Managers Who Mediate: Exploring Perceptions of Managerial Mediation

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Massey University, Palmerston North

Megan Ruth Gordon

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Abstract

Managers worldwide are increasingly expected to take on conflict management responsibilities, and to use early interventions such as informal mediation to address interpersonal conflicts which arise in the workplace in order to prevent them from escalating (Arnold, 2007; Khan, 2012; O'Donnell, 2009; Poitras, Hill, Hamel, & Pelletier, 2015; Teague & Roche, 2012; WorkSafe, 2017). Previous studies have examined this facet of the managerial role from the perspective of employees who have had disputes mediated by their direct supervisor (Poitras et al., 2015), and from the perspective of senior managers and human resource (HR) personnel (Teague & Roche, 2012). While it is acknowledged that the manager-mediator role is a complex one, little is known about how managers themselves perceive their role as informal mediators, nor about how they navigate its complexities.

This qualitative study draws on semi-structured interviews with eleven nurse manager-mediators in order to explore their perceptions of managerial mediation. Specifically, the study sought to find out what skills they consider important for effective managerial mediation, and how their managerial role influences their ability to conduct this aspect of their responsibilities. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interviews.

The findings of this study highlight an important link between management style and mediation skills, indicating that collaborative, people-centred management approaches create an environment in which managerial mediation can take place. In addition, the findings indicate that importance specific mediation skills are essential for conducting effective managerial mediation. In exploring how the role of the manager influences the ability to conduct managerial mediation, the study illuminates the central role of trust in fostering employees' perception of fairness during managerial mediation processes. Furthermore, the study emphasises the overarching role played by organisational policies and values in encouraging and supporting managerial mediation.

In light of these findings, the study recommends that managers require training in specific management and communication skills, as well as in mediation skills, if they are to be able to undertake informal managerial mediation processes. It also recommends that managerial mediation needs to be seen as part of a conflict management system which is supported by senior management and HR personnel, as well as by organisational policies and values.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

In New Zealand, the resolution of problems arising in the employment context is regulated by the Employment Relations Act 2000. One of the primary objectives of the Act was to promote early, collaborative, informal problem-solving of workplace problems (Greenwood & Rasmussen, 2017), by recognising that "employment relationship problems are more likely to be resolved quickly and successfully if the problems are first raised and discussed directly between the parties to the relationship" (s 101). The importance of early, low-level interventions in preventing the escalation of negative workplace behaviour is further emphasised in the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015. Guidelines for compliance with this latter Act (WorkSafe, 2017) outline the role of informal procedures, such as mediation, as early, low-level interventions, which are not disciplinary in nature, and do not disadvantage the parties concerned. These guidelines go on to emphasise that managers have a crucial role in dealing with unreasonable behaviour, and with personnel issues (WorkSafe, 2017), and this is in line with a growing trend, on a global scale, for line managers to handle human resource (HR) responsibilities, one of which is the management of conflict. Informal mediation has, therefore, become one of the many roles carried out by modern managers (Arnold, 2007; Cohen, 1999; Kasserman, 2016; Khan, 2012; O'Donnell, 2009; Poitras et al., 2015; Teague & Roche, 2012).

The role of a manager is not, however, naturally aligned with that of a mediator in the traditional sense (Cohen, 1999). While managers must heed organisational interests when they resolve disputes (Poitras et al., 2015), mediators are expected to be impartial, and disinterested in the outcome of a dispute (Boulle, Goldblatt, & Green, 2008, 2015; Moore, 2014). Managers, moreover, have an interest in performance and productivity, and may be hesitant in taking on roles which obstruct these main functional responsibilities (Khan, 2012).

While managers are tasked with this important role in conflict management, in New Zealand not much is known about conflict management at the level of the workplace itself, nor about how employers and employees address disputes in ways that either assist in resolving them, or which may escalate them (Greenwood & Rasmussen, 2017). Some studies have been conducted overseas: Teague and Roche (2012) assessed the opinions of Irish HR managers regarding line managers' conflict management competencies; while

Poitras et al. (2015) surveyed and interviewed Canadian employees who had had their disputes mediated by their direct manager, in order to explore the mediation skills that they (the employees) found important.

The current, qualitative study aims to find out more about this particular aspect of managerial work in the healthcare sector in New Zealand. More specifically, it aims to explore manager-mediators' perspectives as to which skills are important for managerial mediation; and how the role of the manager influences the ability to conduct managerial mediation.

1.2 Structure

This thesis is arranged in six chapters, including this introductory one. Chapter 2 provides a literature review, drawing on conflict management, mediation, and organisational literature in order to provide a background to current research on the topic. This chapter also presents the research questions for the study. Chapter 3 describes the methods used in conducting the study, from research design through to analysis and write-up. Chapter 4 is concerned with the study's findings, and explores each of the main themes in turn. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings, relating them to the relevant literature, and synthesising them into a coherent whole. Chapter 6 concludes the study by looking at the theoretical contributions of the study, along with its implications for practice, and its limitations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Workplace Conflict

Conflict is a problem for many workplaces both locally and internationally (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008b; Roche, Teague, & Colvin, 2014; Teague & Roche, 2012). Studies show that, if it is not managed in a constructive way, conflict is costly for organisations in terms of lost productivity and costs of settlement, and harmful to the individuals involved as well as their relationships with one another (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011; De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008a) . In order to develop strategies to address workplace conflict, an understanding of its causes and consequences is important, as is an awareness of conflict escalation theory and means of intervention. The following literature review presents and critically discusses recent studies and theoretical developments on these topics, providing a comprehensive background for the research conducted in this thesis.

2.1.1 Definition of conflict

There are numerous definitions of conflict, stressing different dimensions of this construct, but most definitions agree that conflict refers to "any situation in which there is a state of tension, disagreement, or contention between two or more people or groups" (Boulle et al., 2008, p. 73). Conflict arises when two or more interdependent individuals or groups perceive that there are differences and opposition between themselves and other individuals or groups with regard to resources, interests, beliefs, values or practices which are important to them (Bannink, 2010; Condliffe, 2012). A state of conflict may give rise to the surfacing of a specific dispute**,** where one side contests what the other is trying to obtain from it (Boulle et al., 2008). For the purposes of this study, the terms conflict and dispute will be used interchangeably. The study will, in addition, use a process definition of conflict, whereby both conflicts and disputes can be seen as processes (Boulle et al., 2008; Butts, 2016): they are not static, but they escalate and de-escalate over time and in response to outside interventions (Butts, 2016; Green, 2002). Further, the scope of conflict to be considered in this study is limited to conflict occurring in the workplace (i.e. workplace conflict).

2.1.2 Causes of workplace conflict

Conflict arises, inevitably, in the workplace because organisations are made up of groups and individuals who are mutually interdependent for achieving tasks and goals (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008a). It also arises as a result of the complexity of the workplace, with

intricate coalitions of divisions, groups and individuals, all engaged in forms of competition for access to resources, funding and access to power, potentially making the workplace "a breeding ground for conflict" Wilkin (2017, p.179).

The emotional aspects of relationships at work also play a part in the prevalence of conflict (McKenzie, 2015). Professional behaviour differs from normal, societal forms of emotional behaviour in that emotional responses such as distress, attraction or annoyance may have to be disguised or ignored because of the public nature of the workplace (McKenzie, 2015). In addition to this, co-worker relationships are recognised as significant interpersonal relationships in people's lives, and people have to work hard at dealing with them appropriately (McKenzie, 2015). The situation is further complicated by the fact that, while employees may have meaningful relationships in the workplace, professional civility entails also working professionally with people whom they may not like as friends, even to the point of helping them achieve organisational goals (Arnett, 2006).

Apart from organisational and emotional causes, the existence of conflict also involves elements of perception, both interpersonal and intrapersonal (Bannink, 2010; Bokeno, 2011; Butts, 2016; Condliffe, 2012). In that sense, people may remain stuck in conflict because of their entrenched perceptions about the issues in dispute, the character of each other's opponent, their own inner nature and the background of the relationship (Bokeno, 2011; Cloke, 2001).

2.1.3 Types of conflict

Interpersonal conflict can take the form of either task-oriented or relationship-oriented conflict (Jimmieson, Tucker, & Campbell, 2017; Zapf & Gross, 2001). Task-related conflict involves disagreements which concern work to be undertaken: arguments about policies and views, for instance; or diverging opinions about the way that resources are allocated, or that facts are interpreted (Arenas, León-Pérez, Munduate, & Medina, 2015; Jimmieson et al., 2017). Relationship conflict, on the other hand, involves interpersonal relationships (Arenas et al., 2015; Loughry & Amason, 2014): it develops as a result of opposing or incompatible differences in values or personal style (Jimmieson et al., 2017; Loughry & Amason, 2014), and can reflect animosity or general dislike (Loughry & Amason, 2014).

Historically, it has been argued that task-based conflicts can stimulate critical thinking and may enhance group decision-making and performance (de Wit, Jehn, & Scheepers, 2013). This is said to happen because debate and discussion within a team leads to a

consideration of numerous alternatives, and thus to optimal decisions (Loughry & Amason, 2014). In contrast, relationship conflict has been seen as detrimental to group performance (Jimmieson et al., 2017). Relationship conflicts can lead to competitive mind-sets, a decrease in co-operative behaviour, and to positional negotiation, regardless of underlying interests (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2012). In addition, when relationship conflict exists, group members often process information in a more biased way and are less likely to consider reflecting on their initially preferred decision (de Wit et al., 2013). There is also a likelihood that they will be less engaged in a group task (de Wit et al., 2013).

Recent studies, however, question this clear-cut distinction between task-related conflict with its potential for enhancing group decision-making and relationship conflict with its harmful effects (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). They note that task-related conflict can easily be taken as personal criticism and therefore misinterpreted as a relationship conflict (de Wit et al., 2013). Furthermore, there is the possibility that task conflict such as criticising a co-worker's work, blocking her or his progress or openly disparaging her or his ideas may be hiding relationship conflict, including an intent to harm the other party (Raver & Barling, 2008). In the workplace, conflict can start as a task conflict and turn to more personal issues, following which relationship differences develop which polarise positions and differences (Arenas et al., 2015; Zapf & Gross, 2001). This, in turn, can lead to conflict escalation, whereby the disputing parties become increasingly polarised, and the differences become more and more difficult to address (Arenas et al., 2015; Zapf & Gross, 2001).

2.1.4 Conflict escalation

Scholars see conflict as a process, which can increase (escalate) or decrease (de-escalate) in intensity. Glasl's nine-stage model of conflict escalation (Glasl, 1982), for example, differentiates between three phases, characterised by increasing polarisation between parties, and by increasingly dominant behaviours which result, ultimately, in extremely destructive behaviours (Glasl, 1982; Zapf & Gross, 2001).

According to Glasl's model, parties in the early stages of escalation become aware of their personal differences and antagonisms, but attempt to treat them in a controlled and rational way (Glasl, 1982; Zapf & Gross, 2001). They are likely to interact with some co-operation and are, moreover, motivated to try and find workable solutions to the problems with which they are faced (Jenkins, 2011; Saam, 2010; Zapf & Gross, 2001). If co-operation fails to yield results, they move into a more competitive mode (Glasl, 1982), holding their

positions with greater tenacity, which means that they are less likely to see the situation from the other's point of view (Fisher et al., 2012; Glasl, 1982). The second phase is characterised by a deterioration in the relationship between the parties, by distrust and a lack of mutual respect, and by feelings of stress. (Glasl, 1982). By the third phase, the relationship between the parties is all but non-existent and parties feel that no reconciliation is possible: this leads to their viewing confrontation and possible destruction as the only possible outcome (Glasl, 1982).

Escalation theory is relevant to a study of workplace conflict because an understanding of this mechanism can help organisations to design systems and interventions which address conflict at appropriate times (Butts, 2016). Conflict is best addressed as close as possible to its origin (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007; Ury, Brett, & Goldberg, 1989) in order to prevent the development of destructive behaviours and the adverse effects that flow from them (Leon-Perez, Medina, Arenas, & Munduate, 2015).

2.1.5 Consequences of conflict

Interpersonal conflict is considered to be a "stressor" in the workplace, as it can undermine a person's sense of self-esteem and lead to reduced wellbeing, emotional exhaustion, and absenteeism (Giebels & Janssen, 2005; Spector & Bruk-Lee, 2008). For these reasons, it is seen as an occupational health and safety issue in some jurisdictions (Giebels & Janssen, 2005). If interpersonal conflict is unresolved or poorly managed, it has the potential to escalate in ways which lead to a range of adverse effects both for the organisation and for the people involved. These include absenteeism, increased turnover rates, costs of litigation, wasted time, loss of productivity, loss of job satisfaction, poor morale, and destructive relationships between colleagues (Butts, 2016; Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011; McKenzie, 2015).

. A specific example of escalated interpersonal conflict is workplace bullying, (Arenas et al., 2015; Leon-Perez et al., 2015), which has been the subject of extensive research in recent years (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011; Fevre, Lewis, Robinson, & Jones, 2012; Fox & Cowan, 2015; Fox & Stallworth, 2009). Generally, the elements of bullying are understood to include hostile, subtle or covert acts (Jenkins, 2011) which are carried out systematically (Salin, 2008) over a period of time (typically longer than six months) in a way which has an adverse effect on the person at whom they are directed (Jenkins, 2011) and often on witnesses and the wider work environment (Catley et al., 2017; Fox & Cowan, 2015; Saam, 2010). Because it is an escalated form of conflict, strategies

which may be successful in resolving conflicts at the lower end of the escalation scale are often unsuccessful in these cases (Zapf & Gross, 2001).

2.1.6 Conflict intervention

An understanding of how conflict escalates (Glasl, 1982) is useful in planning interventions, and also in designing conflict management systems which recognise that different interventions are appropriate and useful at different stages of a conflict (Lipsky & Avgar, 2004). Since various interventions will have an impact on the life-cycle of a conflict (Boulle et al., 2008; Moore, 2014), it is relevant to consider how the parties manage their conflicts; the timing and nature of interventions by formal or informal parties; and the range of outcomes which will eventuate from the conflict (Condliffe, 2012). Choosing the appropriate method of intervention is, therefore, an important part of conflict management, and involves a diagnosis of the causes of the conflict (Boulle et al., 2008; Moore, 2014). The choice of process will have a significant effect on the way that the dispute is managed and resolved: whether it will be a speedy settlement which does little to examine or address the underlying causes of the conflict, or a resolution which results in improved relationships, increased productivity and perhaps, an improved workplace culture (Goldblatt, 2011; Moore, 2014; Wilkin, 2017).

While acknowledging that the experience of interpersonal conflict in the workplace is harmful to people's health and wellbeing, and potentially harmful to the organisation, it is important to acknowledge also that the way conflict is handled can lead to positive outcomes: the effective management of conflict may increase self-esteem, thereby improving personal resilience by enabling people to realise that they are capable of resolving interpersonal issues (Claremont & Davies, 2005; Cloke & Goldsmith, 2000; Raver & Barling, 2008).

2.2. Mediation

2.2.1 What is mediation?

The process of mediation is a form of assisted decision-making, in which someone external to the conflict (the mediator) helps parties to reach a decision, and in which the mediator cannot make binding decisions for the parties (Boulle et al., 2008, 2015; Moore, 2014). The core features of the process are its focus on decision-making; the involvement of a third party who assists the parties in this decision-making; the fact that the parties themselves must assent to the outcome; and the lack of decision-making capacity of the third party (Boulle et al., 2008). These features differentiate it from other forms of dispute resolution in

which the third party is empowered to make decisions and impose them on the parties, such as arbitration and other adjudicative processes (Boulle et al., 2008).

Mediation is a facilitative, future-focused process which seeks to improve relationships by helping parties to develop mutual recognition and understanding, and which helps parties to communicate in a way which leads to constructive problem-solving (Boulle et al., 2008, 2015). Mediation is an interest-based process, meaning that it seeks to resolve problems by helping parties to understand their own and each other's underlying interests – the motivators or drivers behind their visible positions and claims, as opposed to rights-based processes which are based on fact, fault, and who is right or wrong (Boulle et al., 2008, 2015; Fisher et al., 2012). In the workplace, mediation is said to have the potential to improve relationships and foster improved morale among employees (Zelizer & Chiochetti, 2017). In addition, it provides a safe forum for parties in dispute to discuss their differences in an open way, and for them to see situations from each other's perspective (Wilkin, 2017).

In mediation, disputing parties are responsible for reaching a decision themselves (Farnham, 2015). Mediated outcomes are seen as sustainable because parties have negotiated them themselves, and achieved a better understanding of their situation (Boulle et al., 2008, 2015; O'Donnell, 2009; Poitras et al., 2015).

Confidentiality and mediator impartiality are seen as important features of mediation, because they enable parties to reach their own decisions and to do so in a way which encourages improved understanding and communication (Bannink, 2010; Boulle et al., 2008, 2015; Moore, 2014; Wilkin, 2017). Confidentiality means that the process itself is private, and that details of what transpired at mediation can be disclosed only with the consent of the parties concerned (Boulle et al., 2008, 2015; O'Donnell, 2009). Confidentiality promotes honest, frank discussion, as parties need not fear that what they say will be used against them in a later process (Boulle et al., 2008, 2015). This is of particular relevance in the workplace context, as employees need to know that what they disclose at mediation cannot be used against them later in a disciplinary process (Boulle et al., 2008).

Mediator impartiality is important if disputing parties are to trust the mediator and the mediation process. Impartiality means that the mediator needs to treats the parties in an even-handed way, and that she or he needs to avoid advocating for one or other of the parties (Boulle et al., 2008, 2015). It also involves the mediator's refraining from assessing the

merits of a case, and avoiding the imposition of her or his own values or viewpoints (Boulle et al., 2015).

2.2.2 Mediation as an early intervention in addressing interpersonal conflict

As noted previously, researchers have linked interpersonal conflict with bullying (Arenas et al., 2015; Leon-Perez et al., 2015). A number of researchers have, moreover, studied the use of mediation as an intervention in bullying situations, and have explored the timing of this intervention, and when it should be carried out for maximum efficacy. Frequently, mediation is seen to be an inappropriate method for intervening in cases of bullying, for a number of reasons. Zapf and Gross (2001) point out that mediation relies on both parties being able to participate in a meaningful way, and that in escalated forms of bullying this is not possible. These are essentially criticisms around its suitability because of perceived imbalances of power which may affect parties' abilities to contribute on an equal footing in the consensual, party-controlled process (Saam, 2010). Other critics indicate that the dyadic nature of mediation means that it is unsuitable on its own for a phenomenon which is embedded in an organisational context (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007; Saam, 2010). Aquino (2000; as cited inZapf & Gross, 2001) points out that the use of a problem-solving process like mediation can actually increase victimisation in conflicts which are already at an escalated level.

In examining early intervention, however, researchers are more positive about the possibilities and potential for mediation to be effective. Both researchers and practitioners in Salin's study (2008) study indicated that mediation is feasible only when the conflict is at an early stage. Jenkins (2011) points out that, in the early stages of negative behavioural patterns, both parties are often interested in resolving the conflict early, and that mediation would function optimally at this stage. This is in line with Glasl's (1982) observations, noted earlier, that parties in the early phases of conflict act in a rational and controlled manner and are willing to co-operate in order to address their differences. It has been recommended that interventions are enacted early in order to prevent the negative interaction from reaching the stage of bullying (Saam, 2010).

