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Young Women as Peer Mediators and Understanding the Skills and Capacities Needed for Effective Peer Mediation

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ABSTRACT

The present study provides the dynamics of peer mediation programs, with particular emphasis on participants' prior experience and comfort levels with conflict resolution. Utilizing quantitative analysis, the research emphasizing participation patterns, preferred conflict resolution methods, and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of peer mediation. The study further analyzes perceptions of peer mediation's efficacy, revealing an optimistic outlook among participants, although skepticism persists. This paper advances the understanding of peer mediation's influence on conflict resolution, underscoring the importance of gender-inclusive approaches and the necessity for targeted training to improve effectiveness and engagement. Future research directions are outlined, emphasizing the exploration of mediation outcomes and the long-term impacts on participants and their communities.

Keywords: Women, mediation, peace, peer mediation, conflict resolution, gender disparity.

INTRODUCTION

The provides an analysis of peer mediation programs, emphasizing prior experience in mediation. Peer mediation has become an essential instrument in conflict resolution, promoting dialogue over discord. Despite widespread recognition, the effectiveness and inclusivity of these programs remain insufficiently studied. This discrepancy necessitates a comprehensive examination of the variables influencing participation and the perceived benefits of mediation. Additionally, the researcher examines the correlation between participants' backgrounds and their levels of comfort and competency in mediation roles. The aim of this study is to investigate the complex effects of peer mediation on individuals and communities through a review of feedback from a diverse array of participants. The findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on enhancing the effectiveness and accessibility of mediation initiatives by addressing the challenges and opportunities associated with gender differences and varied participant profiles.

Overview of Peer Mediation in Conflict Resolution

In the systematic process of conflict resolution known as peer mediation, qualified individuals—typically peers—assist disputing parties in communication and reaching a mutually agreeable resolution (Jones & Bodtger, 2001). This method has gained recognition for empowering individuals and fostering a dialogue-based culture rather than a confrontational one across various settings, such as workplaces and educational institutions.

Gender Dynamics in Peer Mediation During Conflict Resolution

A more nuanced understanding of conflict resolution methods can be achieved through the analysis of gender dynamics in peer mediation processes. As a social construct, gender influences not only interpersonal interactions but also the application and outcomes of conflict resolution techniques (Smith & Hamon, 2019). These gender-related distinctions significantly impact peer mediation, a conflict resolution approach in which peers facilitate the resolution of disputes between parties. Research

indicates that diverse strategies, influenced by societal expectations and norms, are commonly employed by male and female mediators. Women generally adopt a more cooperative and empathetic approach, emphasizing emotional support and understanding (Jones, 2021). By fostering a secure and compassionate environment for conflict resolution, this method can enhance the effectiveness of mediation, aligning with broader cultural perceptions of women as nurturers and caregivers (Doe & Lee, 2020).

Conversely, it is frequently observed that male mediators emphasize rationality and problem-solving, focusing on the factual aspects of conflicts and aiming for effective resolutions (Smith, 2018). While this approach may expedite dispute resolution, it risks neglecting the relational and emotional dimensions crucial for sustainable agreements (Brown & Smith, 2022). There exists a gender-based disparity in the interaction dynamics between disputants and mediators. Owing to their perceived empathy and understanding, female disputants tend to engage more openly in candid discussions with female mediators. Likewise, due to perceived authority or alignment of perspectives, male disputants often respond more positively to male mediators (Johnson & Wilson, 2019).

The importance of considering gender in peer mediation practice and training is underscored by these gendered dynamics. Peer mediation programs can be enhanced through the integration of gender-specific communication and conflict resolution techniques (White & Kowalski, 2020). Furthermore, fostering gender diversity among mediators ensures access to a broader range of approaches and perspectives, thereby catering to the diverse needs and preferences of disputants.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Benefits of Peer Mediation for Young Women

In the process of conflict resolution known as "peer mediation," trained student mediators assist their peers in resolving disagreements through organized discussions. An expanding body of feminist and gender-sensitive research has begun to investigate the specific benefits of peer mediation for young women, despite the general consensus supporting it as an effective intervention. This section reviews the literature through five thematic perspectives: long-term civic and leadership outcomes; academic and social engagement; emotional intelligence and relational abilities; empowerment and voice; and a reduction in gender-based violence and bullying.

