tactics of mediators and identify such models of behavior in mediation as descriptive, normative, and transformative. Descriptive models are based on “deal making” and “orchestration”, where the former involves an authoritative role of a third party, and the latter encourages interactions between disputants without the element of force and domination of a mediator (Goldman et al., 2008). Normative models of mediator’s behavior are remarkably similar to descriptive ones; however, unlike descriptive mediation, normative techniques may not be limited to the use in “a unionized environment” (Goldman et al., 2008, p. 302). The authors describe the following steps of

normative mediation: to have the participants meet, to raise trust in a mediator, to highlight the importance of the problem, to dispute assumptions, to identify and expand on “areas of agreements”, and to arrive at alternatives (Goldman et al., 2008, p. 302). Moreover, it is essential to defuse tensions through using some time to cool off. When describing the transformative model of mediators’ behaviors, it is essential to pinpoint its goal to ensure a peaceful environment through educating disputants on the importance to acknowledge diverse viewpoints during mediation. The key element of this model is the idea that apologizing is apt to encourage settlements for opposing parties (Goldman et al., 2008). Along with choosing mediators’ behaviors, it is indispensable to consider appropriate mediation strategies before the beginning of mediation (Goldman et al., 2008). The authors review taxonomies of strategies that are offered by Carnevale and Kressel (Goldman et al., 2008).

The discussed by Carnevale (as cited in Goldman et al., 2008) strategies include integrating, pressing, compensating, and inaction. Integration presupposes the process of arriving at a solution “based on common grounds” and pressing means the encouragement of flexibility between opponents (Goldman et al., 2008, p. 303). When parties compensate, they are ready to compromise through yielding and “giving something back” (Goldman et al., 2008, p. 303). As for the strategy of inaction, this approach presupposes minimal interfering of a mediator. Moreover, Carnevale (as cited in Goldman et al., 2008) put thought into the “model of mediator strategic choice” that relies on several assumptions (p. 303). The outlined assumptions are the following: mediators strive for consensus between opposing parties; a third party is capable of employing any of the above-mentioned strategies, mediators are characterized as being

enthusiastic and action-driven; mediators can only use one strategy at a time; and strategies are based on the variables “how much the mediator cares about the disputants resolving their dilemma and the mediator’s recognition of a common ground” (Goldman et al., 2008, p. 304).

The other taxonomy of strategies is offered by Kressel who (as cited by Goldman et al., 2008) puts forth a simplistic approach to managing disputes through mediation. The suggested strategy contains three elements “reflexive, contextual, and substantive” (Goldman et al., 2008, p. 304). When using reflexive strategies in mediation, a conflict resolution professional starts with attempts to build the basis for resolving issues. The primary focus of a mediator is on establishing rapport, on acting in an impartial manner, and on being accepted by disputants. The lens of contextual strategies is on creating a solution-friendly environment that facilitates effective interactions between opponents. As for the substantive strategy, it involves the importance of pinpointing problems and addressing them accordingly (Goldman et al., 2008). The aforesaid strategies may be effectively used; the extent of their utilization is primarily dependent on evaluations conducted by mediators (Goldman et al., 2008).

When addressing formal resolution of conflicts, the authors highlight in their review of studies that for the most part, companies remain unwilling to formally settle disputes, whereas employees are apt to formally mediate claims. Organizations are reluctant to proceed further given that employers oftentimes do not consider that the issue is worthy of taking the formal route, and the case would “require monetary settlement” (Goldman et al., 2008, p. 312). Moreover, legal consultants are likely to discourage formal mediation if an issue will involve “a novel interpretation of law”, if there are

concerns related to witnesses' credibility, and if the other party is not willing to compromise, or the opponent does not seem to be trustworthy (Goldman et al., 2008, p. 312).

Mediation as a method of formal disputing in organizations is applicable given that parties have the interest in ongoing relationships, cases required quick resolutions, employers prefer "economical alternative to litigation", and privacy and confidentiality of disputants should be preserved (Goldman et al., 2008, p. 312). The popularity of mediation in such cases is explained by the efficiency of this method of alternative resolution of disputes. Organizations demonstrate high rates of satisfaction and success when settling disputes; Goldman et al. 2008 argue that satisfaction is primarily associated with short-term outcomes. At the same time, some research shows the possibility of long-term efficiency. Another merit of formal mediation is that mediating is likely to positively affect perceptions of justice (Goldman et al., 2008).

While Goldman et al. 2008 discriminate between formal and informal use of mediation when resolving conflicts, the authors maintain that many companies oftentimes utilize a new system, which involves the combination of both formal and informal approaches. Combining the former and the latter may be beneficial. Organizations would "proceed from low cost to high cost"; thusly, initial sessions may be cheaper and more informal, whereas further meetings are likely to be formal, less flexible, and pricey (Goldman et al., 2008, p. 310). Appropriate sequencing process may significantly add to the efficiency of mediation; wherein most of issues are managed at initial stages that would reduce organizational expenses (Goldman et al., 2008). Combining informal and formal mediation approaches is likely to show positive outcomes for agencies.

Critical Analysis

Workplace Issues and Employee' Productivity

Workplace problems in helping professions are serious, and, as described in this review of literature, they seem to have negative impacts on employee efficiency. Conflicts in organizations pose threats to employee emotional and physical wellbeing. Companies suffer from monetary losses and poor employee productivity (Filippelli-DiManna, 2012). Workplace issues are oftentimes caused by various stressors that are related to employee job satisfaction (VonDras et al., 2009). Stressors in caring professions are results of conflicts with other staff members, interactions with clients and their families, and intrapersonal problems; ethical issues related to autonomy, justice, and benevolence add to workplace issues as well (VonDras et al., 2009). Stress may also be originated from demographic factors, organizational policies and procedures, and role conflicts (Acker, 2008). Workplace conflicts relate to employee burnout and show a negative impact on personnel's productivity (Kozak et al., 2013). Workplace issues may also involve low salary, overwhelming caseloads, and not feeling appreciated; the aforesaid is likely to result in increased turnover rates in human care services (Ejaz et al., 2015).

Violence on the job as one of workplace issues among caring professionals is the result of poor interpersonal communication (Shier, 2018). Bullying negatively impacts employees and agencies adding to the incivility and aggression in social service organizations (Heugten, 2010). Workplace deviance in human services has individual and organizational predictors and sabotages employee performance and companies' efficiency (Nair & Bhatnagar, 2011).

Workplace stress and conflicts are the results of organizational changes, employee inflexibility, the confusion of roles, disagreements, poor social support, unsafety at work, threats, humiliation, harassment, and physical violence (Shier et al., 2018). Workplace issues influenced by corporate cultures and physical environment that impairs employee emotional and physical wellbeing (Shier et al., 2018). Workplace issues are overly complex in nature and require resolutions on both personal and professional levels (Dellve, & Wikström, 2009).

Management of Workplace Conflicts

The reviewed literature highlights the importance of using conflict resolution skills to effectively manage workplace conflicts in helping professions. Managing conflicts through the elimination of fears of retribution, through the promotion of disciplinary actions and the administration of new hiring practices, through the use of strategies to address poor employee performance and risks to wellbeing is likely to improve workplace environment. Using conflict resolution practices will better interactions among clients, employees, and managers in social services, thusly adding to the improvement of organizational efficiency.

The reviewed materials suggest that nonprofit organizations will be likely to benefit from the administration of different trainings for the personnel to address workplace stressors in a constructive manner. Promoting a supportive workplace climate that facilitates employee dedication and involvement as well as their positive attitudes will reduce stress among providers of social services and will also add to a better productivity. Educating staff on the dynamics of conflicts will be likely to decrease negative interactions and violence at work. It is essential to thoroughly examine major

causes of workplace harassment to start creating a positive atmosphere in social services centers. The encouragement of open communication and employee participation in negotiations within organizations is likely to contribute to the productive decision-making process in agencies of human services. Addressing workplace issues through the identification and the analysis of factors that may result in conflicts will help manage violent behaviors at work. Moreover, enhancing supervisors' competency and active networking with other professionals will also contribute to the reduction of instances of workplace issues among employees in human services centers.

Use of Theories

The present review of literature addresses theories with the lens on a systems approach and a conflict management theory as a subsystem element. Systems theories explore intergroup and intragroup relationships in helping professions, and they are characterized by the complex dynamics among systems' elements; formed systems are marked by unique rules, norms, values, and interactions. The resolution of disputes should embrace the whole system; attempting to manage problems of separate system's elements is ineffective (Barsky, 2017). Systems approach and conflict resolution studies oftentimes share similar features and are interconnected; the latter informs the former, thus adding to a deeper understanding of conflict dynamics and equipping systems with helpful interventions (Li et al., 2012). Systems theories address a variety of disputes in different fields and at different levels given contributions from conflict resolution studies (Li et al., 2012).

Systems theory may be applied while exploring organizational disputes; workplace conflicts emerge within informational, political, functional, and social

subsystems (Pondy, 1966). Interdependence and differences in goals trigger disputes within informational systems; such disputes may be influenced by other subsystems and impact them as well (Pondy, 1966). Autonomy has effects on political subsystems, employee status may result in conflicts in functional subsystems, whereas personality types are positively related to the emergence of conflicts in social subsystems (Pondy, 1966). Systems theory is an effective way for addressing workplace conflicts; the use of conflict management systems successfully tackles disputes within organizations (Conbere, 2001). Conflict management systems are multidisciplinary in nature and are formed from practitioners and researchers from different fields, which adds to the systems' efficiency and to their value for companies. (Conbere, 2001). Dispute resolution systems marked by the combination of right-based, interest-based, and negotiation-based elements are effective ways for the management of workplace conflicts (Bendersky, 2003).

Conflict management systems that consist of different components are marked by the complementary relationships of these components; the influence of the relationships on organizational outcomes is more salient than the quantity of the systems' components (Roche and Teague, 2012). Conflict management theory is characterized by the complex dynamics of conflict episodes. Organizations may benefit from consequences of disputes as long as we can accept them and address their inevitability without avoiding and suppressing them (Speakman & Ryal, 2010). It is essential to employ a combination of different conflict management behaviors to manage workplace conflicts; successful outcomes of the behaviors are likely to be connected with the disputes nature, actors' characteristics, the nature of human relationships, and the dynamics of past conflicts

(Speakman & Ryal, 2010). Conflict management systems may successfully address organizational conflicts if conflict resolution professionals can treat disputes as opportunities for changes (Aula and Siira, 2010). If systems are easily adapted to issues, our interventions are likely to have positive outcomes.

Mediation in the Reviewed Studies

Barsky's (2017) thorough examination of educational resources related to conflict theories and practices aims at helping providers of social services and other caring professions incorporate methods of alternative dispute resolution in their work. Different approaches to mediation and mediation types are comprehensively addressed from the standpoint of social work and other helping professions. Along with the discussion of theoretical aspects, the book provides with an overview of practical application of mediation through a plethora of questions, exercises, role plays, and assignments. Although mediation is comprehensively analyzed through the lens of caring professions, the book does not provide with any quantitative research and/or qualitative data related to the efficiency mediation in the afore-said settings. Moreover, the role of mediation in resolving workplace conflicts in organizations that offer social services is not highlighted.

Moore (2014) explores uses of mediation to address organizational disputes and workplace conflicts and provides with an overview of labor related issues that are likely to be successfully resolved through the aforesaid method of alternative dispute resolution. At the same time, the book does not look into using mediation to settle disputes among employees in agencies that provide human services.

Cloke's (2002) approach to employing mediation as a tool of conflict resolution in workplace highlights a wide range of settings where the above-mentioned tool may be

successfully used from criminal justice to managing issues in education, communities, labor, etc. The emphasis lies on the creative aspect of mediation that empowers the transformation of disputes into constructive interactions. While the author outlines how companies that aim at making social changes end up facing conflicts and addresses beneficial effects of mediation on such conflicts, the dynamics of workplace issues among providers of human services is not discussed. The content of the book does not describe the application of mediation to resolve these workplace disputes and potential outcomes as well.

Bush and Folger (2005) provide with an in depth look at transformative mediation and address advantages of the model for a wide range of settings including organizational disputes. Bush and Folger's work discusses the dynamics of conflict resolution through transformation and outcomes engendered by unfolding in mediation discussions. However, while intracompany issues are thoroughly examined through transformative lenses, the authors do not highlight any opportunities of the transformative model for the resolution of workplace disputes in human services.

The focus of Carpenter and Kennedy's (1988) book is on understanding and on appropriately addressing public disputes. The authors describe ways of coping with conflicts in a productive manner; they point to the development of efficient conflict management strategies and highlight the importance of arriving at agreements when resolving disputes. While the book explores effective conflict management processes and discusses elements that are likely to add to the success of the resolution of disputes, mediation is not the primary lens of Carpenter and Kennedy's (1988) attention.

Moreover, the role of mediation in caring professions including human services is not highlighted.

Asebedo's (2017) explores beneficial effects of mediation when it is applied to resolve money arguments and describes conflict resolution framework to understand and resolve financial matters through the application of conflict theory and mediation processes. Although mediation is discussed as a successful intervention to define and achieve clients' goals, the application of mediation practices solely pertains to the financial field. Mediation is not discussed within the context of human services.

Saundry et al. (2018) explore the impact of mediation on workplace conflicts from the standpoint of company management and employees. While some benefits related to increased company productivity and opportunities for workers to openly confront managerial power have been highlighted, the research does not discuss any implications for resolving workplace conflicts in human service agencies.

The Aramark Corp's (2015) report does not show any data to back the conclusions related to the efficiency of mediation. Although the report highlights outstanding effects of mediation on workplace environment and on the company productivity, the findings are not based on any empirical research. Moreover, while Aramark's field of expertise includes healthcare services, nothing is said about potential connections between mediation and employee's productivity in other helping professions.

While Mantle's (2002) essay points to the role of mediation in social work, the paper is solely based on the analysis of previous studies that make references to applying the afore-said alternative method of disputes resolution to human services. Mantle's (2002) conclusions related to the value of mediation in social services are primarily based

on inferences highlighted in the reviewed literature; the conclusions do not rely on ample empirical research. Moreover, Mantle's (2002) lens is on the relationships between social workers and clients' wellbeing. Although the use of mediation to address workplace conflicts is suggested, and the potential connection between mediation and employee productivity can be implied, the topics are not explicated throughout the essay.

Kruk (1997) demonstrates the tight connection between mediation and social services and highlights advantages of using mediation in different aspects of social work and other human services. The author provides with a thorough description of mediation theories, trends, and processes applicable to different areas of social services and emphasizes the appropriateness and benefits of using mediation strategies in caring professions. At the same time, the book does not explore the potential of using mediation to address workplace tensions among social workers and other human services specialists given the stressful workplace environment and feasible employee burnout.

Mayer's (2018) work highlights benefits of embracing mediation in caring professions to improve the efficiency of the services. The focus is on positive effects of using mediation on a worker-client relationship. At the same time, outcomes of using mediation to address workplace disputes in helping professions are not addressed.

Brubaker et al. (2014) analyze the present status of mediation as a method of resolving workplace conflicts. The authors conceptualize current trends of resolving non-litigious and law-based conflicts at work and make prognoses about the future of the aforesaid disputes. Brubaker et al. (2014) highlight the growing popularity of mediation in organizational conflicts to improve employee productivity. Some optimism is expressed as to the potential of mediation when applied to resolve disputes that may or

may not require litigation. However, present effects of mediation on the resolution of workplace conflicts in social services and the future of mediation in managing disputes in human services are not addressed. Katz and Flynn (2013) reflect their views on the dynamics of organizational conflicts and ways of their effective management. The analyzed pilot study in Broward County lends some evidence to the efficiency of alternative dispute resolution methods including mediation. At the same time, the article does not clearly point to the use of mediation to manage workplace disputes in centers of social services.

Goldman et al. (2008) describe the informal and formal use of mediation, mediators' roles, behaviors, and strategies, and impacts of mediation on the resolution of conflicts. The researchers view mediation through the lens of previously conducted studies that discuss the popularity of mediation in different companies. The authors highlight positive influences of mediation on organizational disputes and explore its efficiency when utilized in informal and formal contexts. However, Goldman et al. (2008) do not describe roles and/or effects of mediation among caring professionals in helping agencies.

Subsequent Conclusions

The present review of literature highlights previous studies that point to the seriousness of workplace disputes in organizations that provide human services and negative effects of these conflicts on employee performance and on organizational productivity. The reviewed studies also reflect on the efficiency of systems theories when resolving organizational disputes in a variety of settings including human services. According to the explored information, mediation is an effective approach when

appropriately employed to address organizational conflicts and to improve employee efficiency. At the same time, a lack of information on the use of mediation within the context of human services and on potential effects of mediation on employee efficiency in social services centers adds to the importance of exploring effects of mediation on conflicts within organizations that aim at helping vulnerable populations. The review of literature lends evidence to the value of the exploration of mediation effects on employee efficiency in organizations that offer caring services to populations in need.

Problem Statement

The foregoing review of studies shows that workers in human services and in other organizations that help vulnerable populations oftentimes deal with significant stress related to the nature of their job. Moreover, stressing oftentimes adds to workplace conflicts and results in negative consequences for employees and, thusly, for their employers. The aforesaid causes poor employee productivity in organizations that offer human services.

Statement of Purpose

Mediation as an alternative method of dispute resolution is effectively used to resolve organizational conflicts. In this study, I explore the efficiency of impacts of mediation on employee productivity while addressing workplace issues in the context of human services. It is hypothesized in this project that employing mediation to resolve workplace conflicts in human services centers and in other organizations that offer caring services will have positive effects on employee efficiency.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This dissertation project uses case study research to examine potential impacts of mediation on employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other organizations that serve people in need. The chapter describes the case study method through the lens of different researchers and addresses the appropriateness of a case study for this paper. I list the research question and the proposition, describe the case study design, and discuss ethical considerations. The protocol for this case study, as well as strategies for collecting and analyzing data, and proposed timelines are addressed as well.

Description of Case Study Research

A history of case studies reflects their applicability in various fields; the method was successfully employed to study organizations and communities, to portray dynamics in mental health facilities, and to explore phenomena in social sciences and education (Bachor, 2002). Nowadays, case study research still gains popularity and tends to be frequently used by many scholars. The method is considered viable due to its ability to show time-frame images of aggregates' qualities and performances (Bachor, 2002). Moreover, a case study is characterized by “face-value credibility” since it demonstrates “evidence or illustrations with which some readers can readily identify”; the method is also known as a popular tool that thoroughly examines evidence related to different units of analysis (Bachor, 2002, p. 20-21).

A case study is well-known “as a methodology, research design, method, research strategy, research approach, style of reasoning...” (Ylikoski, & Zahle, 2019, p. 1). A case study has several distinctive characteristics that differ it from other research methods (Ylikoski, & Zahle, 2019). For instance, the lens of researchers is on a single case study

or on multiple cases; cases represent naturally happening processes or items that are conceptualized (Ylikoski, & Zahle, 2019). Moreover, when employing the case study method, researchers usually work with multiple strategies of collecting and examining information; the processes are rather questions-based than methods-driven (Ylikoski, & Zahle, 2019). Case studies aim at creating complete and thorough records that are oftentimes produced as narratives (Ylikoski, & Zahle, 2019).

When defining a case study, Yin (2014) argues that as an empirical study, the method is characterized by scrutinizing the present-time phenomenon “within its real-time context”, particularly “when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may be clearly evident” (Yin, 2014, p. 16). The other part of the case study definition stems from the fact that, contexts and phenomena may not be totally discerned. (Yin, 2014). Due to the afore-mentioned, it is essential to highlight other case study features: case study research addresses events wherein there are “more variables of interest than data points”, case studies are reliant on many sources of evidence “with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result”, and identified theoretical propositions guide the collection and analysis of information (Yin, 2014, p. 17). The case study method embraces the logic of design, strategies to gather information, and certain approaches to analyze collected data (Yin, 2014).

When discussing the nature of cases, Ylikoski, and Zahle (2019) highlight cases’ flexibility. Like Yin’s viewpoint, the authors stress that boundaries between cases and their contexts may not be always clear. Moreover, boundaries are likely to be modified when information for cases needs to be narrowed down during the process of data collection and analysis (Ylikoski, & Zahle, 2019).

As far as the essence of case study research goes, this method requires the definition of a case and may include both quantitative and qualitative components; thus, a case study is not solely qualitative in nature. Moreover, case studies may not necessarily be thoroughly descriptive or be characterized by in-depth observations. “Thick description” and “detailed observational evidence” are essential features of qualitative methods. Thusly, case study research should not be considered as a typical example of a qualitative study (Yin, 2014, p. 19).

Stake (1995) in his turn maintains that the essence of a case study is unique and complex. The method aims at grasping the complexity and distinctiveness of each case given context circumstances (Stake, 1995). Unlike Yin that highlights the presence of qualitative and quantitative elements in a case study, Stake (1995) is an advocate of a purely qualitative approach wherein ethnography, phenomenology, and biography are interwoven with naturalistic and holistic methods of research. At the same time, the author accedes that when it comes to the exploration of cases, researchers “do things differently” given their styles and a plethora of available methods (Stake, 1995, p. xii).

When describing case studies from the qualitative standpoint, it is essential to emphasize the role of interpretation (Stake, 1995). Researchers should both objectively document observed information and interpret the meaning of such information. It is not uncommon to alter or replace initially formulated research questions during the study to attain a thorough understanding of the case. It is indispensable to change the whole design of the case “if early questions are not working” or “new issues become apparent, p. 9” (Stake, 1995). At the same time, a researcher is strongly advised not to be in a hurry with conclusions based on assertions drawn from his or her interpretations. The case

study method is characterized by patience and thoughtfulness. Moreover, researchers should do their best to ensure noninvasiveness of their approach and empathy to prevent disturbances to a natural flow of events within a case (Stake, 1995). Interpretations are important to understand the thought process of case participants. However, oftentimes researchers' interpretations supersede those of the studied actors; therefore, it is paramount that researchers attempt "to preserve the multiple realities, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening" (Stake, 1995, p. 12).

Case studies are notable for a thorough exploration of data and for addressing multifarious components of researched cases (Ylikoski, & Zahle, 2019). Like Yin, the authors maintain that while gathering data, case studies embrace multiple approaches that may be qualitative and quantitative in nature. Researchers prefer case studies to examine present-time phenomena with "relevant behaviors that cannot be manipulated"; most common techniques for this method are observations and interviews; at the same time, "case studies and histories can overlap", which enables work with such evidence as artifacts and historical documents (Yin, 2014, p. 12). Collecting data for case studies may also be quantitative and include surveys and computational content analysis (Ylikoski, & Zahle, 2019). The distinction between qualitative approaches and statistical methods is blurred during the process of data gathering and its subsequent analysis (Ylikoski, & Zahle, 2019). When addressing goals of a case study, it is essential to focus on promoting "a comprehensive in-depth description and analysis of the case" (Ylikoski, & Zahle, 2019, p. 2). As previously mentioned in this paper, the lens is on creating exhaustive accounts that are holistic in nature.

Appropriateness of Case Study Research for This Paper

The reason for choosing the case study method lies in the ability of the case study to cast light on different socio-political and organizational events and on other phenomena (Yin, 2014). Case studies are popular in different social sciences including but not limited to political science, nursing, psychology, and sociology (Ylikoski, & Zahle, 2019). Case units may involve organizations and social policies, the units “may also be a particular event or process, like ... an organization change...” (Ylikoski, & Zahle, 2019, p. 2). Case study analysis is oftentimes employed in the field of social work to attain a better understanding of complex social phenomena and effectively address individual and group behaviors (Yin, 2014). Using case studies in economics adds to the thorough examination of organizational dynamics and managerial practices (Yin, 2014).

Moreover, case studies are both practical and engaging; they are oftentimes preferred over other methods since “they may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader’s experience and thus to that person a natural basis for generalization” (Stake, 2000, p. 17). While most research methods rely on the positivist approach that focuses on the explanation of events, we use a case study to understand different occurrences. Stake (2002) maintains that reports conducted through case studies enable a better understanding of various phenomena through readers’ personal experiences. Case studies also enable researchers to generalize “by recognizing the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context and by sensing the natural covariations of happenings”; we can characterize such generalizations as intuitive and empirical (Stake, 2000, p. 22). While addressing social issues, using case study research significantly contributes to people’s experiences and comprehension (Stake, 2000).

In view of the outlined, I hold that this dissertation project is likely to benefit from using case study analysis to address the role of mediation in organizations that provide caring services from social and economic standpoints. Using the case study approach will improve the readers' understanding of how mediation may affect employee efficiency in human services and in other organizations that offer help to vulnerable populations.

Case Study Question

One of the most essential steps in the case study method is the determination of research questions (Yin, 2014). Designing appropriate research questions is crucial for a case study since they help researchers maintain the scientific lens on studied phenomena (Stake, 1995). “*How*” and “*why*” questions, which are explanatory in nature are commonly used in case study research (Yin, 2014). This project uses the “*how*” research question; the research question below stems from the previously discussed concerns related to caring professions, the highlighted outcomes of the literature review, and the identified problems in the field of human services: *How using mediation may be linked to employee efficiency in human services and in other caring professions?*

Case Study Proposition

Propositions point to phenomena to explore in a study (Yin, 2014). Identifying propositions helps address theoretical issues and move in the direction of appropriate information (Yin, 2014). The following proposition is identified for this case study: *Mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other organizations that help vulnerable populations.*

Case Study Design

The methodology of this dissertation project is based on the mixed method design, which Yin (2014) describes the combination of different quantitative and qualitative types of studies integrated into one case; “confinement to a single study forces the methods being mixed into an integrated mode” (p. 65). The difference from conventional designs lies in studying individual cases and merging them into the whole. When using mixed method design, we address same research questions; we gather additional information in order to subsequently “conduct counterpart analysis” (Yin, 2014, p. 65). As the result, the use of the aforesaid design enables us to explore complicated phenomena and amass in-depth data and valuable evidence that may not be attainable through a plain single case study. Yin (2014) highlights the potency of the mixed method design since it opens doors to exploring cases through different angles. Namely, we can enrich our research through embedding various approaches and techniques in a single case study; or our case study may be an element of a bigger project created by the mixed-method design.

The other characteristic of the mixed method design is that it “need not include the use of case study research at all”; for example, we may create our research “within historical work” wherein we conduct quantitative analyses of documents and archives (Yin, 2014, p. 66). Moreover, we should not limit the use of mixed methods to the mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches; mixed method projects may solely include several quantitative analyses such as “a survey to describe certain conditions, complemented by an experiment that tries to manipulate some of those conditions” (Yin, 2014, p. 66). In view of the foregoing, Yin (2014) holds that mixed method study

designs are likely to strengthen research through an impressive array of evidence. While using such designs may be more challenging than regular single case studies, we are likely to have richer data and gratifying outcomes.