The problem with the way that bullying is often approached in the workplace is that the conflict has to reach a certain intensity before mediation is recommended (Saam, 2010). Mediation is frequently recommended when it has reached the stage where the relationship between the parties is severely disrupted (Zapf & Gross, 2001) which means that the power

differential will be more difficult to manage (Jenkins, 2011) and the process may involve safety issues (Goldblatt, 2009). In addition, it is often recommended in the wake of rights-based processes such as a formal complaint to human resources (HR) personnel and a formal investigation – all of which will take its toll on the relationship and the parties' interest and willingness to resolve the conflict (Jenkins, 2011; Pedley, in Spiller, 2007). It seems, then, that the most appropriate time to use mediation may well be very early on in the process – long before the negative behaviours develop into bullying and before formal complaints are raised (Jenkins, 2011; Saam, 2010).

For these reasons, there is growing interest in the role that managers have to play in managing interpersonal conflict which arises among their subordinates. This involves an interest in their ability to either effectively and informally mediate disputes themselves at a low level, or to identify, and refer them to, other appropriate intervention processes (Arnold, 2007; Cohen, 1999; Goldblatt, 2006; Kasserman, 2016; Khan, 2012; O'Donnell, 2009; Poitras et al., 2015; Saam, 2010; Teague & Roche, 2012).

2.3. Managerial responsibility for addressing workplace conflict

There is an increasing global trend expecting line managers to take on human resource (HR) management responsibilities (Arnold, 2007; Poitras et al., 2015; Teague & Roche, 2012). The devolution of HR responsibilities to managers is seen as part of the continuous process of change necessitated by various pressures exerted on organisations: increasing competition, globalisation, government deregulation, restructuring, privatisation, and new technologies (Khan, 2012; Link & Müller, 2015). For organisations to cope with this ongoing change, innovative management practices need to be introduced frequently (Khan, 2012). Devolving the management of people to managers is considered vital to allowing senior HR personnel to take part in strategic decisions such as resource allocation and setting of agendas (Teague & Roche, 2012).

The expectation that managers will take on HR responsibilities is accompanied by an assumption that they will play an active role in the resolution of conflict (Arnold, 2007; Cohen, 1999; Kasserman, 2016; Khan, 2012; O'Donnell, 2009; Poitras et al., 2015; Teague & Roche, 2012). In New Zealand, these expectations are articulated in the WorkSafe New Zealand guidelines for preventing and responding to bullying. These guidelines provide information for employers regarding compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, and outline the role of informal procedures such as mediation as early, low-level

interventions, which are not disciplinary in nature, and do not disadvantage the parties concerned (WorkSafe, 2017). Managers are placed at the centre of this process, with a responsibility to deal with personnel issues and unreasonable behaviour (WorkSafe, 2017).

The following sections analyse this particular aspect of the managerial role in more detail. First of all, there is an exploration of the pivotal role that managers play in organisational conflict systems, and this is followed by an examination of the factors that influence the way that managers approach conflict. The final section investigates the skills required for effective mediation, and the dual role of managers who mediate. Finally, it identifies the research questions for this thesis.

2.3.1 Role of managers in resolving workplace conflict

In many ways, managers are well-situated to deal with interpersonal conflict which may arise in the workplace (Nehles, van Riemsdijk, Kok, & Looise, 2006; O'Donnell, 2009; Teague & Roche, 2012), because they continually interact with employees on an ongoing basis (Teague & Roche, 2012). As indicated previously, it is generally accepted that conflict is most effectively addressed close to its point of origin (Ury et al., 1989), at which stage the parties involved are more likely to be open to rational discussion (Jenkins, 2011; Saam, 2010; Salin, 2008; Ury et al., 1989), and more willing to co-operate in order to reach workable solutions (Jenkins, 2011; Saam, 2010; Zapf & Gross, 2001). Attempts to resolve conflicts locally and at a low level are efficient, too, because - as a conflict escalates - the matter may become more complex, involving more people and using more resources (O'Donnell, 2009). By virtue of their day-to-day proximity with employees, managers are in a position to make effective and timely interventions to prevent conflict from escalating (Teague & Roche, 2012) and this may play a role in preventing interpersonal conflict from reaching the stage of bullying (Saam, 2010).

The way that third parties intervene in a conflict can affect the type of resolution achieved, the parties' perception of the fairness of the process and its outcome, and the ease with which the terms of the settlement or agreement are implemented (Giebels & Janssen, 2005; Karambayya & Brett, 1989). The way that a conflict is addressed in its early stages is particularly important because it may well be the first time that the parties have an opportunity to think about their conflict, with the issues being still fresh in their minds (O'Donnell, 2009). It may be the first time, too, that they are asked to justify and explain their actions and their perceptions (O'Donnell, 2009). If managers are the first people to

become aware of the conflict, they will need to decide how to address it (Giebels & Janssen, 2005; Karambayya & Brett, 1989; O'Donnell, 2009; Poitras et al., 2015; Saam, 2010; Teague & Roche, 2012). They may also need to decide whether it is appropriate for them to handle the conflict, and whether it requires intervention by senior managers or other managers charged with a more formal role in conflict intervention (Teague & Roche, 2012). This means that managers have an informal and formal role to play in the management of conflict, and that they should be able to distinguish between problems that they try to resolve and those that need to be passed on to more formal processes (Teague & Roche, 2012).

Viewed in this way, managers can be seen as playing a vital role in the development of conflict-management systems which operate on a number of levels, and which may also involve HR professionals and possibly external professionals such as ombudspersons, arbitrators and mediators (Goldblatt, 2006; Saam, 2010; Teague & Roche, 2012). This means that negotiation and dispute resolution skills need to be core competencies for managers, enabling them to make an informed decision about the best course of intervention for a given conflict (Goldblatt, 2006).

In summary, managers can be said to have three roles in the management of conflict: they can deal with the dispute directly (Nehles et al., 2006; O'Donnell, 2009; Teague & Roche, 2012); they can make decisions as to whether the conflict is referred on to someone else (Teague & Roche, 2012); and they can be involved in the development of conflict management systems (Goldblatt, 2006; Saam, 2010; Teague & Roche, 2012). The way that their managerial role affects their ability to conduct managerial mediation, one of the possible interventions, along with the skills that this intervention requires, is the focus of this research.

2.3.2 Factors affecting the way that managers address conflict

There are a number of factors which influence the way that a manager will approach a conflict (Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Poitras et al., 2015; Saeed, Almas, Anis-ul-Haq, & Niazi, 2014). Some scholars have focused on the link between a manager's leadership style in general and the way she or he manages conflict (Saeed et al., 2014), suggesting that leaders with transformational qualities tend to use conflict management strategies which encourage collaboration and constructive efforts at resolution (Poitras et al., 2015; Saeed et al., 2014). Others have focused on managers' preference for co-operation or assertiveness by using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) (Stanley & Algert, 2007; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974); while others have examined managers' tendency to prioritise either process

or outcome control (Arnold, 2007; Karambayya & Brett, 1989). These approaches will be examined in greater detail below.

2.3.2.1 Leadership style

Leadership style is said to influence the ways that managers engage in the management of conflict (Bass & Riggio, 2005; Saeed et al., 2014), with researchers identifying three kinds of leadership: transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire (Bass & Riggio, 2005; Saeed et al., 2014).

Transactional leaders are said to identify and clarify the responsibilities of their subordinates, and to indicate ways in which successful performance of tasks will lead to rewards (Saeed et al., 2014). They determine goals for their subordinates, provide feedback and suggest how to perform the various tasks effectively, which is said to have a favourable influence on the behaviours and attitudes of employees (Saeed et al., 2014). When managing conflict, they tend to favour expedient techniques which achieve quick results and reward parties for compromising, which create temporary settlements, and which avoid disruption (Bass & Riggio, 2005).

Rather than focussing on short-term goals and rewards, transformational leaders have a focus on long-term issues and seek new ways of doing things; they also tend to empower their followers to be innovative and creative, and to pay individual attention to each follower's needs for growth and achievement (Bass & Riggio, 2005; Saeed et al., 2014). They are said to manage conflict in a positive way, focussing on collaboration and trust, with the leader pointing out to the parties ways in which they stand to benefit from co-operation and agreement, and how their interests are entwined and interconnected with one another (Bass & Riggio, 2005). These leaders favour techniques which maintain the freedom of action of each party: these include techniques which clarify the nature of conflict; which help parties to see creative alternatives to resolving the dispute; and which help parties to see each other's point of view (Bass & Riggio, 2005). Transformational qualities complement, rather than substitute, transactional ones, and are linked with high levels of performance and satisfaction (Raines, 2013; Saeed et al., 2014).

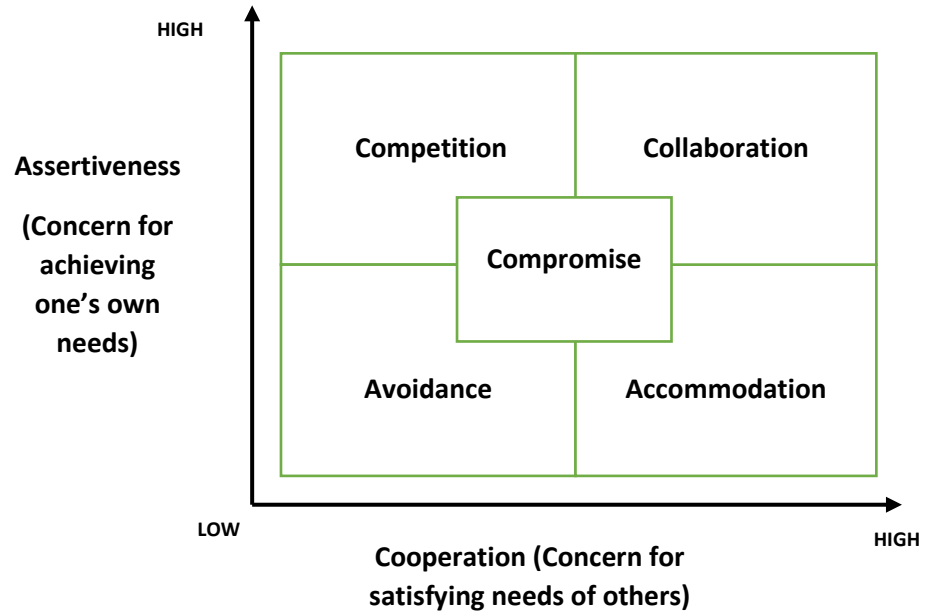
By way of contrast with these pro-active styles, laissez-faire leaders tend not to make decisions, and to leave their subordinates to work things out for themselves, and this style of leadership has been noted for its adverse effect on employee performance (Saeed et al., 2014). It has been observed that laissez-faire leaders tend to avoid dealing with low-level

conflict, seeing it as trivial, and acting under the assumption that parties have to calm down before the conflict can be dealt with rationally (Bass & Riggio, 2005).

2.3.2.2 TKI model

The key model for describing conflict management style, as opposed to leadership style, was developed by Thomas and Kilmann (1974), and operationalised as the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). The TKI assesses a person's preferences for managing conflict, not their competence, by measuring their behaviour along two dimensions: assertiveness and cooperation, which refer to the extent to which they seek to satisfy their own needs and desires as opposed to those of others (Stanley & Algert, 2007).

Figure 1 illustrates the way that personal preferences for managing conflict can be mapped against the cooperation and assertiveness dimensions, and indicates the approach that will be used in addressing the conflict. People who seek to satisfy neither their own needs nor those of others will have a strategy of avoiding conflict, while people with a high assertiveness score and low cooperativeness score will seek primarily to satisfy their own needs, leading to a competitive approach (Stanley & Algert, 2007). On the other hand, people who seek to satisfy others' needs over their own will accommodate the other person in a conflict situation, often at the expense of their own needs (Brown, 2012). Compromise is an approach used when people seek to find middle ground between their needs and those of other people (Stanley & Algert, 2007). Negotiators or conflict managers who are interested in satisfying both their needs and those of other people will adopt a collaborative style (Fisher et al., 2012; Stanley & Algert, 2007). The instrument helps people understand how and why they respond to conflict in a particular situation, and can also assist them in improving their capacity for handling conflict using different styles (Brown, 2012; Stanley & Algert, 2007).



TKI schematic adapted from Cloke and Goldsmith (2011)

Figure 1: **Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode instrument schematic**

2.3.2.3 Link between leadership style and TKI mode

The TKI typology can be useful in helping people to understand their own conflict management style, and also how they frame conflict (Stanley & Algert, 2007). Research conducted by Saeed et al. (2014) proposed that conflict management modes involving a high concern for others were characteristic of transformational leadership styles, while a compromise approach tended to accompany transactional leadership styles. Both of these styles stimulate co-operative behaviour (Saeed et al., 2014). Laissez-faire leaders tend to avoid addressing conflicts, and this can lead to an increase in antagonistic behaviour, and ultimately, to conflict escalation (Saeed et al., 2014).

2.3.2.4 Process-outcome model

There is also research which suggests that a manager's choice of conflict management strategy is determined by whether the manager is interested in controlling the process by which the outcome is reached, or the outcome itself (Sheppard, 1983, cited in Arnold, 2007). Managers interested in controlling both the outcome and the process are likely to use an inquisitorial form of intervention, while managers who seek to control the outcome more than the process are likely to choose an adversarial and autocratic method of intervening (Arnold, 2007). Processes with a high level of outcome control in the hands of a third party tend to

lead to unsatisfactory outcomes, and increased rates of impasse (Arnold, 2007; Karambayya & Brett, 1989), and also to perceptions of unfairness and injustice (Karambayya & Brett, 1989).

Managers who wish to control the process, but to allow parties to reach their own outcome, are likely to choose a mediation-style intervention (Arnold, 2007). Arnold's study (2007) suggested that managers profess to like the idea of mediation, but that they tend to choose procedures which enable them to maintain a high level of outcome control; and also that managers who have the power to impose an outcome often will do so.

2.3.3 Managers as mediators

In analysing conflict management tendencies among manager, researchers have also identified a number of reasons why managers are reluctant to take on conflict management roles in general, and why mediation in particular may be problematic for them (Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Khan, 2012; Poitras et al., 2015). A number of studies have suggested that managers may lack confidence because they have not had sufficient training in conflict management in general, nor in the skills necessary for effective managerial mediation (Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Khan, 2012; Poitras et al., 2015; Teague & Roche, 2012). Other studies (Kasserman, 2016; Khan, 2012; Nehles et al., 2006; O'Donnell, 2009; Poitras et al., 2015; Stanley & Algert, 2007) have suggested that there are numerous complexities in the dual role undertaken by managers who mediate, and that these are difficult for managers to navigate. These questions are dealt with in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

2.3.3.1 Managerial mediation skills

Mediation scholars (Boulle et al., 2008; Moore, 2014) have noted that mediators, including managerial mediators, require a specific set of skills in order to facilitate parties' attempts to resolve disputes in a collaborative way. Conflict is said to occur along three dimensions (Boulle et al., 2008; Poitras et al., 2015) and so managers intending to mediate conflict need to acquire skills to deal with each dimension of conflict (Poitras et al., 2015). Boulle et al. (2008) explain that the *behavioural* dimension of conflict involves the way that parties in conflict act in order to express the way that they are feeling, and to get their needs met, while the *cognitive* aspect of conflict involves disputing parties' perceptions and understanding of the dispute. Finally, the *emotional* dimension of conflict involves the feelings experienced by parties in a dispute towards the dispute and towards one another (Boulle et al., 2008).

In dealing with the various dimensions of conflict, mediators use a range of techniques in order to assist the parties in their communication with one another, and in order to help them make decisions (Boulle et al., 2008). They use skills such as active listening and reframing to de-toxify the communication, to make it easier for parties to understand each other's point of view, to help them focus on common interests, and to help them focus on how they want to move forward (Boulle et al., 2015). They also use skills such as paraphrasing and summarising in order to reflect what parties have said and to focus them on what is important in their communication (Boulle et al., 2015). In addition, they foster an atmosphere of trust and confidence, both in themselves and in the process, providing a setting that is non-threatening and, thus, improving the emotional environment in which the discussion takes place (Boulle et al., 2008).

There are, therefore, a number of skills that are considered by mediators to be an important part of a mediation toolkit (Boulle et al., 2008, 2015; Moore, 2014; Poitras et al., 2015). There is, however, little known about what skills managers consider to be important in conducting managerial mediations, or whether they consider that mediation type processes require any skills other than generic communication skills (Butts, 2016). While Poitras et al.'s (2015) Canadian study sought to find out what managerial mediation skills were important for employees who had disputes mediated informally by their manager, there is little known about managerial perspectives on mediation skills in the New Zealand workplace environment. This thesis seeks to expand understanding of this issue. The first question that this thesis seeks to answer is:

Research question one: What skills are required in effective managerial mediation from the mediating manager's perspective?

2.3.3.2 Complexities in the manager-mediator role

While some managers may be reluctant to mediate because they feel that they do not have the relevant skills, as discussed above (Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Kasserman, 2016; Poitras et al., 2015), there is also the possibility that a mediation-type approach does not align with their leadership or conflict management style (Stanley & Algert, 2007). On a practical level, they may have concerns about how long mediation might take, and how this will impact on their workload (Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Khan, 2012; Nehles et al., 2006; O'Donnell, 2009).

It has been suggested that managers traditionally focus on short-term performance goals, and that their performance is, in fact, measured against these goals (Khan, 2012). As a result, they may be reluctant to take on HR and conflict management responsibilities if they feel that it would adversely affect their main functional responsibilities (Khan, 2012). In addition, they may feel ill-equipped to take on conflict management roles in the face of increasing regulatory complexities, and that they may actively seek HR involvement in a more formal way rather than attempt to resolve the disputes themselves informally (Khan, 2012). HR and conflict management responsibilities can also be seen to have a direct negative impact on their workload (Khan, 2012), especially if their other duties are not reduced (Nehles et al., 2006).

There are also some theoretical concerns in the manager-as-mediator dual role, mainly around the impartiality of the manager-mediator (Poitras et al., 2015). Given that the manager is traditionally in a decision-making position (Alvesson & Willmott, 2012; Cohen, 1999), managers acting as mediators need to make it clear to parties that they will not be imposing a decision in this situation. They also need to demonstrate their impartiality by being respectful to both parties and not pre-judging the situation (Poitras et al., 2015). This is likely to be particularly challenging for managers because they are organisational leaders and they do have direct interests in seeing the conflict resolved in a way which contributes to the smooth functioning of the organisation. In addition, mediation is voluntary, but employees may feel that they are obliged to participate because it has been requested by someone in a position of power over them (Poitras et al., 2015). Confidentiality is another important feature of mediation (Boulle et al., 2008, 2015), and this may be difficult to guarantee in a mediation conducted by a manager; it is vitally important that parties can trust that what they have said will go no further, and so this needs to be respected by the organisation (O'Donnell, 2009). Mediation may, in addition, be unsuccessful if the person conducting it has not had sufficient training or experience (Ferris, 2004; Karambayya & Brett, 1989; O'Donnell, 2009; Teague & Roche, 2012).