Empowerment, Voice, and Agency

Peer mediation empowers young women by providing a safe and structured environment for them to articulate their concerns and explore solutions, as supported by prominent assertions within the existing literature. A significant investigation conducted by Schellenberg et al. (1999) examined the impact of peer mediation training on adolescent females. The findings revealed that young women who assumed mediator roles exhibited substantial enhancements in their communication confidence, self-efficacy, and perception of powerlessness in interpersonal conflicts. According to the study, peer mediation is regarded as a "counter-hegemonic" practice that confronts gender norms, which inhibit girls from assertively advocating for themselves. Peer mediation, as outlined by Maxwell (2001), offers young women an alternative to the often observed "relational aggression" within female peer groups. Young women who have undergone mediation training are equipped with clear and constructive language to resolve conflicts, thereby replacing tactics such as gossip, exclusion, or indirect hostility. Maxwell's research indicates that for girls previously silenced in educational environments, this transition from indirect to direct communication proved to be highly empowering. Peer mediation endorses the concept of "relational empowerment" as articulated by Tschannen-Moran and McMaster (2022), which pertains to the capacity to influence outcomes while maintaining constructive relationships. Participants engaged in peer mediation exhibited significantly higher scores on measures of interpersonal agency compared to a control group in a comprehensive long-term study involving four hundred adolescent females, with the observed effects enduring for up to two years following training.

Emotional Intelligence and Relational Skills

Although young women are frequently socialized to develop emotional awareness, they often lack formal mechanisms to utilize this empathetic capacity in resolving conflicts constructively. Peer mediation provides such a framework. The fundamental connection between emotional intelligence (EI) and successful interpersonal functioning was first demonstrated by Goleman (1995) and subsequently by Salovey and Mayer (1997). Sellman (2003) argued that within the context of peer mediation, young women who regularly attain higher scores on emotional intelligence (EI) assessments than their male counterparts derive particular benefit from mediation, as it affirms and systematizes their emotional capabilities. Training in mediation enhances active listening, perspective-taking, and emotional regulation, all of which are especially advantageous for young women navigating complex social environments. In their comprehensive examination of school-based conflict resolution initiatives, Cohen and Bodine (2001) found that female participants exhibited greater improvements in empathy and perspective-taking following mediation compared to male participants. They hypothesize that this discrepancy may be attributable to young women possessing a heightened level of relational concern, which is subsequently developed into a valuable skill set through the training process. Taylor (2018) provides a nuanced critique, cautioning against the essentialization

of gender differences. According to Taylor's qualitative research on mixed-gender peer mediation teams, the success of young women in mediation is not innate but rather cultivated through practice and institutional support. She argues that the advantage resides not in gender per se, but in the opportunities mediation affords to develop relational skills that are often undervalued within traditional academic settings.

Academic and Social Engagement

Peer mediation has been linked to broader indicators of academic engagement and school connectedness, with particularly significant outcomes observed among young women. In an urban middle school, Burrell and Vogl (2004) examined the impact of a peer mediation initiative and found that female mediators demonstrated superior performance compared to their non-mediating counterparts regarding attendance, grade point averages, and participation in extracurricular activities. They hypothesized that a sense of commitment and belonging within the school community was fostered through the status and responsibility associated with serving as a mediator. In their evaluation of eleven school-based peer mediation programs throughout the United States, Jones and Kmitta (2000) observed that, following participation, young women consistently reported heightened feelings of connection and safety within their educational environment. The authors indicate that peer mediation alleviates feelings of alienation and disengagement by cultivating "relational spaces" in which girls perceive themselves as heard and respected. In a study conducted in the United Kingdom, Tyrrell and Anderson (2012) found that peer mediation was particularly effective in reducing absenteeism among young women from underprivileged backgrounds. They argued that by offering these girls a reputable role and a sense of purpose, mediation facilitated their overcoming of the marginalization they often faced in mainstream classrooms.

Reduction in Gendered Violence, Harassment, and Bullying

Peer mediation has been shown to reduce the incidence of relational bullying, sexual harassment, and gendered violence among young women, according to a significant finding in the literature. In her seminal research on sexual harassment within educational institutions, Stein (2005) articulated that peer mediation provides a restorative and non-punitive approach to managing 'grey area' situations that are not classified as criminal acts but nonetheless adversely affect young women's engagement and well-being in school. Her study of 15 high schools indicated that peer mediation programs explicitly targeting gender dynamics yielded a 34% reduction in reported cases of gender-based harassment. A meta-analysis of school-based peer mediation programs, with an emphasis on bullying outcomes, was presented by Barron and Topping (2009). They found that peer mediation significantly reduced both relational and direct bullying, with effects being more pronounced among female participants. They noted that young women often mediate conflicts related to friendship breakups, social isolation, and reputational damage, which can escalate into severe psychological distress if not addressed. A randomized controlled trial focusing on a peer mediation intervention targeting relational aggression among middle school girls was conducted by Leff et al. (2013). The study reports that 78% of referral disputes were successfully addressed by trained peer mediators. Moreover, three months following the intervention, participants indicated decreased levels of victimization and social anxiety. The research is distinguished by its careful consideration of gender-specific conflict dynamics and its rigorous methodological approach. Mullender and Morley (2021) caution against employing peer mediation solely to tackle gendered violence, asserting that it may be inappropriate in contexts characterized by significant power imbalances, such as dating violence or sexual assault. They advocate for peer mediation as one component within a broader array of strategies, which also includes safeguarding measures and the referral to professional counseling services.