Carolan, Forbat, and Smith (2016) posit that a mixed method design should typify a case study; the nature of the design is qualitative, and it is extensively used in human services. The authors create a new method to address case studies in caring services. When exploring their innovative model in healthcare, Carolan, et al. (2016) use information from case studies and mixed method designs. Carolan, et al. (2016) conclude that the former may not be separated from the latter; “the boundary between case study and mixed methods should be considered permeable and fluid to enable case study to fit within the overall enterprise of mixed-methods”, and mixed method designs embrace case studies (Carolan, et al., 2016, p. 636). It is essential to avoid discrimination between case studies and mixed methods since we can only convey the entire complexity of case study research through the combination of both elements.

Walton, Clark, Foote, and Johnson (2019) maintain that case studies and mixed method designs may be successfully applied in one study. Mixed method designs help effectively address research questions through quantitative and qualitative approaches and integrative strategies; both quantitative findings and qualitative results may be successfully interwoven in the final case report (Walton et al., 2019). A mixed method design can be described as a study that embraces qualitative and quantitative elements to shed more light on the complexity of the examined phenomenon. While the authors distinguish between case studies and mixed methods, they maintain that the combination of the former and the latter adds to the creation of the study with unique “relationships

between constructs that would not have been apparent using either qualitative or quantitative findings in isolation” (Walton et al., 2019, p. 7).

Walton et al. (2019) hold that a mixed method design enhances case analyses and data interpretation. This design effectively manages the daunting task of addressing relationships between different elements and groups within a single study. When we generate case-studies based on mixed methods, we can incorporate different findings, so that our research embraces individual and group perspectives and highlights peculiar relationships between these perspectives. Additionally, a mixed method design promotes a better visual display of findings bridging the gap between qualitative and quantitative approaches and creating the unique framework, which is very helpful when it comes to the presentation of case study results (Walton et al., 2019).

Along with the discussion of the mixed method design, Yin (2014) addresses single and multiple case studies. He argues that a single case study is somewhat like a single experiment and is oftentimes used if we have “a critical, unusual, common, revelatory, or longitudinal case” (Yin, 2014, p. 51). As for a multiple-case design, Yin (2014) maintains that findings of several case studies are more convincing; thusly, research appears to be more compelling. Yin (2014) holds that while most case studies is likely to have successful outcomes regardless of the type of their designs, multiple studies are preferable when exploring different phenomena. Albeit it is essential to use the single-case design approach to study unique cases, multiple-case designs continue gaining popularity due to their potency to attain more powerful outcomes. Researchers that employ the multiple-case approach are likely to receive more accurate results. Yin (2014) asserts that researchers analyze independent cases and subsequently draw

conclusions; the process is more effective than analyzing and concluding a case based on a single experiment. At the same time, the analysis of many cases may be time consuming, is likely to involve “extensive resources ... beyond the means of a single student or independent research investigator” (Yin, 2014, p. 57). In consideration of the foregoing, I choose the mixed method design while basing my dissertation on two most different case studies. The case studies combine both single and multiple case design features and quantitative and qualitative elements, which complement each other.

The first case study involves a single case study with multiple-case features. It explores Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS). The case is solely reliant on documentations. The quantitative model is used to explore work stoppage data, the length of strikes, and the dynamics of their resolution through FMCS mediation from 1984 to 2019. The case study also includes the qualitative analysis of three centers of caring services wherein FMCS mediation was used: *Brigham and Women’s hospital*, *Appalachian Regional Healthcare*, and *Catholic Health Systems*. The first case study combines the single study of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) and three most similar case studies; the first study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative methods of research. The second study explores employee efficiency by interviews. The case study is reliant on semi-structured interviews with mediators that addressed or address disputes with employees who work in human services centers and in other agencies that help people in need. The details will be discussed further in this chapter in *Interviews*.

Yin (2014) argues that multiple-case studies may nevertheless form a single study when they “become part of some larger, main unit of analysis that might not have been

specified at the outset” (p. 63). Thusly, multiple-case studies may be disregarded, and researchers may observe the emergence of a new single case study. Although this research addresses two cases, I regard them as the elements of one single mixed-method design study. I will use the adaptive strategy to explore effects of mediation on employee efficiency in human services since the design of case studies may undergo some changes as new information is discovered (Yin, 2014). And revelations caused by the emergence of new data are likely to result in modifications or alternations in the originally selected design of study (Yin, 2014).

Given the significant lack of information on effects of mediation on employee productivity in human services and in other care centers, my choice of the single case study with mixed-method features will help test the proposition that *mediation is related to employee efficiency in human services and in other organizations that help vulnerable populations*. I argue that the single case study will bridge the gap between the information related to beneficial effects of mediation and stressful environment in centers of human services. Applying a single case study will help determine the accuracy of the proposition, or it may direct the research towards making alternative propositions (Yin, 2014).

To sum up, this study will be conducted through the prism of the mixed method when exploring the single case that encompasses quantitative and qualitative studies of documents and the analysis of interviews. At the same time, I do not exclude the possibility of altering the initially determined design of the case study. The essence of the case design for this research project is adaptive given potential revelations that may emerge during the study.

Ethical Considerations

Edwards and Mauthner (2012) argue that researchers must make ethical decisions throughout the whole research process in social sciences. Ethical considerations should be part and parcel of any case and should inform “conceptualization and design, data gathering and analysis, and report, and literature on the topic...” (Edwards and Mauthner, 2012, p. 8). Studies should embrace principles of respect, integrity, fairness, and rightfulness. The authors underscore the significance of being sensitive, caring, and responsible when conducting research.

Stake (1995) also stresses the importance of the ethical aspect when conducting case studies since collecting information is oftentimes done with some invasion of privacy. It is vital to inform research participants of the nature of the research and of the key problems prior the beginning of the study. If research involves humans, it is essential to receive permissions from potential candidates before we involve them in research; researchers should also advise on potential challenges that may occur during the study and discuss expected time frames of the project (Stake, 1995).

Yin (2014) holds that each case study should be driven by ethical guidelines. Each researcher is responsible to ensure the protection of the case study participants throughout the process of screening, data gathering, data analysis, and reports of findings. Research should be approved, and we “should not view such approval merely as a nominal oversight process” (Yin, 2014, p. 78). Emotional and physical wellbeing of humans is the priority of this research study. I passionately advocate for ensuring privacy and confidentiality of every individual. The primary consideration of this dissertation is to ensure privacy and confidentiality of selected individuals, so that no one during the study

“will ... be unwittingly put in any undesirable position, even such as being on a roster to receive requests to participate in some future study” (Yin, 2014, p. 78). This study does not involve any interviews with vulnerable individuals or minors. This project does not pose any risks of jeopardizing the wellbeing of human beings.

The process of screening candidates will be impartial to ensure that no one will be unfairly selected or excluded. Each participant will be asked to sign a consent that reflects the essence of the study, the voluntary nature of the participation in the research, and rights and responsibilities of selected candidates. The form also reflects the consent for audio recording interviews for this dissertation project (see the adult informed consent form for the participation in interviews in the Appendix).

Case Study Protocol

A major way to increase the reliability of a study is the creation of the protocol, which assists researchers in collecting and reporting data. Yin (2010) defines the case study protocol as “a formal document capturing the entire set of procedures involved in the collection of data for a case study” (p. 85). The following components should be included in the protocol:

- (a) The procedures for contacting key informants and making field work arrangements; (b) explicit language and reminders for implementing and enforcing the rules for protecting human subjects; (c) a detailed line of questions, or a mental agenda to be addressed throughout the data collection, including suggestions about the relevant sources of data; and (d) a preliminary outline for the final case study report. (Yin, 2012, p. 85).

The protocol for this case study research is created based on the one composed by Yin (2014) in his book: *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (see Figure 1).

Table 1

Case Study Protocol for Researching Effects of Workplace Mediation on Employee Efficiency in Centers of Human Services and in Other Caring Agencies

<p>A. Overview of the Case Study</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mission, goals, and audience: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The mission is to improve employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other agencies that offer help to people in need to reduce workplace disputes, job-related stress, and effects of such stress on employee agencies, and clients/patients. b. The goal is to study mediation and its plausible connection with employee efficiency in human services agencies and in other care centers. c. The audience is the thesis committee and management of human services agencies, mental health facilities, hospitals, and other organizations that provide caring services. 2. Case study questions and propositions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The case study question is: <i>how using mediation may be linked to employee efficiency in human services and in other caring professions?</i> b. The proposition is that mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other organizations that help vulnerable populations. 3. Theoretical framework for the case study. The case study research will be conducted through the lens of systems theories.
<p>B. Data Collection Procedures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Names of contact persons doing field work Mariya Mironova will be doing field work. 2. Data collection plan: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Evidence will be collected through using FMCS documentation such as work stoppage reports, annual reports, budget documents, financial statements, and agreements. Evidence will be also collected from media websites and from labor unions. All documents are public records available on the Internet. b. Data collection will also involve semi-structured interviews with mediators who have experience working with employees from organizations that provide human services. 3. Expected preparation prior to fieldwork: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. IRB approval will be needed to start data collection during fieldwork.

- b. Initial screenings will be performed to determine if a human subject qualifies to participate in this case study.
- c. Recruitment letters and consent materials will be sent out prior to interviewing human subjects.
- c. The protection of privacy, confidentiality, and wellbeing of human subjects is the priority of this research. The human subjects will be advised that the participation in this study is voluntary. Human subjects have the right to leave this research study at any time. If they decide to leave, they will not get any penalty or lose any services they have a right to get. This study involves minimal risk to the human subjects. If sharing their opinions about their professional experience as mediators cause anxiety, this researcher will do her best to help. If further assistance is needed, this researcher can refer the human participants to someone who may be able to help address uncomfortable feelings.

C. Data Collection Questions (questions posed to the researcher to answer)

- 1. What are the qualifications of the human subjects?
- 2. Are the human subjects qualified to participate in this case study research?
- 3. Do the human subjects observe any changes in employee efficiency after mediation?
- 4. Does mediation affect workers, organizations, clients/patients in human services?
- 5. Is mediation related to employee turnover in human services?

D. Guide for the Case Study Report

- 1. Audience for the report:
The audience is the thesis committee and management of human services agencies, mental health facilities, hospitals, and other organizations that provide caring services.
- 2. Reporting findings:
Reporting outcomes will be conducted in the narrative format and may involve visuals such as tables and graphs.

Note. Adapted from “*Case Study Research: Design and Methods*” by Yin, R. K., 2014, pp. 84-85, Thousand Oaks, California; SAGE Publications, Inc.

Screening Human Subjects for the Case Study

It is essential to choose appropriate candidates prior to collecting data to ensure that interviewees have required qualifications to participate in a research study. A researcher should “identify the final cases properly”; “the worst scenario would occur when, after having started formal data collection, the case turns out not to be viable or represented something other than what you had intended to study” (Yin, 2014, p. 95).

The screening procedure for this dissertation project will involve what Yin (2014) defines as “a one-phase approach” that is used with single case studies (p. 95). To participate in the research study, each human subject should meet the following criteria:

- A human subject must be over 21 years of age.
- A human subject must have over 3 years of mediation experience.
- A human subject must have the experience of mediating workplace disputes in organizations that provide human services to vulnerable populations.
- A human subject agrees to participate in the study.

Human subjects will be asked about their qualifications. If they match the afore-listed set of criteria, I will send them the formal participant recruitment letter with the request to consider the participation in this case study (see the copy of the participant recruitment letter is in Appendix A).

The following human subjects will not match the criteria:

- A human subject is under 21 years of age.
- A human subject is not a mediator.
- A human subject is a mediator; however, he/she does not have at least three years of experience in the field of human services.
- A human subject does not agree to participate in the study.

Data Collection

The process of collecting data begins before a researcher makes the commitment to conduct a study; gathering information implies getting acquainted with the case through finding data on the context, becoming familiar with other cases, and attaining early impressions (Stake, 1995). While researchers may review, filter, and replace their

first impressions later; early observations are part and parcel of the pool of data (Stake, 1995). Along with searching and assessing, it is essential to have a deep understanding of data gathering process, to be able to recognize good sources of information, and to test out the accuracy of what was observed and the veracity how things were interpreted (Stake, 1995). It is vital for a researcher to be sensitive and skeptical when gathering data for a case study (Stake, 1995).

Collecting data for this dissertation project started with the consideration of early impressions, the gathering process will be realized through the prism of critical thinking, sensitivity, and skepticism. The data for this project will be collected through exploring appropriate documents such as archival records, annual reports, newsletters, and other accounts. Using multiple sources of information will add to the quality of the study since different sources of evidence are likely to result in an increased accuracy and in a higher strength of case study research (Yin, 2014). Moreover, while gathering the data, an accurate database with the obtained information will be composed. Organizing the process of data gathering is paramount for a good case study (Stake, 1995). A solid plan includes cases definitions, research questions, identified helpers, sources of information, “allocation of time, expenses”, and “intended reporting”. (Stake, 1995, p. 51). The database for this study will be composed based on the previously discussed Stake’s elements of the plan for gathering data.

While juggling various sources of information, the project will use triangulation and convergence of different information resources. According to Yin (2014), we need the triangulation of data to gather evidence from various sources and to verify it. It is

essential to converge different sources of information to improve case study validity and to “provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon” (Yin, 2014, p. 121).

Using the triangulation of evidence from the FMCS sources of information and from three individual cases within the FMCS study is likely to facilitate the converged outcome that will assume “a single reality” (Yin, 2014, p. 122). In this case, the case study is likely to accurately describe the events. The other principle of gathering data for this case study will involve the chain of evidence. The principle of maintaining a chain of evidence is highly likely to add to the reliability and the validity of the case study (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) asserts that maintaining a chain of evidence will enable readers to observe how evidence was attained and developed from the beginning of a case study to concluding thoughts. Readers should be able to follow the research “in either direction (from conclusions back to initial research questions or from questions to conclusions)” (Yin, 2014. 127). The chain of evidence significantly adds to the reliability and validity of case studies.

Documentation

Documentation is an essential part of the data collection process for case studies; “documents play an explicit role in any data collection in doing case study research” and help make inferences that will be used during case analysis (Yin, 2014, p. 107). The use of documentation gives “specific details to corroborate information from other resources” and helps make inferences that will be used during case analysis (Yin, 2014, p. 107). Yin (2014) asserts that using documentation is relevant for any information gathering process. The author maintains that the variety of records to explore for case studies include “letters, memoranda, e-mails diaries, calendars, and notes”, “agendas,

announcements... minutes of meetings”, “administrative documents such as proposals, progress reports, and other internal records”, “formal studies and evaluations”, “news clippings and other articles appearing in the mass media or in community newspapers” (Yin, 2014, p. 106). The aforesaid types of documents are available on the internet.

Yin (2014) highlights strengths of using documentation for case studies; documents are characterized by stability and specificity - researchers can repeatedly review them, and they include information about phenomena. Documents are detailed and quantitative. Moreover, documents tend to be broad in nature; they oftentimes describe prolong time periods and reflect diverse settings. Using documentation for case studies is unobtrusive since we do not interfere with our research participants (Yin, 2014). When discussing the role of documentation in case studies, Yin (2014) underscores the significance of archival records that entail public documents “such as the U.S. census and other statistical data made available by federal, state, and local governments”; “service records”, “organizational records”, “maps and charts”, “survey data”, etc. (p. 109). Archival records are vital when used for quantitative purposes (Yin, 2014).

Stake (1995) also underlines the benefits of documentation for case studies. Using documents empowers researchers to gain access to essential information that may not be directly observable (Stake, 1995). Collecting data for a case study oftentimes involves the examination of “newspapers, annual reports, correspondence, minutes of meetings, and the like” (Stake, 1995, p. 68). Thinking process for examining documents is similar to the one used while observing cases and interviewing participants; focusing and organizing along with being open to the unexpected are essential (Stake, 1995).

Welch (2000) argues that the use of records should not be underestimated since documents help create longitudinal data, establish new theories, and strengthen reliability and validity of case studies. When discussing research of business networks, Welch (2000) describes the beneficial use of archival records in case studies. The author highlights such advantages of documentations as adding the dimension of time to theories and “empirical depth” to research (Welch, 2000, p. 198). Using documentations is also helpful to explain phenomena from the developmental standpoint and to generate new theories in case studies.

Unlike interviews, documents are more precise, “less obtrusive and less contingent” (Welch, 2000, p. 199). The comprehensive nature of archival records adds to their reliability; whereas interviews or surveys are deeply reliant on the human factor, which is likely to be contingent and faulty. The non-reactive quality of accounts is another advantage of archival records; gathering data through interviews may distort the information due to the interviewees’ inclination “to report retrospectively on their experiences in a way that rationalizes their decisions and presents their actions in the most favorable light possible” (Welch, 2000, p. 200). Moreover, social pressures placed on interviewers and the need to establish appropriate rapport with research participants is likely to add to the distortion of the gathered information.

The process of studying records is systematic and “iterative”, whereas interviewing participants may be influenced by a variety of factors such as “time constraints, interruptions, the presence of third parties monitoring the discussion, sudden crises facing the company which distract the interviewee, and so on” (Welch, 2000, p. 200). The methodical review of documentation oftentimes results in more reliable

outcomes. To sum it all up, Welch (2000) maintains that researchers should not negate the potency of records for case studies. The value of archival records lies in their capacity to promote temporal dimensions, precision, unobtrusiveness, non-contingency, systematic process, and iteration.

This dissertation is based on collecting and analyzing documentation that includes organizational records, annual reports, budget documents and financial statements, agreements, news articles and other paperwork that reflects information regarding employee performance in human services and in other care centers. The accessed documents are public records available on the Internet through the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) and labor unions, and on news and media websites. The use of documentation in this project is a significant contribution to other data gathered through interviews.

Interviews

Interviews serve one of major case study purposes to describe and interpret other individuals (Stake, 1995). Since cases may not be perceived the same way by everyone, it is indispensable to explore and show different “views of the case”; this is attainable using interviews (Stake, 1995, p. 64). Interviews are part and parcel of a case study.

Interviewing candidates is like conducting guided conversations where it is essential to both pursue “a consistent line of inquiry” and make sure that the process of questioning is fluid (Yin, 2014, p. 110). While interviewing participants, a researcher should adhere to his or her own line of inquiry and interact with respondents in an unbiased and friendly manner (Yin, 2014). At the same time, it is recommended to have a list of questions to

address issues and make inquiries, so that respondents would provide with descriptive and explanatory information (Stake, 1995).

Stake (1995) proposes to use issue questions to address the complex nature of cases and to highlight challenges and areas of concern. Along with the necessity to use issue questions, it is vital to consider benefits of asking topical questions that help describe studied cases (Stake, 1995). The difference between issue and topical questions lies in the goal of the former to draw attention to key problems and perplexities that should be taken care of, and in the essence of the latter to provide with information about the case (Stake, 1995).

In view of the outlined, the focus of gathering data through interviews is on pinpointing results of mediation. Mediators will be inquired about their impressions related to the effects of mediation on employees and their efficacy in human services and in other organizations that help people in need. This dissertation incorporates issue and topical questions to address major concerns, to attain additional information, and to shed light on the essence of interventions and their consequences in centers that offer helping services to people in need. This case study involved interviews conducted with those who acted and/or act as mediators and who worked and/or still work with employees from organizations that provide caring services. Semi-structured interviews will be presented in the form of guided and unbiased conversations to gather information related to effects of mediation on workplace environment and on worker's efficiency in a non-threatening manner.

The examples of questions for mediators are as follows:

- 1) Are there any changes about employee attitudes towards their job during the process of mediation?*
- 2) How do employees resolve workplace conflicts prior to attending mediation? How do they manage workplace issues after mediation? What are the changes?*
- 3) How does mediation impact employees in human services professionally and personally?*
- 4) What do most employees learn from mediation? How do they use the acquired knowledge in their organizations? How do they implement the acquired knowledge with their clients and/or patients?*
- 5) Does mediation affect the way employees resolve workplace disputes in centers of human services? If yes, please explain.*
- 6) Does mediation affect the way employees help vulnerable populations such as families in need, single parents, people with health problems, low-income populations, people with mental health diagnoses and disabilities? If yes, please explain?*
- 7) How does mediation affect the workplace environment in centers of human services?*
- 8) Are there any changes in the employee level of professional stress before and after mediation? If yes, please explain.*
- 9) Does mediation affect the way employees feel about their job? If yes, how?*

10) When assessing employee job satisfaction, on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 is not at all satisfied and 10 is very satisfied, how do workers identify their job satisfaction prior to using mediation and after its use?

11) Are there any changes in the employee productivity? If yes, please explain.

12) Are there any changes in the rates of employee turnover? If yes, please explain.

Analyzing Data

Analyzing a case study is a challenge since there is meager information on how to process gathered data (Yin, 2014). The analysis will begin with following Yin's (2014) strategy to manipulate collected evidence in order to pinpoint helpful ideas and patterns. Moreover, attempts will be made to arrange the data in different ways, to organize the information into appropriate categories, to design handy displays of the data, to tabulate "the frequency of different events", and to chronologically arrange the evidence (Yin, 2014, p. 135). In addition to the aforesaid, notes will be written, and graphs, tables, and other visuals may be composed to reflect on observations made throughout the process of data collection and analysis; the lens of this paper is on the interpretation of the documents and the interviews.

When considering an appropriate strategy for analyzing the gathered evidence, this dissertation project will be based on merging some features of four analytic strategies proposed by Yin (2014): "relying on theoretical propositions", "working ... data from 'ground up'", "developing a case description", and "examining plausible rival explanations" (pp. 136-140). This strategy was guided by the originally proposed statement that *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human*

services and in other organizations that help vulnerable populations and the research question: *how using mediation may be linked to employee efficiency in human services and other caring professions?* While analyzing the data, this study continues revising the afore-said proposal and the research question to compare the findings of the analysis with the original proposition and the inquiry that was initially set out to answer.

At the same time, I worked the evidence “from the ‘ground up’”, keeping the lens of this project on “pouring through the data” in an attempt to obtain promising ideas while conceptualizing the case and analyzing the collected information (Yin, 2014, p. 136). The afore-said component of the data analysis will imply the use of grounded theory that embraces the inductive strategy of exploring the evidence to build a theory (Charmaz, 2014). The procedure will involve codifying and categorizing the data to arrive at abstract concepts and the construction of a theory that will be compared with the original proposition. The data analysis also involved elements of case description to arrange the collected data based on a descriptive framework. Yin (2014) argues that such strategy can be particularly useful if a researcher collected plethora of evidence but he “may not have been able to surface any useful concepts from ... data (making it difficult to follow the second, or inductive strategy)” (p. 139).

The aspect of exploring plausible alternative explanations address the initial theoretical proposition that *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other organizations that help vulnerable populations* in the light rival explanations. While conducting the data analysis, I identified and examined the following alternative propositions: *workplace issues may be resolved due to reasons other than mediation practices in human services centers* and *workplace issues may not*

be resolved through mediation in human services. The alternative propositions were compared with the originally proposed statement to test the initially set hypothesis. To sum it up, the analysis of this case study is not solely driven by one strategy. The analytical approach, generated for this dissertation project, is the amalgamation of the four above-stated strategies. This approach helps attain a better interpretation and a deeper understanding of the collected evidence.

Data analysis also requires that researchers should use appropriate techniques within the selected strategy; they help develop both internal and external validity (Yin, 2014). This dissertation uses the pattern matching technique to compare the received through the research patterns with the patterns that were predicted prior starting the research. Yin (2014) maintains that if there is a similarity between “empirical and predicted patterns”, the outcomes are likely to significantly contribute to the internal validity of a case study.

Reporting Results.

Yin (2014) argues that reporting findings may be done efficiently in the format of an embedded design that involves “an embedded unit of analysis by using other methods (e.g., surveys or quantitative analyses of archival data such as health status indicators)” (p. 184). The results of the case study for this dissertation project will be reported in the format of a single case study with some quantitative and qualitative features of the embedded design; the case study will describe findings of the collected FMCS data and interviews with mediators. The linear-analytic structure was used to address the problem, to highlight the review of previous studies, to describe methodology, the collection of

evidence, and its analysis, and to report the findings, concluding thoughts, and implications.

Conclusion

Workplace conflicts in human services centers are likely to lead to serious negative consequences for employees and organizations. Jeopardized emotional and physical health of employees, decreased job motivation, absence of commitment, poor efficiency, and high turnover rates add to organizational losses. Moreover, losses in social services and other helping businesses are also caused by vicarious traumas, compassion fatigue, employee burnout and subsequent animosity and stress. When resolving workplace issues in social services, alternative conflict resolution methods may be preferred to traditional ways of managing disputes. The win-win strategy of dispute resolution is likely to contribute to creating and maintaining a healthy workplace environment with higher performance. It is vital to address the essence of workplace issues and their potential precursors and consequences for helping professions given insufficient information related to the use of mediation within the context of human services. The hypothesis is that the use of mediation for resolving workplace conflicts in the field of human services positively influences workplace environment including employee efficiency. The goal of this dissertation was to test the aforesaid hypothesis by applying the single case study, which encompasses quantitative and qualitative methods of studying documentation and the qualitative analysis of interviews. The case study analysis was realized through the mixed methods design. Different manipulations with the selected information will add to the thorough case study analysis. The analysis will involve the combination of three strategies: “relying on theoretical propositions”,

“working ... data from the ‘ground up’”, and the study of potential alternative explanations (Yin, 2014, p. 136).

As for the implications and significance of this dissertation project, the dissertation aims at enhancing the understanding of the mediation potential in human services. The study advances the knowledge of the interest-based approach for all disputants in the workplace without the stress of taking cases to court. The study also raised the awareness of threats of decreased employee efficiency that are likely to involve potential high turnover rates and low retention. The study addresses the potency of mediation while managing significant personal disputes that add to the individual performance within organizations that offer social and other caring services. This research also sheds light on employee emotional distress, threatened physical health, decreased professional motivation, and poor commitment and will discuss the potential effects of mediation on the aforesaid. Moreover, the study contributes to employee improvement of own coping skills with workplace issues that may add to the wellbeing of served vulnerable populations. The single case study format was used to report results of this case study.