Despite these obstacles, there is research showing that managers perceive of mediation processes as fair in themselves, and as producing fair outcomes (Karambayya & Brett, 1989). Mediation-based processes are appealing to managers because they are practical and restore workable relationships, which contributes to a more productive workplace, and also because employees participate directly in the resolution process, so the employees will be more committed to the resolution than if it were imposed on them (Boulle et al., 2008;

Poitras et al., 2015). Giebels and Jansen (2005) point out that this type of intervention is particularly useful in clarifying the real issues at stake, in helping emotionally stressed parties to recover their control over the process and outcome of their dispute, and in helping them to restore their relationship. Managers are, moreover, in a position to follow up the implementation of mediated agreements and to play a part in changing organisational culture if this is necessary (Hutchinson, 2009; Jenkins, 2011). Mediation by managers can thus be seen as an important early intervention in conflict which may assist in preventing conflict escalation, and which may also contribute more generally to effective conflict management in organisations (Cohen, 1999; Goldblatt, 2006; Saam, 2010).

The dual role undertaken by managers who mediate is, therefore, a complex one, with the managerial role having the potential to both enable and hinder effective managerial mediation (Butts, 2016; Cohen, 1999; Goldblatt, 2006; Poitras et al., 2015; Teague & Roche, 2012). There is little known, in general, about how employers and employees in New Zealand workplaces respond to conflict, and how their actions either de-escalate or escalate conflict situations (Greenwood & Rasmussen, 2017). Teague and Roche (2012) explored some of these issues in an Irish context, but their study was based on the opinions and perspectives of senior managers and HR personnel. Karambayya and Brett (1989) investigated some of these matters thirty years ago, using simulation exercises. Given that this type of managerial mediation is said to have the capacity to address workplace conflict in a proactive way that prevents conflict escalation, there is a need for a greater understanding of this managerial activity in a New Zealand context. Accordingly, the second research question that this thesis seeks to address is:

Research question two: How does the role of the manager influence the ability to conduct managerial mediation?

Chapter 3: Methods

Chapter 2 explored the literature on workplace conflict, conflict escalation, mediation and the role of managers in managing conflict. It identified the importance of early, informal managerial mediation as an intervention with the potential to prevent the escalation of interpersonal conflict in the workplace (Cohen, 1999; Goldblatt, 2006; Saam, 2010), while also considering some of the complexities inherent in this dual role. At the end, the research questions for this thesis were identified, and these involve finding out what skills are required in managerial mediation, from the mediating manager's perspective; and how the role of the manager influences her or his ability to conduct managerial mediation.

This chapter, Chapter 3, presents the research design for the project, outlining the philosophical worldview underlying the design before discussing qualitative research in general and the importance of sincerity in this type of research. Following this, there is a description of the way that data was collected, and the ethical considerations that were taken into account when recruiting and interviewing participants. The final section explains the process of data analysis used in this thesis.

3.1 Research design

My approach to this piece of research was based on my philosophical worldview. My background is in humanities, law, and mediation. These fields are dominated by people's stories and their perspectives and, for me, people perceive events and experiences in their own way, according to the context in which they are experienced. I assume, therefore, that reality is experienced in a subjective way by individuals, and the only way that I can begin to understand another person's reality is to try understand the way that people make sense of it, by listening to their stories and trying to grasp the way they make sense of their world.

In research terms, this philosophical worldview concerns beliefs about the nature of reality and human beings (ontology); the relationship between myself as a researcher and the participants in my study (epistemology); and the methods that I could use to gain knowledge of the world (methodology) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013b).

3.1.1 Ontology

Ontology is concerned with notions pertaining to the existence of people, of society, and of the world in general, and to the relationships which exist between them (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The ontological assumptions underlying this piece of research assert that reality is understood to be subjective, and that it is grounded on perceptions and experiences

which may differ from person to person, and according to time and context (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). In addition, there is an assumption that "social phenomena and their meanings" are constructed by social actors; that they are in a state of constant revision by these actors (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013b); and that the "knower and the respondent co-create understandings" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p.27). In research terms, this signifies that understandings are built by a collaboration between the researcher and the research participants (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge (Bowleg, 2017), and how knowledge can be produced and defended. The epistemological assumptions underpinning this research are subjective and interpretivist: they assert that the social world is best understood by studying the way that the participants in that world make sense of it (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013b).

3.1.3 Qualitative research

Epistemological and ontological assumptions influenced the research design, as well as the approaches for collecting and analysing data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The nature of the study and the underlying assumptions indicate that a qualitative design is appropriate, as a qualitative research designs allowed me to share in others' perceptions, and to explore the ways in which my participants give meaning to themselves and their actions (Lune & Berg, 2017). In qualitative research, the emphasis is on words, rather than quantifications (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Data in qualitative research can be collected in a variety of ways, such as open-ended questionnaires and observations; the most commonly used process is, however, the interview (Crowe, Inder, & Porter, 2015). In this study, interviews were used to explore the stories that managers tell about their experiences as mediators.

3.1.4 Sincerity and the situated researcher

A qualitative approach to research entailed a recognition that I was bringing my own assumptions and biases to the research, and that I needed to constantly be aware of these, and reflexive about how I dealt with them (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bryman & Bell, 2015; Dearnley, 2005). My approach to reflexivity was heavily influenced both by my practice as a mediator, and by Tracy's (2010) article on excellence in qualitative research. The practice of mediation involves reflection both 'in action' and 'on action' – requiring mediators to be constantly mindful of their words and actions during their interventions and when reflecting

on them afterwards (Moore, 2014). Boud et al. (1985, cited in Dearnley, 2005, p22) describe reflection as "an important human activity which enables people to recapture their experience, think about it, and evaluate it." In mediation, this practice is considered vital as mediators must monitor their interventions and the effects thereof during a mediation, and they also need to recall these details afterwards in order to improve on their practice (Moore, 2014).

Tracy (2010) views self-reflexivity as an important component of sincerity, one of the hallmarks of excellent qualitative research. This author points out that self-reflexivity involves being honest with oneself, and with one's audience. It is crucial in all stages of research, from design to data collection, through to analysis and presentation, and it animates researchers to be candid about their strengths and their inadequacies (Tracy, 2010). Throughout the research, I was conscious of being honest with myself, with my participants, and with the readers of this report. To this end, I have attempted to provide a readable and honest account of some of the difficulties I experienced in the recruitment process, and my reflections on why this might have happened. When I met with the participants, I allowed a period of time for us to become comfortable with one another, and for them to ask me about myself and my research before we started the interview itself. Sincerity also requires a researcher to be transparent about the research process, and the decisions made during this process, including challenges faced along the way (Tracy, 2010). The last section of this Methods chapter provides a detailed account of my analysis process, describing some of the important decisions I made along the way. In this way, I have demonstrated my sincerity (Tracy, 2010) as well as helping readers to follow the process (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Throughout this Methods chapter, I have used the first person voice, which is an effective way to remind readers of my presence and of my influence (Tracy, 2010).

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 Study context

My focus for this thesis was nurse managers who had experience of using informal mediation to address interpersonal conflict arising among members of their teams. Interpersonal conflict in the nursing context is a problem both globally and in New Zealand (Hutchinson, 2009; Jenkins, 2011; Moloney, Boxall, Parsons, & Sheridan, 2018). In addition to the general consequences of interpersonal conflict which were discussed in the literature review, interpersonal conflict between nursing practitioners has been linked to poor teamwork, which can lead to ineffective delivery of care, ultimately compromising patient

safety (Iglesias & de Bengoa Vallejo, 2012; Klinkhamer, 2015). Interpersonal conflict has also been shown to be a factor in nurses choosing to leave a job, and even the profession, and this is of importance given that nursing is a vital component of healthcare, and that there are prospects of a shortage of nurses in New Zealand in the near future (Moloney et al., 2018).

Effective intervention by immediate line managers has been identified as vitally important when there is a conflict situation and the parties to the conflict do not have the knowledge or time to deal with properly, thus leading to the possibility of it getting worse (Moloney et al., 2018). Nurse managers have a complex and demanding role, in which they must balance clinical leadership with administrative and managerial functions (Rankin, McGuire, Matthews, Russell, & Ray, 2016). In the nursing environment, clinical leadership is important for effective ward management and thus for patient care (Rankin et al., 2016), and it has been suggested that this aspect of the role suffers when senior charge nurses need to devote significant time to the management of their teams, with this dual requirement creating personal stress and an increased workload for senior charge nurses (McWhirter & Scholes, 2009). For these reasons, I was interested in finding out more about nurse managers' perception of their role as conflict managers, and specifically as informal mediators.

3.2.2 Participants

3.2.2.1 Criteria for participants

I used purposive sampling, as I needed to select participants according to their potential ability to answer the research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The Participant Information Sheet (Appendix A) detailed criteria for people interested in participating, as well as providing information about the interview process itself. In order to answer the research questions, I needed to interview nurse managers, with a minimum of six months' managerial experience, who had used informal mediation as a means of addressing interpersonal conflict among their teams during the previous two years. It is accepted that people take six months to adjust to a new job (Nelson & Sutton, 1991), so it is important that this period is complete before people are asked about their experiences and perceptions. I used the term "facilitated discussion" in conjunction with the term "informal mediation" in case prospective participants did not consider their interventions to be "mediations," thinking that mediation refers solely to a process conducted by specialist outsiders.

In planning the research, I had to decide on the number of people I needed to interview for the purposes of my research. This is important for planning purposes, such as estimating timelines and budgets (Hagaman & Wutich, 2017). Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) used the concept of data saturation to indicate that twelve interviews are sufficient to gain an understanding of common perceptions and understandings if the group has a level of homogeneity. Given the delineated parameters for recruitment, it seemed likely that the group would have a high level of homogeneity, so at the beginning of the study, I decided that I would aim ideally for twelve to fifteen participants.

3.2.2.2 Recruitment

As my particular focus was nurses in managerial roles, I started off approaching two local District Health Boards (DHBs) for permission to recruit within their organisations.

Before obtaining permission to recruit, I was required to complete the ethics approval process for each DHB. This is discussed in further detail in the Ethics section below. I then approached the Director of Nursing in each organisation and discussed my research with her. In both organisations, this person acted as a "champion" for my research (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p.450), helping me to disseminate information about the study. In one organisation, the Director of Nursing invited me to address a charge nurse meeting, and to distribute a notice of the intended research.

I also placed an invitation to participate on the public Facebook page "New Zealand, please hear our voice," (a page where nurses can share stories about their experiences and their profession), as well as on my LinkedIn page. These invitations are appended at the end of this thesis as Appendices B and C. I hoped to recruit further participants in this way, but actually managed to recruit none at all. Finally, I used a form of snowball sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2015): I approached people I knew with connections in the nursing world, and they contacted people from their networks who were interested in participating. I then approached them, first by a phone call, then with an email letter of introduction outlining the research and inviting them to take part.

In total, I was able to recruit and interview eleven participants. I started analysing the interviews after four, and observed no new themes from the eighth interview. After 11 interviews, I was confident that no new themes were emerging, and it was therefore clear that data saturation had been reached (Guest et al., 2006), and that the eleven interviews were

sufficient for me to gain an understanding of common perceptions, given the homogeneity of the group.

3.2.2.3 Reflections on difficulties in recruiting participants

Following my address at the charge nurses' meeting in the first DHB I approached (DHB1), I received messages from five nurse managers indicating that they would like to participate in the research. From there, it was a simple matter of arranging suitable times and places with them, and planning two small journeys. Within two weeks, I had planned five interviews (four scheduled in March and one in May 2018), and I was convinced that more would follow easily and quickly.

Approval from the other DHB (DHB2) took much longer, however, and I was not able to start recruiting there until the end of May 2018. This coincided with an increase in industrial action on the part of New Zealand nurses, following the rejection of two employer offers by members of the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) (NZNO, 2018, 27 May). Negotiations between the employers and the members of NZNO continued for several weeks after this, and culminated in a nation-wide nurses' strike on 12 July 2018 ("Completely undervalued", 2018, 12 July). The period of negotiations and industrial action ended on 7 August 2018, when 30 000 members of the NZNO accepted a new pay agreement, voting by online ballot (Cook, 2018). Effectively, this meant that much of my recruiting period in DHB2 overlapped with these negotiations, and I am convinced that nurses nation-wide did not have the time nor the wherewithal to respond to them.

My recruitment endeavours through the "New Zealand, please hear our voice" page were similarly difficult. Although I heeded the advice given by the page administrators to hold the advertisement until after the pay offer was made, there was no response to the invitation, beyond one or two "likes." As a last resort, I launched the LinkedIn campaign after this period, and specifically targeted nurse managers in the heading. I recruited nobody through this medium, until one of my supervisors personally sent a message to a contact of hers. This resulted in one participant being recruited.

Apart from the timing issues, I think that the low response rate was also related to the fact that very few managers actually mediate disputes between members of their teams. A reason for this might be that people lack training and confidence to conduct informal mediations, which are not part of the standard managerial toolkit in New Zealand. It is also

possible that there are organisational reasons for the lack of managerial mediation. One executive leader of a large DHB answered my LinkedIn post with the following words:

> We aim for low level where possible and where both agree, but unfortunately are increasingly finding that staff will go to non-union advocates and allege we forced them into it and didn't allow representation.

In the era of #MeToo, there is an increasing distrust of processes which involve confidentiality undertakings, which happen behind closed doors, and which are often perceived of as favouring employers or stronger parties (Bates, 2019; Smith, 2018). I wondered whether this, too, might explain a tendency of employees to seek representation and formal processes, and of managers to avoid informal mediation.

3.2.3 Interviews

Interviews allowed me the opportunity to gather "rich, in-depth, qualitative data" as well as allowing me to build trust and rapport with the participants (O'Leary, 2014, p. 217). Semi-structured interviews are popular instruments for qualitative research by virtue of their flexibility and versatility (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). Designing a semi-structured interview allowed me sufficient structure to address specific facets of the research question, while also providing sufficient openness for participants to add new meanings to the topic being studied, and for me to explore these meanings with the participants (Galletta, 2016).

3.2.3.1 Designing the interview guide

In drafting the interview guide, I bore in mind that it was an "integral tool" (Krauss et al., 2016, p. 246) for my data-collection process, and that its purpose was to provide me with a level of consistency in conducting interviews (Cridland, Jones, Caputi, & Magee, 2015). It needed to provide a structure for exploring the research area with the participants, rather than a list of questions to be asked and answered in a prescriptive way (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

In order to design an interview guide for semi-structured interviews, I needed to be able to rely on my previous knowledge of the subject in order to determine at least part of the phenomenon to be studied prior to the interview (Kallio et al., 2016; Turner, 2010). This meant that the literature review was a vital part of the process (Krauss et al., 2009). In the current research, I developed the interview guide after drafting the literature review so that I had access to a wide range of information about the subject to be addressed. The connections between the interview guide questions and the literature are shown in Table 1.

Table 1*: Relationship between interview questions and literature*

Interview Guide Questions	***Literature consulted***
WORKPLACE CONFLICT	
Can you tell me about your views on conflict in general? / Do you primarily view conflict as positive of negative?	Arenas, Léon-Pérez, Munduate, and Medina (2015); Boulle, Goldblatt, and Green (2008, 2015); Cloke (2001); Cloke and Goldsmith (2011); Fisher, Ury and Patton (2012); Glasl (1982); Saam (2010); Ury, Brett, and Goldberg (1989); Zapf and Gross (2001).
Why do you think conflict occurs in your workplace?	Arnett (2006); De Dreu and Gelfland (2008a); McKenzie (2015); Wilkin (2017).
Can you tell me a bit about the sorts of conflict that arise in your workplace?	Arenas et al. (2015); Jimmieson, Tucker and Campbell (2017); Loughry and Amason (2014); Zapf and Gross (2001).
Can you tell me about your role in conflict management and prevention when it comes to conflicts/ disputes within your team?	Arnold (2007); Cohen(1999).
MEDIATION/ INFORMAL FACILITATION	
I'm interested to learn how you find out about conflicts/ disputes within your team.	Giebels and Janssen (2005); Karambayya and Brett (1989); O'Donnell (2009); Poitras, Hill, Hamel, and Pelletier (2015); Saam (2010); Teague and Roche (2012).
Can you talk to me about your decision-making process when a conflict is brought to your attention? How do you decide what to do?	Arnold (2007); Cohen (1999); Goldblatt (2006); Kasserman (2016); Khan (2012); O'Donnell (2009); Poitras et al (2015); Saam (2010); Teague and Roche (2012).
In general, how useful do you find informal facilitation meetings in dealing with interpersonal conflict?	Boulle et al. (2008); Giebels and Janssen (2005); Hutchinson (2009); Jenkins (2011); Karambayya and Brett (1989); O'Donnell (2009); Poitras et al. (2015).
Can you tell me a bit more about the situations where you think they are useful? (and where they are not?)	As above
Now I want you to think about a facilitation meeting which you think was successful: ➢ What specific things did you do which made it successful? ➢ Was there anything specific the parties did which contributed to the success of the meeting?	Boulle et al. (2015); Moore (2014); Poitras et al. (2015).

What are the aspects of these facilitated meetings which you find challenging? How do you deal with these challenges?	Boulle et al. (2008, 2015); Fisher et al. (2012); Moore (2014); Poitras et al. (2015).
Are there any aspects of the organisation which make your role as a conflict manager easier? Can you tell me about them?	Khan (2012); Saundry, Jones, and Wibberley (2015); Teague and Roche (2012).
Are there any aspects of the organisation which make this role more difficult? Can you tell me about them?	Khan (2012); Saundry, Jones, and Wibberley (2015); Teague and Roche (2012).
MANAGEMENT AND MEDIATION	
How would you describe your management style in general?	Bass and Riggio (2005); Saeed, Almas, Anis-ul-Haq, and Niazi (2014)
How would you describe your rapport with your team members?	Bass and Riggio (2005); Saeed et al. (2014); Stanley and Algert (2007)
Can you tell me a bit about the methods you use to reach decisions with your team?	Bass and Riggio (2005); Saeed et al. (2014); Stanley and Algert (2007)
In what ways do you think that your management style influences the way you approach conflict in your team?	Arnold (2007); Bass and Riggio (2005); Poitras et al. (2015); Saeed et al. (2014); Stanley and Algert (2007).
Can you talk me through the expectations that the organisation has of you as a conflict manager?	Arnold (2007); Cohen (1999); Kasserman (2016); Khan (2012); O'Donnell (2009); Poitras et al. (2015); Teague and Roche (2012).
Can you tell me about any reservations you might have about your role as a conflict manager?	Karambayya and Brett (1989); Khan (2012); Nehles, van Riemsdijk, Kok, and Looise (2006); Poitras et al. (2015); Saundry et al. (2015); Teague and Roche (2012).

I designed the interview schedule so that the questions led the research towards addressing the research topic (Krauss et al., 2009). In a semi-structured interview, the questions need to provide the opportunity for conversation to flow (Dearnley, 2005), and to move easily from one topic to another (Astedt-Kurki & Heikkinen, 1994). Open-ended questions ("Can you tell me a bit about the sorts of conflict that arise in your workplace?") were included to encourage participants to talk about their experiences, and also to determine the order in which subsequent questions would be asked (Dearnley, 2005). This flexibility allowed for a level of consistency between the interviews, and also provided an opportunity for individual and in-depth discussion (Cridland et al., 2015; Krauss et al., 2009).

My interview guide was designed based on the literature review and the research questions. My three main areas of interest were the participants' perceptions and experiences related to workplace conflict in general; the use of informal mediation/ facilitated discussions by managers in addressing this conflict; and the relationship between management and mediation roles. Consequently, I arranged my interview guide into these three sections. In light of the fact that people often find it hard to talk about conflict management (Stanley & Algert, 2007), I included a question which invited participants to reflect on an informal mediation which had gone particularly well, and to identify attitudes and actions which they regarded as having contributed to this event's success.