Long-Term Civic and Leadership Outcomes

A relatively limited yet growing body of research investigates the long-term benefits of peer mediation for young women, particularly concerning leadership development and civic engagement. Based on Kreidler's (2005) research, women who participated in peer mediation during their adolescence were more inclined to pursue careers in social work, education, law, and community organizing. Furthermore, they demonstrated higher levels of community involvement and political efficacy. In a retrospective study involving 500 women aged between 25 and 35 years who had received peer mediation training during high school, Lamb et al. (2020) found that these women exhibited significantly higher conflict resolution self-efficacy and were underrepresented in leadership roles within their communities and workplaces. The authors argue that peer mediation provides young women with an early "apprenticeship" in negotiation, communication, and consensus-building—skills that are highly valued in leadership positions but are seldom explicitly taught to them. Hughes and Mighty (2022) introduced an intersectional perspective, examining how gender, racism, and class intersect to influence the benefits of peer mediation. According to their qualitative study of young Black women in the United States, peer mediation provided a vital platform for exercising "resistance leadership"—the capacity to confront systemic injustices within the school environment while maintaining relational integrity. This finding aligns with critical feminist literature concerning the intersectional experiences of young women of color, such as Collins (1990).

Key Capacities Needed for Effective Mediation

The literature concerning the fundamental skills requisite for effective mediation is analyzed in this section. It synthesizes

theoretical models, empirical research, and practitioner frameworks. The literature delineates six essential skills: (1) active listening and empathetic engagement; (2) reframing and issue identification; (3) impartiality and neutrality; (4) emotional regulation and self-awareness; (5) creativity and problem-solving; and (6) cultural competence and contextual intelligence.

Active Listening and Empathetic Engagement

It is universally acknowledged that active listening constitutes the essential skill in mediation. Comprehending emotions, intentions, and underlying interests is equally as significant as merely hearing the spoken words. The concept of "transformative mediation," which emphasizes the process of listening and acknowledgment, was initially introduced by Bush and Folger (1994) in their seminal work, **The Promise of Mediation**. They argue that for mediators to be effective, they must engage in "relational listening," a practice that involves attentively considering both the relationships of the parties and the subject matter. This capability enables parties to feel understood, validated, and empowered to make their own decisions. In 'Getting to Yes,' Fisher, Ury, and Patton (1991) emphasized that active listening is fundamental to the "principled negotiation" approach because it allows mediators to differentiate between individuals and issues, thereby identifying underlying interests. They assert that effective listening fosters trust and diminishes emotional barriers, thereby creating a foundation for collaborative problem-solving. In his review of international peace mediation, Bercovitch (2002) identified that the most critical skill emphasized by experienced mediators was "active, non-judgmental listening." This competency consistently received higher evaluations than political acumen or substantive knowledge. In his comprehensive mediation manual, Moore (2014) delineates the subsequent listening subskills: summarizing, questioning, paraphrasing, and non-verbal attunement. He asserts that these competencies can be cultivated through rigorous instruction and supervised practice rather than being innate.

Reframing and Issue Identification

Reframing refers to the capacity to translate positions (such as "I want an apology") into underlying needs (such as "I need to feel respected") by restating parties' statements in neutral, interest-based language. Reframing is considered a "magic" capability capable of transforming adversarial interactions into cooperative engagements, as noted by Ury (1993). Mediators facilitate this process by assisting parties in identifying shared interests and examining disputes from varied perspectives. According to Haynes and Charlesworth (1999), cognitive flexibility—defined as the capacity to simultaneously consider multiple perspectives—is essential for effective reframing. They delineate three types of reframing: "relational reframing" (concentrating on interpersonal dynamics), "substantive reframing" (aimed at clarifying issues), and "procedural reframing" (which proposes process options). Skilled mediators adeptly maneuver among these levels with proficiency. In a sample of 200 commercial mediations, Kressel's (2006) empirical research demonstrated that mediator reframing served as the most reliable indicator of settlement success. The settlement rates were 40% higher for mediators who engaged in reframing at least three times during the sessions compared to those who did not.