Chapter 4: Findings

Data Analysis

The evidence for this case study was gathered from FMSC documentation and data, from union archives and news media, and from interviews with mediators. The analysis of this case study involves both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative approach was used to analyze the work stoppages. The data was studied by examining graphs and trendlines devised in Microsoft Excel. Moreover, SPSS was employed to measure correlations between variables that are identified further in this chapter. The data was collected and explored with consideration of the research question: *how using mediation may be linked to employee efficiency in human services and in other caring professions?* The outcomes were compared with the initial proposition: *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other organizations that help vulnerable populations.*

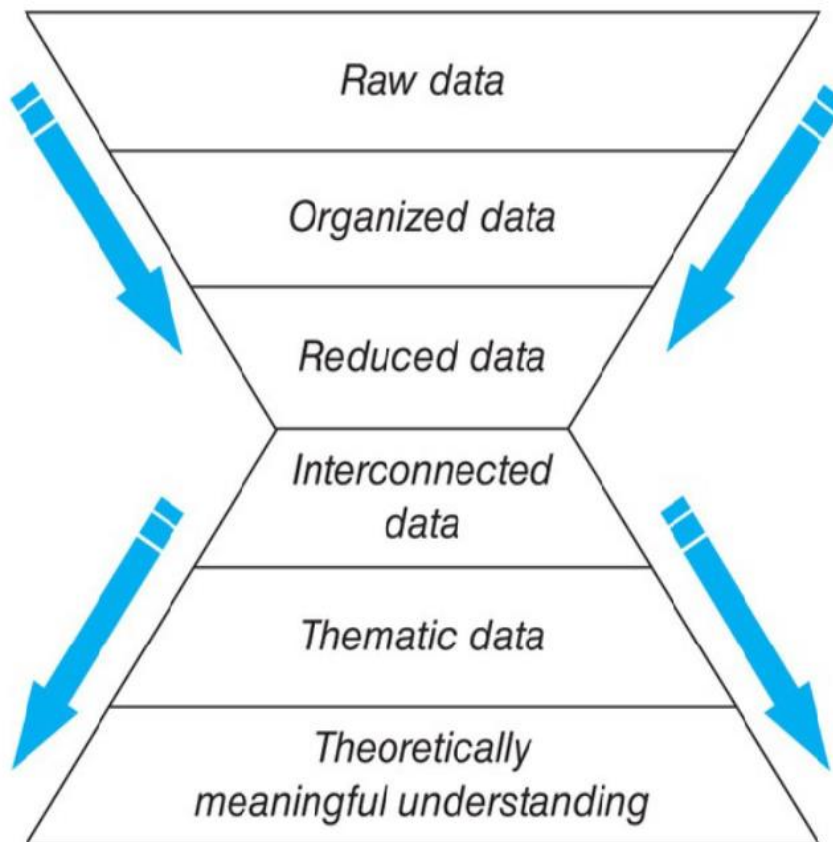
The qualitative part of this study is conducted by using “the thematic analysis through coding” to highlight vital trends and explore implicit meanings of themes (O’Leary, 2017). The study of documentation and the analysis of interviews involves the combination of both inductive and deductive methods. The inductive method implies “building theory through ... observations and analysis” without considering any particular concepts, whereas the method of deduction involves “having some ideas or theories in mind and searching ... data for potential confirmation of these” (O’Leary, 2017). The process of analyzing of documents and interviews is based on c’s method of pouring through the raw data to discover themes and generate theories. The processes of coding, categorizing, and subsequent movement from the identified categories to themes

were done manually for this research project. Figure 1 describes the method used in this dissertation project.

Figure 1

Analyzing the Qualitative Data

Analyzing the Qualitative Data. Reprinted from Z. O’Leary (2017). *The essential guide to doing your research project*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC, Melbourne: SAGE Publications.



Both quantitative and qualitative analysis employed examining the data through the prism of alternative propositions. The obtained data was viewed considering both the initial theoretical proposition that *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other facilities that promote care to vulnerable populations* and the alternative propositions that *workplace issues may be resolved due to*

reasons other than effects of mediation and workplace issues may not be resolved through mediation in organizations that promote caring services to vulnerable populations.

Analysis of Work Stoppages

I researched work stoppage data that was found and uploaded from the FMCS website. These records are public and do not require any specific authorization for the access and retrieval. The data describes the resolution of strikes after FMCS intervened as mediators to stop workplace disputes. For this dissertation project, I reviewed the FMCS work stoppage reports between 1984 and 2019. The FMCS report data was merged to the Microsoft Excel format; the data was organized into several tables with the following headings: *FMCS Case Number, Employer Name, Union Name, Affected City, Affected State, Industry, Number of Idled, Work Stoppage Begin Date, Work Stoppage End Date, and Ending Fiscal Year*. The analyzed data is presented in this paper in graphs to promote an easier understanding and interpretation. The work stoppage reports from 1984 through 2019 were filtered by the *Industry of Healthcare and Social Assistance*. All data related to *Healthcare and Social Assistance* was selected and merged into one spreadsheet for further analysis.

To explore effects of mediation on human services, the analysis was done to review trends in the assigned to FMCS mediator cases that resulted in ending strikes from 1984 through 2019. I calculated the total number of cases per year, the duration of work stoppage period for each case, and the total duration of work stoppages per year. The mean, median, and mode for the duration of strikes per year were calculated as well.

Furthermore, the research study examined relationships between the variables as follows:

- *total number of cases and 36 years of FMCS mediation.*
- *duration of strikes in days per year and 36 years of FMCS mediation.*
- *average duration of strike activities per year (mean) and 36 years of FMCS mediation.*
- *duration of work stoppages per year (median) and 36 years of FMCS mediation.*
- *duration of work stoppages per year (mode) and 36 years of FMCS mediation.*

The relationships were explored by the quantitative method of correlation. SPSS was used to conduct appropriate measurements, and the results were reported and discussed later in this chapter. When reporting the findings of studies, Field (2013) argues that it is indispensable for researchers to have maps that will help navigate successfully around gathered information. In this research project, graphs and tables are the maps that assist in not getting lost in the obtained outcomes. Researchers should look at collected data graphically if it is quantitative in nature to observe, analyze, and report “what general trends in the data are” (Field, 2013, p. 19). The table below (Table 2) shows the number of work stoppage cases, the total duration of strikes in days, the calculated average of the length of strikes (mean), as well as the median and mode of work stoppages between 1984 and 2019 in organizations or companies that offer caring services.

Table 2*Total Number of Cases and 36 Years of FMCS Mediation*

Fiscal Year	Number of Cases per Fiscal Year		Fiscal Year	Total Duration in Days per Year		Fiscal Year	Average Duration of Work Stoppage per Fiscal Year, Mean		Fiscal Year	Duration in Days per Year, Median		Fiscal Year	Duration in Days per Year, Mode
1984	22		1984	847		1984	39		1984	30		1984	31
1985	32		1985	1042		1985	33		1985	10		1985	8
1986	26		1986	1086		1986	42		1986	23		1986	37
1987	42		1987	1674		1987	40		1987	21		1987	6
1988	43		1988	1405		1988	33		1988	20		1988	2
1989	28		1989	1504		1989	54		1989	27		1989	5
1990	43		1990	1508		1990	35		1990	18		1990	2
1991	21		1991	1531		1991	73		1991	31		1991	133
1992	31		1992	1043		1992	34		1992	16		1992	3
1993	41		1993	2647		1993	65		1993	10		1993	1
1994	26		1994	771		1994	30		1994	8		1994	1
1995	20		1995	1296		1995	65		1995	26		1995	0
1996	35		1996	802		1996	23		1996	3		1996	3
1997	21		1997	248		1997	12		1997	10		1997	13
1998	24		1998	827		1998	34		1998	10		1998	1
1999	31		1999	638		1999	21		1999	6		1999	1
2000	33		2000	1021		2000	31		2000	14		2000	1
2001	107		2001	3494		2001	33		2001	25		2001	1
2002	33		2002	1487		2002	45		2002	3		2002	1
2003	22		2003	9807		2003	46		2003	30		2003	5
2004	30		2004	1911		2004	64		2004	8		2004	3
2005	28		2005	464		2005	17		2005	4		2005	1
2006	25		2006	1519		2006	61		2006	5		2006	1
2007	18		2007	197		2007	11		2007	3		2007	1
2008	42		2008	530		2008	13		2008	2		2008	1
2009	14		2009	1221		2009	87		2009	3		2009	2
2010	18		2010	653		2010	36		2010	3		2010	1
2011	30		2011	100		2011	3		2011	3		2011	4
2012	42		2012	1031		2012	25		2012	3		2012	1
2013	34		2013	1353		2013	40		2013	6		2013	6
2014	24		2014	188		2014	8		2014	2		2014	2
2015	19		2015	60		2015	3		2015	2		2015	5
2016	28		2016	176		2016	6		2016	0		2016	0
2017	13		2017	100		2017	8		2017	2		2017	0
2018	34		2018	364		2018	11		2018	3		2018	4
2019	22		2019	171		2019	8		2019	1		2019	1

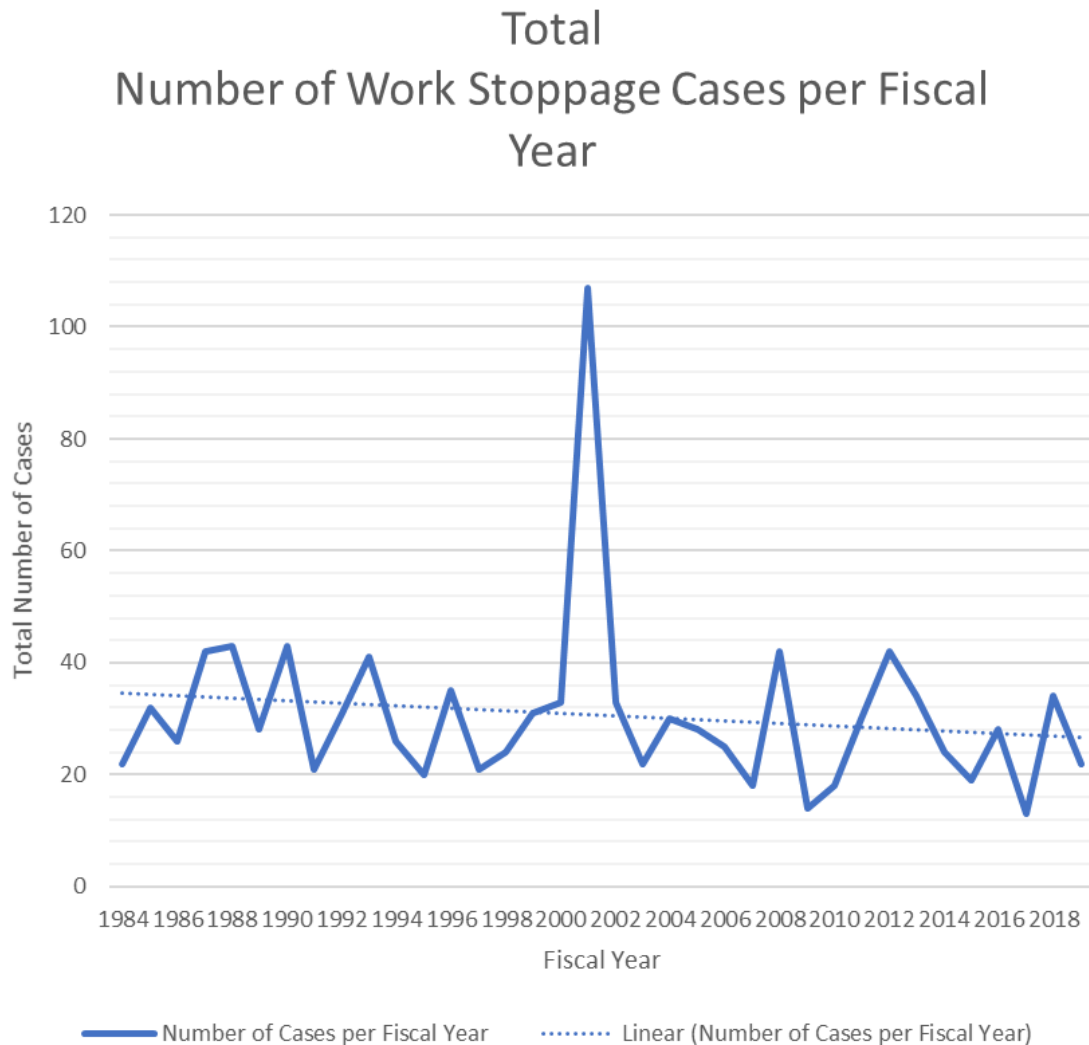
Total Number of Cases per Year, Total Duration of Work Stoppages in Days per Year, Average Duration of Work Stoppages in Days per Year (Mean), Duration of Work Stoppages in Days per Year (Median), and Duration of Work Stoppages in Days per Year (Mode).

Figure 2 illustrates a linear graph created from the data values on the annual number of cases that were managed by FMCS in human services from 1984 to 2019. Each case resulted in a work stoppage after mediation was used to settle workplace disputes. The y-axis reflects the total number of cases, whereas the x-axis shows the time period in years. The graph does not show a straight line; there are multiple rises and falls throughout the whole time period. The first peak of 32 cases occurred in 1985, which was followed by a drop to 26 cases in 1986. The increase with two peaks of 42 and 43 cases in 1987 and 1988 was followed by a fall to 28 cases in 1989 and the return to 43 cases in 1990. After the nadir of 21 cases in 1991, the number of cases rose to 41 in 1993 and fell sharply to 20 cases in 1995. A slight increase to 35 cases in 1996 and a subsequent decline to 21 cases in 1997 took place prior the surge of 107 cases in 2001 and the dramatic plunge to 22 cases in 2003. Further numbers never repeated that dynamics of 2001. The graph shows increases to 30 cases in 2004 and to 42 cases in 2008 and 2012; there are declines to 18 cases in 2007 and to 14 cases in 2009 as well. After rising to 42 cases in 2012, there was a drop to 19 cases in 2015, which followed by a rise to 28 cases in 2016; afterwards, the numbers bottomed out to 13 cases in 2017, steeply increased to 34 cases in 2018, and dropped to 22 cases in 2019. The most significant increase took place in 2001 when the peak totaled 107 FMCS cases.

Despite the afore-listed non-monotonic dynamics, the graph shows the descending tendency in annual work stoppage cases over the indicated time period. The straight downward trendline represents the decline in work stoppage cases from 1984 to 2019 after FMCS intervened using mediation.

Figure 2

Total Number of Work Stoppage Cases per Fiscal Year



Additionally, I analyzed the relationship between 36 years of using FMCS mediation and the total number of work stoppage cases within this time period. The quantitative method of correlation was used to see if there is any significant relationship between the total number of strikes with the number of years from 1984 to 2019 through which FMCS repeatedly intervened with mediation. The correlation was explored through a bivariate method which Field (2013) describes as “a correlation between two variables” (p. 267).

To compute the correlation, the collected data on the total number of work stoppage cases per fiscal year was entered into SPSS. The selected variables were Fiscal Year and Number of Cases per Fiscal Year. I used Pearson's correlation coefficient to run correlations for this study. The calculations do not illustrate any significant relationship between the number of work stoppage cases and the years of mediation from 1984 to 2019, $r = -.157$, $p = .361$ (see Table 2). The coefficient of determination R^2 equals 0.025, which shows that the total number of work stoppage cases per fiscal year shares 2.5 percent of the variability in 36 years of mediation. 97.5 percent of the variability may be accounted for by other variables. It is highly unlikely that the relationships between the variables are causal in nature.

Table 3

Pearson Correlation. Total Number of Work Stoppage Cases per Year over 36 Years of Mediation

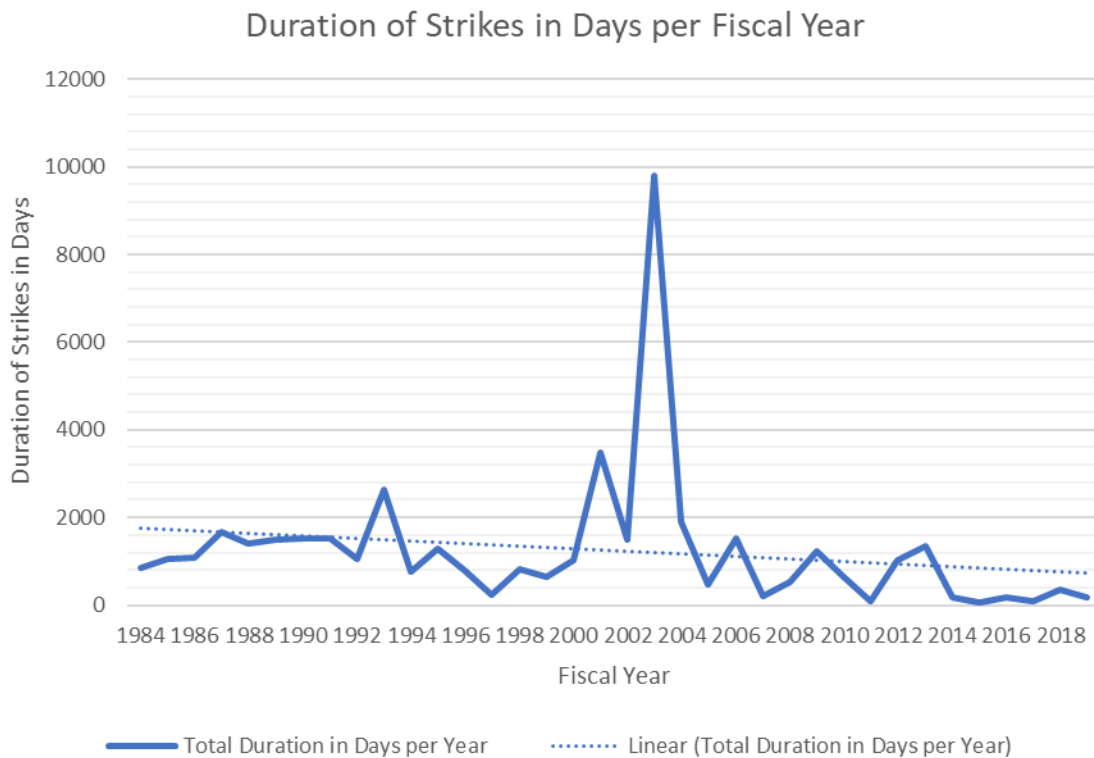
Correlations					
				Fiscal Year	Number of Cases per Fiscal Year
Fiscal Year	Pearson Correlation			1	-.157
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.361
	N			36	36
	Bootstrap ^c	Bias		0	-.030
		Std. Error		0	.135
		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	1	-.530
			Upper	1	.036
Number of Cases per Fiscal Year	Pearson Correlation			-.157	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.361	
	N			36	36
	Bootstrap ^c	Bias		-.030	0
		Std. Error		.135	0
		95% Confidence Interval	Lower	-.530	1
			Upper	.036	1

c. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Total Duration of Strikes in Days per Year and 36 Years of FMCS Mediation

The total duration of labor strikes in days per year that took place from 1984 to 2019 after FMCS addressed workplace conflicts through mediation is illustrated in Figure 3. The horizontal axis represents the time in years, whereas the total annual number of strike days is reflected on the vertical axis. First, the graph shows a gradual increase in the number of days with the first peak of 2647 in 1993. After a subsequent decline of 771 days in 1994 and a slight rise to 1296 in 1995 followed by a fall to 248 days in 1997, there is an observable growth up to 3494 days in 2001. The highest level of 9807 strike days was reached 2003 followed by a sharp drop to 464 days in 2005. A slight rise to 1519 strike days in 2006, a drop to 197 days in 2007 and another increase to 1221 days in 2009 occurred prior a decrease to 100 days in 2011 and a growth with a peak of 1353 cases in 2013. The tendency between 2013 and 2019 is marked by a dramatic fall with the lowest number of 60 days 2015.

The dynamics of the line graph is up and down. At the same time, the direction of the trendline highlights a gradual reduction in the number of strike days in human services and other care centers between 1984 and 2019 after mediation was used (See Figure 2 below).

Figure 3*Duration of Strikes in Days per Fiscal Year*

This research study also analyzed the relationship between 36 years of mediation and the duration of strikes in days per year through the quantitative method of correlation to explore if there is any significance in the relationship between the duration of strikes and the number of years from 1984 to 2019 through which FMCS continued applying mediation. The bivariate method was used to study the dynamics between two variables.

To compute the bivariate correlation, the collected data on the duration of work stoppages in days per year from 1984 through 2019 was entered into SPSS. The studied variables are *Fiscal Year* and *Duration of Strikes in Days per Year*. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used for measuring relationships between the afore-said variables. According to the findings reflected in Table 3, there is no significant relationship between the total duration of work stoppages per year and the years of mediation from 1984 to

2019, $r = -.186$, $p = .277$. The coefficient of determination R^2 equals 0.035, which demonstrates that the total duration of work stoppage in days per year shares 3.5 percent of the variability in 36 years of mediation. In view of the foregoing calculations, 96.5 percent of the variability may still be accounted for by other variables. And the nature of the relationship between the afore-listed variables is unlikely to be causal.

Table 4

Pearson Correlation. Duration of Work Stoppages in Days per Year over 36 Years of Mediation

Correlations			
		Fiscal Year	Total Duration of Work Stoppages in Days per Year
Fiscal Year	Pearson Correlation	1	-.186
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.277
	N	36	36
	Bootstrap ^c Bias	0	-.091
	Std. Error	0	.185
	95% Confidence Interval Lower	1	-.668
	Upper	1	-.020
Total Duration of Work Stoppages in Days per Year	Pearson Correlation	-.186	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.277	
	N	36	36
	Bootstrap ^c Bias	-.091	0
	Std. Error	.185	0
	95% Confidence Interval Lower	-.668	1
	Upper	-.020	1

c. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Average Duration of Strike Activities per Year (Mean) and 36 Years of FMCS Mediation

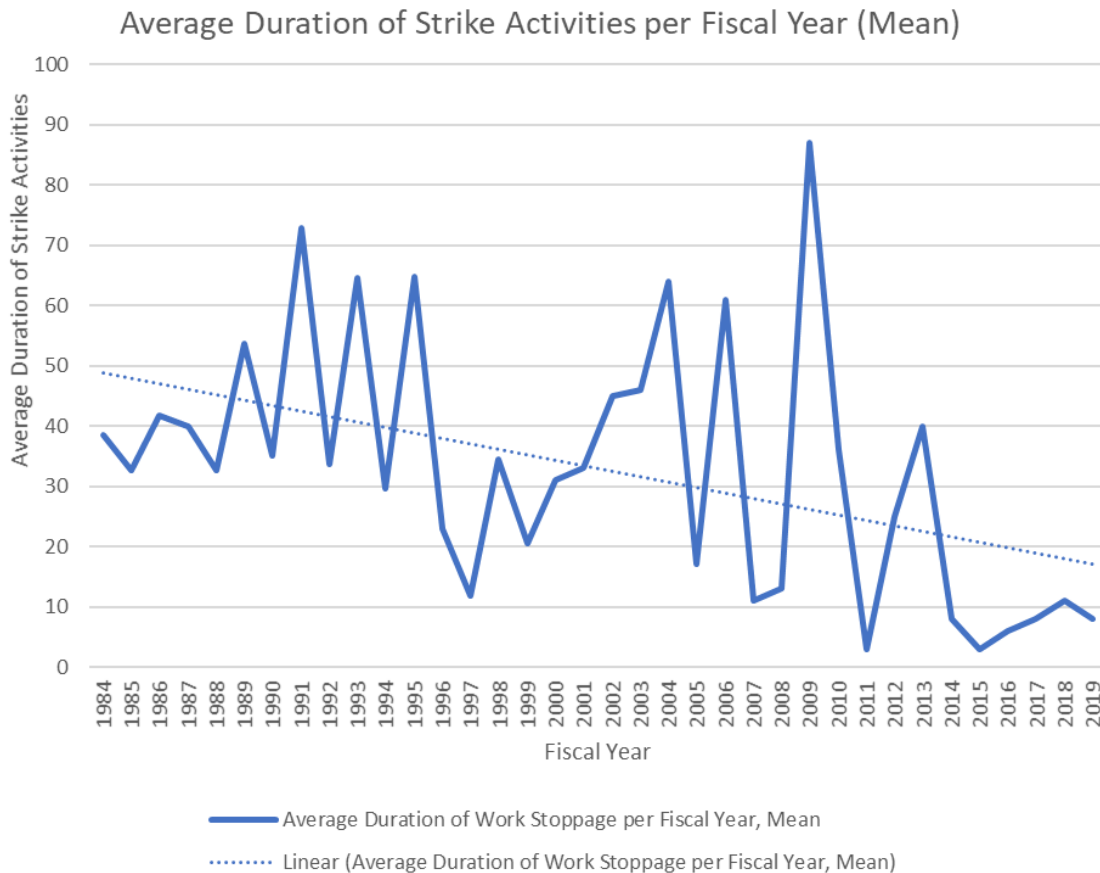
The graph reflected in Figure 4 demonstrates the average annual length of strikes (mean) that occurred after FMCS used mediation in human services from 1984 to 2019. Researchers calculate the mean most of the time since “it uses every score (the mode and median ignore most of the scores in a data set). Also, the mean tends to be stable in different samples” (Field, 2013, p. 24). The horizontal axis represents the time period in years from 1984 to 2019; the numbers reflecting the average duration of strikes per year are displayed on the vertical axis of this graph.

The line graph is represented by multiple peaks and nadirs. A slight fall to 33 average strike days in 1985 followed by a small increase to 42 in 1986 and another drop to 33 in 1988 ended up as a peak of 54 in 1989. Afterwards, the graph demonstrates a number of falls and rises as follows: the numbers dropped to 35 in 1990, reached the second peak of 73 in 1991, dropped again to 34 in 1992, surged to 65 in 1993, and plunged to 30 in 1994. The fourth peak of 65 is observed in 1995 followed by a sharp dip to 12 in 1997 and a slight rise to 34 in 1998. Afterwards, there is a decrease to 21 average strike days in 1999 and a subsequent steep increase to 64 in 2004. Another drop to 17 in 2005 and an increase to 61 average days of work stoppage in 2006 occurred prior to the dramatic decline to 11 in 2007. The line graph shows that numbers reached the maximum of 87 in 2009 and bottomed out to 3 in 2011. After a sharp rise to 40 in 2013 the numbers dropped again to the lowest level of 3 in 2015. The dynamics between 2015 and 2019 shows a gradual increase to 11 average strike days in 2018 and a subsequent decrease to 8 in 2019. All in all, the line graph illustrates several sharp increases and

steep drops in the average duration of work stoppage. However, despite the non-monotonic dynamics of the annual average length of work stoppages, the trendline shows a steady decline in the average number of days of strike actions (Figure 3 is below).

Figure 4

Average Duration of Strike Activities per Fiscal Year, Mean



Similar to the analysis of the previously addressed variables (see the description of data in Table 2 and Table 3 above), I explored relationships between 36 years of mediation and the average duration of work stoppages per year (mean) through the use of correlation. The purpose of such analysis was to check for any significance in the relationship between the average duration of strikes (mean) and the number of years from

1984 to 2019 during which FMCS intervened through mediation activities. The bivariate method was used to analyze the dynamics between the afore-said variables.

The previously gathered data on the average duration of work stoppages (mean) per year from 1984 through 2019 was run in SPSS to compute correlations between *Fiscal Year* and *Average Duration of Strike Activities per Year (Mean)*. I used Pearson's correlation coefficient for assessing relationships between the afore-said variables. According to the SPSS calculations, there is a significant relationship between the average duration of work stoppages per fiscal year and the years of mediation from 1984 to 2019, $r = -.452$, $p < .001$ (see Table 4 for details). The coefficient of determination R^2 equals 0.2; this shows that the average duration of work stoppages per year (mean) shares 20 percent of the variability in 36 years of mediation. In view of the foregoing calculations, 80 percent of the variability may still be accounted for by other variables. Based on the aforesaid, we may not infer causality between these variables.