In formulating the guide, I was mindful of the fact that this had to be carefully crafted, as the quality of the interview guide has an impact both on the way the interview is implemented and on the quality of the analysis (Kallio et al., 2016). Dearnley (2005) urges the use of open-ended questions which are participant-oriented, clearly worded, and which do not lead the participant's response in a particular direction. Some researchers recommend the use of two levels of questions – main themes and follow-up questions (Kallio et al., 2016). The main themes apply to the main concept being examined, while the follow-up questions are used to clarify participants' understanding of the main themes (Turner, 2010). It is possible to design the follow-up questions in advance, or to ask them spontaneously, as the interview unfolds (Rabionet, 2011; Whiting, 2008). The majority of the questions in my interview guide were main theme questions ("In general, how useful do you find informal facilitation meetings in dealing with interpersonal conflict?"). I included some possible follow-up questions (*Can you tell me a bit more about the situations where you think they are useful?" "And where they are not?")* to act as prompts during the interview. During the interview, I used some of these follow-up questions, and it was sometimes necessary for me to devise spontaneous probes in order to clarify the main questions for the participants. This was generally done in response to the participants asking for clarification, and it was also done when I sought further detail on a response to a main question.

3.2.3.3 Pilot interview

I conducted a pilot interview before commencing my data collection. A pilot interview provides an opportunity for a researcher to check for ambiguities and difficult questions, to discard unnecessary or ambiguous questions, and to check the timing of the interview, in order to decide whether it is reasonable given participants' time commitments

(Chenail, 2011; Krauss et al., 2009). It also allows a researcher to gauge whether the questions have the capacity to generate an adequate range of answers (Chenail, 2011).

For the pilot interview, I approached a manager in a similar role to that held by nurse managers in hospital settings. I ran through the entire interview, including the consent and information process, and asked for her feedback on the interview. During the interview, I had the opportunity to ask a number of follow-up questions. During the feedback, the interviewee advised that she had found the interview to be logical and fairly straightforward to answer. I was happy with the timing of the interview, which took 45 minutes in total. I did not feel the need to make any changes to the interview guide. Following the pilot interview, I listened to the recording, which was entirely audible. This meant that I could rely on the recording equipment which I had used.

3.2.3.4 Conducting the interviews

Ten out of eleven interviews were conducted face-to-face, with me travelling to a location convenient to the participants. Generally, this involved me travelling to their workplace, in order to fit into their schedule. At the workplace, most participants had access to their own office space, where we conducted the interview – although one participant chose to meet me in the hospital café. The meetings were arranged individually with the participants concerned, following initial contact. I met one participant at her home, as she was on maternity leave, and I conducted one interview over the phone as that participant was located too far away for me to travel there.

During the interviews, it was necessary for me to reflect both 'in-action' and 'on-action' (Moore, 2014), and to be aware of the ways that my background and understanding could affect my conduct and my questions during the interview (Sorsa, Kiikkala, & Åstedt-Kurki, 2015). As I had identified myself as a mediator in my introductions, I had to be prepared for the fact that participants might seek my advice or opinion relating to their mediation roles, and I needed ensure that this did not result in my dominating the interview, nor in my obtaining data that was not relevant to my study. I tried to ensure that we focused on the material in the interview guide during the main part of the interview, with the possibility for extended discussion (if time allowed and the participant sought it) at the end. My intention was to create a collaborative atmosphere, where we could work together in a way that would expand our understanding of the issues concerned (Denzin & Lincoln,

2013a). Given that I am a complete outsider to the world of nursing and healthcare, it was not hard to create an atmosphere of mutual curiosity between myself and the participants.

The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. With the participants' permission, I recorded the interviews using a portable digital voice recorder, in order to transcribe them verbatim for analysis.

3.3 Ethics

I obtained a Low Risk Ethics Notification from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, and this notification is appended at the end of this project (Appendix D). Despite the low risk assessment, there were a range of ethical considerations, both general to conducting research and specific to this research and to my values, both as a researcher and a mediator.

In planning the interviews and considering the way that I would approach participants and deal with them, I bore in mind the guidelines for ethical interviewing and research practice (Massey University, 2017). It was important for the participants to be provided with full information about the study and how I planned to use the data (Bryman & Bell, (2015), and these details were included in the Participant Information Sheet, which was emailed to each participant. In particular, participants were informed that interviews could be conducted face-to-face or via telephone or Skype (Peters & Halcomb, 2015), according to what was convenient for each of them and for me. I also provided assurances that all identifying details would be anonymised, and that participants would receive a report on the findings if desired.

At the beginning of the interview, I read through the Participant Information Sheet with participants and checked if they had any questions. Participants were also advised at the outset of the interview that they could withdraw from the study at any time, and that they could choose not to answer particular questions or explore particular areas (Massey University, 2017). Informed consent is an important part of ethical interviewing (Bryman & Bell, 2015; O'Leary, 2014; Saunders & Lewis, 2012) and I sought express consent from the participants at the beginning of the interview, including their consent to record the interview (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

I also had to ensure that I promoted the integrity of my research and the reputation of my organisation (Massey University, 2017), so I endeavoured to provide accurate information about my work. I was aware that the participants in my study were busy people with many responsibilities, and that they were engaged in public service. I tried, therefore, to

ensure that I was punctual in my timings and that the interviews were scheduled according to the participants' convenience – both time and place. Furthermore, I was responsible, as a researcher, for minimising the risk of harm to myself, so I had to ensure that I did not place myself in dangerous situations (Massey University, 2017). I therefore avoided situations where I disregarded my personal safety by – for example – driving to a distant and unknown location to interview a participant (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). As indicated above, I scheduled ten of the eleven interviews in or close to my home town, and conducted the distant one by telephone.

In addition to approval from the Massey University Ethics Committee, I was also required to obtain ethics approval from both of the DHBs from which I hoped to recruit participants. In order to respect the confidentiality of these organisations, I have not included these agreements in this thesis.

The ethics approval process from the organisations took significantly longer than I expected. These applications entailed my submitting detailed information, including a summary of the research, proof of Massey ethics approval, the consent form, a summary of the literature review, the Participant Information Sheet and (for one) a copy of the interview guide and a confidentiality agreement. In the case of one DHB, I had to negotiate a contractual agreement between that organisation and the University, and to provide detailed information on how I intended to schedule the interviews. I was also required to obtain the endorsement of the Māori Research Review Board, and completing the forms for this process enabled me to focus my approach to the interviews in a coherent way. I consulted Dr. Farah Palmer, who explained tikanga Māori protocols relevant to the interviewing process. I decided that I would strive to conduct the interviews on a face-to-face basis (korero kanohi ki te kanohi) on the basis that these types of conversations build trusting relationships (Faircloth, Hynds, Jacob, Green, & Thompson, 2016). To minimise misunderstandings, I tried to establish a respectful, trusting rapport with participants so that participants were comfortable and confident in disclosing information (Madison, 2005). To build rapport and show my appreciation for the participants' time and effort, I offered a small koha in the form of home baking or a jar of home-made preserves at the beginning of the interview. I also decided that I would open the interviews with a welcome and a brief introduction to myself, where I come from and what I was trying to find out, and that I would share a hot (or cold) drink with each participant, as well as some home baking, in order to create a feeling or collaboration and community.

These practices are also in line with my belief, as stated above, that research is a collaborative process undertaken by the researcher and the participants, and these align with the values underlying my mediation practice: the principles of respect and of doing no harm to the parties, and the parties' right to self-determination (Boulle et al., 2008, 2015). In preparing for the interviews, I recognised the similarity between these values and those of manaakitanga, with its emphasis on respect and caring for the whole person, and tino rangatiratanga, which values a person's right to self-determination. I tried to uphold these values in the interview setting too, creating an interview environment where the participants felt valued and safe. In this way, I hoped to approach the project as a collaborative venture, where I (a mediator) was learning about the lives and practices of managers mediating conflicts in a nursing environment, thus building understanding across these fields.

I also had to pay detailed attention to the issue of confidentiality. While my Participant Information Sheet stated that all identifying details of participants would be removed when I wrote up my research, I was also required to sign a confidentiality agreement specific to one DHB. This meant I had to ensure that the participants understood that their identities would be anonymised; and that details identifying the DHB would be expunged. I also needed to make sure that the details of any disputes that they discussed would have identifying details removed. There was, in addition, the ethical consideration that mediation is a confidential process (Boulle et al., 2008, 2015), and that one of the questions in my interview schedule asked managers to talk about a mediation they had conducted and what went well or not. In the interview process, we managed this by my assuring the participants that the information would be used for research purposes only, and by the mediating managers ensuring that they provided no names regarding the disputes they had mediated.

3.4 Data analysis

Following transcription of the interviews, I analysed them using the software tool NVivo 12. I used a thematic analysis process, following the six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation with the data; generation of initial codes; search for themes; reviewing of themes; definition and naming of themes; and production of the report.

3.4.1 Familiarisation with the data

Initially, I familiarised myself with the data by reading the transcriptions repeatedly, and by checking the transcripts back against the recordings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I made notes on the prints of the transcripts to keep track of my thoughts during this process.

3.4.2 Generation of initial codes

Once I felt I was familiar with the data, I moved onto the second step of the process, which involved the generation of initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding was an iterative and reflexive process using a hybrid approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) which incorporated both template analysis (Brooks, McCluskey, Turley, & King, 2015) and inductive coding (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This process is described in more detail below.

In the initial stages of coding, I utilised template analysis (Brooks et al., 2015). This involved my identifying a set of themes in advance, assessing them as likely to be relevant to the analysis. In order to address the first research question pertaining to the mediation skills which are important for managerial mediation, from the mediating manager's perspective, I used the outline provided by Poitras et al. (2015). This framework was suitable because the authors had already explored the research question I was addressing, but from the perspective of employees. For the second research question, relating to the ways that the role of the manager influences the manager's ability to conduct managerial mediation, I used the core features of mediation as described by prominent mediation scholars (Boulle et al., 2008, 2015; Moore, 2014). I also included some of the important aspects of the relationship between management and conflict management that I had identified in the literature review. I included the code for "Impartiality" in both research questions at this stage, as it was included in the literature for each template. Although I stayed open to new themes emerging, utilising these frameworks as an initial coding template allowed me to draw comparisons between different perspectives. This provided me with an initial coding framework, based on the research question and the literature consulted. Table 2 depicts my first set of codes and its relationship to the literature:

Table 2: ***Managers as mediators - initial codes***

Code	Literature
Research question 1:	**What skills are required in effective managerial mediation, from the mediating manager's perspective?**
Behavioural skills	(Boulle et al., 2008; Fisher et al., 2012; Poitras et al., 2015)

Code	Literature
encouraging exploration of solutions	
encouraging perspective taking	
facilitating implementation	
Cognitive skills	(Boulle et al., 2008, 2015; Poitras et al., 2015)
identifying underlying interests	
understanding concerns	
Emotional skills	(Boulle et al., 2008, 2015; Poitras et al., 2015)
accounting for emotions	
reframing expression of emotions	
Research question 2:	**How does the role of the manager influence the ability to conduct managerial mediation?**
Impartiality	(Boulle et al., 2008, 2015; O'Donnell, 2009; Poitras et al., 2015)
How managers become aware of conflict	(Saam, 2010; Teague & Roche, 2012)
notice it themselves	
notified by others	
Management style	(Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Poitras et al., 2015; Saeed et al., 2014)
Nature of dispute	(Arenas et al., 2015; Jimmieson et al., 2017; Loughry & Amason, 2014)
Relationship	(Arenas et al., 2015; Jimmieson et al., 2017; Loughry & Amason, 2014)
Task	(Arenas et al., 2015; Jimmieson et al., 2017; Loughry & Amason, 2014)
Timing of intervention	(Arenas et al., 2015; Glasl, 1982; Saam, 2010; Zapf & Gross, 2001)

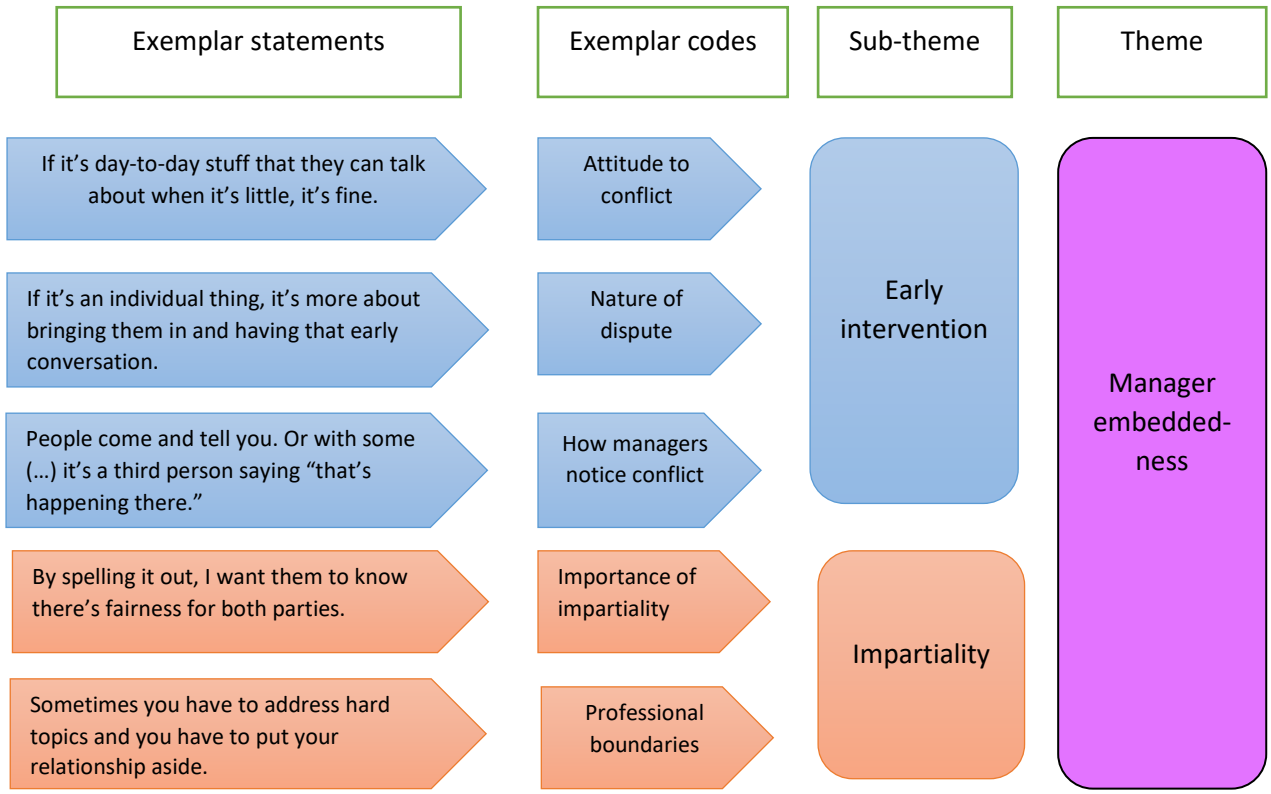
While the initial coding was guided by this set of codes, it was not confined by it. As I read the transcripts, I also allowed developed new codes for segments of the data which

described something new, or which expanded on the preliminary codes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This part of the coding was, therefore, an inductive, data-driven approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In order to add rigour to this part of the process (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017), I kept a record of the changes made and the reasons why, as I expanded the framework. This also recognised my active role in the research, as the choice of codes was a result of a series of judgements and decisions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A significant addition to the initial framework, for example, was a code for "Trust," which I initially included in RQ2 as it was spontaneously mentioned by a number of participants in connection with "Management Style." I also included new codes for "Organisational context" and "Values" because a number of the participants talked about how important it was that their conflict management role was supported by organisational values and by senior management. Toward the end of coding, I moved "Management Style," along with "Trust" to RQ1. I saw that "Management Style" and "Trust" were more closely allied to RQ1 than to RQ2, in that a particular managerial approach appeared to lay a foundation for managers to conduct managerial mediation: without that foundation, which included a trusting relationship between managers and their team members, the mediation skills outlined by Poitras et al. (2015) were seen as insufficient for a successful mediation process by a manager. I continued with this iterative process until I had coded all of the transcripts.

3.4.3 Search for themes

Once the codes had been identified across the data-set, I started the process of searching for themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). During the iterative process of coding, as described above, I had started thinking about themes and relating them to the research questions (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018), but the development of themes began in earnest once all the transcripts had been coded. During this stage of the analysis process, I kept a record of decisions made, in order to recognise my important active role in identifying the themes, deciding which ones were important and relevant when related to the research question, and, ultimately, describing them to the reader (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Figure 2 provides some insight into my decision-making process, and aims to facilitate the reader's ability to understand this process and to decide whether it is credible (Nowell et al., 2017).It provides an example of how I developed the theme of "Manager embeddedness".



Template for figure adapted from O'Brien and Linehan (2018)

Figure 2: **Example of coding process**

3.4.4 Review of themes

The analysis process was both iterative and reflexive (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), as I slowly made sense of the data and related the concepts to the research questions, attempting to refine the provisional themes into broad, non-repetitive, and relevant themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Braun and Clark (2006) point out that it is sometimes necessary to combine two provisional themes during this phase as it becomes evident that they are not separate and discrete themes but actually form one theme. In my analysis, for example, I had specified that the idea of "Self-determination and empowerment" was a discrete theme, but subsequently decided that it formed part of the broader theme of "Management style," as the text segments indicated a broad managerial approach rather than a specific intervention.

3.4.5 Definition and naming of themes

This stage of the process involves development of the themes in a way which illuminates the relationships between the them as well as the ways that they are related to the

research questions (Crowe et al., 2015). In the case of this study, this phase was prolonged and tortuous as I moved themes around and sought to assign pertinent and succinct names to them in order to give the future reader an idea of the content of the theme. While I originally had included the idea of "Impartiality" as part of "Mediation skills" because Poitras et al.'s (2015) study had identified impartiality as an important attitude for managerial mediation, I decided at this stage that it fitted better into the "Embeddedness" theme, as the role of the manager, embedded in the organisation, poses challenges for impartiality.

At the end of this stage, I had defined and named five themes, each with a range of subthemes. These are the final five themes that will be discussed in the Chapter 4 (Findings).

3.4.6 Production of the report

Once I had identified the themes above, and related them to the research questions (Nowell et al., 2017), I started the final synthesis and write-up of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006), being careful to remove identifying details of organisations and participants in order to preserve their anonymity. I assigned pseudonyms to each of the participants. In the write-up (Chapter 3: Findings), I included direct quotes from participants in order to give the reader a taste of the original texts (Nowell et al., 2017), and I attempted to illustrate the relationships between the themes and the research questions in order to create and interesting and convincing narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). For example, in the theme of "Embeddedness," I explained the connection between embeddedness, early intervention, and impartiality by using titles: "Embeddedness as an enabler of early intervention," and "Embeddedness as a challenge to impartiality." Once I had described the findings, I moved on to the Discussion chapter (Chapter 5: Discussion), and referred my findings back to the literature, in order to provide interpretations of the findings as well as exploring possible theoretical and practical contributions made by the findings (Nowell et al., 2017).