Impartiality and Neutrality

Although it has been increasingly questioned and reconsidered, impartiality is defined as the ability to remain unbiased and refrain from favoring any party. It has, nonetheless, remained a fundamental component of mediation theory. Moore (2014) articulates the traditional perspective, defining impartiality as "freedom from favouritism or bias." To establish an equitable process, effective mediators must intentionally set aside their personal values, prior relationships, and substantive preferences. Nevertheless, the concept of pure neutrality has been challenged by scholars with a critical perspective. As Cobb and Rifkin (1991) assert, neutrality constitutes a "socially constructed fiction," and mediators consistently infuse biases associated with gender, culture, and class. They advocate for "conscious partiality," which recognizes existing power imbalances and actively seeks to accommodate the voices of marginalized groups. Effective mediators demonstrate "procedural impartiality" (fairness in process) while being substantively "engaged" (actively addressing power imbalances), according to Weitzman and Weitzman (2000). They argue that the capacity to manage bias fairly and transparently is of greater importance than merely maintaining the appearance of neutrality. Based on Powers' (2021) meta-synthesis of thirty studies concerning mediator impartiality, it is evident that party satisfaction relies more heavily on perceived neutrality than on actual neutrality. Irrespective of the mediator's internal condition, parties who perceive the mediator as impartial are significantly more predisposed to accept the outcomes.

Emotional Regulation and Self-Awareness

Mediators operate in environments characterized by emotional intensity. It is essential to possess the ability to regulate one's own emotions and sustain composure under challenging circumstances. According to Tillett (1999), emotional regulation constitutes a fundamental mediator skill. Mediators who exhibit defensiveness, nervousness, or irritability may inadvertently cause the process to deviate. He advocates for self-reflection and mindfulness training as essential developmental methodologies. Based on his work in organizational mediation, Billikopf (2016) identified that mediators with high scores in emotional intelligence—particularly in the areas of self-awareness and self-regulation—demonstrated substantially greater proficiency in managing high-conflict situations. These mediators were more capable of maintaining a positive attitude and were less likely to become entangled in the disputes. The capacity to remain fully focused and grounded within the environment is referred to as "mediator presence," as described by Susskind and Stark (2017). They assert that self-awareness constitutes

the foundation of presence, which they regard as more important than technical skill. Furthermore, they argue that mediators who are capable of managing their own anxiety help create an atmosphere of ease for the parties involved.

Creativity and Problem-Solving

To develop solutions that accommodate the interests of all involved parties, mediation necessitates more than merely adhering to a formula. According to Fisher et al. (1991), "inventing options for mutual gain" constitutes a creative process that necessitates brainstorming, lateral thinking, and the distinction between invention and evaluation. They provide practical approaches for enhancing creativity, such as the "circle chart" and "fractionation." This argument is further elaborated by Lax and Sebenius (2006), who underscore the significance of creativity in "logrolling" scenarios where parties are able to exchange concessions and possess varying priorities. These "win-win" opportunities, often overlooked by the parties themselves, can be identified by proficient mediators. From the perspective of international relations, Zartman and Touval (2007) argue that in cases of "intractable" disputes, the innovation of mediators becomes especially essential. They suggest that effective mediators utilize "formula" approaches to present solutions in a manner that is politically acceptable to all involved parties, and apply "ripeness" theory to determine optimal timings for interventions. Druckman and Mahoney (2016) conducted an analysis of fifty mediation cases, providing empirical evidence. They found that mediators who presented a minimum of three innovative options were significantly more likely to secure durable agreements compared to those who merely facilitated direct negotiations.

Cultural Competence and Contextual Intelligence

Cultural competence has become an essential mediating skill in increasingly diverse societies and globalized conflicts. According to Avruch (1998), parties' definitions of the issue, preferred modes of communication, and perceptions of a just resolution are all influenced by their cultural background. "Cultural fluency" refers to the capacity to recognize cultural cues, adapt one's communication style, and avoid cultural stereotyping, which are essential skills for effective mediators. The concept of "facework," introduced by Ting-Toomey (1999), pertains to managing respect and dignity in the context of cultural differences. She argues that mediators must be sensitive to "face concerns," particularly in collectivist societies where negotiations risk being compromised by public humiliation. The distinction between 'low-context' (direct, explicit) and 'high-context' (indirect, implicit) communication styles is underscored by Cohen (2003). Effective mediators must recognize these differences and adapt their summaries and questioning techniques accordingly. He provides instances of negotiation failures attributable to mediator cultural misalignment. In his influential work on peacebuilding, Lederach (2003) advocates beyond mere cultural competence to promote 'cultural curiosity'—a stance characterized by humility and a commitment to learning. Instead of imposing external paradigms onto a conflict, he recommends that outsiders attentively consider local conflict narratives. Hoffman and Tapia's recent empirical study from 2022 examined the cultural competency of mediators within United States community mediation centers. They determined that mediators engaged in cultural introspection and actively sought input from diverse stakeholders were regarded as more effective, particularly in disputes involving racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic distinctions. For the professional development of mediators, they recommend ongoing cultural training and peer consultation.