Table 5

Pearson Correlation. Average Duration of Work Stoppage per Fiscal Year (Mean) over 36 Years of Mediation

Correlations			
		Fiscal_ Year	Average_Duration_of_Work_Stoppa ge_per_Fiscal_Year
Fiscal Year	Pearson Correlation	1	-.452**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006
	N	36	36
	Bootst Bias	0	-.010
	rap ^c Std. Error	0	.136
	95% Lo	1	-.696
	Confid we ence r		

	Interval	Upper	1	-.164
Average_Duration_of_Work_Stoppage_per_Fiscal_Year	Pearson Correlation		-.452**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006	
	N		36	36
	Bootstrap Bias		-.010	0
	rap ^c Std. Error		.136	0
	95% Lower		-.696	1
	Confidence			
	Interval	Upper	-.164	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

c. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Duration of Work Stoppages per Year (Median) and 36 Years of FMCS Mediation

The next graph represents the median of the annual length of strikes per year over the 36-year period from 1984 to 2019 after FMCS mediation was employed in human services and other care centers (Figure 5). While the mean has the disadvantage that “it can be influenced by extreme scores”; the median, defined by Field (2013) as “the middle score when scores are ranked in order of magnitude” is much “less affected by extreme scores than the mean” (pp. 22, p. 24).

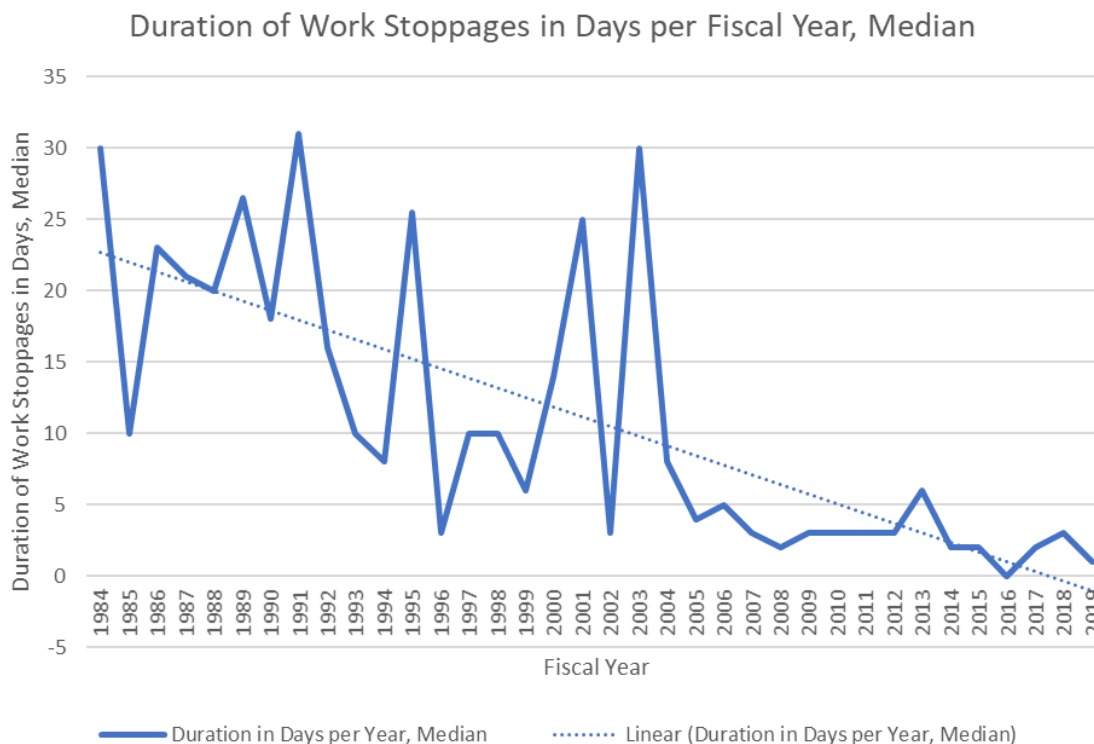
The x axis shows the time period in years; the y axis represents the median score of the duration of work stoppages over this time period. The dynamics of the graph is characterized by rapid rises and dramatic falls. A steep decline from the score of 30 in 1984 to 10 in 1985 and another increase to 23 in 1986 are followed by a gradual decrease to 20 in 1988. A slight change to 27 in 1989 and a subsequent drop to 18 in 1990 precede the highest score of 31 in 1991 and a significant decline to 8 by 1994. Another steep rise to 26 in 1995 is followed by a sharp drop to 3 in 1996. Afterwards, there is a slight rise to the score of 10 in 1997, which remained consistent until 1999 when the value dropped to

6. Another rapid growth to 25 in 2001 and a subsequent sharp decline to 3 in 2002 are followed by a steep rise to the second highest score of 30 in 2003. The median scores sink to a trough afterwards. By 2005, the score is 4; it only increases to 5 in 2006 and declines to 2 in 2008. The graph shows that a slight increase to 3 in 2009, which remains stable to 2012 and only grows to 6 in 2013 prior decreasing to the lowest score of 0 in 2016. The median scores show a slight rise 3 in 2018 followed by a decline to 1 in 2019.

Like the previously described graphs, this line graph illustrates multiple peaks and troughs of the median numbers in human services from 1984 and 2019. However, the trendline reflects a steep decline in the median of annual duration of strikes over this time period (see Figure 5 below).

Figure 5

Duration of Work Stoppages per Fiscal Year, Median



The correlational approach was used when exploring relationships between the duration of work stoppages in days per fiscal year (median) and the time period from 1984 to 2019 through which FMCS used mediation to address workplace disputes. The bivariate method of correlation addressed the dynamics between the afore-said variables.

Running the collected data through SPSS is essential to calculate the correlation between *Fiscal Year* and *Duration of Work Stoppages in Days per Fiscal Year (Median)*. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used for the measurement of relationships between the afore-listed variables. The findings outlined in Table 5 are as follows: SPSS calculations show that the median of the duration of strikes measured in days is significantly related to the 36-year period during which FMCS addressed workplace issues through mediation; $r = -.725$, 95% BCa CI [- .861, - .556], $p < .001$ (see Table 5 for details). The coefficient of determination R^2 equals 0.53. The coefficient shows that the median of the duration of work stoppages per year accounts for 53 percent of the variability in 36 years of mediation. 43 percent of the variability may still be accounted for by other variables. At the same time, while R^2 is oftentimes used "to imply causality", "it cannot be used to infer causal relationships" (Field, 2013, p. 276). Although the median of the duration of work stoppages may have 53 percent of variability in the 36-year period, "it does not necessarily cause this variation" (Field, 2013, p. 276).

Table 6

Pearson Correlation. Duration of Work Stoppages in Days per Year (Median) over 36 Years of Mediation

		Correlations	
		Fiscal_Y ear	Duration_in_days_per_Fiscal_Ye ar_Median
Fiscal_Year	Pearson Correlation	1	-.725**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	36	36
	Bootstr	Bias	0
	ap ^b	Std. Error	.078
	95% Low	Confide	er
	nce Upp	Interval	er
			-.556
Duration_in_days_per_Fiscal_Ye ar_Median	Pearson Correlation	-.725**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	36	36
	Bootstr	Bias	-.003
	ap ^b	Std. Error	.078
	95% Low	Confide	er
	nce Upp	Interval	er
			-.556

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

b. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

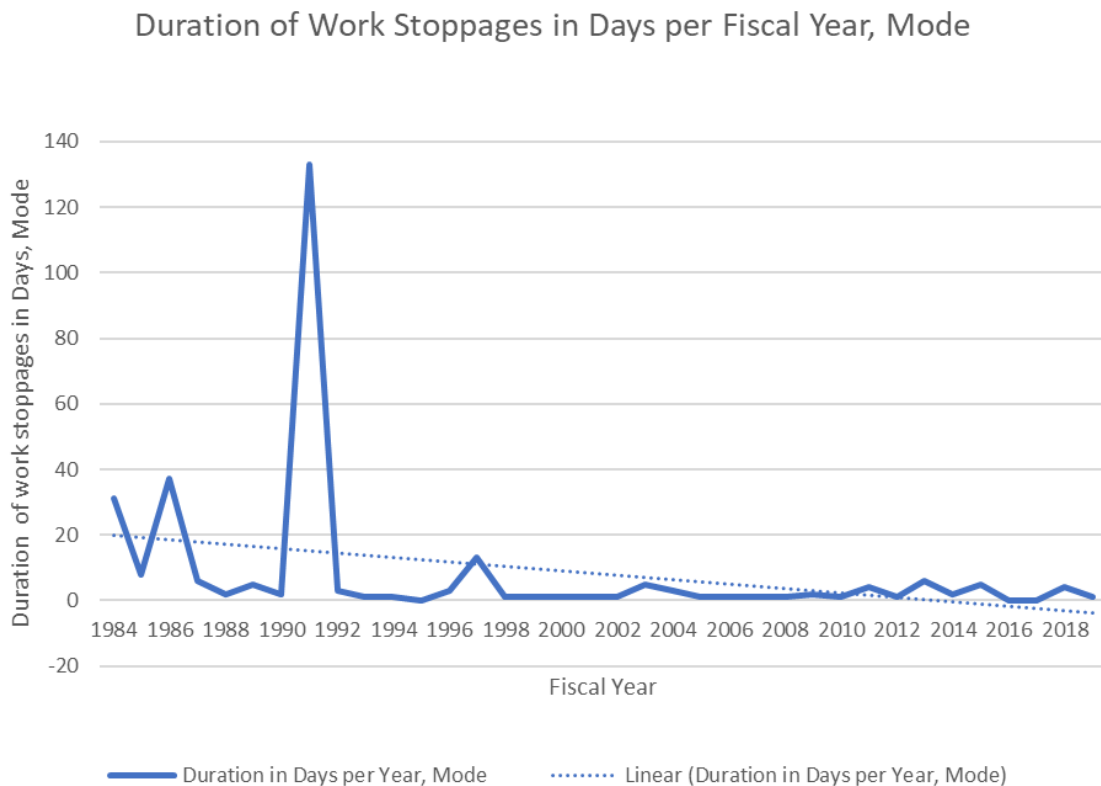
Duration of Work Stoppages per Year (Mode) and 36 Years of FMCS Mediation

Figure 6 illustrates the line graph of the mode of the annual length of strikes. The mode along with the mean and the median is a measure of the central tendency. The advantageous quality of the mode involves the fact that “it can be found for both numerical and categorical (non-numerical) data” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013, para. 3).

The vertical axis shows the mode of the duration of strikes in human services per year; the horizontal axis reflects the 36-year period throughout which FMCS employed mediation for the resolution of work stoppages. Figure 6 demonstrates a downward trend with a few peaks and rapid falls. According to the graph, the mode value of 31 in 1984 drops to 8 in 1985 and then rises to 37 in 1986. Afterwards, a dramatic fall to 6 in 1987 preceded a slight decline to 2 in 1988, an increase to 5 in 1989 and another decrease to 2 in 1990. The value suddenly peaks at 133 in 1991 and dramatically falls to 3 in 1992. The mode values bottom out from 1992 and 1995 and then grow slowly to 13 in 1997 and drop to 1 in 1998. The subsequent slight rise to 5 in 2003, the gradual decline to 1 in 2005 and the steady low graph dynamics precede a slight increase to 4 in 2011, another decrease to 1 in 2012 and a growth to 6 in 2013. The mean values continue fluctuating from 6 to 0 between 2013 and 2019. The analysis of the graph dynamics shows a steady decline of the mode trendline in human services and other care centers from 1984 to 2019. Despite a spike in 1991, the graph represents a steady decrease in the annual length of strikes that occurs in the analyzed data set over the 36-year period (see Figure. 6 below).

Figure 6

Duration of Work Stoppages in Days per Fiscal Year, Mode



Likewise, I utilized the method of correlation for the analysis of relationships between 36 years of mediation from 1984 to 2019 during which FMCS intervened through mediation to resolve work-related problems with employees and the mode values of the duration of work stoppages per year. Similar to the analysis of the previously described variables, this research study employed the bivariate method of correlation to explore the dynamics between the *Duration of Work Stoppages in Days per Year (Mode)* and *36 Years of Using Mediation*.

The data was run through SPSS, and the results were displayed in the correlation matrix below (see Table 6). Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to help to measure relationships between the variables. Based on the SPSS calculations, there are no

significant relationships that may be observed between the mode of the duration of work stoppages in days and the time period between 1984 and 2019 during which FMCS addressed employee conflicts through mediation. Table 6 illustrates the following results: $r = -.312$, $p = .064$. The coefficient of determination R^2 equals 0.097. The coefficient demonstrates that the mode of the duration of work stoppages per year accounts for 9.7 percent of the variability in 36 years of mediation. Thusly, 90.3 percent of the variability may still be accounted for by other variables. That being said, it is highly unlikely that there are causal relationships between the mode of the duration of work stoppages in days and the 36-year period of mediation.

Table 7

Pearson Correlation. Duration of Work Stoppages in Days per Year (Mode) over 36 Years of Mediation

Correlations			
		Fiscal Year	Duration in Days per Year, Mode
Fiscal Year	Pearson Correlation	1	-.312
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.064
	N	36	36
	Bootstrap ^c Bias	0	-.055
	Std. Error	0	.097
	95% Confidence Interval Lower	1	-.575
	Upper	1	-.203
Duration in Days per Year, Mode	Pearson Correlation	-.312	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.064	
	N	36	36
	Bootstrap ^c Bias	-.055	0
	Std. Error	.097	0
	95% Confidence Interval Lower	-.575	1
	Upper	-.203	1

c. Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Conclusions

This research project involves the analysis of work stoppage cases that took place in human services from 1984 to 2019. The dataset was retrieved from the FMCS website and describes the resolution of strikes after FMCS intervened through mediation to address workplace conflicts. The analysis of the afore-said database highlights strikes dynamics that took place over the 36-year period. The dynamics encompasses the study of the resolved by FMCS work stoppage cases, the length of work strikes per year, the average duration of work stoppages in days per year, and the median and the mode of the duration of strikes in days per year between 1984 and 2019. The outcomes of the analysis illustrate the non-monotonic trend with multiple peaks and nadirs in the examined line graphs. Despite the up-and-down dynamics, there are visible declining tendencies in the graphs over the analyzed period.

The performed correlation analysis does not show any significant relationships between the following variables: *total number of cases* and *36 years of FMCS mediation*, *duration of strikes in days per year* and *36 years of FMCS mediation*, and *duration of work stoppages in days per year (mode)* and *36 years of FMCS mediation*. At the same time, there is a significant correlation between *average duration of strike activities in days per year (mean)* and *36 years of FMCS mediation* and *duration of work stoppages in days per year (median)* and *36 years of FMCS mediation*. Causal relationships may not be inferred between the discussed variables.

When comparing and contrasting the collected data with the initial proposition that *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other organizations that serve vulnerable populations* and with the alternative

propositions that *workplace issues may be resolved due to reasons other than effects of mediation* and *workplace issues may not be resolved through mediation in organizations that promote caring services to vulnerable populations*, it is essential to pinpoint that other variables may result in changes in employee efficiency. It is essential to conduct further studies to examine effects of mediation, employee performance, and absence or presence of potential factors that may impact productivity in centers that offer caring services.

Analysis of Three FMCS Subcases

Brigham and Women's Hospital

Brigham and Women's Hospital is a medical center, which is "recognized internationally for its excellence and innovation in patient care" (Harvard Medical School, 2020, para. 1). Along with addressing a plethora of medical conditions, the hospital actively promotes social services and supports people in need by advocating for "health equity and reducing disparities locally and through its numerous global health programs" (Harvard Medical School, 2020, para. 1). This facility was chosen for the case study analysis given its policy to offer caring services to people in need.

According to the FMCS annual report as of 2016, mediators intervened for several days to address disputes between Brigham and Women's Hospital and the Massachusetts Nurses Association (Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service, 2016). As the result of the negotiations, "labor and management representatives averted a potentially disruptive strike" (Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service, 2016, p. 6). Nurses from this healthcare center that offers such services as clinical care and patient support voiced their disappointment related to the security of the facility, "safe patient

care”, equality related to healthcare plans, and fair salaries (Massachusetts Nurses Association, 2016, para. 7).

The data for the thematic analysis of this subcase was collected from the documents in the news archive on the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) website. The following news articles were analyzed for this study: “Brigham and Women's Faulkner Hospital Nurses Picketing Friday, July 22”, “Brigham Nurses Vote Overwhelmingly to Ratify Contract”, and “Brigham Nurses Reach Historic Tentative Agreement”. To inform this research study, I also reviewed such documentation as “FMCS Statement on Tentative Agreement Between Brigham and Women's Hospital and the Massachusetts Nurses Association” and data from the *Annual Report 2017* on the FMCS website. After gathering the raw data, I employed the method of first cycle coding to organize the information and to start the examination and interpretation of the collected materials. The use of the second cycle coding helped reduce the data and proceed with the development of categories. The categories were devised through the process of finding patterns and connections among the identified codes. Cycles of grouping and linking the codes resulted in the emergence of the following categories: *workplace disputes, workplace issues, employee requirements, interventions, outcomes of mediation, FMCS challenges, FMCS, mediation process, and FMCS accomplishments.*

Figure 7 shows the identified codes and subcodes and their organization into the *workplace disputes* category.

Figure 7

Workplace Disputes: Category, Codes, and Subcodes

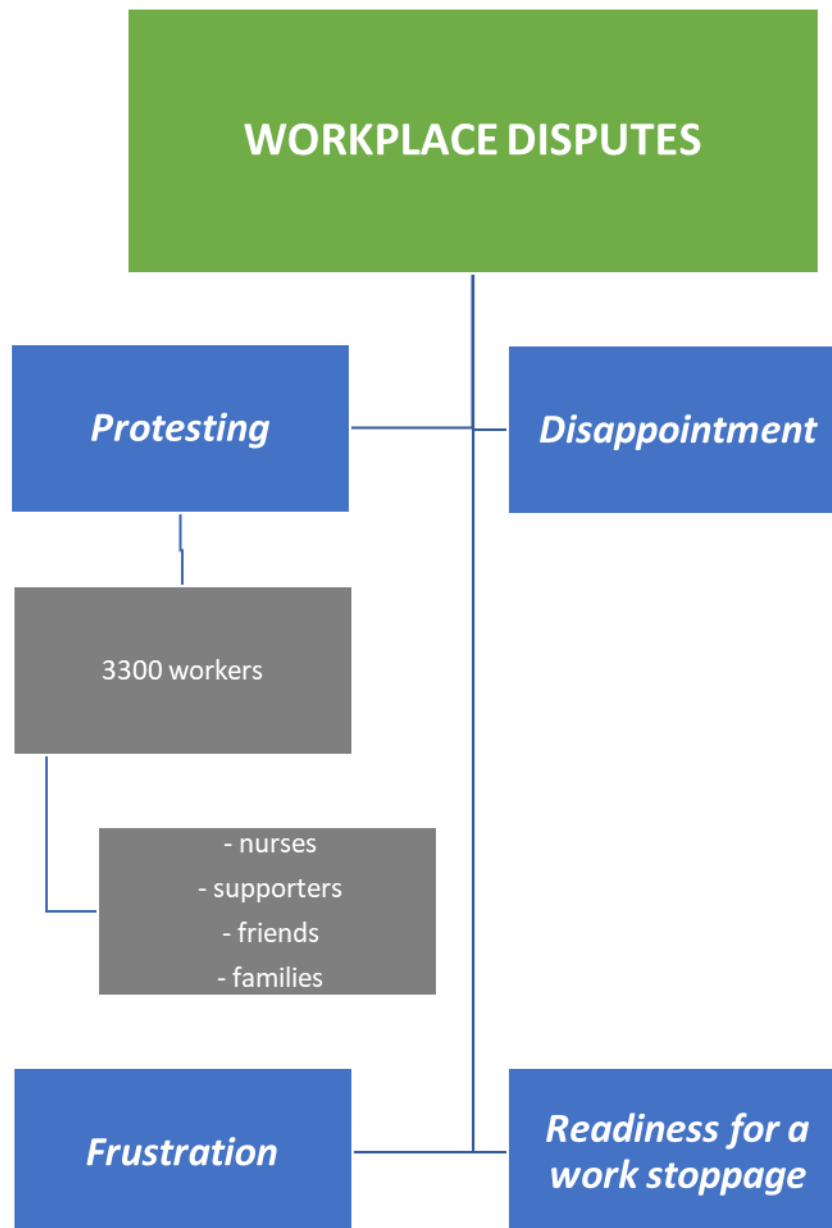


Figure 8

Demonstrates a cluster of codes that form the category of workplace issues

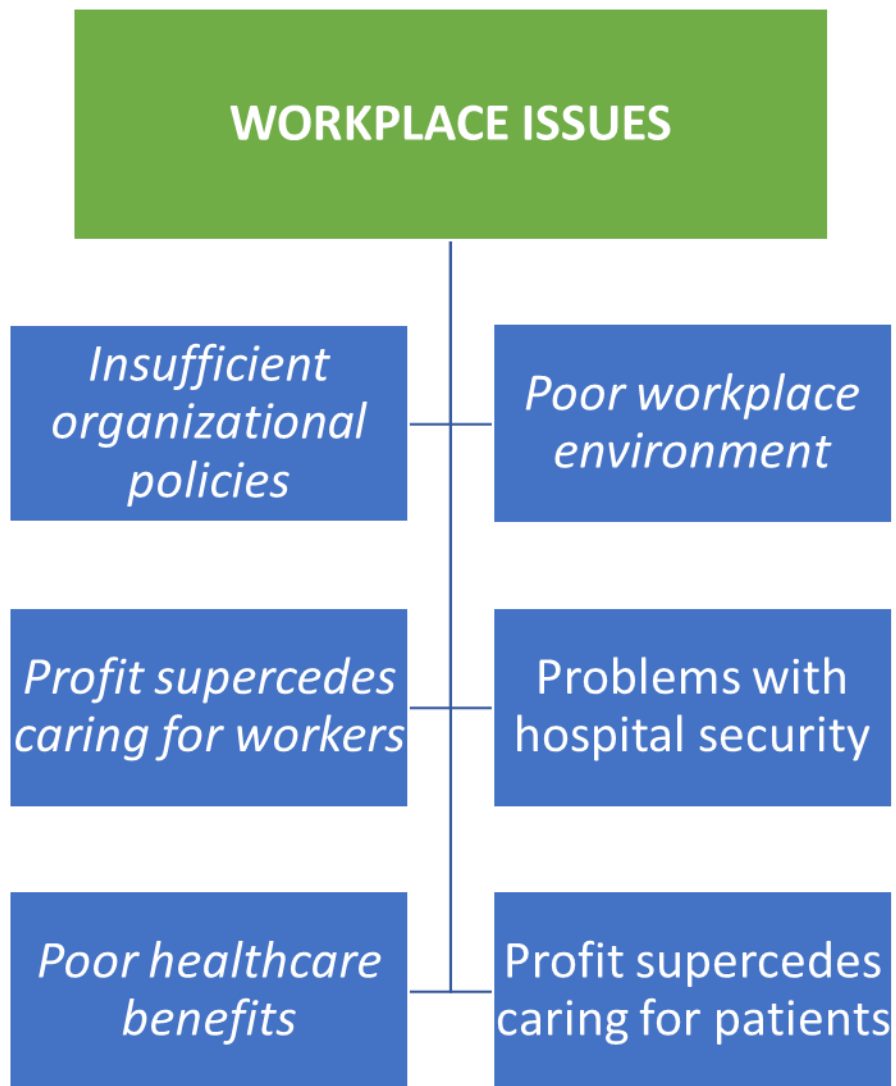
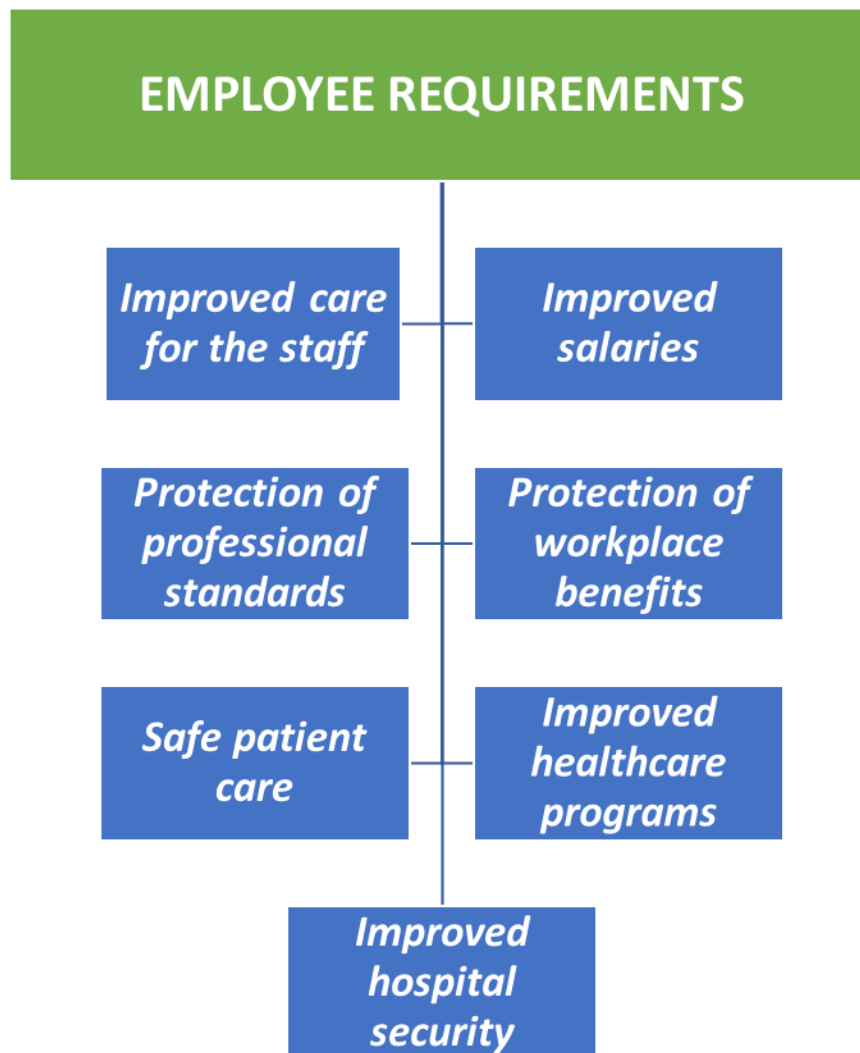


Figure 9

Workplace Requirements: Category and Codes



Employee requirements and the codes that shape this category are reflected in Figure 9 above.

The *interventions* category emerged as the result of two codes: *FMCS mediation* and *addressing concerns through mediation* (see Figure 10 below).