Chapter 4: Findings

The previous chapter, Chapter 3, described the research design of this thesis, and detailed the way that data was collected and analysed. It identified the main themes that emerged from the interviews, and related them to the research question. This chapter (Chapter 4: Findings) considers these themes in greater detail. First of all, there is an overview of the participants who took part in the study, and this is followed by an overview of the range of interventions used by the participants in addressing conflict arising between members of their teams. The two research questions are then reiterated, and the themes relevant to each question are discussed in turn,

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 Overview of participants

In total, eleven participants participated in this study. While I did not intend this to be a women-only study, all of the participants were women. Given that the nursing workforce in New Zealand is overwhelmingly female, with only 9% being male (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2017), the predominance of female participants is unsurprising.

While all participants had held a managerial position for at least six months, there was a huge range of years of experience, both as managers and as mediating managers – ranging from one year to 26 years. Several of the participants who have addressed large numbers of disputes are managers of big teams: Pat, for example, has over 80 direct reports; Suzanne has 77 direct reports; Trish has 27 direct report; and Barbara has 26 direct and 11 indirect reports.

The participants in the study talked about two different kinds of informal mediation. Some described a form of shuttle mediation, where they discuss issues with each party separately and then convey messages between the two. Others used a more conventional form of mediation, where they hold separate meetings with each party and then get the two parties together in a room, with the manager who facilitates a discussion between them. Most mediations arose from observations, or from informal complaints, and were generally regarded as extremely low level.

Table 4 on the following page provides an introduction to the participants, using their pseudonyms, and to their experience in management and conflict management. The leadership roles identified in the diagram all refer to managerial positions, where the nurse

managers are in charge of particular teams. Their role includes coordination of the nurses in their team, as well as dealing with complaints and queries from these nurses. The different names for the roles result from differing conventions in various organisations and District Health Boards.

Table 3*: Overview of participants*

Participant number	Name	Gender	Role	Number of years in management	Number of dispute addressed using informal facilitated discussions	Shuttle mediation or joint meetings?
1	Emma	Female	Clinical nurse manager	20	Over 20	Joint meetings
2	Rachel	Female	Clinical nurse manager	1	3	Joint meetings
3	Barbara	Female	Clinical nurse manager	6	Over 20	Both
4	Kate	Female	Clinical nurse manager	4	2	Joint meetings
5	Pat	Female	Clinical nurse manager	7	“on a weekly basis”	Joint meetings
6	Jenny	Female	Senior nurse manager	26	“in some shape or form, I do it every day”	Both
7	Rebecca	Female	Charge nurse	8	5-10	Joint meetings
8	Fiona	Female	Nurse supervisor	5	Over 20	Shuttle mediation
9	Trish	Female	Nurse supervisor	5	“I’ve actually lost count.”	Shuttle mediation
10	Sally	Female	Clinical nurse manager	5	6	Joint meetings
11	Suzanne	Female	Charge nurse	6	“on a weekly basis”;	Shuttle mediation

4.1.2 Overview of managerial interventions in disputes

When managers become aware of disputes or conflict, they need to decide how they will intervene in order to manage the conflict, and whether they will deal with it informally or at a more formal level (Teague & Roche, 2012). The participants in this study described a scale of interventions from low and informal through to asking for help from senior management or referring the matter to HR (generally seen as a last resort), and indicated that they base their decisions on the nature of the conflict, and also on what the parties choose to do. Sally, for instance, explained that she will always ask parties: "What would you like me to do to get this resolved?" Pat, similarly, highlighted the fact that: "I actually ask them what they want me to do."

A number of participants indicated that – prior to deciding on process – they seek to find out what is really happening; they do their "homework" (Rebecca) in order to "get some context around it" (Rebecca). Participants regard this background work as vital if their staff are to feel supported, and in order to "show them that you are consistent" (Jenny). A few participants indicated that, on some occasions, they had no choice but to formalise the process. These included disciplinary actions involving union support and HR – where "there's a whole process that must be followed to ensure that it is done fairly" (Suzanne).

Participants in this study indicated that their choice of conflict management process depended strongly on the nature of the dispute in question, and the attitude of the parties involved. Table 5 below provides a summary of the types of interventions chosen by managers, and the circumstances in which they are used.

Table 4*: Choice of intervention*

Type of intervention	**When it is used**
Group meeting; hui	Process- related dispute; Disputes involving whole team.
Encouraging disputing parties to resolve dispute themselves.	Communication- or task-related dispute involving individuals.
Coaching	Communication, task, relationship disputes involving individuals
Talking to each party in turn; possibly relaying messages (shuttle mediation)	Communication, task, relationship disputes involving individuals
Informal mediation with joint meeting	Communication, task, relationship disputes involving individuals when parties request it, and show willingness to participate

Asking for help from senior management	Communication, task, relationship disputes involving individuals when the issue is more complex and parties are reluctant to engage with one another.
Referring the matter to HR	Disciplinary actions involving union support

Choosing an appropriate intervention is relevant to effective managerial mediation, because the way that third parties intervene in a conflict is likely to affect the quality of the resolution achieved, as well as the parties' perception of the fairness of the process and its outcome (Giebels & Janssen, 2005; Karambayya & Brett, 1989). As shown in Table 5, the managers in this study indicated a preference for informal mediated processes when the dispute is related to communication, task or relationship issues involving individuals, rather than whole groups. The participants indicated, further, that they will choose to hold a joint mediation meeting when the disputing parties request such a meeting, and show a willingness to participate.

4.2 Themes

4.2.1 Introduction to themes

The findings of this study were organised in a way that addresses the two main research questions.

Five primary themes were identified, as illustrated in Figure 3. In the discussion which follows, each theme is explored in the order presented in Figure 3. At the beginning of each theme, there is a diagram which illustrates the theme and the sub-themes which were identified in the analysis stage of the research. These diagrams set the scene for further exploration of the themes.

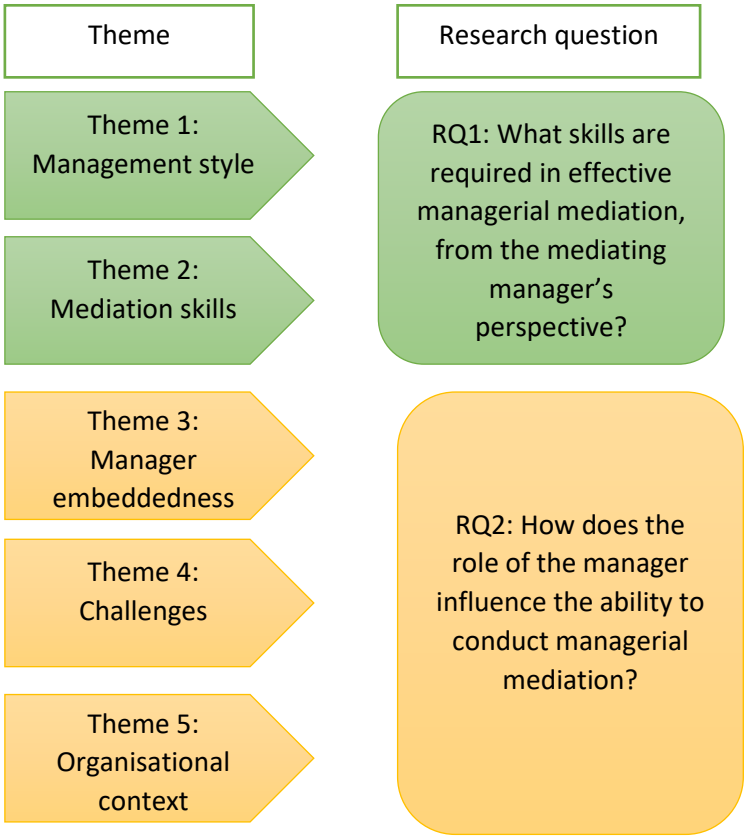


Figure 3: **Primary themes and research questions**

4.2.2 Themes pertaining to Research Question One

Research question one: What skills are required in effective managerial mediation, from the mediating manager's perspective?

4.2.2.1 Theme 1: Management style

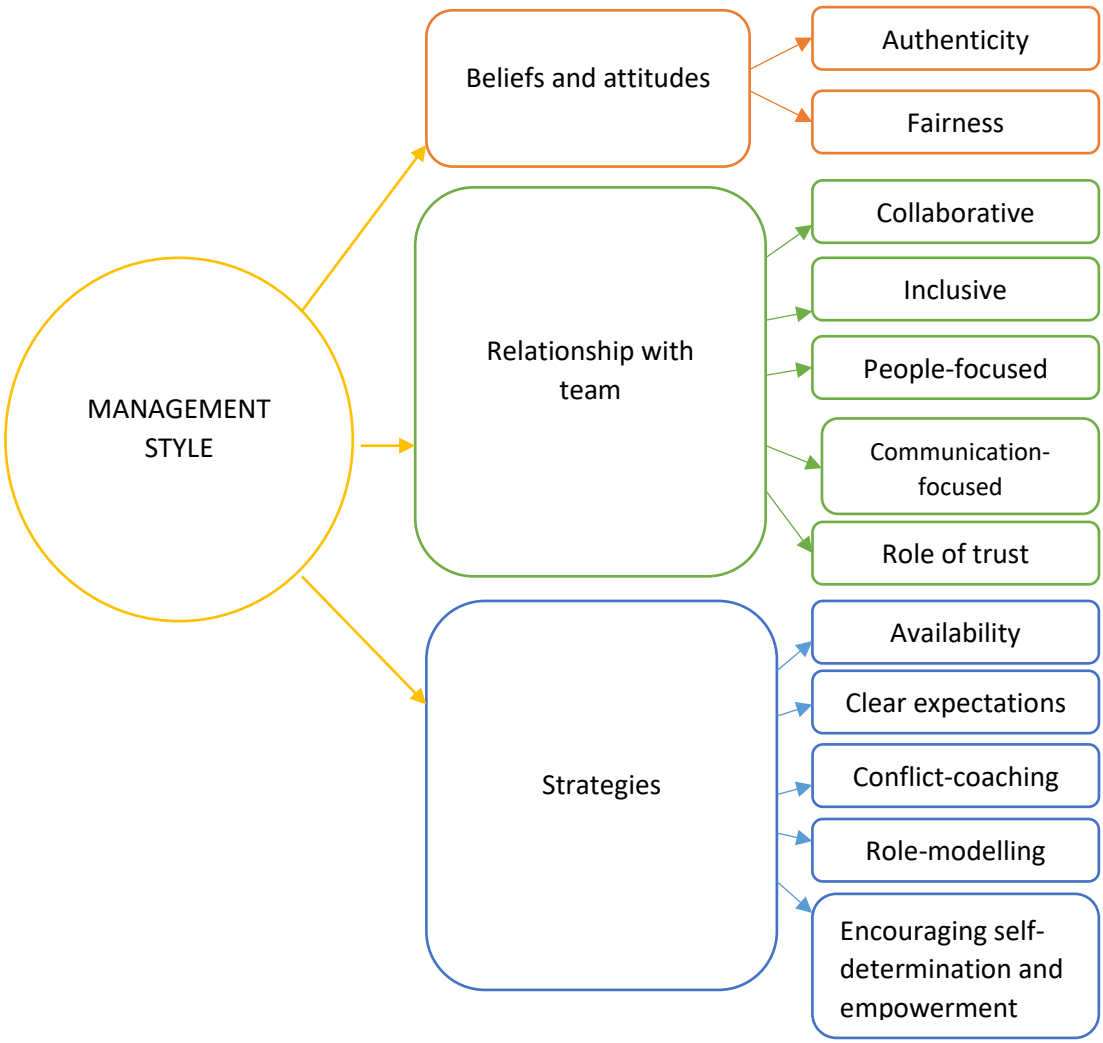


Figure 4: **Theme 1, Management style**

All eleven participants talked at length about their management style and about how they treated the members of their team in general. They regarded their management style as an essential part of their mediation role, as it laid the groundwork for effective managerial mediation, as well as playing a role in conducting managerial mediations. The way that they interacted with their team members on a day-to-day basis, and the processes they used for making day-to-day decisions affecting the teams, were seen as an integral to the creation of

an atmosphere in which managerial mediation could be undertaken in an effective way when conflict arose between members.

Three sub-themes emerged from the analysis relating to management style: beliefs and attitudes; relationships with team members; and strategies which they used in the exercise of the management role. Related to these themes were twelve third-order themes.

4.2.2.1.1 Beliefs and attitudes

Authenticity

Four out of eleven participants indicated that a sense of authenticity, or "realness" (Barbara) was important to them both in their day-to-day managerial role, and when they conduct managerial mediations. They explained that this authenticity is linked to the way they related to their team members, and that it is a powerful tool in conflict management. Barbara explained it in these words: "I usually find you can turn most things around with that realness, that caring, the genuineness." Kate explored the personal challenges she faced on becoming a manager, as she was concerned that she might be seen to be compromising her authenticity. For her "part of my management style is making sure that (…) I am authentic to who I am."

These participants also related authenticity to values. Barbara explained that her approach requires her to be honest with herself, describing her management style as involving "a lot of real honesty in myself, and what's my values and my integrity." Kate explained that, as a manager, she needs to find a way to balance her own values with the policies and expectations of the organisation, saying that "when you work in a values-based way, it's about finding that balance between the two worlds." She explained the relationship between her Māori worldview and her management style in these words:

> We talk about manaakitanga, which is about supporting, and being supportive. We talk about, so about respect, about manga tangata. You know about being respectful of each other, about maintaining dignity. (…)My whole career, well it's just naturally part of who I am, 'cause that's how I've been brought up, is based on a value base. And so it is, as a team (…) it's the expectation that, if we're talking about these values, we practice what we preach.

Fairness

Four participants indicated that fairness was an important part of their management style. This seemed to be related to the way that they treat people equally, without preference, and thus has certain links with the theme of impartiality discussed further on. This fostered an environment in which managers are able to conduct effective managerial mediations, because parties to a managerial mediation need to feel that the manager is not going to take sides, or listen to only one party.

For participants who regarded fairness as a part of their management style, the word "firm" invariably accompanied the term "fair". Both Suzanne and Barbara described themselves as "firm and fair," while Pat used the following words to depict her management style when describing how she built relationships with staff that fostered an environment suitable for managerial mediation:

> I've got this attitude in my management style. Not attitude as such but a style where I am firm in what I do, but I'm fair. I try to be firm, and I want to be as fair and open, that everybody can see it.

4.2.2.1.2 Relationship with team

In considering their management style, and how it relates to their effectiveness as managerial mediators, more than half of the participants described their rapport with their teams in terms of a people-focused, collaborative approach.

Collaborative

Four out of eleven participants described the way they collaborate with their team members. They indicated that this approach results in durable decisions, because "everyone feels a little bit more involved, and to see it through" (Trish). Pat explained that, when making day-to-day decisions which will affect her team members, she consults her team, "and see if they're meeting with what I think, and then I make my decision with their support, (…) their buy-in."

In a similar vein, Suzanne described a decision-making process based on questions to her staff about what they want to achieve, how to sort out problems, and how things could have been done differently. In this way, she attempts to "get the answers and results from them," so that – when it comes to the decision itself, "they actually feel like they have come up with all the answers." This collaborative style was said to help set the foundation for managerial mediation because mediation is a process based on collaborative problem-solving,

and is thus more likely to be effective if team members and their managers approach decisions in this way in other contexts too.

Inclusive

Six of the participants talked about their inclusive management style. Suzanne, for example, interpreted this as referring to an approach whereby all opinions are considered in day-to-day decision-making which affects the team, when she will "survey the staff and (…) get their views."

Other participants seemed to interpret inclusivity as an egalitarian approach to being a manager. Kate, for example, described her managerial role in terms of the waka model:

> A manager's no better off than the cleaner who cleans the toilets, because we all have a role to play. That's why the waka model is beautiful. Because we're all in a waka, playing a role. The cleaner's important as the CEO. You know if we don't have clean toilets and we don't have you know, toilet paper or whatever it may be, or clean environments for our patients, then that affects their health. It affects everybody's health.

Other participants were wary of being too close to their team members, particularly when it comes to a conflict management role. They expressed concerns about their ability to conduct effective managerial mediations if they are too closely involved with the parties. This tension was described by Fiona, for example, who indicated that she prefers it that "my staff see me as their supervisor, not as their friend." Jenny places more emphasis on trust and respect than on friendship, explaining that, given the existence of "trustful relationship", "even if they don't like me, they will respect me."

People-focused

A third of the participants regarded the relationships they have with their team members as very important to them in the way they carry out their role. In reflecting on what made them effective managers, and managerial mediators, participants described their management style as one that is focused on people. Sally indicated that she is "very people-focused," while Emma called herself "a people leader" and Pat explained that "I enjoy working with people," and, more specifically, that she enjoys the variety of personalities she encounters, and "the richness in the differences in people's behaviour".

Participants also described the way that they build these relationships. For some, it is a question of being available to their staff members. Rachel indicated that she makes sure "that I'm on the floor, that I'm around and I'm there." Others use more directed methods to ensure that they have some kind of relationship with their team members. Pat, who manages a very large team, for example, described her method of building "a professional relationship" with all of her team members:

> When we recruit them, I have meetings with them like every week, just to catch up with them, if things are going ok. Or if they are having any problems, or any complaints, anyway. So the first month I meet with them during their orientation. I meet with them just to catch up, you know weekly. And then I space it to about like, every fortnight.

There were also less formal ways of building relationships. Sally, for example indicated that she puts "a lot of time and energy into the people bit." She explained that she does this by getting to know about them and about their personal lives. She explained her approach like this:

> Getting to know the names of their children, so you can say: did you have a nice weekend? How's so-and-so? When they're off sick I would phone someone. In fact I'm going to get my phone over, so can we do something? You know saying; I'm sorry you're been unwell, how are you feeling today? You ready to be back?

<u>Communication-focused</u>

Open communication was described as a relevant skill for managerial mediation, specifically in facilitating early recognition of issues and disputes by managers (n=3). Open communication might involve a formal arrangement like a timed "handover" (Barbara) at a specific time to allow co-ordinators to "get the flavour of any issues at that point" (Barbara). It might also involve regular meetings where team members are encouraged to raise concerns and issues. Kate described these meetings like this: "We have it in our hui, all our meetings and we'll bring up, is there anything we need to talk about?"

Pat explained that she is not a fan of "grapevine management" and that she tries to avoid relying on hearsay. She described herself as "an open person in terms to discussions," indicating that she encourages her team members to raise issues directly with her to enable her to do her job properly. She explained that she tells her staff: "I need you to be as open as

possible, when it comes to any issues that you have. Because I don't want to be held responsible for things which I don't know."

The role of trust.

Six of the eleven participants spontaneously spoke about the importance of trust in the relationship between them and their teams – a factor that is a vital underpinning to the success of managerial mediation. This seemed to be of special significance in addressing disputes between team members. For example, Rebecca explained simply, "for a charge nurse to be effective in what he or she does, she needs to have the trust and respect of her staff." She elaborated on this concept in these words:

> [My staff] need to trust that I will do my job and support and back them. You know they need to trust that I have their best interests and the patient's best interests at heart. That I'm not just out to feather my own cap. They need to trust that when I say; I'm going into bat for you, that I am going in to bat 100%. And trust takes time.

Fiona linked trust to awareness of conflict, by explaining that:

> I've had to get them to trust me, to tell me, when any episode happened. And that was really hard, 'cause it, it kind of felt like they were, not tittle-tailing, but I had to stress then that it was really important that I knew. Because if I don't know I cannot fix it.