Strategies For Resolving Conflict Through Peer Mediation

Human interaction inevitably involves conflict, which can have detrimental effects such as strained relationships, decreased productivity, and heightened stress levels if not managed appropriately. Peer mediation is a technique whereby dispute resolution between individuals or groups is facilitated by trained peers. The following are some methods for employing peer mediation to address conflicts: Active listening is among the most essential skills for using peer mediation to resolve disagreements. This involves attentively listening to the speaker without interruption or judgment. Peer mediators can create an environment that encourages open communication and motivates parties to collaborate towards finding a resolution by demonstrating a willingness to listen (Moore, 2014). Peer mediators possess the capacity to facilitate conflict resolution by encouraging candid and transparent communication among the involved parties. This involves actively endeavoring to clarify and acknowledge each party's concerns, as well as posing inquiries that promote reflection and understanding (Boulle & Nesic, 2018). By discerning common interests and objectives and exploring strategies to attain them, peer mediators can assist parties in establishing mutual understanding. This may include devising solutions that meet everyone's needs and considering concessions that enable all parties to reach a satisfactory agreement (Fisher et al., 2011). Peer mediators can facilitate the development of empathy between parties by urging them to consider each other's point of view in a given scenario. This entails assisting each side in comprehending and appreciating the needs, feelings, and intentions of the other (Moore, 2014). Peer mediators possess the capacity to promote more effective communication between parties by instructing them to utilize "I-statements" instead of "you-statements." This involves expressing one's own thoughts and feelings in a manner that avoids assigning blame or making accusations against others (Boulle & Nesic, 2018). Throughout the mediation process, peer mediators are required to uphold their objectivity and avoid showing favoritism or taking sides. According to Fisher et al. (2011), this approach can foster cooperation and assist in building trust among the participants involved in seeking a resolution. Encouraging Parties to Accept Responsibility for Their Actions and Work Towards a Solution That Benefits All Parties is One

Way That Peer Mediators Can Encourage Accountability. This may entail establishing precise objectives and deadlines as well as making sure that each party is aware of and accepts the terms of the contract (Moore, 2014).

The Challenges of Implementing Peer Mediation

Peer mediators can be particularly effective in resolving disputes among youth, as peers are often more capable of understanding and relating to each other's perspectives. However, implementing peer mediation programs presents certain challenges. The following outlines some of the difficulties encountered in the adoption of peer mediation.

- i. **Limited Resources:** The implementation of a peer mediation programme may necessitate a substantial outlay of funds, personnel time, and educational materials. Many organisations and schools might not have the resources needed to start and run a successful programme, especially in places where financing and resources are scarce (Myers, 2007).
- ii. **Opposition to Change:** Individuals accustomed to traditional dispute resolution methods might exhibit hesitancy towards the implementation of peer mediation programs. Peer mediators could be perceived as untrustworthy, and there may be skepticism regarding young people's ability to effectively resolve conflicts (Lefkowitz, 2011).
- iii. **Insufficient Support:** The dedication and backing of key stakeholders—including school administrators, teachers, parents, and community leaders—are crucial for the successful implementation of a peer mediation program. Without adequate buy-in and endorsement, the program may face significant challenges in launching and achieving its objectives (Myers, 2007).
- iv. **Training and Supervision:** To ensure effective oversight of the mediation process, peer mediators must undergo comprehensive training alongside ongoing supervisory support. This requirement can prove challenging, particularly in regions with limited access to qualified trainers or training resources. Furthermore, robust oversight of the program is essential to ensure that mediators comply with established standards and that disputes are resolved impartially and equitably (Lefkowitz, 2011).
- v. **Concerns Regarding Confidentiality:** To ensure a secure and supportive environment for all participants, peer mediation relies heavily on confidentiality. However, maintaining confidentiality can pose challenges, particularly if mediators or participants are insufficiently trained. Furthermore, legal obligations may require the disclosure of certain types of information, potentially conflicting with the imperative to preserve confidentiality (Myers, 2007).
- vi. **Diversity and Cultural Sensitivity:** Peer mediators must demonstrate the ability to effectively collaborate with individuals from diverse cultural norms, values, and backgrounds. This task can be particularly challenging in environments characterized by significant linguistic and cultural diversity, especially when mediators do not share the same background as the participants (Lefkowitz, 2011).
- vii. **Limited Scope:** The ability of peer mediation programs to address more complex or severe disputes, particularly those involving abuse, harassment, or violence, may be restricted. In certain cases, more specialized interventions, such as counseling or legal proceedings, may be required (Myers, 2007).