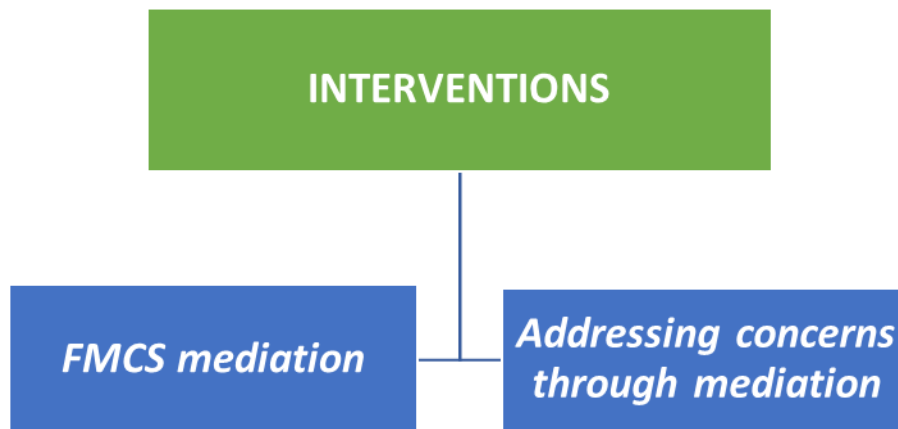
Figure 10*Interventions: Category and Codes*

Figure 11 demonstrates the identified codes and their consolidation into the *outcomes of mediation* category. The identified subcodes inform the summative nature of the codes (see Figure 12 for details).

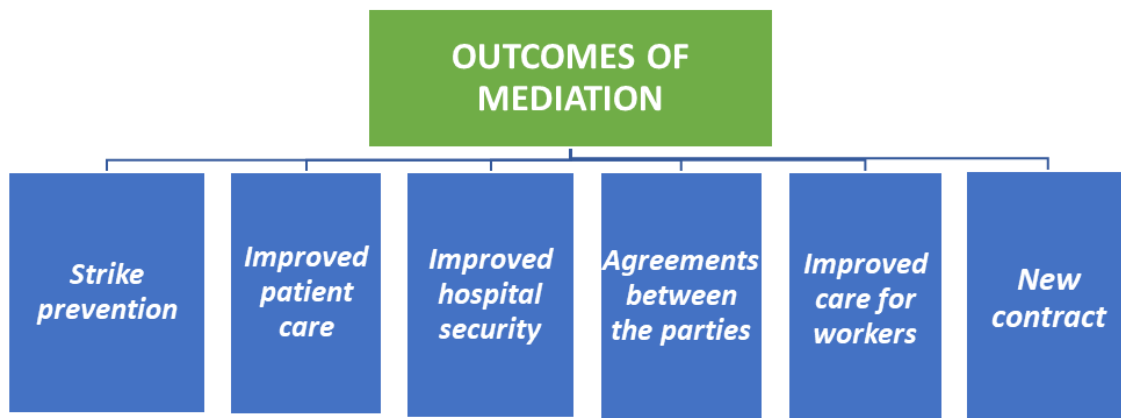
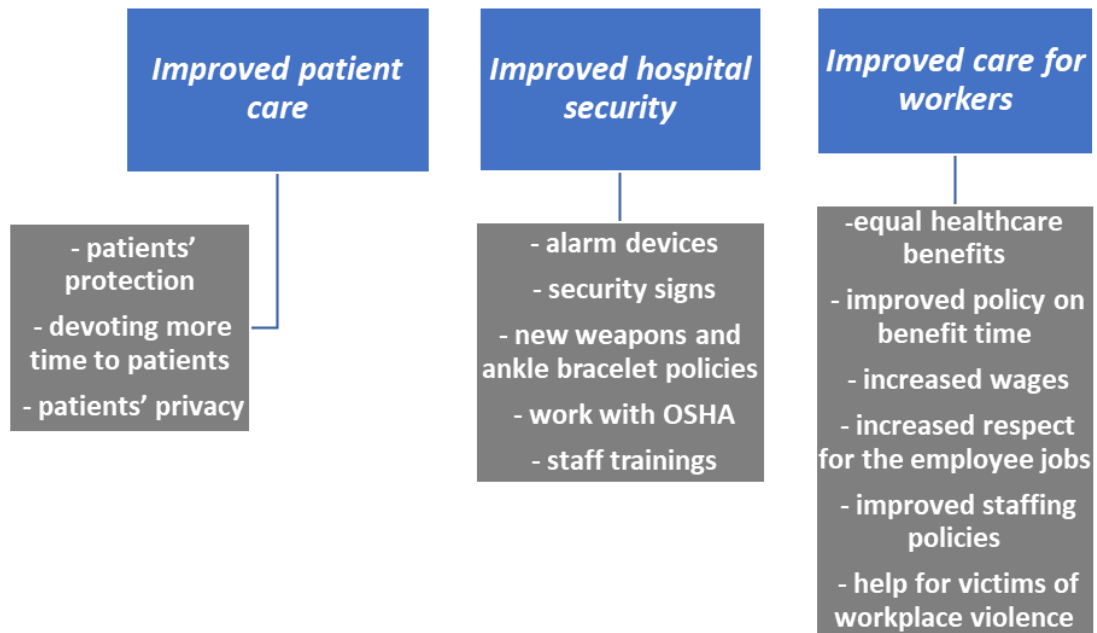
Figure 11*Outcomes of Mediation: Category and Codes*

Figure 12

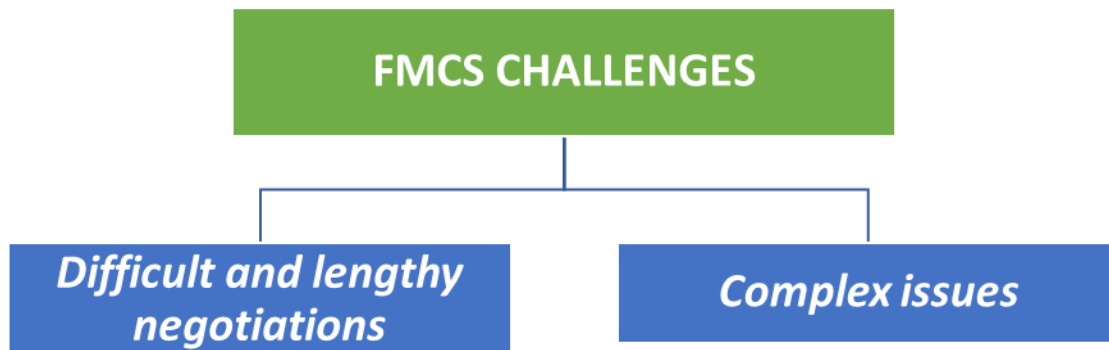
Outcomes of Mediation: Codes and Subcodes



FMCS challenges formed by such codes as *difficult and lengthy negotiations* and *complex issues* is reflected in Figure 13.

Figure 13

FMCS Challenges: Category and Codes



FMCS, mediation process emerged from the summative meanings of the following codes: *perseverance* and *hard work* reflected in Figure 14.

Figure 14

FMCS, Mediation Process: Category and Codes

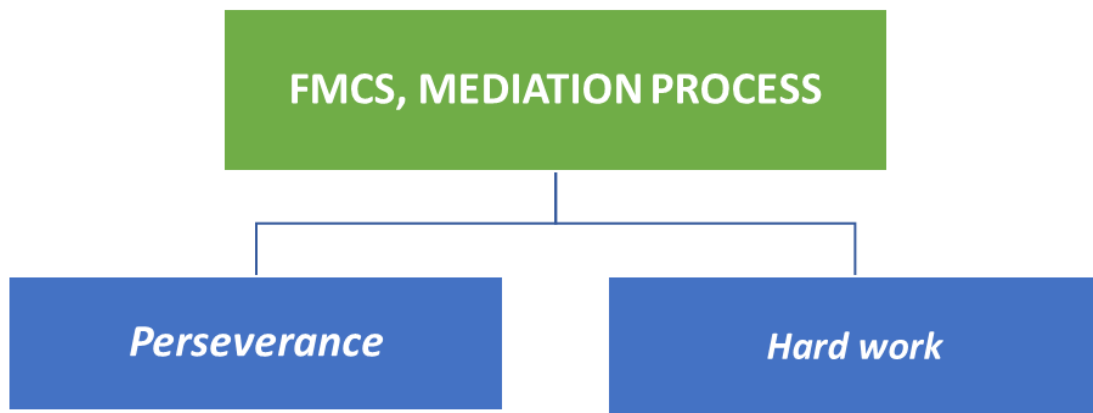
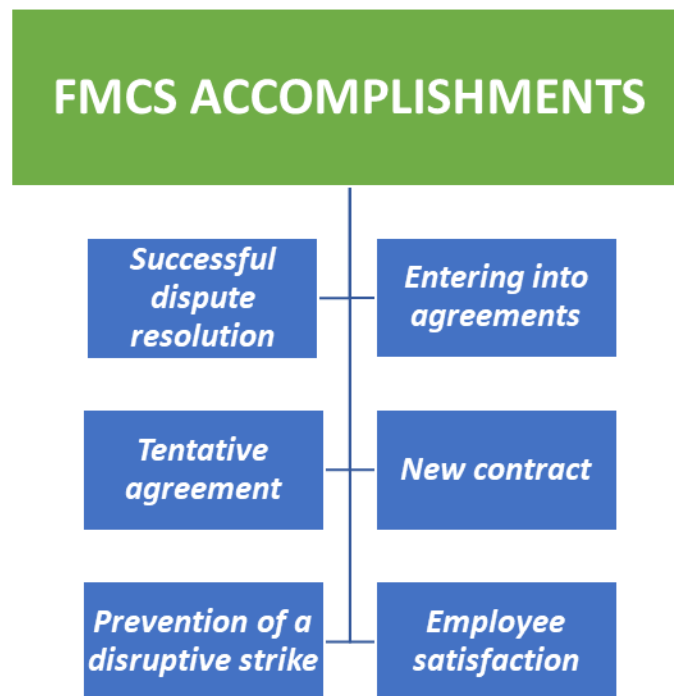


Figure 15 emerged from the amalgamation of different codes that form the meaning of achievement reflected in the category of *FMCS accomplishments*. The developed during the data analysis of subcodes adds to the summative essence of *employee satisfaction* code (see Figure 16 below).

Figure 15*FMCS Accomplishments: Category and Codes***Figure 16***FMCS Accomplishments: Codes and Subcodes*

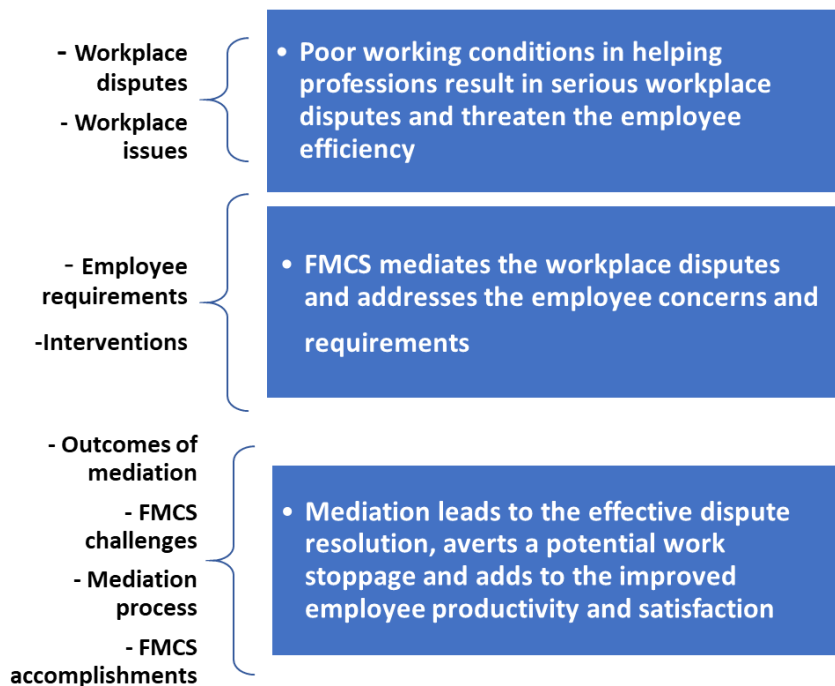
Mapping the data helped build themes, which Saldaña (2012) identifies as results of “coding, categorization, or analytic reflection...” (p. 14). Themes for this data analysis are the outcomes of the identified categories distinguished by its subtle and abstract nature Saldaña, (2012).

Figure 17 shows how the clusters of categories are organized into the following themes:

- 1) *Poor working conditions in helping professions result in serious workplace disputes and threaten the employee efficiency.*
- 2) *FMCS mediates the workplace disputes and addresses the employee concerns and requirements.*
- 3) *Mediation leads to the effective dispute resolution, averts a potential work stoppage and adds to the improved employee productivity and satisfaction.*

Figure 17

Categories and Themes



I analyzed the above-listed themes to develop the theory that would better the understanding of mediation within the context of workplace disputes among professionals that offer caring services. The following theory was developed as the result of studying the data: *mediation improves employee efficiency and their job satisfaction in organizations that offer caring services.*

Appalachian Regional Healthcare

Appalachian Regional Healthcare is a non-for-profit organization that provides a variety of services including but not limited to wound care, rejuvenation programs, emergency, heart care, rehabilitation therapy, and orthopedic center (Beckley ARH, 2020). This healthcare provider also offers a wide range of human services that address mental health conditions and behavioral problems (Beckley ARH, 2020). This center was chosen for the research study due to the mission to help vulnerable populations by offering them a spectrum of services that address their emotional and behavioral health along with the treatment of their medical conditions.

According to the congressional budget submission report for 2021, FMCS effectively mediated a series of disputes between Appalachian Regional Healthcare and the United Steelworkers Union (Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service, 2020). After intense negotiations with FMCS mediators, “the parties reached a tentative agreement on a master contract covering housekeeping, maintenance, janitorial, radiology, nursing aids, truck drivers, office staffing, respiratory, and clinical staff. The mediator tested 30 different settlement scenarios until the parties reached a consensus on one of them” (Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service, 2020, p. 7). The parties devised a new three-

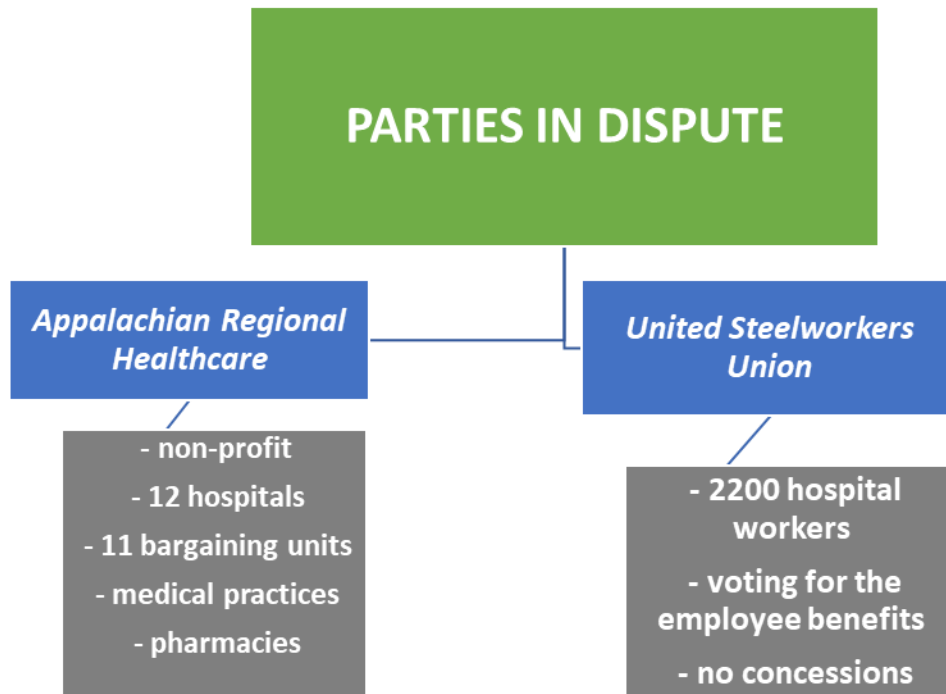
year contract, which addresses needs of “USW members who work in a variety of occupations” (United Steelworkers, 2019, para. 1).

I gathered data for the thematic analysis of this subcase from the news archive on the United Steelworkers (USW) website and analyzed the following news article for this research project: “Stat Facts: Members overcome tough negotiations in contract win at ARH”. Moreover, the news articles from *The Mountain Eagle* “ARH Workers Keep Benefits, Get Pay Raises” and from *MOUNTAIN NEWS WYMT* “Strike Averted, Three Year Contract Reached Between ARH and United Steelworkers Employees” were also analyzed for this study. Information was gathered from *FMCS Congressional Budget Report 2021* to inform this subcase study as well. After the raw data was collected, the method of first cycle coding was used to organize the information and to start examining and interpreting the obtained information. Afterwards, I employed the second cycle coding to reduce the data and to gather the developed codes into appropriate categories. I developed categories after studying patterns and relationships among the identified codes. Grouping, regrouping, and linking the codes resulted in the emergence of the following categories: *parties in dispute*, *effective mediation*, and *mediation outcomes*.

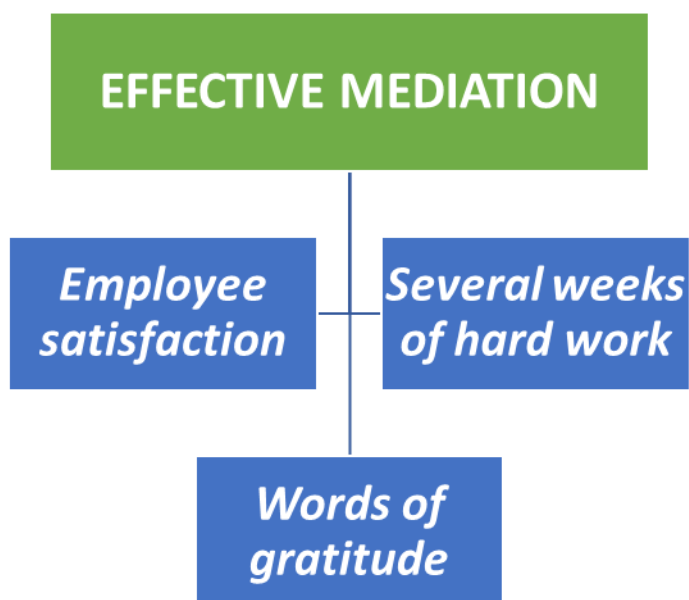
Figure 18 shows the identified codes and subcodes and their subsequent organization into the category of *parties in dispute*.

Figure 18

Parties in Dispute: Category, Codes, and Subcodes

**Figure 19**

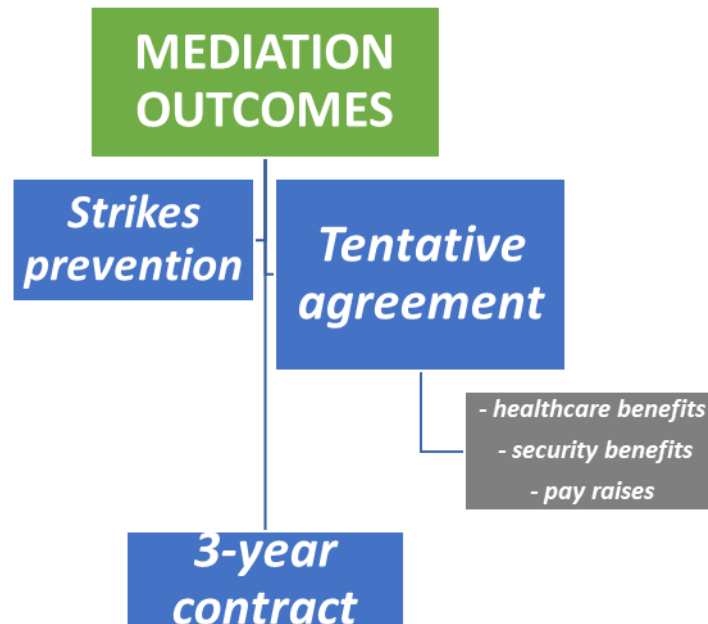
Demonstrates three codes that form the category of effective mediation



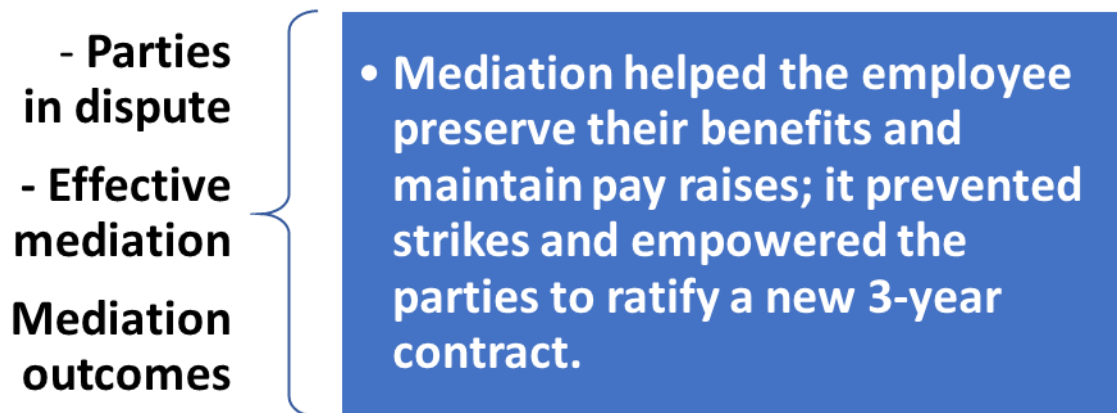
Mediation outcomes is formed by the codes: *strike prevention*, *tentative agreement*, and *3-year contract*. Three subcodes: *healthcare benefits*, *security benefits*, and *pay raises* inform *the tentative agreement* (see Figure 20 below).

Figure 20

Outcomes of Mediation: Category, Codes, and Subcodes



Mapping the subcodes, codes, and categories resulted in the appearance of the following theme: *mediation helped the employee preserve their benefits and maintain pay raises; it prevented strikes and empowered the parties to ratify a new 3-year contract* (see Figure 21 for details below).

Figure 21*Categories and a Theme*

Finally, I analyzed the cluster of categories and the theme to arrive at the theory that may explain the mediation phenomenon in the context of human services. The analysis of the above listed theme caused the emergence of the following theory:

mediation improves workplace conditions; it also has a positive impact on employee productivity in organizations that offer human services.

Catholic Health Systems

The Catholic Health System Inc. is a non-profit organization that includes “a network of hospitals, primary care centers, imaging centers, and several other community ministries” (Catholic Health 2020, para. 1). Along with providing a wide range of medical treatments such as women care, orthopedic care, cardiac and vascular care, and stroke care, this healthcare system offers home care services to senior patients, mother and baby home care to females with high-risk pregnancies, or to those who struggle with the postpartum period. Additionally, the Catholic Healthcare System promotes spiritual care that involves a team of counselors who encourage and support patients who face medical emergencies or life-threatening conditions and patients’ relatives (Catholic

Health, 2020). The afore-said healthcare system was selected for this research study since the offered services aim at addressing medical and mental conditions of vulnerable populations.

The FMCS congressional budget submission report for 2018 reflects the efficiency of federal mediation when addressing workplace disputes between the Catholic Health Systems (CHS) and the Communications Workers of America (CWA). According to the document, thanks to FMCS interventions, during negotiations with the health system and the union the parties arrived at “new agreements in FY2016. The CHS negotiations included registered nurses at Sisters of Charity Hospital, St. Joseph Campus; technical associates at Kenmore Mercy Hospital; and registered nurses and service, technical and clerical associates at Mercy Hospital of Buffalo” (Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service, 2018, p. 6).

The data for this thematic analysis was collected from such resources as: *FMCS Congressional Budget Report 2018*, *FMCS Congressional Budget Report 2016*, and from the website of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) labor union. The following CWA press releases were analyzed for this subcase study: *Bargaining update* and *CWA and Catholic Health Reach Tentative Agreement on Contracts for Mercy Hospital, Kenmore Mercy Hospital and Sisters Hospital, St. Joseph Campus*. Additionally, the data was gathered from the media releases on the Catholic Health website: *Mercy Hospital Associates Ratify New Four-year Contract Agreements* and *Registered Nurses at St. Joseph Campus Ratify New Contract*. Moreover, the news articles “CWA Members Approve All Labor Contracts with Catholic Health” and “Labor Peace: Catholic Health, CWA Union Reach Tentative Deal” from *BUFFALO BUSINESS*

FIRST and “Catholic Health Reaches Tentative Agreements with Union Workers at Three Hospitals” from *The Buffalo News* were reviewed for this dissertation project. Finally, I gathered information from the news article “Fourth Of Four New Catholic Health System Contracts Negotiated by the CWA in the Buffalo Area is Ratified as Technical Associates at Kenmore Mercy Hospital Register a Positive Vote” on *The Union News Company* website.

Like the previously described in this study subcases, I employed the method of first cycle coding after having collected the raw data. This method was used to arrange the gathered data and to study and interpret the received information. The method of second cycle coding was subsequently used for “reorganizing and reanalyzing data coded through First Cycle methods” (Saldaña, 2012, p. 207). As the result, the data was reduced and organized into the following categories: *Catholic Health Systems, poor work environment, negative consequences, effective mediation, positive outcomes, and employee satisfaction with the changes.*

Figure 22 below demonstrates the organization of the identified codes into the category of *Catholic Health Systems.*

Figure 22

Catholic Health Systems: Category and Codes

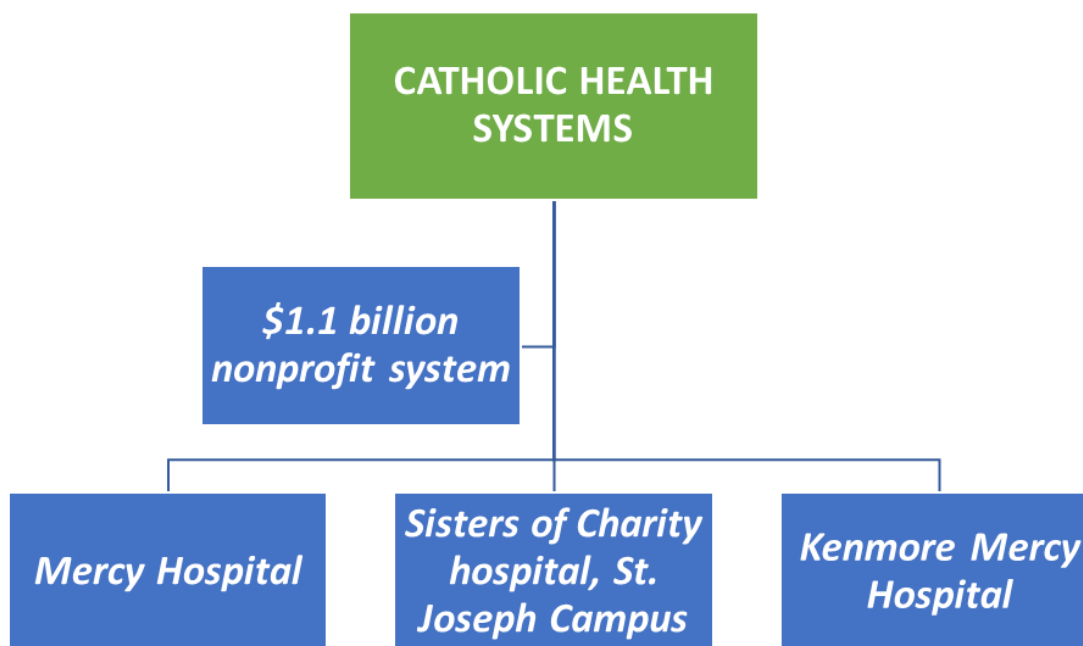
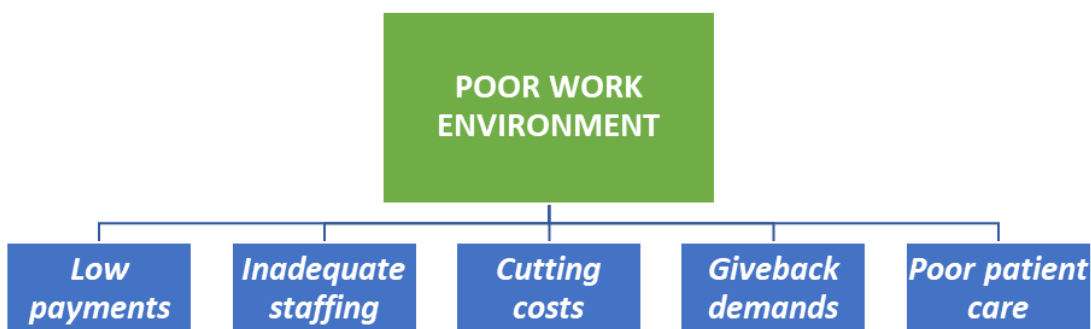


Figure 23 shows five codes that are included in the category of *poor work environment*.