Participants also highlighted the fact that trust does not exist in a vacuum; that they could not expect their team members to trust them as mediators and conflict managers if they do not trust them as managers. Jenny explained how, when she is assisting people to see each other's perspective in the mediation process, the most important thing is "having a trustful relationship in the first place." She pointed out that this trust is built through integrity and consistency, which are part of being professional, saying: "You continuously show them that you are consistent. You have the integrity. You continue to be professional. It's when you move those goal posts that you come unstuck."

Some participants indicated that building caring relationships was important in cultivating trust. Sally, who described herself as "very people-focused" explained how she puts a lot of time and energy into building relationships with her team members, investing a lot of time in understanding their problems and complimenting them on their triumphs, and

on understanding what is going on their lives outside work. She indicated that this relationship-building makes her role as a conflict manager easier, because "when they do stuff up, then it is easier, 'cause they know that I have congratulated them when it went well."

Understanding team members' concerns about work – and life outside work – was described by a number of participants as important in building trust, and in helping people address conflict. Rachel described how she always tries to find out the reason for a person's behaviour by exploring what is going on in her or his life. She described a shuttle mediation where, "the first question I asked of the person that I had concerns about their behaviour I guess was; are you ok? Is there something going on for you because I'm concerned about the way you're talking to people."

Kate recounted a similar approach, where she will try and find out what is going on in a team member's life that may have affected their behaviour in an adverse way. She explained how she will invite the person for a korero:

> Then it might be they talk about what's happening at home, or there's some personal stuff going on, or whatever it may be. So then as the manager, I say; what are the things that we can work together on? If it's a work thing or if it's a personal thing, that we can support you.

4.2.2.1.3 Management strategies

Availability

As indicated above, some participants (n=6) regarded availability as an important part of relationship building, and in turn building the foundation for successful managerial mediation. A number of participants mentioned the importance of an open-door policy. Suzanne explained that this is vital "to encourage staff to come to us with any issues whatsoever," while Trish pointed out that an open door indicates that "I like to talk to people, I'm approachable." This was important both in identifying issues early, and in building relationships with staff that meant they would be comfortable discussing issues in a shuttle mediation or a joint meeting. Kate explained that, if people are having problems, an open door is important so that "they come in and then we might talk about it." Barbara emphasised that an open door policy is not only good for solving little problems as they arise, but "is worth it in terms of growing the team".

There is also the question of where the manager's office is situated. Rebecca described how her decision to move her office enhanced her availability to her team

members: “My office used to be hidden round a corner, and the staff never knew I was there. So I've moved it to the main corridor. I can hear what's going on. But they now know when I here, and when I'm not.”

Some participants indicated that untrammelled availability can take its toll, and that sometimes they need to withdraw a little. Rachel explained that, sometimes, she puts a “Do Not Disturb” sign on her door, because “it’s very easy to fall into the being too available, being too touchy-feely.” In a similar vein, Rebecca told me:” I have an open door policy, except when my door’s shut with the ‘Do Not Disturb’ sign on it.”

Clear expectations.

A third of the participants explained how their management style involves outlining their expectations clearly to their team members, and that this approach was also important in managerial mediation because parties understand what is expected of them during the process. Emma explained that this is important so that “they know where you’re going, and where you are planning on taking the team,” while Rebecca described the relationship between setting expectations and building trust:

> I have my expectations and I make that very clear to staff. I set my boundaries; I set my expectations with them. And I don't expect anything less. I also trust my staff to do their job. I trust my staff to take on board; ok these are set as expectations, this is how I'm going to work, this is how I'm going to behave, this is how I practice.

These participants also explored the idea that clear expectations make it easier for team members to recognise when there is an issue that needs to be dealt with, and assures team members that the managers will deal with it appropriately. Rebecca explained: “I think because I'm quite clear in my expectations, the staff know that if there's an issue I'll deal with it.” Sally explained that clear expectations also make her job easier in that “if people know you have standards that you're going to accept. You aren't going to be sucked into the nonsense.”

Conflict coaching

Several participants (n=5) described a conflict-coaching process, which they use as a preliminary to a managerial mediation. This involves helping disputing parties to develop strategies to cope with the dispute, and emerged as an important skill for managers as it prepared employees to participate meaningfully in the mediation process. Emma, for example

says she helps them "come up with some words" to encourage them to raise a difficult issue with the other party. A similar strategy was described by Rachel, who encourages staff members experiencing difficulties with another staff member to "talk to me about some strategies for talking to this person."

Participants also explained how they work with a disputing party separately in order to help them address a particular problem. Pat, for example, described a situation where she explained to a team member "that I'd actually noticed that she's got abrupt language" and that this language was affecting the morale of the team. Rebecca, too, sees her role as a manager as being "to coach (the staff member) in having a better awareness and understanding of how her communication impacts on us." She specifically sees this as part of her managerial role, and told me that "it's my role to coach and mentor (them)."

This type of coaching also involves some kind of follow-up for several participants. Rebecca, for example, encourages nurses she has coached "to come back (…) to give me feedback on how things are going."

Role modelling.

For a number of participants (n=3), modelling the behaviour they hope to see from their team members is an important skill for managerial mediation. Rachel, for example, described how she tries to "set the tone (…) role modelling what I want to develop," while Barbara focused more specifically on the way that she tries to act in a genuine and empathic way in difficult situations, in order to "model what I'm wanting as an outcome from conflict."

Kate linked role modelling with values, indicating that it is disingenuous to talk about values without enacting them. She expressed this by saying "I can't come in here as a manager and – you know – be abusive."

Encouraging self-determination and empowerment.

Six out of eleven participants described how they strive to encourage their team members to be self-sufficient and to feel empowered to make decisions on their own. In particular, they mentioned this quality in terms of communication. Rachel, for example, described her role as being "to empower them to have sound communication skills, and strategies to sort stuff out without needing me," in order to "cultivate independent critical thinkers."

Emma explained that this approach is central to her management style and that, when somebody comes to tell her about a dispute they are having with someone else, she asks them: “Have you been and had a discussion with that person involved and explained to them how you are feeling and why?” For her, it is important to “lead people so that they in turn can lead as well.”

While this approach sometimes means that parties can resolve the issues by themselves, it also paves the way for effective managerial mediation, because parties can use these communication skills to convey their perceptions of the situation to one another, and to the manager-mediator.

For some participants, encouraging self-determination also involves asking permission for certain interventions. Sally, for example, indicated that, in conflict situations, she asks disputing parties “What would you like me to do to get this resolved?” In a similar vein, Barbara explained that, in a managerial mediation process, she encourages parties to come up with their own solutions, while she acts as a facilitator of communication.

4.2.2.2 Theme 2: Mediation skills

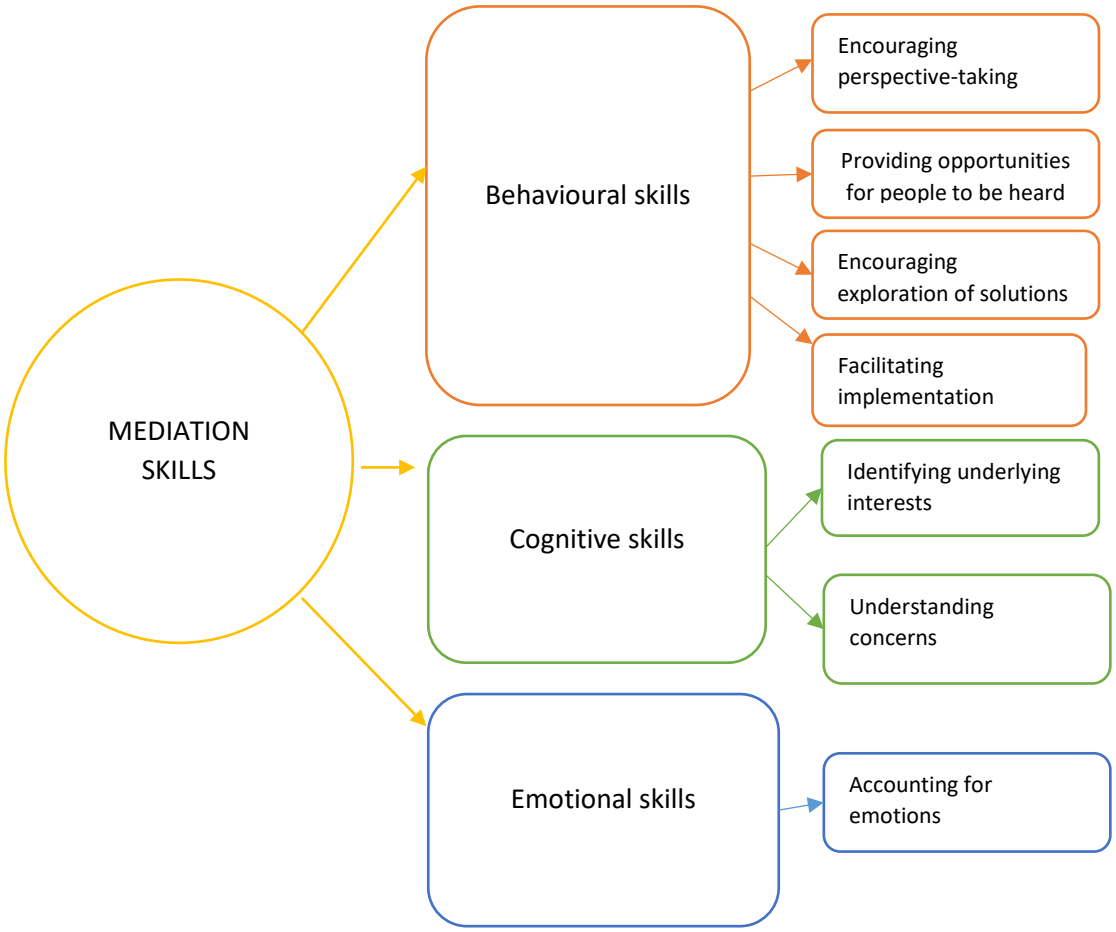


Figure 5: **Theme 2, Mediation skills**

The participants in the study described a number of skills which are important in conducting managerial mediation. The skills are relevant in addressing the first research question concerning the skills necessary for managerial mediation, from the mediating manager's perspective. These skills can be described broadly as behavioural, cognitive and emotional in nature, and are explored in further detail below.

4.2.2.2.1 Behavioural skills

Encouraging perspective taking

All eleven participants discussed ways in which they helped disputing parties to explore and share their perceptions as a way to unblock conflict during managerial mediation processes. Barbara, for example, described a process of full disclosure, where she encourages people to "put everything on the table, so we know what we're dealing with." In a similar

vein, Kate explained the way that she helps people to work through the problem by reflecting and clarifying what she hears them say:

> And saying; so I understand you know, like this is what, how you see things to be? Am I right? And I clarify. And then give them the opportunity to talk. And then work through. Ok well so what is it that we can do to support you? What is it that you can look at to perhaps change that behaviour?

Some participants described how they use questions to help people to examine their perceptions. Rachel, for example, told me:

> I think the big thing was the first question I asked of the person that I had concerns about their behaviour I guess was; are you ok? Is there something going on for you because I'm concerned about the way you're talking to people. And it was very interesting for me that when we started to unpick that, there was absolutely no awareness of the way that they were coming across. Absolutely no awareness.

A number of participants also described how they encourage parties to try and explain their perceptions to the person with whom they are in conflict. Emma, for example, explained how, in the first instance, "when somebody comes to see me it's like you know so have you been and had a discussion with that person involved and explained to them how you are feeling and why?" Similarly, Suzanne explained, "so first of all if somebody came to me, I would be asking them to approach their peer."

Emma also described how she will often use an objective criterion like patient safety to encourage people to examine their perceptions and their behaviour more carefully and to share these perceptions with the person with whom they are in conflict, by asking:

> How will it impact on your relationship when you work in the same clinic as she does and you work very closely to one another? "`Oh it's not the first time it just goes on all the time so you know I just get over it," and I said but I don't think you do and I'm wondering about how you working together how that might be for patients?

In order to use this criterion successfully, a certain amount of preparation is necessary, and Jenny emphasised to me "that sometimes you do have to use the hard data, you do. And do your homework really well before you go into that situation. Don't go in,

don't go in blind." This tactic encourages people to overcome their personal concerns about addressing their dispute, by placing it in a wider context – one that embraces professional conduct and patient care. In mediation terms, this facilitates the mediation process by assisting parties to focus on the problem and how to resolve it, rather than on the other person. This tactic is also used by Pat, who described her approach in these words:

> And I only say to my staff when they're actually having these personality clashes, we're not here to look at our personal issues, we're here for the work. So to me if you concentrate on the work which you're doing, and don't look at how it's being done, you might find that you give yourself more time to your workload, other than to concentrate on the other person's ideas.

The process of perspective-taking frequently happens (as described above) in one-on-one meetings with the disputing parties – usually starting with the one who has come to the manager in the first place. Sometimes, this sharing of perceptions can happen in a joint meeting, as described by Rebecca:

> I would chair the meeting. And it was generally an opportunity for how I did it. I would generally let the person who'd come to me in the first instance, speak, share their piece, share their thoughts, their feelings, what the issue for them was. I would let the other person respond to that.

Participants also talked about the ways that they encouraged each party to try to understand the perspective of the other party, to "see their behaviour from the other side" (Suzanne). They regard this as important, because "there's always two sides to every story as we know" (Emma). Pat stated bluntly that "I don't believe in resolutions involving one person."

<u>Providing opportunities for people to be heard</u>

Seven out of eleven participants commented on the importance of providing opportunities for people in conflict to be heard, both by them (the manager) and by the person with whom they are in conflict.

A number of participants highlighted the fact that they make this intention overt to the parties concerned, in order to encourage participation in the mediation process. Rachel explained to me that she starts her informal mediated sessions like this:

> I will start with a big sum up of why I've asked people to pop in, what I'm wanting to achieve from this? Which is you know to provide an opportunity for actually people to have their say and be heard. And so that we can actually try and understand where we're coming from.

Jenny described how she places "ground rules" around her informal mediations by telling parties that "everybody's say is important; you know everybody has a voice." Similarly, Rebecca indicated that she lays down clear rules for the discussions, explaining to the parties:

> Yes, you're going to get emotional, you know I understand that. But you need to share your thoughts and how you feel. And how that you know, how you feel is valid. And the other person needs to respect that."

More specifically, Sally described some of the micro-skills she uses in providing opportunities for people to be heard, and to feel that they have been heard. She described, for example, how she encourages parties to summarise what each other has said, so that they can show that they have been listening to each other.

Encouraging exploration of solutions

Eight out of eleven participants described the ways that they helped parties to explore solutions to their disputes. Several participants expressed clearly that they think that parties must come up with their own solutions if they are going to respect those decisions and abide by them. Rachel, for example, says that she asks the parties "have you thought about what we're going to do? So (…) try and get them to have that conversation so that I don't even have to." Similarly, Barbara described a "bottom-up approach" where she advises the parties: "You come up with the solutions, the brain storm. I'm not going to tell you what to do, but I'm here to facilitate."

By encouraging parties to explore their own solutions, participants felt that the parties are likely to abide by the decisions they make during the mediation process. Suzanne described positive outcomes from "trying to come up with a solution together." Similarly, Pat explained the advantages for her as a manager if people devise their own solutions: "You find that you are treading on very comfortable ground, if you have them come up with ideas on how they can manage it."

In some descriptions of this process, it is not easy to see where participants draw the line between leading the process, facilitating it, and stepping back to let parties explore possible solutions. Barbara explained her approach like this: "I will help facilitate and lead, to a point that you are then comfortable to take over." She explained, further, "I want to help solve it. I don't want to control this."

Rachel described quite a collaborative process, involving herself and the parties, whereby they will all share their perceptions in a way that "allows the opportunity to be able to (...) peel back the layers like an onion and sort of get to the middle of what the problem is, and try to find a solution or an outcome."

Emma explained how she uses a type of "reflective practice" to encourage parties to think about what they would "do differently if we could wind the clock back."

Facilitating implementation

Managers are in a position to be able to check up on implementation of solutions, and to follow up on parties' responses. Only three out of eleven participants mentioned this aspect of managerial mediation.

For Emma, this is an important part of her conflict management role. She explained that she does this facilitation in an informal way, telling parties, "I'll just check on you before I go home – I just need to know how you guys are." She highlighted the importance of doing this after an informal mediation, and explained her process in these words:

> I just say, "Before I go home let's touch base because you know I don't want you to go home feeling like it's still like this when you've got to come back to work the next day; because I want you to come back to work the next day because you want to be at work not that you are dreading things."

Rebecca and Pat explained that they take a more formal approach to this aspect of their conflict management role. Although the informal mediations do not go on the parties' disciplinary records, the two participants explained that they keep a written record of the meetings for consultation purposes. Pat told me that the size of her team (over 80 direct reports) makes this record-keeping vital, and helps her with facilitating implementation of agreements because "If things get sour, I've got the evidence; and you know also, that this is what we discussed."

In a similar vein, Rebecca described a process whereby the minute-taker in the meeting types up the minutes of the meeting, along with the agreement reached by the parties: if the agreement is not complied with, “then I’ll pull out that plan and go: this was the plan that we agreed to, so why have we deviated from it?”

4.2.2.2.3 Cognitive skills

Understanding concerns.

Seven out of eleven participants talked about the ways that they show parties that they are interested in what they are thinking, and how they are experiencing the conflict situation.

A number of participants described pre-emptive processes where they try and find out from the disputing person what is going on in their world. Rebecca explained that she tries to “make sure they’re OK in themselves” by asking them about “stressors going on in their life” which might be contributing to the conflict situation. Kate described a very informal approach to this process, involving “a cup of tea and a casual conversation” with one of the parties when they are in the tea-room alone. She explained that she would open the conversation with a simple “How are you today (…) are you OK?” and offering the person the option of “a korero about it.”

Several participants described the steps which they take after these initial inquiries. Rachel recounted a situation in which she helped the person explore what it was about the job that was contributing to the conflict situation. She did this by telling the person, “If this doesn't work for you, then we need to look at helping you find something that works for you, because life's too short to be miserable in your job.” She explained that this offer led to the staff member exploring her concerns in detail, and eventually apologising to her fellow staff member for her behaviour.

Barbara explained that, for her, it is important to provide an environment where the team feels safe to voice their concerns without fear of retribution. She described her process in these words:

> What I do naturally, is pull everyone together, get out on the table what their concerns are. And that's a lot about the safety of a team. Feeling safe that it's ok to voice my concerns, without a retribution.

Identifying underlying interests.

Only three participants discussed this skill, which involves helping parties understand their real, underlying needs, and also helping them recognise the needs of the other party. Emma described how she uses a type of reflective practice, asking parties "if we could wind the clock back, what would you do differently," and indicated that these problem-solving questions help people explore what they really need in order to resolve the dispute.

Kate related this process as an "opportunity to peel back the layers like an onion, and sort of get to the middle of what the problem is, "explaining that it is important, if a conflict is to be resolved, for parties to understand the problem behind "the anger, or whatever it may be."

4.2.2.2.3 Emotional skills

Accounting for emotions

Four participants described how they allow parties to express their emotions. These participants explored the ways that they deal with emotional responses from parties. Emma, for example, acknowledged that it conflict situations involve a lot of emotions and described her ability to "sit with silence" while people express emotions. She explained that she has often been in situations where parties are tearful, and that she has learned the importance of remaining calm and letting them express themselves:

> Sometimes silence is okay (…) you don't have to keep speaking all the time; you can sit with that while these people get themselves together or (…) I might say I can see that you're really upset by this: do you need a little bit of time?