Examining Best Practices for Peer Mediation

Peer mediation best practices involve a comprehensive approach that encompasses all aspects of the mediation process, from training to post-mediation support. Here, the researcher examines several recommended practices in peer mediation:

- i. **Entire Instruction:** To acquire the necessary skills for effectively managing the mediation process, peer mediators must participate in thorough training. The training should cover various topics, including confidentiality, cultural sensitivity, dispute resolution techniques, and communication skills. Moreover, it is essential that mediators receive ongoing training and supervision to maintain their competencies and ensure compliance with established standards (Erford, 2015).
- ii. **Organised Mediation Process:** A well-defined set of guidelines and protocols should serve as the foundation for an organised mediation process. This includes creating an agenda, establishing ground rules for the mediation, and ensuring that each party has an opportunity to voice their opinions. To facilitate parties in identifying the fundamental causes of the conflict and considering potential solutions, the mediator should also employ effective communication strategies and active listening (Erford, 2015).
- iii. **Culturally Responsive Mediation:** To effectively collaborate with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, peer mediators should receive comprehensive training. This involves being aware of and respectful toward cultural norms and differences, as well as possessing the ability to adapt mediation techniques to accommodate the needs of various ethnic groups. Furthermore, during the mediation process, the mediator must be capable of recognising and addressing any cultural biases or preconceptions that may arise (Cohen & Smith, 2017).

Maintaining confidentiality is imperative to the mediation process, as it fosters an environment where participants feel secure and supported. Mediators should undergo comprehensive training on managing sensitive information, including the circumstances under which confidentiality might be exceptioned. Prior to the commencement of the mediation session, participants ought to be informed of the scope and limitations of confidentiality (Cohen & Smith, 2017). Effective peer

mediation programmes ensure that participants receive ongoing support to monitor adherence to the mediation agreement and to address any unresolved issues. This may involve follow-up with participants, continuous communication with parents or school officials, and additional mediation sessions if necessary. To ensure the durability of the agreement over time, follow-up support is an essential component of the mediation process's effectiveness (Erford, 2015). Assessment and evaluation are essential components for determining the effectiveness and identifying potential areas for improvement in peer mediation programmes. This process may involve collecting participant feedback, analyzing mediation outcomes, and assessing the programme's impact on the school's environment and culture. Such assessments ensure the programme's ongoing relevance and effectiveness over time, as well as its capacity to fulfill its objectives (Cohen & Smith, 2017).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Operational Definition

Female individuals aged 18 years and above, residing in Guwahati, Assam, who are either students pursuing professional education (particularly law) or practitioners engaged in mediation-related professions.

Design of the Study

This study's design emphasizes analyzing the abilities and skills possessed by young women that are vital for effective conflict resolution, aiming to examine the pivotal roles they serve as change agents in peer mediation. The research incorporates quantitative data on gender distribution, educational backgrounds, previous experience with peer mediation, and comfort levels in conflict resolution, all approached using a quantitative methodology. Through this comprehensive analysis, the researcher seeks to identify the specific education and support necessary for young women to enhance their proficiency as peer mediators. Furthermore, the study explores how young women's involvement in peer mediation contributes to the advancement of gender equality within their social environments. It underscores the importance of including women's perspectives in mediation processes and highlights the need for specialized training that addresses gender issues and biases. By concentrating on areas where targeted interventions could significantly improve young women's participation in peer mediation, this holistic approach not only emphasizes existing capabilities but also promotes the development of a more equitable and inclusive society.

Data Collection

Using a series of close-ended questions, the researcher surveyed 50 students and recorded their responses.

Fact Exploration and Perceptive

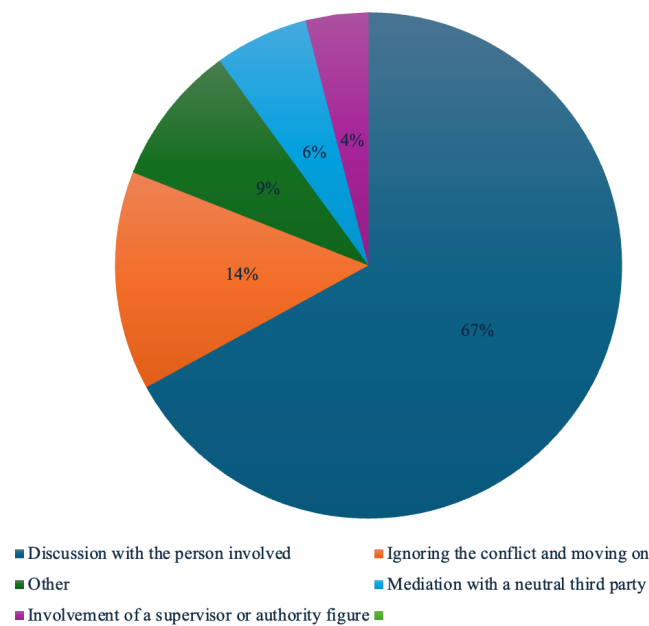
The researcher conducts a comprehensive investigation into the dynamics of peer mediation programs, with particular attention to gender distribution, qualifications, occupational status, and participants' prior experience and comfort with conflict resolution. Utilizing quantitative methods, the study examines participation patterns, preferred conflict resolution approaches, and perceptions of the effectiveness of peer mediation.