Figure 23

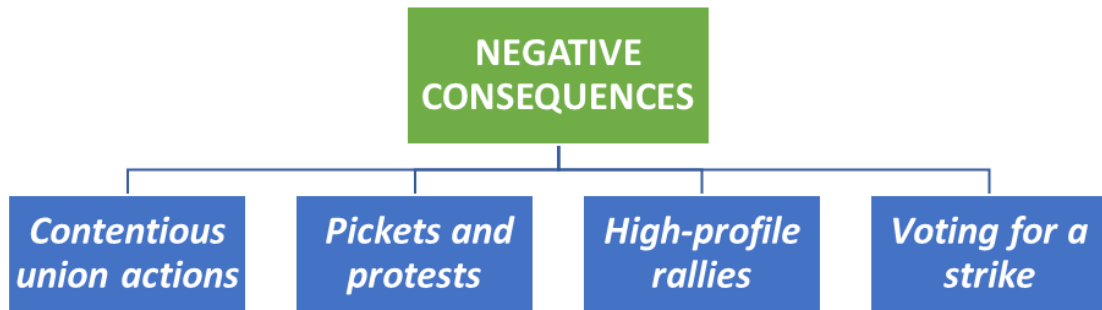
Poor Work Environment: Category and Codes



The category of *negative consequences* includes four codes that are reflected in Figure 24.

Figure 24

Negative Consequences: Category and Codes



The category of *effective mediation* emerged from seven codes that share the characteristics of proficiency and efficiency (see Figure 25 for details).

Figure 25

Effective Mediation: Category and Codes



Figure 26 shows a plethora of codes that I clustered together since they capture the meanings of *achievements* and *effective results*. The highlighted below codes are fused into the category of *positive outcomes*.

Figure 26

Positive Outcomes: Category and Codes



The last category of *employee satisfaction with the changes* is formed through four vital elements that capture the meaning of efficacy and success (see Figure 27 below).

Figure 27

Employee Satisfaction with the Changes: Category and Codes



Mapping the data helped analyze the clusters of the identified codes and the subsequently developed categories. After organizing the reviewed information through

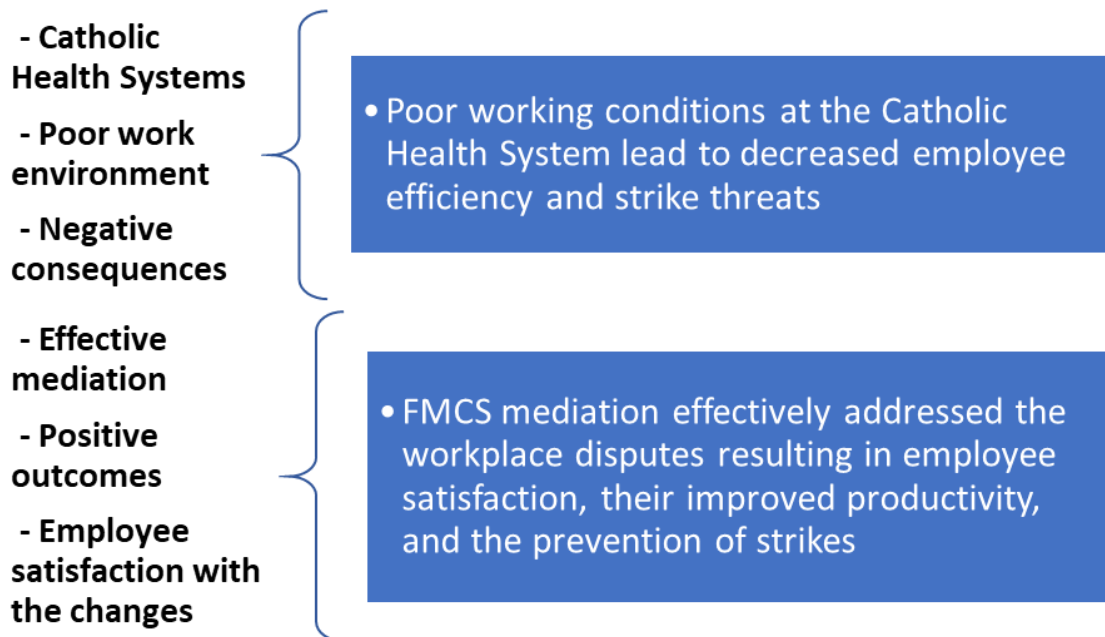
the exploration of different patterns and interconnections within the codes and the categories, I arrived at two themes:

- 1) *Poor working conditions at the Catholic Health System lead to decreased employee efficiency and strike threats.*
- 2) *FMCS mediation effectively addressed the workplace disputes resulting in employee satisfaction, their improved productivity, and the prevention of strikes.*

Figure 28 demonstrates how the emergent categories were clustered together to develop the afore-said themes.

Figure 28

Categories and Themes



To conclude the study of this subcase, I explored the clustered categories and the developed themes to build the theory to shed more light on the role of mediation in addressing working conditions and working environment in organizations that offer services to vulnerable populations. This thematic analysis resulted in the emergence of following theory: *using mediation during workplace disputes in organizations that offer services to vulnerable populations improves employee job satisfaction and has a positive influence on their efficiency.*

Conclusions

This research study embraces the analysis of three subcases that address the use of mediation in workplace disputes between employees from the organizations that offer helping services to people in need and the unions. Three subcases: *Brigham and Women's Hospital*, *Appalachian Regional Healthcare*, and *Catholic Health Systems* were viewed through the qualitative lens; the information about workplace disputes and their resolutions was taken from FMCS records, from the unions archives, and from various online news sources. The information was grouped, condensed, and organized into codes. First Cycle method followed by Second Cycle method of coding facilitated the emergence of several categories, which, in their turn, transcended the actuality of the codes and the categories and moved to “the thematic, conceptual, and theoretical” (Saldaña, 2012, p. 12). The listed in this study themes came into being as the result of the thematic analysis of the identified codes and categories.

The study of three subcases progressed “from the particular to the general” in the attempt to foresee how the resolution of workplace disputes in the healthcare centers through FMCS mediation may be applicable to other conflicts in other organizations that

offer caring serving to vulnerable populations (Saldaña, 2012, p. 14). The generalizations and predictions formed the following theories:

- a) Subcase 1: *mediation improves employee efficiency and their job satisfaction in organizations that offer caring services.*
- b) Subcase 2: *mediation improves workplace conditions; it also has a positive impact on employee productivity in organizations that offer human services.*
- c) Subcase 3: *using mediation during workplace disputes in organizations that offer services to vulnerable populations improves employee job satisfaction and has a positive influence on their efficiency.*

The consolidation of the afore-said leads to the statement that *mediation positively affects worker's productivity in organizations that offer caring services to vulnerable populations*. While grounded theory permeated the thematic analysis of the subcases in this study, the theory was generated through the amalgamation of both inductive and deductive methods of reasoning. Although grounded theory was primary when analysing the data, I also reviewed the goals, the research question, and the proposition of this study when processing the information. Thusly, when responding to the initially posted case study question: *how using mediation may be linked to employee efficiency in human services and other caring professions?* the answer is as follows: *mediation improves employee efficiency in human services and other caring professions*. The developed through the thematic analysis of the subcases theories confirm the previously stated proposition that *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other caring facilities*.

That being said, the alternative propositions that *workplace issues may be resolved due to reasons other than effects of mediation* and *workplace issues may not be resolved through mediation in organizations that promote caring services to vulnerable populations* are likely to be ruled out. At the same time, further studies of impacts of mediation on employee performance may shed more light on the dynamics of the relationship between both variables and may identify other factors that could affect productivity in human services and in other organizations that help people in need.

Analysis of Interviews

The exploration of potential connections between employee efficiency and workplace mediation in human services and in other organizations that serve vulnerable populations was also realized through using interviews with human subjects who acted as formal and/or informal mediators, and who addressed workplace disputes in organizations that work with people in need. During the screening procedure I inquired potential candidates about their formal and informal mediation experience with managing conflicts among employees in centers that help vulnerable individuals. As the result, 11 qualified individuals were selected to participate in the interviewing process. The qualified individuals were advised of the nature of the study, of possible risks and discomforts, and of privacy and confidentiality guidelines; the qualified human subjects expressed their willingness to participate and signed the consent forms prior to being interviewed for this dissertation project.

The selected participants reported extensive experience as mediators in human services. Most of the interviewees confirm that they have in-depth trainings in mediation, and their educational backgrounds are related to the resolution of conflicts in

organizations that work with vulnerable populations. Most of the interviewees primarily use problem-solving mediation, narrative and transformative mediation when addressing workplace disputes in centers of human services. The experience and educational backgrounds of the interviewees are reflected in the table below:

Table 8

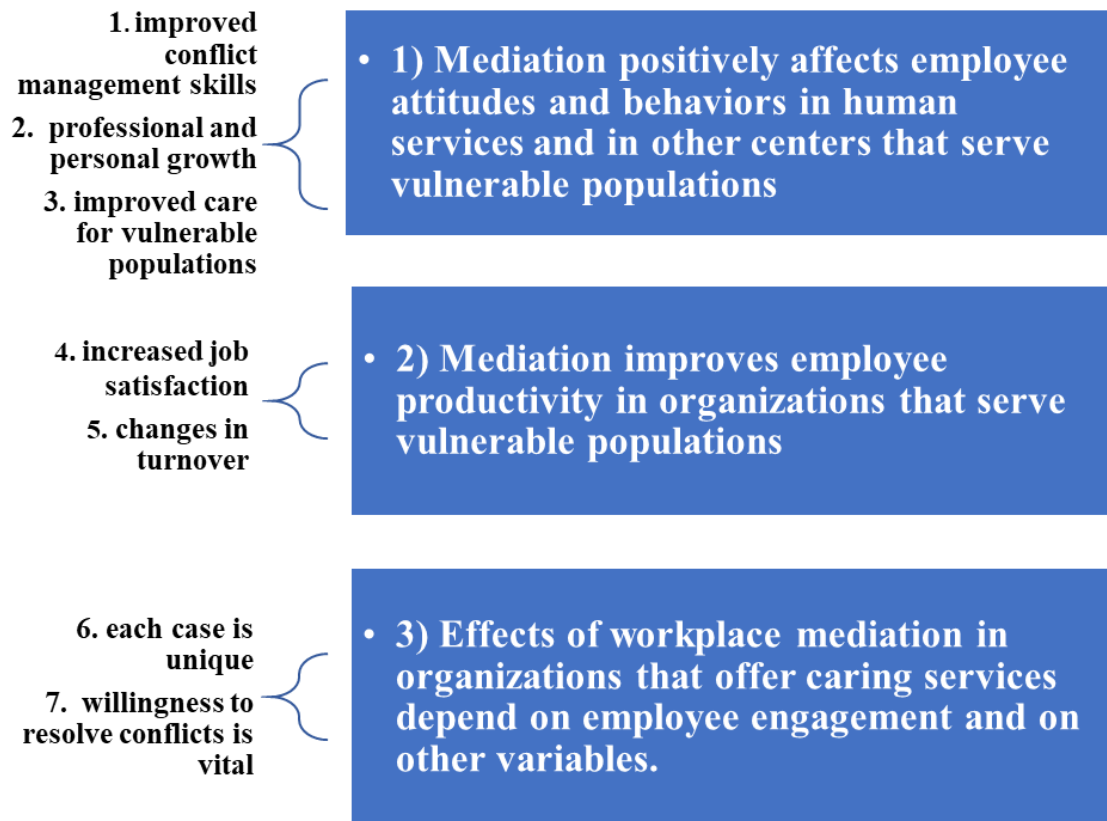
Relevant Experiences and Educational Backgrounds of the Participants

Nancy	
Relevant experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mediation of workplace disputes in the military workplace mediation with civilians employees work with clients diagnosed with mental health conditions 	Educational background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> courses in mediation and conflict resolution studies through the undergraduate program in the Homeland Security Management
Tom	
Relevant experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> chaplain for a pediatric hospital mediator to resolve conflicts between employees and families employees work with patients; many of which are victims of abuse and have mental diagnoses 	Educational background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> master's degree in global education, which involves trainings in mediation pursuing PhD in conflict studies
Robert	
Relevant experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> informal mediation and resolution of workplace conflicts solution-focused approach to conflict resolution to manage employee frustration and to improve their tolerance employees work with inmates 	Educational background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PhD in clinical psychology
Richard	
Relevant experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 years of informal mediation experience at mental health facilities that provide care for patients with mental health diagnoses. 	Educational background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> no formal training in mediation; medical school and MBA

Jessica	
Relevant experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mediation of workplace conflicts as a project coordinator at the risk reduction program workplace mediator with law enforcement, district attorney, prosecutors, victims, service agencies and probation services. informal mediator to facilitate dialogues with employees about cases that involved victims of domestic violence. mediation of internal disputes between agencies. Extensive use of transformative, narrative, and problem-solving mediation 	Educational background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> certified ethno -religious mediator through the International Center for Religious Mediation. PhD candidate – conflict analysis and resolution program 40 hours of trainings in mediation and therapy
John	
Relevant experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 years of workplace mediation experience in organizations that offer medical services to vulnerable populations 	Educational background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> no formal training in mediation. Informal mediation training through bachelor's degree in psychology and through medical school.
Ted	
Relevant experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 years of mediation experience mediator in community mediation program with public housing residents mediator with staff from the Department of Correctional Services mediator with employees from different social service agencies 	Educational background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PhD and master's degree in conflict management copious trainings in mediation, continuing education in mediation
Matthew	
Relevant experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> extensive mediation experience in charitable programs informal workplace mediation in different social programs that work with populations with mental and physical traumas 	Educational background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> law school
Joseph	
Relevant experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> informal mediation in health services mediation in Homeland Security workplace mediation in prisons 	Educational background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No formal degree, trainings in conflict resolution

Mary	
Relevant experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> workplace mediation with employees that deal with detainees 	Educational background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> trainings in conflict resolution, pursuing PhD in conflict studies
Samantha	
Relevant experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assistant executive director of the mediation division extensive experience as a mediator with employees who deal with vulnerable populations 	Educational background: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> master's degree in social work pursing PhD in conflict studies

As previously stated in this chapter, I used grounded theory along with the method of deduction and descriptive analysis to explore effects of mediation on workplace disputes in human services and in other caring centers. After the raw data was collected, I manually arranged the information and used the first and second cycle coding methods to reduce the organized data and to explore relationships between the emerged codes. The codes were grouped and regrouped several times until being reduced to the categories, which, in their turn, were mapped and consolidated. The developed categories and themes are reflected in Figure 29.

Figure 29*Interviews: Categories and Themes*

Theme 1: Mediation Positively Affects Employee Attitudes and Behaviors in Human Services and in Other Centers that Serve Vulnerable Populations

During semi-structured interviews that guided interviewees' narrations, the interviewees confirmed that using mediation during workplace conflicts in organizations that help people in need results in observable positive changes in employee demeanor. The interview questions covered such topics as employee attitudes, resolution of disputes, personal and professional development, levels of stress, acquired knowledge, workplace environment, and vulnerable populations (see Chapter 3 for examples of questions that were asked while interacting with the research participants). The analysis of the reported changes resulted in the emergence of the following categories: *improved conflict*

management skills, professional and personal growth, and improved care for vulnerable populations

- ***Category 1: improved conflict management skills***

This category was formed by codes that I identified after several rounds of data analysis (see Table 8 below).

Table 9

Category 1 and Codes

Category	Codes
Improved conflict management skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better communication • improved listening skills • peaceful environment • improved focus • critical thinking • decision making skills • alternative perspectives • increased awareness • systematic and logical process of thinking • rapport building

During the interview, all eleven participants reported that employee abilities to manage problems in organizations that offer services to people in need improved. Eight out of eleven interviewees maintained that their *communication skills* got significantly better. For example, Jessica claims, “obviously, the first time we spoke, it wasn't much of a difference. But through a series of sitting down and using mediation skills to deal with these ... law enforcement and the prosecutors ... eventually, the tension started to subside, and it wasn't as accusatory or deflecting of responsibilities but more at least the parties clarifying their own perspectives and their points to help the other, I guess, see things or try to understand what it was that they were trying to accomplish”.

Joseph reports the following, “So, you know, I think you learn a lot. I think you learn how to listen. You learn different strategies. Sometimes you discuss cases with another colleague who is not part of ... you know, not involved And you may learn new skills, new tips, new ways of doing business”.

Samantha contends, “they [employees] are better equipped to work through challenging situations; it's better than if they didn't have the knowledge “.

Jessica, Ted, Joseph, and Samantha highlight *improved listening skills* of employees in centers that offer services to vulnerable populations. Ted also reports such outcomes of mediation as *peaceful environment* and *improved focus*. Ted admits, “So, for the ones that are doing it [mediation] well, it creates a healthier work environment”. Ted also replies, “when they [employees] don't have that shadow of the conflict, they're able to focus better”. Additionally, Nancy reports strengthened *critical thinking* and *decision-making* skills among employees as the result of mediation, “so rather than making snap judgments about another person or another persons’ decision-making process or something, they [employees] are a little bit more apt to take to pause to consider other viewpoints and then make a decision on how to handle a situation rather than just attacking a person”.

Several interviewees highlight that mediation empowers employees to see *alternative perspectives*. For example, per Tom, “they [employees] are given an opportunity to express themselves, but also to hear the opposing perspective, or side of the story so to say. And so oftentimes the conversation that takes place as the part of mediation often allows them to reframe the situation and look at it with the new perspective”. Robert states, “I mean, just a different perspective on how both think about

the events that have transpired already”. Ted reports, “they [employees] learn that there is another perspective to the situation”.

Many interviewees highlight the *increased awareness* that was attained among employees after using mediation. For instance, Nancy stresses “cognitive awareness to biases” and the awareness of other people and of their feelings. Tom and Matthew also emphasize improved awareness as the result of mediation. Moreover, Ted reports “a greater sense of self-awareness”, which he observed with social workers. Ted also points to the recognition of others’ opinions after using mediation. Ted responds, “the idea of empowerment and recognition happens in transformative mediation ... they [employees] learn that to some degree”.

Matthew also emphasizes the role of mediation in ensuring *systematic and logical process of thinking*. Per the interviewee, “it [mediation] will assist the person to think in a more systematic and logical way about their interactions with other people”.

Finally, *rapport building* as a vital part of effective conflict management is highlighted by several participants. For example, Mary reports that building rapport is a result of workplace mediation:

So I think, for example, just using an analogy ... like if you and I had, at least in my place of work, had a dispute, especially since we really don't hang out all the time, it is a professional environment; that's something you may go to your supervisor, I'll go to mine. And then after they sit us down, it seems like people always say, oh, you know, this is just a misunderstanding to the other person's not as bad as they thought they were. And I think it builds rapport between. And so you see a lot of rapport building when you actually just sit service members down

and make them talk to each other and see that a lot of times when you think the other party is bad or is coming from a bad position, you tend to overinflate in your head when you actually sit down and talk to them, see that there are regular individuals just like you. And I think from that they are able to handle their own problems a lot better.

- ***Category 2: professional and personal growth***

The following codes were consolidated in the afore-listed category as the result of the data analysis.

Table 10

Category 2 and Codes

Category	Codes
Professional and personal growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes in attitudes • improved coping skills • decreased stress • improvements in personal lives • improved thought process

Ten out of eleven participants report *changes in attitudes* in employees who work for organizations that offer caring services to people in need. Nancy highlights improved empathy and states, “and what I really saw in that arena, it was just the employment of compassion and really being aware of not treating a person who's been through ... adversity and conflict, not treating them any lesser, really being aware of treating them as a human being”. Tom and Richard discuss improved trust among employees. Tom states, “having to share those things with other people as part of the mediation process, I think maybe they [employees] began to trust each other a lot more...”. Richard reports, “After the mediation, they knew it was OK to come to me as their supervisor, and I would take it

seriously and the problems would be resolved”. Richard also confirms that there are positive changes in employee attitudes.

When addressing *changes in attitudes*, Tom also highlights that “most of them [employees] report being able to better approach the person that they're in conflict with, whether it is a colleague or whether it is a manager or supervisor. Once they're given the skills, they feel they're better able to articulate what their issue is and also advocate for themselves in a way that they were able to be heard and not be drowned out by their own anger and resentment.”

Robert reports better workplace relations and maintains, “there are more harmonious relationships with those that work together and you're better able to work as a team.” Jessica points to decreasing hostility and tensions, less accusations, and increased responsibility. Ted highlights that transformative mediation results in the emergence of empowerment and recognition; the interviewee also asserts that mediation “takes away the gossiping factor”. Similar to Ted, Joseph also underlines empowerment among workers as the positive outcome of mediation. Joseph reports, “obviously when there's negotiation and empowerment and people coming together, obviously stress levels go down, there is work satisfaction, we start to enjoy what we do a little bit more. We're not dreading it”.

Matthew reports such positive changes in employee attitude as being “more reasonable, more objective, more focused on the goal ... less focus on their own internal thinking process and desires”.

Mary highlights maturity:

I think it helps them mature because they're able to sit down, work through their problems together, find out that the other party isn't as bad as they thought they were, build professional relationships.

Moreover, Mary argues that thanks to mediation, employees become more initiative, “they are able to take those tools ... and they're able to develop their own leadership”.

As for Samantha, this human subject stresses improved tolerance. Samantha states, “It's great to have more tolerance for each other as a result of the process of mediation, especially given the conflict was resolved”.

Most of the respondents confirm that employee attitudes show improvements after mediation, at the same time, John does not report positive changes. According to this participant, effects of mediation on employee attitudes are unknown.

It's hard it would be hard for me to assess changes because you see during mediation, mediation, can be frequently just a very short time. So it would be hard to know how that impact over the long term on their job.

When addressing *coping skills*, the participants concur that mediation helps employees improve their coping mechanisms. For example, Nancy stresses effective coping with stigma. When discussing changes in attitudes towards sex workers, Nancy underlines the importance of “treating them [sex workers] no different than anyone else”, which “comes from the just being aware and being compassionate”. Robert reports decreased frustration since mediation positively influences “unresolved contention”. Samantha reflects that mediation facilitates accountability for personal actions. The

interviewee states, “it's twofold, meaning that the first person acknowledges that. But the second ... the person allows the other person to take responsibility for the actions. So you're not solving the problem, but you are actually encouraging the person to solve the problem.

Most participants report *decreased stress* as the result of using mediation. Nancy underlines that changes in employee mental wellbeing may be possible and reflects, “Well, not all leaders, but a lot of us try to be very mindful of burnouts.” Tom concurs that there are positive changes in the level of stress before and after mediation. Robert and Richard points to the significant relief from stress. Robert contends, “it [mediation] would have pretty profound impacts on stress.” Richard confirms that mediation decreases employees’ stress. He provides with the following example, “As I said before, they [employees] would either keep it [problem] to themselves or talk to the other employees, thus spreading dissension among the other employees. And if you've got one employee that's angry, and they start talking to the others, then you have seven, eight, ten, twelve employees who then are angry. And sometimes I don't even know why they're angry. And that starts affecting the way they treat the patients and their work ethic, because when they start getting a little lazy and they start saying, well, no one cares about me, so I'm not going to care about anyone. After the mediation, I saw that they felt like they were actually part of my team and that we had their back and they were more tolerant with the mental health patients”.

While Jessica did not report any changes in stress levels of employees from care centers, John responds that “there should be less stress after mediation”.

When being asked about the relationship between mediation and employee stress in human services and other centers that offer caring services, Ted responded as follows:

I think when you resolve a conflict, it takes away an element of stress. That doesn't mean that there is not other stress in their lives that they were stressing over other things. But it does remove that interpersonal stress of that interpersonal conflict. And that is huge.

Matthew pinpoints that while people are different, mediation may help improve professional and personal stress. He reports, “maybe some even personal stress, perhaps, but also professional”. When being asked about effects of mediation on stress, Joseph reported, “So I think mediation ... can be something to maybe help get to the root of it [stres] or at least part of it. And so that way people can coexist together”.

Mary also discusses positive changes in employee emotional state after mediation was employed. Being being asked if she sees changes in employee attitudes towards the job when she mediate, Mary reports, “I would have to say yes, of course... I would say the majority of the time, yes”. Samantha responds that during mediation “they [employees] would have learned some skills that could help them manage their own stress”.

Improvements in personal lives are also identified during this data analysis. Tom argues, “once we're able to have them [employees] work through those kind of things with mediation, they're generally able to provide a better level of care; and outside of work, I would say it helps them to be more pleasant and to be better, to be more productive as parents or spouses or whatever their roles are outside of the hospital.”

Additionally, Samantha reports, “I think it also helps them [employees] in their own personal experiences as well. They learn how to manage conflict better as a result”.

Improved thought process is highlighted by Robert:

So... I mean... I think after they [mediators] can give them [employees] a chance to kinda of regroup their thought process and an emotional response to things and formulate a plan to address them in a more successful manner when they have to deal with that.

- ***Category 3: improved care for vulnerable populations***

This category emerged as the result of the consolidation of the codes reflected in the table below.