These participants also expressed the opinion that emotions can make it difficult for people to address their underlying problems. Pat, for example, explained that people who are feeling hurt need to be brave in order to attempt to resolve their dispute. Similarly, Kate acknowledged that the real problems often lie behind emotions like anger or frustration and that these emotions need to be expressed before parties can address their underlying needs.

4.2.3 Themes pertaining to Research Question Two

Research question two: How does the role of the manager influence the ability to conduct managerial mediation?

4.2.3.1 Theme 3: Manager embeddedness

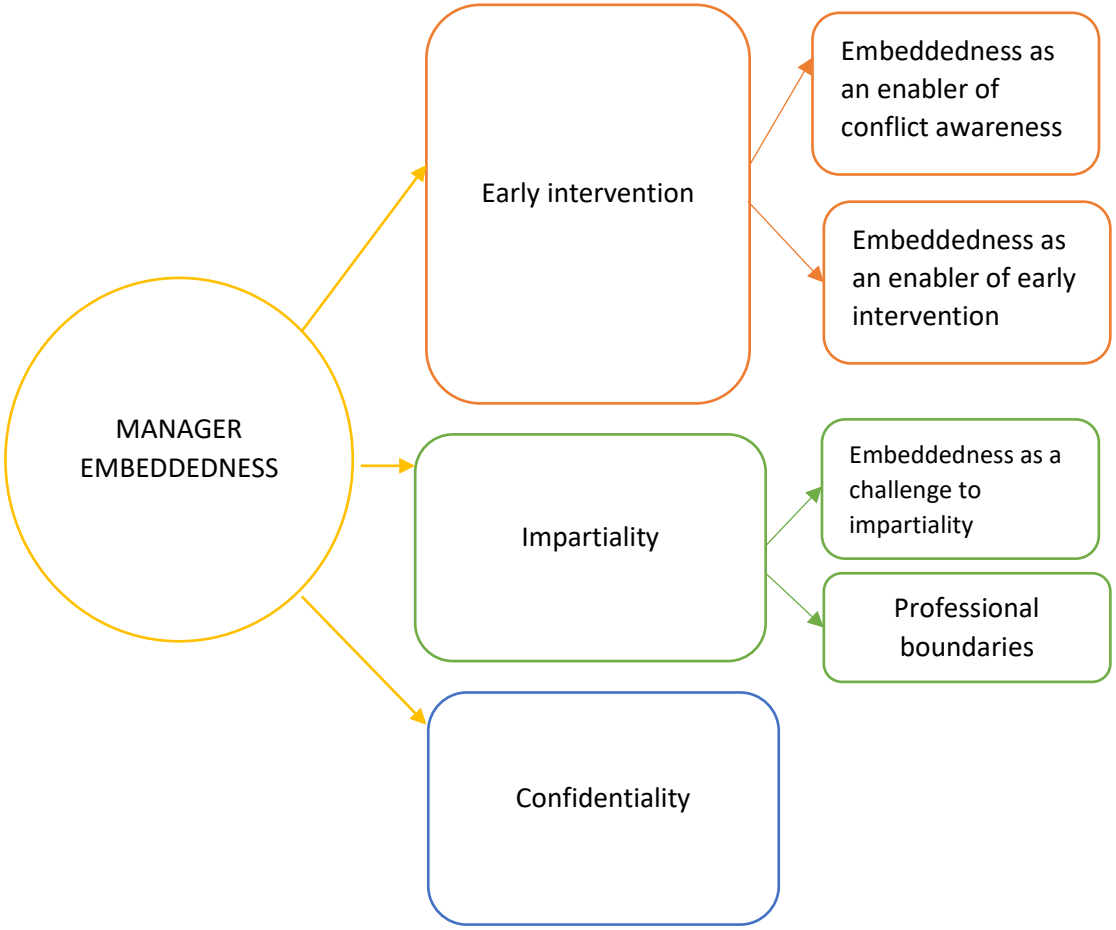


Figure 6: **Theme 3, Manager embeddedness**

I chose the term "manager embeddedness" to indicate the relational and positional closeness of managers to their team members, to the place where they work, and to the work that they do. The embeddedness of the manager has a significant impact on the nature of managerial mediation: it enables managers to intervene in disputes at an early stage; and it has implications for the manager's impartiality when mediating a dispute. Furthermore, the managers' embeddedness raises concerns around the confidentiality of the informal mediation. These impacts are illustrated in the table above, and will be further examined in the discussion which follows.

4.2.3.1.1 Early intervention

A key theme that emerged from the analysis relates to the effectiveness of managerial mediation as an early, low-level, and informal intervention in workplace conflict. Given the importance of early intervention, manager embeddedness was viewed as an advantage as it enabled awareness and early action.

Embeddedness as an enabler of early intervention

Nine of the eleven participants discussed early intervention in conflict as being important to managerial mediation. These participants described conflict in process terms, emphasising that it is crucial to address conflict in its early stages, before it can escalate into something more serious. Fiona expressed this view that, "I still think it's better to get on top of the issue as it happens and try and defuse it before it turns into anything major." This implies a belief that disputes are best sorted close to the source.

A few participants were more descriptive about the possibilities of unaddressed conflict becoming something more destructive. When describing how she decides when to intervene in a conflict situation, Kate said:

> I'd rather do it sooner than later. Than let it you know, boil up to a point where it becomes a major issue. And that's why I think it's important to have an open door policy. To be, to feel that people can come to you.

This understanding that unaddressed conflicts can escalate, or that they can have other negative impacts was also articulated by Sally, who explained:

> We need to talk about these things on day one, day two, day three. We don't let them brew and fester. If someone has got an issue and if someone is seen to be argumentative, not welcoming, not friendly, let's talk about that before it becomes awful.

The use of dramatic and kinetic words like "boil up", "brew" and "fester" indicates that these participants have strong feelings about the negative consequences of unaddressed conflict.

Some participants expressed frustration with co-workers or fellow managers who do not follow this policy of early intervention, indicating that a policy of avoidance is a futile one, which does not address conflict in a useful way. This view was expressed in an emphatic way by Suzanne:

> And the other thing is to just do it as soon as possible. ‘Cause I see that, I see other management, and I see other people in my team that avoid it, and avoid it, and avoid it, which definitely, that's the conversation that we've had quite often in our senior team management, is that some people will avoid having that initial conversation.

The problem with avoiding these difficult conversations, according to some participants, is that addressing undesirable behaviour is more difficult if it is allowed to continue unchecked for a period of time rather than being stopped early on. Sally pointed this out by saying, “I think sometimes we let behaviour slide and we don't do anything about it quick enough.” In a similar vein, Suzanne indicated that early intervention is particularly important in addressing bullying behaviour:

> I think stopping bullying right from the first instance is the key to not having a bullying culture. And if someone does something that you don't agree with, you, everyone needs to have basically the confidence straight away to say; that is not appropriate.

<u>Embeddedness as an enabler of conflict awareness</u>

When discussing the ways in which they become aware of conflict among their teams, participants reported that their role as managers enabled them to notice it themselves, or that other people told them. Pat summed up this experience by saying, “Oh people do come. They come and tell you. Or with some, it’s not them telling you, it’s a third person saying; that's happening there.”

Barbara outlined a similar experience in these words: “Usually, staff are in my door telling me if there's issues for themselves. Or they've noticed other staff seem out of sorts. Or other staff have raised issues with them.”

Some of the participants discussed the fact that their knowledge of the people in their teams, and of the relationships between team members meant that they were able to ‘read’ the situation. They talked about the way that they intuitively know if something is not quite right. Kate, who manages a small team, told me that sometimes,

> a behaviour, or what we call their āhua, will be different. So you know, like as opposed to them relaxed and happy, having a cup of tea, they might have withdrawn themselves to the other room, and not engaging.

Suzanne, who manages a large team made up of several groups, described her daily rounds, during which she has "a general chit-chat" with the teams. As a result of this,

> you can pick up with, you can pick up on little snarky comments that might get made. Or just a general saying; look are your team mates today? And if they say; oh I don't know. It's straight away a; well how come you don't know? What's going on there?

Other participants emphasised the importance of approachability and accessibility on their part – so that team members feel able to come to tell them about conflicts. Rachel, for example, indicated that, "I think I have the opportunity to, but I do cultivate it, to have the relationships. That I am available, that I'm on the floor, that I'm around and I'm there."

Open-door policies were regarded as crucial to this early knowledge, with participants making comments like:

> We encourage staff to come with, to us with any issues whatsoever. And we have an open door policy (…) we're very lucky that out of all those staff members, there is usually somebody who's happy to come and advise us, that there are issues going on that they can see within their team. (Suzanne)

Trish indicated that "people are better at just emailing me if they've got a concern, or coming and tapping on the door, or that kind of thing." There was also an indication that paying attention to this information is important in managing conflict as an early stage. Sally expressed it thus, "It's normally some sort of murmur. But you need to listen to, and say; you know I've heard."

4.2.3.1.2 Impartiality

Another important theme that emerged from the findings related to the ways that managers navigate impartiality while embedded in the organisation. Given that mediator impartiality is seen as a key feature of mediation processes, this aspect of the findings is important in exploring the ways that the role of the manager affects the ability to conduct managerial mediation.

<u>Embeddedness as a challenge to impartiality</u>

In discussing managerial mediation, the participants in this study spoke at length about the way that their managerial role meant that they had to think consciously about their involvement with their team members, and about how to ensure that they upheld impartiality

both when making decisions and when mediating disputes. Impartiality was found to be a key component of the manager's role in managerial mediation, and was also linked to the role as manager. Pat stated: "because I'm their manager, I'm supposed to be neutral," and Pat explained "the team know, that when I'm in here I'm working in my role as a manager."

In managerial mediation, participants linked the idea of impartiality with a fair, even-handed process, rather than with a lack of concern about the outcome. Understanding that the process needs to be seen as impartial and even-handed affects the way that managers set up their informal mediated discussions. Emma, for example explained how carefully she explains the process to the disputing parties:

> You know, I mean I might have a better relationship with one person and maybe not know that other person so well so they may be thinking um the wrong thing there so by spelling it out that I want to know that there's fairness there's transparency and there's fairness for both parties.

Sally discussed the importance of holding these meetings "in an unbiased venue" and of managing arrivals carefully so that there is no appearance of collusion or partiality between either of the parties and herself.

In discussing the way that participants navigate the relationships at work in order to ensure that they can be impartial when needed, there was a focus on the role played by professional boundaries, and on trust. There is some level of tension between these concepts, and some ambiguities are evident.

Professional boundaries

Eight of the eleven participants talked about the importance of professional boundaries, and often related this to impartiality, which is an important attitude in managerial mediation. For some participants, this involves a clear line between workplace and out-of-work relationships. For example, Rachel explained that she will attend social events with team members,

> but when it comes to things like social media or stuff, then we'll keep that separate, 'cause I don't want to see you falling over drunk on Facebook, as your manager. And I don't want you seeing me doing all of my day-to-day stuff.

Avoiding social events and social media seemed to be particularly important for some participants in drawing these boundaries, as participation in these forums can create the impression that the manager has affiliations within the team, and this can be "destructive" (Rebecca) when it comes to disciplinary or conflict management roles. Rebecca highlighted the fact that she wants her team members to be able to go out and enjoy themselves without worrying about "the boss," emphasising that "I can't be your boss and your friend." In a similar vein, Trish explained how, since she became a manager:

> I've realised I've had to distance myself from, from the group. And cut ties, unfriend people, that kind of thing. Because it's really difficult to you know, chat away to someone about all sorts of stuff, have a drink with them or whatever, and then have to tell them off the next week for a client complaint, or something like that.

While acknowledging the importance of maintaining professional boundaries, a number of participants also divulged that this was frequently difficult to do. Several participants talked about how difficult it is to find a balance between having good relationships with people at work, and maintaining professional boundaries. They explained that both of these aspects were important to them in their jobs as managers. Suzanne, who became a manager fairly recently, explained her attitude in this way:

> I have been very, very aware going into this role to not be friends as such with people, but to be friendly with people. I know everyone's kids names. I know everyone's grandchildren's names. People know enough about my life, but I don't have anyone on social media.

Kate recounted these difficulties in these words:

> When you're working in this role, as a manager, you've got sometimes you have to talk to them about some hard subjects, or some hard topics. And that sometimes can be, feel uncomfortable, because you know you're going to have to, but you know that in your role as a manager you have to address it and you have to put your relationship aside. But it's not always easy.

Trish indicated that total separation may not be desirable, although she said that it is easier for her "just to remove myself from the group." She also pondered the fact that, "I think you can probably go too far in removing yourself."

4.2.3.1.3 Confidentiality

A further theme which emerged from the findings was related to confidentiality. Six out of eleven participants discussed the importance of confidentiality in their informal mediations. Confidentiality was considered to be linked to trust, and to showing awareness of other people's needs. Kate, for example, explained that, in her small team, it was easy for people to speculate about what is going on, "and that starts what we call pito korero korero, which is that talking behind everyone's back." This means that she will wait for people to be on their own before she approaches them for "a conversation," and makes sure that this request is not overhead – in order to "maintain their mana, their own dignity, and mine, by making sure that I don't expose them."

For other participants, confidentiality was explained in terms of keeping the information revealed during the process away from the disciplinary process, and off the record. Sally stated, for example, that her aim is to sort out a conflict "without having anything on your personnel file (…) it's not a disciplinary or an admonishing process." Pat explained that she keeps a written record of what is agreed, so that she can return to it with the parties if she needs to, but that is as far as it goes: "I'm keeping it confidential between me and you."

4.2.3.2 Theme 4: Challenges

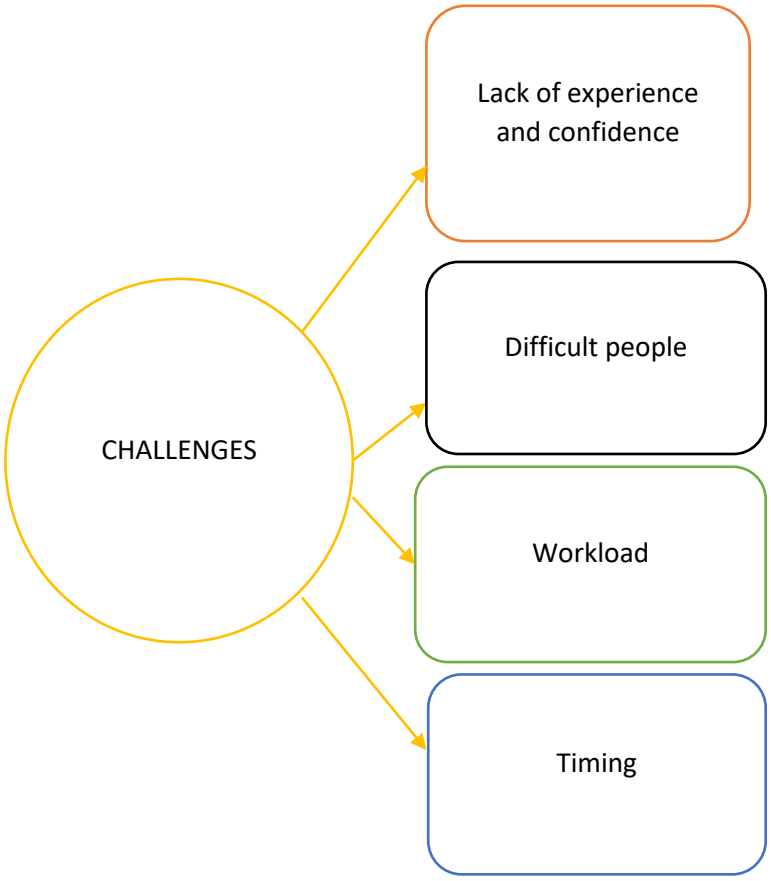


Figure 7: **Theme 4, Challenges**

Participants identified a number of challenges that they faced in mediating disputes arising within their teams. These challenges were mostly related to a perceived lack of experience and confidence as conflict managers; to people who were difficult to deal with; to organisational factors; and to issues related to timing and workload. These challenges were related to the role of the manager, and often made it difficult for the managers to feel that they were able to mediate disputes in an effective way.

4.2.3.2.1 Lack of experience and confidence

Seven out of eleven participants disclosed that they lacked confidence in mediating disputes, and that this was largely related to a lack of experience. Trish, for example, explained that she found holding joint meetings with disputing parties extremely challenging, to the point where she engages in a form of shuttle mediation rather than bringing the parties together. She indicated that this is because, despite conflict management being a central part of her role as a manager, she has not been trained in this area. She explained: "I've just learnt

as I go and some of it has just purely been common sense, or how I would want to be treated. Because I've had absolutely zero training in this."

Other participants who have the confidence to bring parties together explained that they have difficulties in structuring the process itself. Pat, for example, explained:

> Just to break that ice is very challenging. Sometimes I don't know what to do, or what to say. And I think, am I going to manage to have the correct words? You know you worry that you're going to offend, or make things even more difficult.

In a similar vein, Rachel discussed how she finds it difficult to find the right tone for this type of meeting:

> I think when you get people talking over everyone and there's that lack of respect, it just can unravel really quickly. So I think that is a definite challenge, keeping it informal but structured. And I guess setting the tone so that people feel safe to speak. Because generally there is a power imbalance.

She expressed the view that this challenge might arise from a lack of training in this area, telling me: "My reservations would simply be that I haven't (…) really had training. My style in general is intuitive and life based."

Further to lack of training, the lack of confidence was a result of a bad past experience for two participants. Both of these participants indicated a reluctance to bring parties together in a joint meeting as a result of these experiences. For example, Trish described a situation where "one of my supervisors called in two nurses once (…) and I was just there sort of as an extra person, and I didn't think it was fair." Similarly, Suzanne explained that she had only once had two people in the room at the same time, and that this was in the aftermath of a "major event." She felt that it was an unsuccessful strategy because "people are worked up already. The last thing they want to do is come and sit next to the person that they hate."

Participants explained ways of overcoming the lack of experience and confidence in this area, because they feel that it is part of their job and "if you're educated around it, it doesn't have to be scary" (Suzanne). For example, Rachel explained that she finds the practical aspects of running a mediated meeting and keeping track of it problematic, so she will bring in a ward delegate with whom she has " a close working relationship" to be a

neutral observer and keep notes of what is happening in the meeting. Similarly, Pat explained that she will be assisted in her meetings by her co-ordinator, who will act as a witness and record-keeper.

4.2.3.2.2 Difficult people

Six out of eleven participants indicated that they found it difficult to mediate disputes where one or both of the people involved in the dispute lacked the wherewithal to engage meaningfully in the process. Barbara explained that it is hard to mediate conflicts with people who are "completely self-focused and don't want to, don't care or have capacity to think outside themselves." Likewise, Pat described a difficult situation where one of the parties "didn't have the insight that she was the one who was actually causing the drama". As a result, this person did not engage in the process at all. Similarly, Sally described situations where people will come to the mediation meeting, but will not engage in a sincere way. She explained how this can frustrate the process:

> Sometimes, they will not be willing to buy into the process. They'll come because they think it's expected. They will seem to go along with it (…). But I think sometimes if the parties are not willing to play the game, it's really hard.