DATA ANALYSIS

Preferred Method of Conflict Resolution Among the Survey Respondents

Figure 1 demonstrates that the most preferred method of conflict resolution is discussion with the involved party, accounting for 67.7%, reflecting a predilection for direct communication. Peer mediation remains a novel concept in the context of North-East India, where further exploration, research, training, and other participatory approaches are imperative for its development.

Figure 1: Preferred Method of Conflict Resolution Among the Survey Respondents

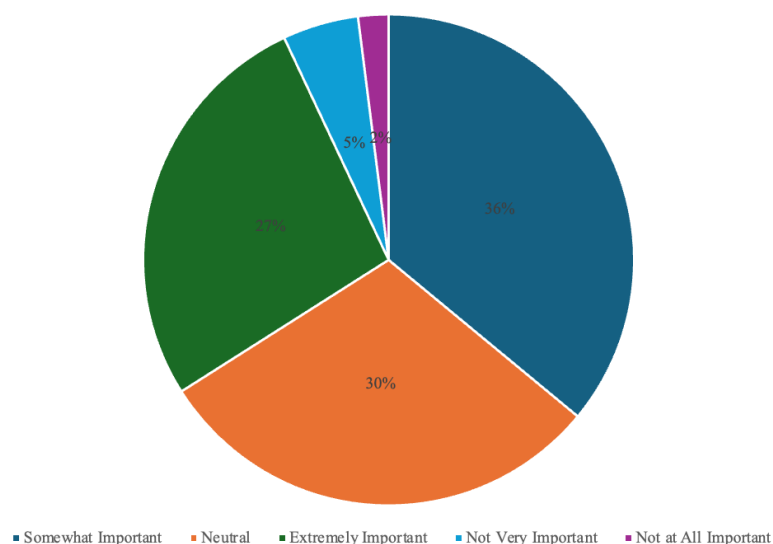


Source: Author's Compilation

Importance of Participating Peer Mediation

The importance of participating in peer mediation is emphasized by the data presented in figure 2, which indicates that the majority of respondents consider access to opportunities for engagement in such initiatives to be of at least moderate significance. This perspective reflects an acknowledgment among respondents of the value associated with involvement in peer mediation processes, thereby suggesting a widespread recognition of its potential benefits and its relevance in promoting conflict resolution skills within peer environments.

Figure 2: Importance of Participating Peer Mediation.



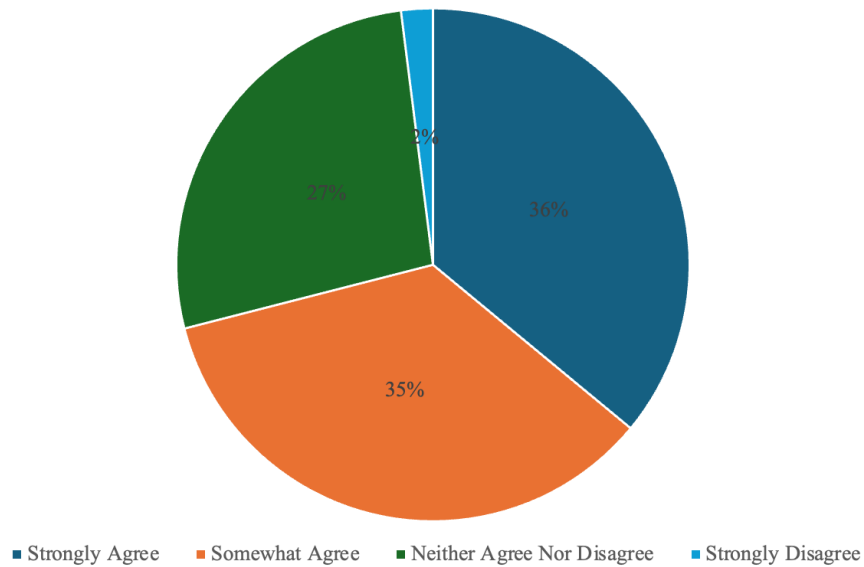
Source: Author's Compilation

Effectiveness of Women's Participation in Peer Mediation Programs in Resolving Conflicts

The Figure 3 exemplifies a prevailing sentiment among respondents, signifying a consensus concerning the efficacy of incorporating women into peer mediation initiatives for conflict resolution. The data indicates a predominant belief in the

constructive role of female participation within such programs. This finding underscores the perceived value and effectiveness ascribed to women's involvement in facilitating conflict resolution processes within peer mediation contexts.