Table 11

Category 3 and Codes

Category	Codes
Improved care for vulnerable populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved attitude • better communication • effective conflict management • improved mindfulness

Most participants concur that using mediation improves employee *attitude* towards their clients, patients, and other people in need. For instance, Nancy reports increased compassion, respect, and empathy. Nancy reports the ability of “really being aware of treating them [vulnerable population] as a human being, as just another person”. Matthew also maintains that employees are sometimes observed to develop better empathy and sympathy towards their clients. Matthew replies, “well, yes, I do believe that it would make somebody more sympathetic and empathetic, empathetic with other people, perhaps also special needs people”. Tom empathizes strengthened caring skills

and the employee ability to be responsive to patients' needs. Tom reports, "it [mediation] enhances their [employees'] ability to ask the appropriate questions, to hear the appropriate information and to know what they're hearing when they hear family share something with them. So I think in the end, it helps them then be able to take that information and get it to the various places it needs to go; to social work or to myself or wherever. And so, I think they really do become ... better communicators as a result of mediation, and they become also better advocates for their patient".

Mary and Samantha also underline that employees show more care towards vulnerable populations. Moreover, Samantha asserts, "it is less agitating, they [employees] can communicate with them [people in need] better. They have more patience in listening". Employees better attend to needs of vulnerable populations. Richard replies, "really, what I saw, the mediation did make my workers more compassionate towards their patients and more tolerant of the idiosyncrasies of some of the mental health patients."

Many participants report that mediation facilitates *better communication* between employees and their clientele. For example, Robert highlights better rapport building with clients. Jessica reports that some improvements are observed in the communication between law enforcement and victimized populations. When discussing communication between employees and people in need, John claims that mediation "can further their [employee] ability to negotiate things". Mary also confirms that mediation helps employees improve their interactions with vulnerable populations. She emphasizes that employees show more care towards vulnerable populations, and employees better attend to needs of vulnerable populations.

Effective conflict management as the result of mediation with workers who help people in need is highlighted by several participants. Ted, for example, argues that mediation helps workers handle conflicts better at their jobs. Joseph confirms that mediation empowers workers soothe conflicts with vulnerable populations:

Sometimes I would have patients who would be very irate at their particular provider, who was a resident physician, that they weren't getting the proper time of the day, etc. and I would have to step in and then talk to the chief of the clinic here and sometimes reassign patients to a new provider and meet with the family and try to smooth things out... So I think those were negotiation or mediation ...I felt like I became a master of dealing with conflict, trying to diffuse things.

Samantha also addresses improved conflict management skills when employees serve vulnerable populations:

They [employees] have more tolerance. You do not see any visible agitation; you do not see it. Even though vulnerable population is very difficult. You do not see it on their demeanor and their purposes in the way they interact, their skills are better.

Jessica and Ted point to the *improved mindfulness* among employees that work with vulnerable populations. Jessica reports a better understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence when employees serve their clientele:

At least when it came to the issue of domestic violence, I felt like they [employees] felt better equipped with understanding things in a different way, and they felt like they could process better on a professional level. I cannot speak to other areas of their work, mainly because I do not participate in that. But I felt like

I would notice that there were others who would be able to walk into these situations equipped with better language skills, better ways of not just communicating, but interpreting or hearing what people were saying and being able to take a moment and ask things in a way that would again, like I said, be proactive rather than reactive.

Ted maintains that employees improve their awareness of situations that vulnerable populations have to face; employees start recognizing diversity and become more culturally competent when they help people in need. According to this respondent, social workers, educators, nurses, and police officers may develop mindfulness after mediation services. Ted describes a situation where a police officer changed his opinion on diversity and culture after completing a conflict management training that involved mediation:

it really changed how he saw things and then how he treated ...it had a racial component to it. So, he was a white male and the component how he saw people, particularly black people. So, it helped open his eyes on the diversity and people that he worked with.

Theme 2: Mediation Improves Employee Productivity in Organizations that Serve Vulnerable Populations

During the interviews, the participants confirmed that using mediation to address workplace disputes with employees is likely to impact their productivity. While some of the participants pointed to the importance of considering other factors that may impact employee performance in human services and in other organizations that offer caring services to people in need, the respondents maintain that there is a correlation between

mediation and employee efficiency. The semi-structured interview questions with the participants embraced such topics as job satisfaction, changes in employee productivity, and possible consequences for the rates of turnover in organizations that serve vulnerable populations (see Chapter 3 for examples of questions that were asked while interacting with the research participants). The following categories emerged after the gathered information was analyzed for this research project: *increased job satisfaction* and *changes in turnover*.

- ***Category 4: increased job satisfaction***

Two codes were identified during the analysis of the collected data. The codes emerged as the result of examining, grouping, and rearranging the studied information (see table 11 for details).

Table 12

Category 4 and Codes

Category	Codes
Increased job satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved productivity • feeling valued

All participants concur that employee *productivity* improved after mediation was used to address workplace disputes in organizations that offer caring services to people in need. Nancy responds, “I think in general it [mediation] does impact productivity because it impacts job satisfaction, impacts really impacts a person's mental health, even if it [conflict] wasn't always resolved”. Tom highlights the following:

You are going to get better productivity... people are going to be happier about their work environment, that they are going to be more likely to help each other out. They are going to be more responsive to the patients’ and the families’ needs.

When people are happier about their work environment, they are going to come in on their days off if you need them. And they are going to do extra stuff, so their productivity definitely goes up.

Robert reports that employees become more effective and efficient. The interviewee also highlights decreased absenteeism as the result of mediation. Richard also identifies improved productivity and states that “they [employees] were much more productive”. Jessica asserts:

For law enforcement, I saw a massive positive shift in their productivity for the project we were working on. There was much more cooperation, understanding, you know, with understanding why I needed them to do certain things, why these policies and procedures were important, why their leadership and they in their agency needed it. I think they felt more confident because the process helped them, it was clarifying, major points that they were not aware of.

John responds that employee productivity in medical centers that assist vulnerable populations may go up if the personnel have positive results from mediation, “yes, it's, if it's a positive result, the productivity may increase”. When being asked if mediation may impact employee productivity, Ted responds, “I believe so... I think there's less absenteeism”. Matthew responds as follows:

Positive changes in the positive direction. I think mediation can be useful. There are other issues. How much does it cost? I mean... there are many things that go into this, but generally speaking, I am in favor of it. And I think that it will help productivity.

Joseph and Mary report that along various factors that may negatively impact employee performance even if mediation was employed, there are some increases in employee performance. Samantha positively responds to the question about positive effects of mediation on employee productivity, “yes, you see that; you see changes; you see things.

During the interviews, two participants reported that mediation helped employees *feel valued*, which adds to the employee satisfaction with the jobs they do. Richard argues, “I think they've learned from mediation that they are more valuable to the organization than they really thought”, “they felt like they were actually part of the team and not just a worker bee. I try to make everyone in all of my organizations feel like we' are in this together. And it is not just you out there getting beat up all the time. You have a problem. Come to me. Let's talk about it. Let's try to resolve it. Let's make it a positive experience for you. So that way it is a positive experience for the patients”.

Mary highlights that employees feel valued after mediation was used in organizations that work with vulnerable populations:

When you sit as a leader, when you sit your personnel down and actually mediate it, it gives them a sense that you actually care about their problems, but you're not going to treat them like a child, you're not going to hold their hand, but you're going to work with them through the process. (Mary)

In sum, most participants argue that mediation may be positively correlated with employee job satisfaction in organizations that serve people in need. At the same time, Samantha responds that effects of mediation on employee satisfaction with their jobs are unknown:

It decreases their tolerance levels. But whether it impacts their job satisfaction, I cannot say because people want different things. If you as an employee, you have a problem with management in terms of salaries that would not help you to accept the fact that you want more money, right? What it does, it gives you a level of tolerance to continue to work, even though you have those issues.

- **Category 5: changes in turnover**

While analyzing the data, the following codes were identified and merged into the afore-listed category (see table 12 for details).

Table 13

Category 5 and Codes

Category	Codes
Changes in turnover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decreased turnover • other/unknown changes • no effects

Four out of eleven participants argue that mediating workplace disputes in organizations that offer services to vulnerable populations results in *decreased turnover*. Tom reports, “if we're able to mediate issues for them [employees] from the start, they're more likely to stay with the organization”. Richard states, “Some of the nurse practitioners that we had would come and go quickly. And then after we instituted mediation, we had basically no turnover for years”. When Ted was asked if mediation impacts turnover rates, the participant responded, “I think absolutely it does... I think the resolution of workplace conflict helps with employee retention”. Matthew also responds, “It will be lower turnover”.

Four participants point to *other/unknown changes* in employee turnover since many other factors may add to the workplace dynamics in organizations that serve

vulnerable populations. When being asked about turnover/retention rates, Nancy reported, “I’m not really sure I can answer that one. Principally for the fact that for the military ... they don't really get much of a choice ... they're going to be there, unless there's extenuating circumstances that have dealt with victims of sexual assaults”. Robert asserts that other factors may have influences on employee turnover, “I think that would also in many settings, again, kind of things like stress and kind of, you know, professional support from co-workers that are going to have a really large impact on turnover”. John highlights correlation between mediation and turnover rates, however, the effects may not always be positive: “I think if the work environment is negative, there is increased turnover”. Joseph reports that while mediation may have positive impacts on employee retention, turnover rates depend more on the nature of jobs that employees perform in human services and in other centers that help people in need.

Three respondents report *no effects* of mediation on employee turnover. Jessica claims that nothing changes in employee turnover once mediation is used to address workplace conflicts in organizations that work with vulnerable populations. At the same time, the participant contends that there may be changes in turnover in law enforcement, however, other factors may result in such changes as well, “for prosecutors, I would say yes. But I think those were outside factors that go beyond the scope”. Mary also denies any correlation between mediation and turnover rates and points to other factors that affect retention:

No, I would say no, you must think we have a huge turnover rate. Only a few decide to stay in their first initial 40 years, but what seems to affect us more than anything is the economy. So Covid-19 with all afraid of the job market. Now

nobody is getting out of the military. The military has ways to actually kick people out. And so, it's really the economy....

Samantha disagrees that mediation may influence employee turnover rates as well; the respondent's answer is as follows, "no, no, employees will do what employees will have to do anyways; when they find a better job they will leave".

Theme 3: Effects of Workplace Mediation in Organizations that Offer Caring Services Depend on Employee Engagement and on Other Variables

Along with the highlighted effects of mediation on employee attitudes, on behavioral patterns, and on their performance in human services centers and in other agencies that help vulnerable populations, the participants also maintain that mediation is not the panacea for the resolution of conflicts. The results of the guided narrated interviews show that it is essential to consider the influence of other factors prior making prompt conclusions related to the direct connection between mediation and peaceful workplace environment in human/social services. Several participants argue that employee interest in resolving conflicts and their engagement in mediation may play the key role in successful outcomes for the personnel and for the organization. The responses provided during the semi-structured interviews were refined into categories as follows:

each case is unique and willingness to resolve conflicts is vital.

- ***Category 6: each case is unique***

After the analysis of the interviews, two codes emerged. The codes contain summative information related to peculiarities of using mediation in organizations that offer caring serves (see table 13 for details).

Table 14*Category 6 and Codes*

Category	Codes
Each case is unique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • different effects • other factors

Some participants reported that at times, they struggled giving definitive answers to the stated questions since each situation is *different*, and employee reactions to mediation may vary. For example, when Jessica was asked about knowledge that employees obtain through mediation, she highlighted improvements with law enforcement offices; however, not many changes were observed with prosecutors. Jessica also highlights that effects of mediation depend on the size and on the structure of organizations where mediation is conducted. Per the participant, mediation should be handled by an independent third party, and some agencies that do not hire external mediators have different effects versus those who work with professionals that are not employed in the organization.

John responds that mediation shows different outcomes in different cases. Personal or professional changes are likely to be positive if employees get what they want; otherwise, mediation may not be beneficial for personnel in human services and in other centers that offer care to vulnerable populations:

Again, sometimes they are improved, and sometimes they are worse.

I don't think there's one fixed answer, and I don't know what the percentages would be. I think it depends on the result. If they get the outcome in mediation that they want, I think ... I think their work performance is probably improved; if

they don't get the result they want, it is probably negative impact on their work performance. (John)

Ted reports that while mediation generally has beneficial effects on employees who work with vulnerable clients, each case is different. The respondent states, "I think it'll be different for each person in each conflict.... But hopefully they'll also learn that there are there's another way to handle a conflict."

Matthew also points to different responses to the use of workplace mediation in human and other caring centers, "mediation is a learning and psychological tool for the parties that allows them to step outside of themselves, obviously to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the individual and on the circumstances."

When addressing changes that mediation may have on employees who work with people in need, Joseph claims that while changes are feasible, things happen differently for different people. The response of this interviewee about changing workplace dynamics is as follows:

I think so over time. But change is slow, you know, and sometimes it depends on the people that you're dealing with. Some people are very recalcitrant, they are unmalleable, they are set in their ways, especially a lot of older workers. Maybe, maybe the younger generation would be more, you know, more flexible. (Joseph)

Samantha also highlights that effects of mediation may be different for each employee in an organization:

What I have found is that persons who actually use these [conflict resolution] skills, seem to have more tolerance, seems to have a better understanding of what conflict is, seem to want to try to resolve it. But if they have no... no experience in

mediation to resolve conflict, how they would generally do it, which is, as I said, use of the chain of command or not speaking to one another.

When discussing *other factors*, it is indispensable to highlight that the summative meaning of this code is tightly connected and has some similarity with the *different effects* code. However, the *other factors* code is identified as the independent unit in this study since it encompasses specific elements that, along with mediation, may impact employee efficiency.

Nancy reports that change in employees after mediation may be also imputed to their attitudes, personal character, and biases.

I would say sometimes it depends; job satisfaction goes up when they [employees] feel like mediation worked out in their favor. When they feel like they got the shorter end of the stick during mediation, job satisfaction does go down. But I find a lot of that too is more due to perspective, but also the biases that existed previously.

Nancy also argues that aside from mediation, middle management and upper management in organizations are likely to influence employee productivity in centers that serve vulnerable populations.

Jessica also highlights external factors that affect employees, which makes it sometimes difficult to explore the link between mediation and changes in employee attitudes and productivity. The interviewee highlights such factors as “size of organizations”, “general burnout”, “lack of community resources”, and “insufficient training in conflict resolution”.

John holds that effects of mediation may be hard to determine given that it is oftentimes introduced for a short time period. According to the respondent, “it would be hard for me to assess changes because, you see, during mediation, mediation, can be frequently just a short time. So, it would be hard to know how that impact over the long term on their job”.

Like Nancy, Ted also points to the role of management in resolving workplace conflicts, “if the manager is part of the mediation, the manager can sometimes be part of trying to help make that. You know, sometimes the managers are the problem”. Additionally, Ted stresses the factor of professional field in which mediation is employed. Per the interviewee, there is “a marked difference in the corrections settings”, however, a noticeable difference is not observed “with public housing”. The participant also highlights that mediation is more effective with educators, teachers, nurses, social workers than with “cops” and “correction officers”. The interviewee also reports that punitive use of mediation may negatively affect outcomes for employees.

Matthew reports that results of mediation vary based on the frequency of using mediation to address workplace disputes. Joseph emphasizes differences in personalities that, along with mediation, influence workplace dynamics in organizations that offer caring services to people in need. Samantha asserts that while mediation has positive effects on employees in human services and in other care centers, their satisfaction with the job may not be related to outcomes from mediation. Such factors as management and salaries should be considered when measuring employee happiness with their jobs.

- *Category 7: willingness to resolve conflicts is vital*

This category emerged as the result of amalgamation of two codes: *willingness to change* and *reluctance to make changes* (table 14).

Table 15

Category 7 and Codes

Category	Codes
Willingness to resolve conflicts is vital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • willingness to change • reluctance to make changes

When addressing *willingness to change*, Nancy argues that mediation may significantly impact employee attitudes if they are open to changes. This interviewee reflects, “So the way I see people ... I see that people have the great successes when they actually put the lessons into practice”. The Nancy also discusses *reluctance to make changes* that can hinder employee resolution of conflicts and their efficiency and responds, “you know, some people seem to enjoy conflict”.

Robert also pointed to effects of mediation given that employees are interested in changing their attitudes and behaviors; at the same time, employee unwillingness to make any changes negatively impacts mediation outcomes on workplace conflicts. The participant states, “In most those scenarios... it's a kind of ... you know, lead to a horse to water type situation”, “I mean, at the end of the day, the individual has control on whether or not they act on that information or not. So, I think most people, you know, do. But you're going to have some of that don't”. When being asked about the implementation of the acquired through mediation skills at work, the participant replied, “if they [employees] found it to be helpful, I think they're probably more likely to. If they weren't open to it or didn't choose to use those [skills], they are probably not very likely to use the information that was presented to them”.

Jessica highlights *reluctance to make changes* among management in some organizations that is likely to jeopardize positive outcomes from mediation for employees:

From what I observed, generally, non-profit domestic violence work often has people in leadership who already think that they know everything and trying to engage them in anything that doesn't make them the star or doesn't make them to the resolution themselves... They tend to frown upon and quickly dismiss.

(Jessica)

John pinpoints that while mediation may have positive effects on employees in human services and in other centers that offer caring services, the staff's *willingness to change* and their *reluctance to make changes* that depend on employee personalities significantly affect results of mediation. The interviewee maintains, "I'm sure some probably learn that the things are negotiable... and some don't".

Ted highlights the importance of employee *willingness to change* when it comes to resolving disputes. If employees are *reluctant to make changes*, they are likely to "still end up walking out with the same conflict locked in" (Ted).

Samantha also addresses employee *willingness to change* and their *reluctance to make changes* when it comes to working with a mediator to improve workplace environment. The participant reports that "some of them [employees] come up with resolutions where their problems are resolved. Some of them don't get the resolution to their problems"; the interviewee also responds that "some people may think it [mediation] does not work, and so they don't give it a chance" (Samantha).

Theory

To conclude this interviews analysis, I explored the clustered codes, the emerged categories and the developed themes to bring to light the role of mediation in employee efficiency in organizations that offer services to vulnerable populations. This analysis resulted in the development of following theory: *mediation shows positive effects on employee efficiency in organizations that offer caring services to people in need. At the same time, mediation should not be viewed as the panacea since each case is unique, and other factors should be considered when addressing employee performance.*

Conclusion

This dissertation embraces the analysis of 11 interviews; the interviews with eleven participants describe impacts of mediation on workplace issues, compare the resolution of conflicts between employees before and after mediation, and reflect on changes in employee behaviors and attitudes as the result of mediation. The gathered data also highlights viewpoints of the interviewees on the impacts of mediation on workplace environment, on vulnerable populations, on employee job satisfaction, and on employee productivity. The analysis of the interviews was studied through the prism of grounded theory with some deductive elements, the descriptive framework was used to describe this study.

While exploring raw data from the ground up, the proposition *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other organizations that serve vulnerable populations* was also considered. The raw data attached from the interviews was grouped, condensed, and organized into codes. Seven categories emerged after the data was explored through First Cycle method followed by

Second Cycle method of coding: *improved conflict management skills, professional and personal growth, improved care for vulnerable populations, increased job satisfaction, changes in turnover, each case is unique, and willingness to resolve conflicts is vital.*

As the result of the thematic analysis, the codes and categories were refined into three themes:

- 1) *Mediation positively affects employee attitudes and behaviors in human services and in other centers that serve vulnerable populations.*
- 2) *Mediation improves employee productivity in organizations that serve vulnerable populations.*
- 3) *Effects of workplace mediation in organizations that offer caring services depend on employee engagement and on other variables.*

The analysis of the identified themes “from the particular to the general” using generalizations and predictions, resulted in the emergence of the following theory: *mediation shows positive effects on employee efficiency in organizations that offer caring services to people in need. At the same time, mediation should not be viewed as the panacea since each case is unique, and other factors should be considered when addressing employee performance* (Saldaña, 2012, p. 14).

While grounded theory permeated the thematic analysis of the interviews, the theory was generated as the result of combining both inductive and deductive methods of reasoning. That being said, albeit I primarily relied on grounded theory, I also kept in mind the goals, the research question, and the proposition of this study while processing the data. When responding to the initially posted case study question: *how using mediation may be linked to employee efficiency in human services and in other caring*

professions? the answer is as follows: *mediation may improve employee efficiency in human services and other caring professions; at the same time, we should also consider other factors that may affect employee performance.* The developed through the thematic analysis of the interviews theory points to the importance of taking into account the alternative proposition that *workplace issues may be resolved due to reasons other than effects of mediation.* It is essential to conduct additional research studies to determine other variables and their effects on employee productivity in human services and in other organizations that help people in need.

Chapter 5: Concluding the Findings

Introduction

This case study consists of two parts: the first part encompasses the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the FMCS data, and the second part consists of semi-structured interviews with eleven mediators. The quantitative research is represented by the reviewed work stoppage reports that involve successfully resolved by FMCS work stoppage cases. The mound of data explores the total number of cases per year, the duration of work stoppages in days per year, the average duration of work stoppages in days per year (mean), and the median and the mode of the duration of work stoppages in days per year from 1984 through 2019. The qualitative piece of this case study includes the thematic analysis of three FMCS subcases: *Brigham and Women's Hospital*, *Appalachian Regional Healthcare*, and *Catholic Health Systems*. The second part of this case study project entails eleven interviews with human subjects that have experience with addressing workplace disputes in organizations that offer caring services such as human services centers, prisons, medical facilities, public housing, immigration services, etc. This case study aimed at finding answers to the research question: *how using mediation may be linked to employee efficiency in human services and in other organizations that offer caring services?* The review and analysis of the afore-mentioned quantitative and qualitative data lead to the findings that will be described below. In addition, this chapter will also address implications, limitations of this case study, recommendations as regards further research on this topic, and the application of system theory.

Overview of the Findings

The outcomes from the quantitative part shows that work stoppages in human service centers and healthcare organizations where conflicts were addressed through mediators from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) declined from 1984 through 2019. The line graphs that demonstrate the total numbers of work stoppages, the length of work strikes in days, the average duration of work stoppages in days, and the median and the mode of the duration of strikes in days demonstrate downward trends over the time period between 1984 and 2019. The correlation analysis was performed between the variables: *total number of cases and 36 years of FMCS mediation*, *duration of strikes in days per year and 36 years of FMCS mediation*, and *duration of work stoppages per year and 36 years of FMCS mediation (mode)*. The outcomes do not indicate any statistical significance. However, the findings show a significant correlation between the following variables: *average duration of strike activities per year (mean) and 36 years of FMCS mediation* and *duration of work stoppages in days per year (median) and 36 years of FMCS mediation*; at the same it, no evidence of the causality was observed during the analysis. While this quantitative study demonstrates some positive dynamics between using mediation and work stoppages, there is no sufficient evidence to support the initially proposed statement that *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other caring facilities*.

The qualitative analysis of three subcases *Brigham and Women's Hospital*, *Appalachian Regional Healthcare*, and *Catholic Health Systems*, which primarily relied on the grounded theory results in the formation of three theories:

- a) Subcase 1: *mediation improves employee efficiency and their job satisfaction in organizations that offer caring services.*
- b) Subcase 2: *mediation improves workplace conditions; it also has a positive impact on employee productivity in organizations that offer human services.*
- c) Subcase 3: *using mediation during workplace disputes in organizations that offer services to vulnerable populations improves employee job satisfaction and has a positive influence on their efficiency.*

Once the theories were reviewed and consolidated, the following statement emerged: *mediation positively affects worker's productivity in organizations that offer caring services to vulnerable populations.*

Grounded theory permeated the analysis of the subcases in the study; at the same time, the theories and the subsequent statements were formed due to the combination of the inductive and deductive methods of reasoning. Upon the completion of the qualitative analysis of the subcases that involved the review of the goal, the research question, and the proposition, the response to the research question: *how using mediation may be linked to employee efficiency in human services and in other caring professions?* is the following: *mediation improves employee efficiency in human services and other caring professions.* The aforesaid confirms the proposition that *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other organizations that service vulnerable populations.*

The other part of the qualitative analysis embraces the study of 11 interviews with mediators who discussed effects of mediation on workplace environment, compared the resolution of conflicts between employees before and after mediation, underlined changes

in employee behaviors, attitudes, job satisfaction, and their productivity as the result of mediation. The thematic analysis embraced grounded theory with the deductive method of reasoning, which led to the formation of the following theory: *mediation shows positive effects on employee efficiency in organizations that offer caring services to people in need. At the same time, mediation should not be viewed as the panacea since each case is unique, and other factors should be considered when addressing employee performance.*

The goal of this study, the case study question, and the initial proposition were considered while analyzing the gathered data. As the result, the response to the initially asked in this dissertation question: *how using mediation may be linked to employee efficiency in human services and other caring professions?* is the following: *mediation may improve employee efficiency in human services and other caring professions; at the same time, we should also consider other factors that may affect employee performance.* Having said that, while the connection between mediation and employee efficiency is likely to persist, the initially stated proposition that *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other caring facilities* may not be accurate for all cases; other variables may affect employee performance in agencies that help vulnerable populations.

Implications

This research contributes to a better understanding of how using alternative dispute resolution such as mediation may help maintain peaceful workplace environment for employees, add to their job satisfaction, and improve their retention rates in human services and in other organizations that serve people in need. This dissertation shows the

importance in employing mediation services for organizations and their employees.

Using mediation will be helpful when addressing employee distress, jeopardized physical conditions, lack of motivation, and dissatisfaction with their jobs. The information in this case study will be helpful to leaders of nonprofit organizations and/or profit businesses, which areas of expertise are related to offering case management, medical and mental care, assistance with immigration issues and with public housing, and other human services to vulnerable populations. Human resources, senior management, program directors, and supervisors are also benefit from learning about how mediation may decrease organizational losses that occur due to employee stress, vicarious traumas, absence of job satisfaction, low performance, and high turnover rates.

The findings of this study will advance the knowledge of mediation, its benefits and limitations. The outcomes of this dissertation project will open doors for a broader use of mediation in caring professions. Additionally, this project is likely to draw more attention to the problems of workplace conflicts in organizations that serve vulnerable populations. The information in this study may help businesses see the importance of exploring other ways of improving employee levels of stress, their behaviors, attitudes, their engagements, and efficiency at work.

Contributions

The importance of problems in human services should not be overlooked. Employees suffer from vicarious traumas, high levels of stress, constant workplace tensions, and conflicts between their professional ethics and organizational demands. The foregoing results in low efficiency. Employers, in their turn, suffer from financial losses due to poor staff performance. Thusly, vulnerable populations are also at risk to not

getting appropriate care, which may significantly jeopardize their wellbeing. The lens of this dissertation project is on the improvement of the situation in centers of human services. The study brings to light the potency of alternative dispute resolution within the context of human services. The study demonstrates how using mediation may help improve employee efficiency, which may positively affect personnel, organizations, and people in need. The present study also contributes to the understanding of the multifaceted nature of mediation. This paper enables the professional and the academic worlds to see the potential of mediation to make a difference in lives of helping professionals, their employers, and people in need. Moreover, this dissertation project opens doors to further in-depth explorations of the potentiality of mediation and other methods of alternative dispute resolution within the context of human services.