Figure 3: *Effectiveness of Women's Participation in Peer Mediation Programs in Resolving Conflicts.*

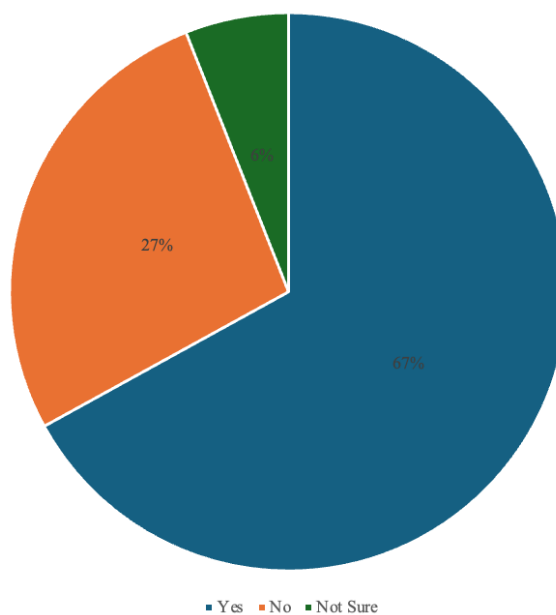


Source: Author's Compilation

In Order for Women to be Effective Mediators, they Need Specific Training

The necessity for specialized training aimed at empowering women to assume productive roles as peer mediators in conflict resolution is underscored in figure 4. A considerable proportion of participants expressed support for the implementation of targeted training programs designed to strengthen women's proficiency in mediation techniques, suggesting that such initiatives may facilitate women in becoming more effective mediators.

Figure 4: *Need Specific Training.*

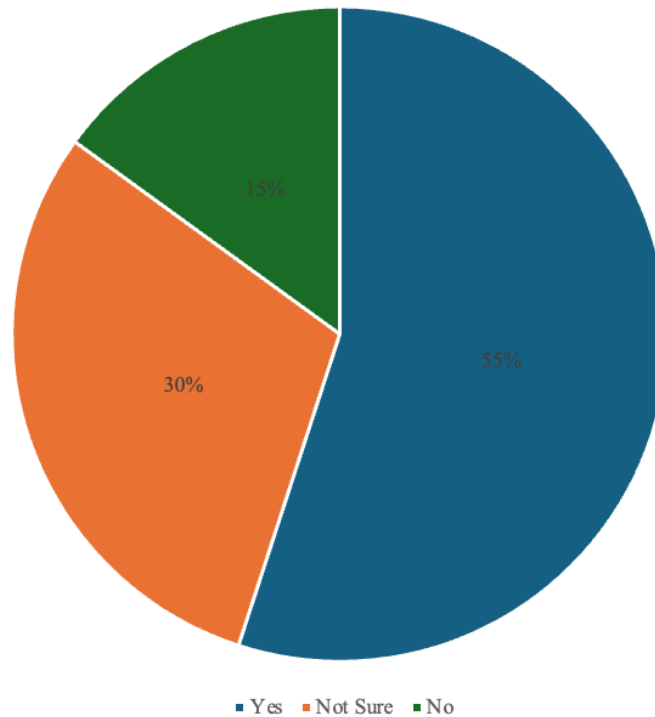


Source: Author's Compilation

Dedicated Instruction on Gender Issues and Biases

The distribution of responses concerning the inclusion of specific training on gender-related issues and prejudices within peer mediation programs is depicted in Figure 5. It indicates that more than 50% of participants concurred with the proposition that such programs should incorporate specialised training on gender issues and biases.

Figure 4: Dedicated Instruction on Gender Issues and Biases.



Source: Author's Compilation

CONCLUSION

The need for increased participation in peer mediation programmes represents a significant area of concern. While positive perceptions may be present, they are often not matched by corresponding levels of active engagement, indicating a disconnect between perception and action. To remedy this, it is essential to encourage more young women to participate actively in mediation processes. Furthermore, the information underscores the significance of incorporating gender-specific training within peer mediation programmes. This indicates that existing training programmes may not comprehensively address the specific challenges and dynamics related to gender issues and biases. By tailoring training programmes to these particular concerns, peer mediators can be better equipped to manage diverse conflicts and promote an inclusive environment. It is also emphasized as essential that women's perspectives are incorporated into mediation processes. This suggests that the experiences and viewpoints of women may not be sufficiently considered or represented in existing mediation methodologies. Peer mediation programs can ensure that the needs and concerns of all participants regardless of gender are properly addressed by incorporating a diverse array of perspectives. The survey emphasizes the potential of peer mediation programmes to tackle challenges extending beyond dispute resolution, including the promotion of broader social objectives such as gender equality and female empowerment. Enhancing peer mediation's capacity to support inclusive decision-making processes and foster positive social change can be achieved by concentrating on the areas identified for improvement.

ETHICAL DECLARATION

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