Limitations

Several limitations are identified in this case study. First, albeit the methodological format is presented as the mixed method design of two most different case studies, the cases were subsequently merged to form the single case study for this paper. Yin (2014) argues that single case studies may not always be as sufficiently compelling and robust. The other limitation is related to having limited access to data; the documentation for this study including but not limited to archived files with notes, media articles, annual reports, and budget planning was retrieved from public records. Information about FMCS cases that was not revealed to public was not reviewed for this study. Finally, this research study entails interviews with eleven participants. Due to the world situation related to COVID 19, I faced difficulty finding participants for this project. Many individuals were observed to be overwhelmed and preoccupied due

suffering hardship as the result of the pandemic, which made it particularly challenging to look for human subjects. The findings of the second part of this case study are based on the limited number of the interviewees who consented to participate in this project.

Recommendations

This case study explored potential connections between mediation and employee efficiency in organizations that offer human services and other care to vulnerable populations. Ideally, using this research study would better employee conflict resolution skills, would reduce employee stress, and would increase their job satisfaction and professional efficiency. The recommendations in this case study are as follows:

- It may be helpful for non-profit organizations and for companies that offer caring services to people in need to employ the findings of this paper when hiring professional mediators for the resolution of workplace. Employers would benefit from making the best of the mediation to address workplace issues.
- The afore-mentioned agencies may benefit from organizing trainings for the management to enhance their knowledge of conflict dynamics and of effective mediation methods and techniques.
- Nurses, counselors, therapists, case managers, and other representatives of caring professions would benefit from utilizing the findings of this study to raise their awareness of the nature of mediation, of the importance to be engaged in negotiations, and of the employee willingness to resolve disputes.

Additionally, this dissertation highlights several recommendations for future research. First of all, the quantitative part of the present study discusses the revealed

decreasing trend between the prolonged use of mediation and strikes and pointed to a statistically significant correlation between the *duration of work stoppages per year (median)* and *36 years of FMCS mediation*. However, despite the discussed findings, the absence of sound evidence of causal relationships and only few data on the statistically significant results between the measured variables bring out the need to continue employing quantitative research to further explore potential links between mediation and employee productivity in organizations that help vulnerable populations.

Moreover, while the thematic analysis of 3 FMCS sub-cases reveal the positive connection between mediation and employee efficiency in centers or human services and at other facilities that help people in need, additional research is needed to examine similar cases to add to the reliability of the afore-said findings. The qualitative analysis of eleven interviews shows that albeit the variables *mediation* and *employee efficiency* are likely to be connected to one another, other variables may have influences on staff performance in centers that offer caring services. In view of the foregoing, the final recommendation is to complete additional research to review and explore other variables that may positively or negatively affect workplace dynamics, employee satisfaction with their jobs, their levels of professional and personal stress, and their behaviors and attitudes; the afore stated may have impacts on employee performance.

Applying Systems Theories

Systems theory has been used throughout the research process. While the case study was steered by the quantitative and qualitative methods, the systems approach was considered when collecting, analyzing, and reporting the data. Chapter 2 of this dissertation project points to the efficacy of systems theories when addressing conflicts in

different settings including human services. Elements within systems are marked by the complexity of their relations; each system is a unique organism with its own set of rules, norms, and values. Managing conflicts should address managing the dynamics of the whole system since any attempts to fix random issues with some systems' elements will not be successful (Barsky, 2017). As previously highlighted in this dissertation project, systems theories and conflict resolution studies have many similar qualities; they are interconnected, which results in a better understanding of conflicts and helps effectively intervene to tackle disputes (Li et al., 2012).

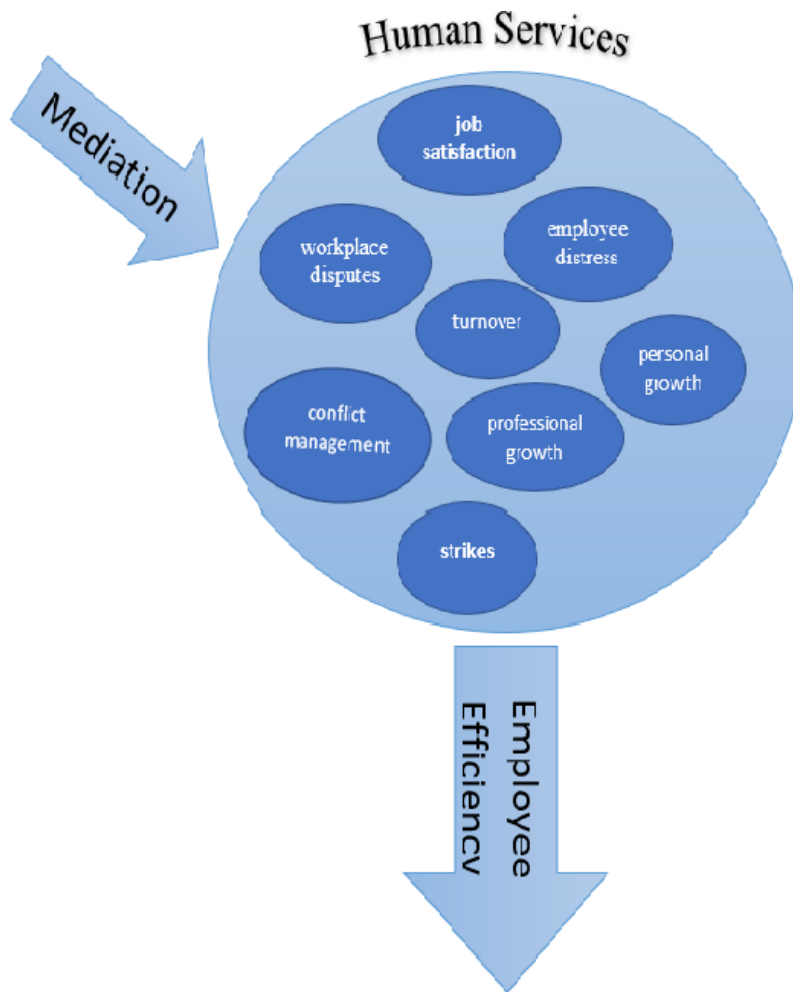
Meadows (2008) argues that “a system is an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something”; systems are defined by “elements, interconnections, and a function or purpose” (p. 11). While elements are easy to discern, relationships among them as well as a system's function or its purpose are much harder to find.

In view of the foregoing, organizations that provide vulnerable populations with caring services comprise a unique system, which consists of various elements. Meadows (2008) defines elements as “visible, tangible things” (p. 12). *Workplace disputes, conflict management skills, personal and professional growth, employee distress, job satisfaction, turnover, strikes* are parts and parcels of the system of human services. The elements form the tight connection with each other and with other items such as *employees, management, vulnerable populations*, etc. The system of human services is alive and self-functioning; it behaves in its own manner serving people in need and causing vicarious traumas to employees and oftentimes resulting in low organizational performance.

Meadows (2008) identifies connections within systems as “flows of information – signals that go to decision points or action points within a system” (p. 14). Using mediation in human services centers serves the role of the inflow to alter the interconnections among the elements thusly changing behaviors within the system and possibly breaking the previously set feedback loops. I explore the potential of mediation to impact the system stock, which Meadows (2008) defines as “an accumulation of material or information that has built up in a system over time” (p. 188). The lens is on the outflow, the employee efficiency, which serves the role of a measurement of potential changes in interrelations among the elements, thusly in the feedback loops and in the stock. The afore-said inflow and the outflow items are studied through the prism of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The diagram below (figure 30) is the visual representation of the system and of some of its elements with the inflowing and outflowing dynamics.

Figure 30

Introducing Changes to Human Services System



System's functions or purposes are essential to examine since they are likely to be "the most crucial determinant of the system's behavior" (Meadows, 2008, p. 8).

Functions/purposes may be implicit; Meadows (2008) argues that finding them may take some time since researchers should "watch for a while to see how the system behaves".

This dissertation project reviews human services centers through the lens of problems that employers, employees, and oftentimes people in need tend to face on a regular basis.

The grand focus is on improving the function of the system of human services to contribute to the wellbeing of the employees and of the people in need, and to increase

the performance of caring organizations. The findings of this study show the possibility of changes in the dynamics of centers of human services; at the same time, it is vital to continue the exploration of mediation effects on interconnections among the system elements; “interconnections are ... critically important; changing relationships usually changes system behavior” (Meadows, 2008, p. 8). It is also essential to continue measuring the outflow (employee efficiency) to observe the nature and the amplitude of changes in the system’s behavior in the future.

Conclusion

Chapter 1 highlights that workplace conflicts are likely to lead to serious business losses. It is highly likely that workplace conflicts result in decreased motivation, health problems, declining work commitment, and poor employee productivity, which can be very damaging to organizations. Disputes are oftentimes triggered by personal and professional differences and by the distribution of power. Conflict dynamics is oftentimes dependent on the size of organizations and on the nature of services. Public organizations and centers of voluntary services seem to be more vulnerable to the emergence of work-related issues. Agencies that offer caring services face serious workplace issues and subsequent decreases in employees productivity due to the staff exposure to vicarious traumas, extensive pressures from the management, overwhelming workloads, lack of necessary resources, bureaucracy, social justice issues, and discouraging organizational policies. High levels of professional and personal stress oftentimes affect employee efficiency; personnel suffer from burnouts, lose the feeling of belongingness, and become dissatisfied with the work they do, which negatively impacts turnover rates in many organizations that serve vulnerable populations. Unsupportive leadership that have

unrealistic expectations from workers is likely to add to employee distress as well. As the result, many organizations face poor retention and must deal with serious financial losses. Workplace conflicts in centers that provide human and other caring services may be addressed by using traditional methods or alternative approaches. The former focus on the resolution of disputes without attracting the neutral third party; some issues are addressed through working with a manager or an HR professional, a friend, or a family member. The latter involve a scope of dispute resolution methods that encourage win-win negotiations, improved awareness, and independent thinking. Mediation as one of alternative dispute resolution methods is effectively used in many professional fields; however, this method is still new and uncommon in human services centers or other agencies that serve people in need.

The findings of the literature review discussed in chapter 2 show that using systems theories in resolving conflicts is highly likely to have beneficial effects for centers that offer caring services to vulnerable clients/patients. The findings also highlight the efficiency of employing mediation to resolve organizational disputes and to boost employee productivity. However, the outcomes of the literature review also demonstrate insufficient information on the use of mediation in the context of human services and other caring professions and on potential effects of mediation on employee productivity in centers that service people in need. The review of literature lends evidence to the importance of studying effects of mediation on employee efficiency in organizations that offer caring services to populations in need. Thusly, the lens of this paper is on bridging the gap between mediation and employee performance in helping professions. This dissertation studies the use of mediation in the context of human

services and other helping professions. Also, there is a discussion of the potential of mediation and its impacts on employee performance in human services and in other centers that help vulnerable populations.

The discussed in chapter 3 case study method is chosen to explore the role of mediation in caring professions. The justification for this choice lies in the potential of this research approach to elucidate social events and organizational changes. A case study is extremely popular in social sciences since it helps cast light on complex social and economic phenomena and effectively manage different human behaviors. This case study inquires: *how using mediation may be linked to employee efficiency in human services and in other caring professions?* The study proposes that *using mediation to resolve workplace conflicts in organizations that promote caring services to people in need positively affects employee efficiency*. The case study is devised based on the mixed method design that represents the amalgamation of the quantitative and qualitative methodology; this helps collect vital information, carefully examine it through different lenses, and obtain more reliable results.

This research project is based on two most different case studies. The focus of the first case study is on studying effects of mediation on human services and other caring professions by reviewing the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) data. The study uses the quantitative lens to explore data on strikes in centers that offer caring services, the length of strikes, and their resolution through FMCS mediation between 1984 and 2019. The qualitative part of the first case study includes the thematic analysis of three healthcare centers that employed FMCS mediation to resolve workplace disputes: *Brigham and Women's hospital, Appalachian Regional Hospital, and Catholic*

Health Systems. The second case study uses the qualitative approach to explore the data from interviews with experienced mediators who address workplace conflicts in organizations that offer caring services to vulnerable populations. The afore-listed most different cases are regarded two essential elements that form the single study with the mixed-method design.

The ethical component of this study involves impartial screenings of human subjects for the study. This case study neither includes any interactions with vulnerable individuals or minors nor poses any risks to the wellbeing of the human subjects. Each participant was advised of the nature and the purpose of this project, and of the rights and responsibilities of the interviewees; each participant signed the consent forms prior to being interviewed for this research study. The approval from the Institutional Review Board was received prior to interviewing the research participants.

Collecting evidence for this study is realized through retrieving data from documentation and from interviews. The exploration of multiple sources of information such as archival records, annual reports, newsletters, budget documents and financial statements, mediation agreements, etc. strengthens accuracy of this research project. These documents are public records that are retrieved from FMCS, from labor unions websites, and from multiple online news media. Triangulation, convergence of different sources of information, and chain of evidence are used to increase the reliability and validity of this case study. Interviews conducted with mediators that are experienced in addressing workplace conflicts in human services and in other care centers are focused on the outcomes of mediation. Interviews are semi-structured; the communication is realized in the form of guided and unbiased conversations to collect data on effects of mediation

on workplace climate and on worker's efficiency in a non-threatening manner. The selected human subjects share their viewpoints related to the effects of mediation on employee attitudes and behaviors, and on their efficacy in human services and other care centers.

The approach to analyzing the collected data embraces elements of four analytic strategies such as “relying on theoretical propositions”, “working ... data from ‘ground up’”, “developing a case description”, and “examining plausible rival explanations” (Yin, 2014, pp. 136-140). The data analysis in this study is guided by the research question: *how using mediation may be linked to employee efficiency in human services and other caring professions?* and by the proposition: *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other organizations that serve vulnerable populations*. Elements of grounded theory are also used to add inductive reasoning to the data analysis to build a theory. The gathered information is coded and categorized, which results in the emergence of themes. Themes add to the formation of the theory, which is compared with the initially developed proposition. The other component of the data analysis is case description, which enables the arrangement the collected data in a descriptive framework. Finally, the exploration of alternative explanations involves comparing and contrasting the initially formulated proposition that *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other caring facilities* with the rival propositions that *workplace issues may be resolved due to reasons other than mediation practices in human services centers* and *workplace issues may not be resolved through mediation in human services*.

Chapter 4 describes the findings of this case study. The quantitative part of this case study aimed at analyzing work stoppages from 1984 through 2019 explores the resolution of strikes after federal mediators intervened to discontinue workplace conflicts. The FMCS work stoppage reports are organized into tables filtered by the *Industry of Healthcare and Social Assistance*, which merged into one spreadsheet. The data is analyzed through calculating the total number work stoppage cases per year, the duration of work stoppage period for each case, the total duration of strikes per year, the mean, median, and mode of the duration of strikes per year. The calculations are represented in the format of liner graphs that illustrate visible declining tendencies of work stoppages between 1984 and 2019.

The case study also examines relationships between the following variables through correlation: *total number of cases and 36 years of FMCS mediation*; *duration of strikes in days per year and 36 years of FMCS mediation*; *average duration of strike activities per year (mean) and 36 years of FMCS mediation*; *duration of work stoppages per year (median) and 36 years of FMCS mediation*; and *duration of work stoppages per year (mode) and 36 years of FMCS mediation*. The results do not show any significant relationships between *total number of cases and 36 years of FMCS mediation*, *duration of strikes in days per year and 36 years of FMCS mediation*, and *duration of work stoppages per year (mode) and 36 years of FMCS mediation*. However, a significant correlation is noticeable between *average duration of strike activities per year (mean) and 36 years of FMCS mediation* and *median of the duration of work stoppages per year and 36 years of FMCS mediation*. The outcomes of this research do not confirm any causality between the afore-stated variables. In light of this quantitative study, comparing and contrasting

the proposition: *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other organizations that serve vulnerable populations* with the alternative propositions: *workplace issues may be resolved due to reasons other than effects of mediation* and *workplace issues may not be resolved through mediation in organizations that promote caring services to vulnerable populations* opens doors to the importance of examining other variables that may affect employee efficiency.

The qualitative analysis of three subcases *Brigham and Women's Hospital*, *Appalachian Regional Healthcare*, and *Catholic Health Systems* wherein workplace conflicts were addressed through interventions of FMCS mediators is realized through coding and categorizing the collected data. Using First and Second Cycle methods of coding leads to the emergence of several categories and themes that shape the theories as follows:

- a) Subcase 1: *mediation improves employee efficiency and their job satisfaction in organizations that offer caring services.*
- b) Subcase 2: *Mediation improves workplace conditions; it also has a positive impact on employee productivity in organizations that offer human services.*
- c) Subcase 3: *Using mediation during workplace disputes in organizations that offer services to vulnerable populations improves employee job satisfaction and has a positive influence on their efficiency.*

The theories are reviewed and consolidated in the statement that *mediation positively affects worker's productivity in organizations that offer caring services to vulnerable populations*. The qualitative analysis of the cases relies on the amalgamation of inductive and deductive methods of reasoning; grounded theory is combined with the

review of the goals, the research question, and the initial case study proposition. With this in mind, the response to the research question: *how using mediation may be linked to employee efficiency in human services and in other caring professions?* is as follows: *mediation positively affects worker's productivity in organizations that offer caring services to vulnerable populations.* The developed through the thematic analysis theories confirm the proposition that *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human services and in other care centers.* Thusly, the comparative analysis of the preceding findings and the alternative propositions: *workplace issues may be resolved due to reasons other than effects of mediation* and *workplace issues may not be resolved through mediation in organizations that promote caring services to vulnerable populations* rules out these alternative propositions.

The collected from the semi-structured interviews information highlights effects of problem-solving mediation, narrative and transformative mediation on the resolution of workplace issues in centers that serve vulnerable populations. The data also shows changes in employee attitudes and behaviors before and after mediation. Eleven mediators that consented to be research participants for this study also share their professional opinion on how mediation may influence workplace environment, vulnerable populations, employee job satisfaction and their productivity. Like the previously described in this dissertation thematic analysis of three subcases, the data analysis of the interviews relies on grounded theory, deductive reasoning, descriptive framework, and the review of alternative propositions.

The data was explored from the ground up and through comparing the findings with the proposition *mediation positively affects employee efficiency in centers of human*

services and in other organizations that serve vulnerable populations. In consideration of the foregoing, after First and Second Cycles of coding, the emerged codes and categories are integrated into the following three themes:

- 1) *Mediation positively affects employee attitudes and behaviors in human services and in other centers that serve vulnerable populations.*
- 2) *Mediation improves employee productivity in organizations that serve vulnerable populations.*
- 3) *Effects of workplace mediation in organizations that offer caring services depend on employee engagement and on other variables.*

The themes are analyzed through the lens of inductive reasoning, which results in the emergence of the following theory: *mediation shows positive effects on employee efficiency in organizations that offer caring services to people in need. At the same time, mediation should not be viewed as the panacea since each case is unique, and other factors should be considered when addressing employee performance.* The response to the research question: *how using mediation may be linked to employee efficiency in human services and other caring professions?* is the following: *mediation may improve employee efficiency in human services and other caring professions; at the same time, we should also consider other factors that may affect employee performance.* Thusly, it is vital to consider the alternative proposition that *workplace issues may be resolved due to reasons other than effects of mediation.*

Concluding thoughts are reflected in chapter 5. The limitations of this case study are related to some constraints of the single study format, inability to access documents other than public records, and a limited number of research participants. The implications

are that this study adds to an improved understanding of how mediation may help promote healthy workplace environment for employees and decrease organizational losses for the management. The findings of this study raise the awareness of advantages and limitations of mediation and open doors for a broader use of mediation in caring professions. Additionally, this study calls attention to workplace conflicts in organizations that serve vulnerable populations, which may help find ways of decreasing employee stress and of improving their behaviors, attitudes, motivation, and productivity.

This dissertation project contributes to the understanding of the potency of alternative dispute resolution including mediation within the context of human services. The paper educates both the professional and the academic fields on the potential of mediation to make a difference in lives of helping professionals and people in need. The study encourages further in-depth explorations of the potentiality of mediation and other methods of alternative dispute resolution within the context of human services.

The recommendations in this case study are the following: organizations that provide caring services to vulnerable populations may benefit from using mediation to manage workplace disputes; these organizations may also benefit from educating their management on conflict dynamics and on effective methods of mediation.

Representatives of caring professions such as nurses, counselors, therapists, case managers, etc. would benefit from utilizing the findings of this study to advance their knowledge of mediation, of the importance of engagement in negotiations, and of the employee willingness to resolve disputes. Recommendations for future research are as follows:

- to continue studying potential relationships between mediation and employee productivity in organizations that offer caring services to vulnerable populations
- to explore more cases wherein mediation is used during employee conflicts; this will add to the reliability of the findings of this case study.
- to complete additional research to review and explore other variables that may positively or negatively affect workplace dynamics, employee satisfaction with their jobs, their levels of professional and personal stress, and their behaviors and attitudes; the afore-stated is likely to have impacts on employer performance.
- to review and explore other variables that may impact employees and their productivity.

The theoretical framework of this dissertation involves the systems approach, which guides this research study. The field of human services is viewed as a unique, live, and self-functioning system that consists of different tightly connected elements including but not limited to *workplace disputes, conflict management skills, personal and professional growth, employee distress, job satisfaction, turnover, strikes, employees, management, and vulnerable populations*. Mediation is used as the inflow to change the interconnections, which would affect the dynamics of the system. Employee efficiency is the outflow that needs to be explored to assess changes within the system. The lens is on bettering the functioning mechanism of the system of human services to improve the wellbeing of helping professionals, vulnerable people, and caring facilities.

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Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Letter

To Whom It May Concern:

I am recruiting participants for my research study and am writing to see if you would like to take part in this project.

The purpose of my research study is to explore effects of mediation on employee performance in agencies that serve vulnerable populations.

To conduct this research study, I will need participants who assumed in the past or still assume formal or informal mediator roles when addressing conflicts with employees from organizations that offer caring services. These participants will be interviewed about their experience of mediating workplace disputes in organizations that offer caring services.

Interviews will last no more than 60 minutes, and the research will be conducted via video chat programs such as Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, or FaceTime.

Participants will not be asked any questions that may be related to the disclosure of confidential and/or private information about the participant's identity, employees, organizations, clients, and/or patients.

Participants will not be paid or compensated for being in this research study.

The obtained information may significantly add to a better understanding of impacts of mediation on employee personal and professional efficiency when workers help vulnerable populations.

Thank you in advance for considering this request.

Best regards,

PhD Candidate

Mariya Mironova

Nova Southeastern University

(239) 848 9421
mm4116@mynsu.nova.edu

Appendix B: General Informed Consent Form

NSU Consent to be in a Research Study Entitled

Effects of Mediation on Employee Efficiency in Human Services Centers and in Other Caring Organizations

Who is doing this research study?

College: NSU's College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. Department of Conflict Resolution Studies.

Principal Investigator: Mariya Mironova, MA, MS.

Faculty Advisor/Dissertation Chair: Dustin Berna, Ph.D.

Co-Investigator(s): None

Site Information: N/a

Funding: Unfunded

What is this study about?

This is a research study, designed to test and create new ideas that other people can use.

- The purpose of this research study is to explore effects of mediation on employee efficiency in agencies that serve vulnerable populations.
- The study needs to be done since workers in human services and in other caring centers oftentimes deal with significant stress related to the nature of their job. Moreover, the stress oftentimes adds to workplace conflicts and results in negative consequences for employees. The aforesaid causes poor workers performance in organizations that offer human services.
- The most frequently seen in this study term is mediation that may be defined as an alternative approach to resolving disputes that involves assisted negotiations through the involvement and interventions of a neutral third party.

Why are you asking me to be in this research study?

You are being asked to be in this research study because you acted or act as a mediator and formally or informally addressed or address workplace disputes with employees from human services centers and/or from other caring organizations.

This study will include about 10 people.

What will I be doing if I agree to be in this research study?

You are taking part in this research study, which will involve one 45 to 60 minutes semi-structured interview. The interview will be conducted via video chat programs such as Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, or FaceTime.

Are there possible risks and discomforts to me?

This research study involves minimal risk to you. To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would have in everyday life. If sharing your opinions about your professional experience as a mediator including your observations and your impressions make you anxious, we will do our best to help you. If you need further assistance, we can refer you to someone who may be able to help you with these feelings.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research study?

You have the right to leave this research study at any time, or not be in it. If you do decide to leave or you decide not to be in the study anymore, you will not get any penalty or lose any services you have a right to get. If you choose to stop being in the study, any information collected about you **before** the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the end of the study but you may request that it not be used.

What if there is new information learned during the study that may affect my decision to remain in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available, which may relate to whether you want to remain in this study, this information will be given to you by the investigators. You may be asked to sign a new Informed Consent Form, if the information is given to you after you have joined the study.

Are there any benefits for taking part in this research study?

There are no direct benefits from being in this research study. We hope the information learned from this study will add to a better understanding of impacts of mediation on employee personal and professional efficiency when these workers offer caring serves and help people in need.

Will I be paid or be given compensation for being in the study?

You will not be given any payments or compensation for being in this research study.

Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you for being in this research study.

How will you keep my information private?

Information we learn about you in this research study will be handled in a confidential manner, within the limits of the law and will be limited to people who have a need to review this information. This data will be available to the researcher, the Institutional Review Board and other representatives of this institution, and any regulatory and

granting agencies (if applicable). If we publish the results of the study in a scientific journal or book, we will not identify you. All confidential data will be kept securely within a locking cabinet in a USB flash drive and in a laptop with the 3 levels of password security to protect your confidentiality. All data will be kept for 36 months from the end of the study and destroyed after that time by permanently deleting the information from the USB flash drive and from the laptop.

Will there be any Audio or Video Recording?

This research study involves audio recording. This recording will be available to the researcher, the Institutional Review Board and other representatives of this institution. The recording will be kept, stored, and destroyed as stated in the section above. Because what is in the recording could be used to find out that it is you, it is not possible to be sure that the recording will always be kept confidential. The researcher will try to keep anyone not working on the research from listening to or viewing the recording.

Whom can I contact if I have questions, concerns, comments, or complaints?

If you have questions now, feel free to ask us. If you have more questions about the research, your research rights, or have a research-related injury, please contact:

Primary contact:

Mariya Mironova, MA, MS. can be reached at 239 848 9421

If primary is not available, contact:

Dustin Berna, Ph.D. can be reached at 954 262 3024

Research Participants Rights

For questions/concerns regarding your research rights, please contact:

Institutional Review Board
Nova Southeastern University
(954) 262-5369 / Toll Free: 1-866-499-0790
IRB@nova.edu

You may also visit the NSU IRB website at www.nova.edu/irb/information-for-research-participants for further information regarding your rights as a research participant.

All space below was intentionally left blank.

Research Consent & Authorization Signature Section

Voluntary Participation - You are not required to participate in this study. In the event you do participate, you may leave this research study at any time. If you leave this research study before it is completed, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

If you agree to participate in this research study, sign this section. You will be given a signed copy of this form to keep. You do not waive any of your legal rights by signing this form.

SIGN THIS FORM ONLY IF THE STATEMENTS LISTED BELOW ARE TRUE:

- You have read the above information.
- Your questions have been answered to your satisfaction about the research

Adult Signature Section

I have voluntarily decided to take part in this research study.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining
Consent and Authorization

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent &
Authorization

Date