4.2.3.2.3 Workload

Participants described situations where their workload in a managerial role made it difficult for them to attend to their conflict management responsibilities. Fiona explained that her organisation had provided training in the form of a study module, but she indicated that "I don't have the staff or the time to do it," going as far as to say that "the place I work is not designed for that." As a result, she feels that she has been "set up to fail." Trish and Pat also referred to the impact of workload but had happier stories, indicating that they had had similar problems in the past, but that these had been addressed by their organisations. Trish explained how she has had more time to deal with disputes since she came "off the floor," and Pat described how she has been better able to perform her conflict management role since the organisation had arranged for "other layer to support me."

4.2.3.2.4 Timing

While some participants described it challenging to find the time to address disputes, owing to their workloads, others explained that the timing of interventions can be difficult owing to the nature of the healthcare sector. Emma explained that the clinical requirements

of the hospital need to be balanced with the personnel issues, because, “when you're providing hands on care and people are waiting you can't be in a back room sorting out your issues.” It is, therefore, important for managers to know how to create a space for these conversations. Rachel explained how she will wait for the clinical needs to have been met, and will then arrange for the conflicting parties to “step in here or into the filing room, or something that actually provides a safe, a space where the other stresses have been removed.”

Fiona described a situation where she will often be in the middle of “doing something” when she has to talk to disputing parties, and how the demands of her job mean that it is difficult for them to complete a conversation without interruption from other operational staff. She explained how “just to get us all in the same room, at once, at a good time, at the right time – that is hardly ever.” This has implications for her conflict management role, and she told me: “I do feel that I could do a better job in my role, if I had the proper time and the proper resources. So again I feel that I don't do a good job because of that reason.”

4.2.3.3 Theme 5: Organisational context

Figure 8: **Theme 5, Organisational context**

Nine out of eleven participants talked about how the organisational context influenced the role as a manager, particularly with regard to conducting informal mediations. This was seen as important either in enabling their role as conflict managers, or in hindering it. Key elements in this area are policies and values.

4.2.3.3.1 Policies

Policies were generally considered to assist managers in the process of managerial mediation. Participants referred to a number of policies: the Code of Conduct for nurses, and the "Speaking Up for Safety" programme which has been introduced into a number of New Zealand DHBs.

Rebecca indicated that there are "very clear rules and guidelines about what is expected from a practice and certificate perspective for registered nursing staff." Use of policies can enable a conflict manager to render the dispute less personal – to make it more

about the problem than about the person. Emma described how she reminds nurses that the code of conduct is "about respecting – not only respecting patients but respecting each other." Rebecca also highlighted this dual purpose of the Code:

> It's in our Nursing Council code of conduct and our Nursing Council competencies about professional boundaries and professional relationships, not just with our patients but with each other as nursing staff.

The "Speaking up for Safety" programme provides an avenue for staff members to address behaviour which is unsafe – either in terms of patient safety or workplace safety in general. Emma indicated that this training is mandatory for all staff at the DHB where she works, and she envisages that this training will be able give staff strategies for dealing with situations where "you see somebody doing something that you don't agree with." Jenny pointed out that these strategies will make it easier for people to talk about undesirable behaviour from others in a less personal way, one which is less likely to lead to inter-personal conflict:

> So that you can start that conversation; now I'm speaking up for safety. You know I've done my training. And rather than go head on in, talk about it and get into a conflict. Because it just, it gets everybody's back up.

4.2.3.3.2 Organisational values

Seven of the participants spoke about the role of organisational values in determining their behaviour as conflict managers, and their expectations of other staff members. Values were seen as giving rise to meaningful interpretation of policies and guidelines. Fiona talked about the futility of an organisation providing conflict management training in the form of a work-through module, but then providing no support for consolidation and practice: "Because it's all very well having the book and the module there, but to be able to put that into practice and do what they're saying to do, and not being able to do that, that to me is failing." Her words echo a frustration with an organisational approach which appears to comply with guidelines but does not do so in a purposeful way. These sentiments were also expressed by Kate who described the actions of some managers in these words:

> Some manage (…) in a big organisation like this, there's policies, procedures, guidelines for managers, but again it's about how you still maintain professional practice, but not fall into the gap of doing the tick box stuff.

Values were viewed as a matrix for determining acceptable behaviour. Sally explained the situation at her DHB:

> We have done a lot of work on establishing what our values are, and how they should underpin what we do. And we have created a pamphlet of behaviours that are acceptable and not acceptable (…). So I use them regularly to set the tone of my expectations of staff."

She also described the importance of compassion as a value in the healthcare setting, pointing out that clients are dealt with in a compassionate way, and asking: "Why do we not show the same degree of compassion to one another?"

Participants from one organisation used the image of a waka to describe organisational values. Barbara mentioned that "we all get on the same waka, and have the same ethos and ethics and values." The image is thus one of unity, of common values and purpose. The waka image also emphasises that all members of the organisation are important, that they each have a role to play, and this promotes mutual respect. Pat described the image in these words: "We're all in a waka, playing a role (...) so you know, if you're going to you know, get stuck up and put your nose in the air because you've become a manager(…) you're off the waka."

Participants from this organisation emphasised that the values are given real meaning in the day-to-day expectations that the organisation has of its members. Pat explained:

> The expectation the DHB has, is to follow our values. That there should be respect within teams, as an example. There should be respect within teams. There should be positivity and productivity within teams. We should meet our targets, in whatever we are doing. So as a manager, they expect me to work with a team who actually are goal-oriented and meet whatever want met, in a non-drama, non-malicious way. And the main thing which our director has, is that they want a safe environment. It's patient safety and staff safety. That's what they want. And whatever definition a staff member says they're feeling safe, that has to be actioned."

Rachel expressed similar sentiments, describing the relationship between organisational values and her behaviour in these words:

> A big push for our DHB is values. We are a values based DHB and so I really like that. And I tend to operate from that kind of place anyway. So I guess that guides my intuition or my process. I am coming from a - you know - respect and treat people the way you want to be treated.

In describing the importance of values, Kate referred to them as "an unspoken given," as something that everybody can be counted on to know and understand. She talked about meetings where she reminds staff that, "we all know what our values are. We all know what we should be doing in our mahi."

Organisational values, clearly expressed, thus provide a medium within which managers can set expectations for their teams, and within which they have an avenue for addressing undesirable behaviours and interpersonal conflicts within their teams. Organisational values also have a bearing on the way that managers treat the members of their teams, and make policies around respect and safety applicable to them.

4.2.4 Summary of findings

This chapter has explored the findings of the study by first providing an overview of the participants and the way that they decide which interventions they will use to address interpersonal conflict arising in their teams, and by then examining the five main themes relevant to the research questions: management style, mediation skills, embeddedness, challenges, and organisational factors. The next chapter further explores these themes by relating them to current literature in the field.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This thesis set out to explore mediating managers' perspective on managerial mediation. It specifically sought to find out their perspectives on the skills required to undertake this role in an effective manner, and on the ways that their managerial role influences their ability to conduct managerial mediation. The following discussion will address each research question in turn, by exploring the themes related to the questions. The practical implications of the findings, and the limitations of this study, will be addressed after this thematic discussion.

5.1 Discussion pertaining to Research Question One

Research question one: What skills are required in effective managerial mediation, from the mediating manager's perspective?

As indicated in the findings, this study showed that the first research question encompassed two sets of skills: a style of management which lays a foundation for effective managerial mediation; and a set of specific mediation skills for conducting effective managerial mediation, as shown in Figure 9. These two facets of the managerial set of skills are discussed in more detail below.

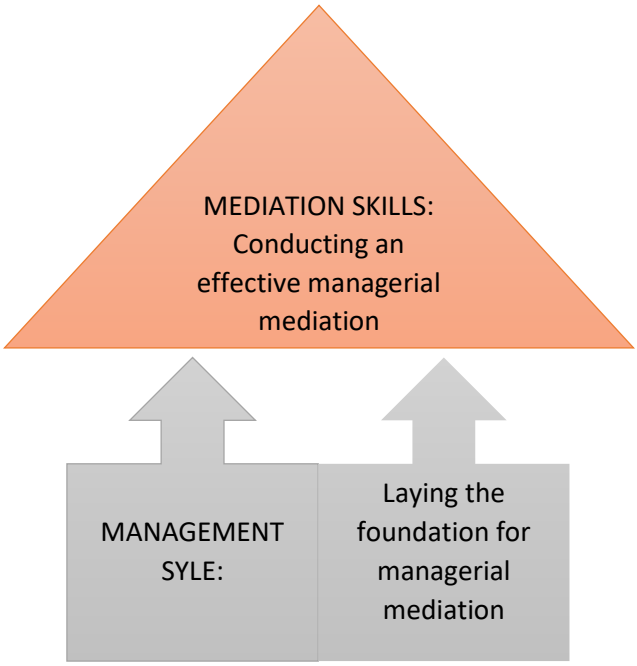


Figure 9: **Relationship between management style and mediation skills**

5.1.1 Management style: Laying the foundation for managerial mediation

My findings suggest that managers' management style affects their ability to conduct effective managerial mediation in two ways: first of all, their readiness and ability to conduct managerial mediation are affected by their management style; and secondly, their management style fosters relationships and trust in a way which facilitates managerial mediation when it is undertaken.

Certain scholars (Poitras et al., 2015; Saeed et al., 2014) have focused on the link between a manager's leadership style in general and the way she or he manages conflict. These authors have suggested that managers with a transformational leadership style tend to use conflict management styles which encourage parties to undertake collaborative efforts, such as direct negotiation or mediation, to resolve conflicts.

Transformational leaders are said to pay attention to individuals' needs for personal growth, to seek to empower their team members to make decisions for themselves, and to help people see each other's point of view (Bass & Riggio, 2005; Saeed et al., 2014). While none of the participants in this study consciously identified themselves as transformational leaders, a number of them described qualities which fit into the transformational mould. Some participants described, for example, how they encourage team members to be self-sufficient; to feel empowered to make decisions on their own; and – in the first instance – to try and deal with their conflicts on their own. They also described how they undertake conflict coaching in order to help parties cope better with conflicts. In this sense, the findings of this study concur with the literature.

A number of participants also talked about their 'collaborative' and 'inclusive' style of management, emphasising that people are more likely to support decisions that they have been a part of making. A number of them went further, emphasising the importance they place on forming good relationships with the members of their teams. This supports previous findings (Saeed et al., 2014; Stanley & Algert, 2007) related to the TKI model for describing conflict management style (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974), according to which conflict management modes involving a high concern for others were characteristic of transformational leadership styles.

In talking of their management style, a number of participants in this study also spoke about their personal values, and the importance of authenticity in their role. Authenticity has

been described as "being yourself; being the person you were created to be" (George, 2005, p.3), and as acting in harmony with personal beliefs and values (Yaacoub, 2016). Authenticity at work is a complex concept: individuals need to honour their commitments to themselves, in order to feel that they are being true to who they are; and they also need to honour the commitments they owe to others as a result of their work role (Caza, Moss, & Vough, 2018). Participants described how they sought to balance their two worlds, of self and work identities, through values common to both worlds – such as respect, or manaakitanga, or maintaining dignity. While authenticity is not necessarily indicative of a transformational leadership style, it has been suggested that authenticity in leadership is likely to contribute to stronger relationships, and higher levels of trust, with followers (Spitzmuller, Ilies, Schyns, & Day, 2010).

Trust-building emerged as an important aspect of the skills necessary for effective managerial mediation, with several participants indicating that they were able to intervene successfully in disputes because of the high levels of trust between them and their team members. This supports the thinking of some organisational scholars (De Nalda, Guillén, & Pechuán, 2016; Pearce, 2005; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007) who emphasise the importance of interpersonal trust in building employee commitment to organisational processes. Trust from employees requires managers to have integrity and honesty, and to be consistent and predictable in their behaviour (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). The findings also concur with the thinking of mediation scholars Cloke and Goldsmith (2011), who indicate that one of the competencies of leaders who seek to resolve conflict is the ability to build and maintain trust through consistency and integrity.

These findings add to current literature about managerial mediation, in that they show the vital importance of a management style which creates an atmosphere in which managerial mediation can take place effectively. As indicated in the Methods chapter of this thesis (Chapter 3), the study by Poitras et al. (2015) was used as an initial framework to guide the analysis for the first research question. Poitras et al. (2015) looked at the skills from the perspective of employees and identified a set of skills which included behavioural, cognitive and emotional skills to address the various dimensions of conflict. The study also emphasised the importance of impartiality, as an important attitude of mediators. By looking at the skills from the perspective of manager-mediators, however, this study has identified a vital set of skills beyond those required specifically in the mediation process. These skills are related to the manager's management style, and are important in building relationships of trust with

team members, and in laying the foundation for an effective managerial mediation. Although these skills are evident in existing literature (Butts, 2016; Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011; De Nalda et al., 2016; Pearce, 2005; Spitzmuller et al., 2010), this study has highlighted the important role that they play in managerial mediation.

The findings of this study indicate, therefore, that certain management styles and qualities incline managers towards collaborative dispute resolution processes, and also that they lay the groundwork for effective managerial mediation. Simply thinking that mediation processes are valuable does not, however, automatically indicate that managers will attempt them, or that they will perform them effectively (Arnold, 2007; Poitras et al., 2015). Scholars have noted, moreover, that generic management communication skills are not a replacement for specific conflict management skills (Butts, 2016). The next section discusses managers' perspectives on what specific skills are required in order for managers to perform effective managerial mediation, and builds on Poitras et al.'s study (2015), which sought to investigate employees' perspectives on these skills.

5.1.2 Mediation skills: Ability to conduct an effective managerial mediation

Mediation scholars (Boulle et al., 2008; Butts, 2016; Moore, 2014; Poitras et al., 2015) have noted that mediators, including managerial mediators, require a specific set of skills in order to facilitate parties' attempts to resolve disputes in a collaborative way. Conflict is said to occur along behavioural, cognitive and emotional dimensions (Boulle et al., 2008; Poitras et al., 2015) and so managers intending to mediate conflict need to acquire skills to deal with each dimension of conflict (Poitras et al., 2015).

As described in Chapter 4 (Methods) , I used the study by Poitras et al. (2015) as the initial conceptual framework for my analysis to explore whether managers had the same priorities regarding mediation skills as employees had when they had disputes mediated by their managers. The current study found that many of the skills that were important to employees were also important to managers, although there were some subtle differences, particularly with regard to emotional skills. These aspects of the study are discussed in more detail in the discussion which follows.

Behavioural skills were rated as important by all of the participants in the study by Poitras et al. (2015), and by all of the participants in my study. Of particular importance to both groups was *encouraging perspective taking*, a process which involves helping parties to share their perceptions and to relate them to facts, as well as helping them to understand the

perspective of the person with whom they are in conflict (Poitras et al., 2015). The participants in the current study indicated that many of the disputes they resolve using informal mediation have their roots in communication problems, and in misunderstanding one another. Encouraging perspective taking is important in these kinds of conflicts, because perceptions can often guide behaviour, causing – for example – the assignment of blame, and difficulty in understanding others' perspectives (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011; Wiseman & Poitras, 2002). The ability to address these problems in a constructive way can lead to greater understanding between people (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011) and to a de-escalation of conflict (Poitras et al., 2015). In this sense, the findings of my study concur with the literature in finding that behavioural skills are an important part of the managerial mediator's toolkit.

Cognitive skills are said to be important in mediation because mediators need to communicate to parties that they (the mediators) understand what the parties see as important (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011; Poitras et al., 2015). This is part of effective listening (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011), and has been linked to the building of trust (Moore, 2014; Posthuma & Poitras, 2013). My findings indicate that a number of managers consider these skills – particularly *understanding concerns* – to be important in effectively managing conflict by means of informal mediation. Several of them, in fact, linked this skill to their people-centred management style, and to the importance they place on building relationships. Communicating an understanding of concerns is part of empathy, along with an ability to see the world from another's perspective and being non-judgemental (Hastings, Kavookjian, & Ekong, 2018). Cloke (2001) suggests that mediators who role-model empathy are likely to encourage disputing parties to behave in a similar way, thus enabling them to see the dispute from one another's perspective and therefore the communication of this understanding is an important mediation skill. This was recognised both by the employees in Poitras et al.'s study (2015) and the managers in the current study.

Along with behavioural and cognitive skills, mediators are also required to have emotional skills (Boulle et al., 2008; Cloke, 2001; Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011; Poitras et al., 2015), because conflict situations can initiate negative emotional responses which impede resolution (Poitras et al., 2015). Mediating managers need to be able to work in a way which does not ignore these emotional responses, but rather incorporates them into the process (Poitras et al., 2015). An important aspect of this skill is *accounting for emotions* – which involves allowing the parties to express their emotions, as this enables them to convey to one another what they are feeling about the conflict and why (Boulle et al., 2008, 2015; Cloke,

2001; Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011; Poitras et al., 2015). In Poitras et al.'s (2015) study, numerous employees found this skill to be an important aspect of managerial mediation, linking it with empathy. My findings indicate that only some managers consider this skill important, and that they link it with their ability to allow venting of emotion and to be silent while parties express their emotions, rather than their ability to reframe emotions and help parties express their emotions in ways that do not escalate the conflict further (Poitras et al., 2015). The latter skills assist parties in acknowledging and integrating their emotions (Poitras et al., 2015). They also help parties to understand their own and each other's deeper interests, leading to a more sustainable outcome (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011; Poitras et al., 2015).

A significant number of participants indicated that they have a people-centred management style, with a focus on building relationships and communicating effectively with their team members. These qualities are components of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996), which refers to an ability to use and understand emotions (Prezerakos, 2018), involving a combination of empathy, self-awareness, and relational skills (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011). Emotional intelligence is seen by some scholars (Pearce, 2005; Prezerakos, 2018) as a marker of transformational leadership, a constituent part of management skills such as building relationships of trust with team members.

With emotional skills being an important aspect of a mediator's work, it is of interest to explore possible reasons why managerial mediators find it less important than cognitive and behavioural skills, especially in light of the management style preferred by a significant number of the participants in my study, with its emphasis on a people-centred approach. Responses in this study indicated that informal interventions generally occurred when the disputes were at a very early stage, and frequently before the parties themselves had indicated that there was a problem. According to conflict escalation theory, based on Glasl's model of escalation (1982), parties in the earliest stages of conflict tend to be aware of their differences, but remain rational and controlled in the way they attempt to address them (Zapf & Gross, 2001), meaning that cognitive and behavioural skills may be more immediately relevant in this context. Mediation experts (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011) point out that skills in handling negative emotions can contribute to speedy resolution of disputes, though, and it is possible that managerial mediators lack confidence in this area as a result of insufficient training (Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Khan, 2012; Poitras et al., 2015).

From my research it is unclear whether participants did not focus much on emotional skills in conflict management because they take them for granted as part of their management style, or because they prefer to focus on behavioural and cognitive skills for the reasons outlined previously. Further research into this aspect of managerial mediation is warranted.

This part of the study has identified a range of mediation skills important for managerial mediation, from the mediating manager's perspective. This has built on the research conducted by Poitras et al. (2015), who explored the mediation skills important for managerial mediation from the employees' perspective. The Poitras et al. (2015) study was conducted in Canada, across a range of industries, while the current study was conducted in the health sector in New Zealand. As has been shown above, there were significant similarities in the findings of the two studies, and this provides some indication that the skills described in this study may be relevant beyond the specific geographical and industry context. Further quantitative research would be useful in exploring the generalisability of the findings of the current study.

5.2 Discussion pertaining to Research Question Two

Research question two: How does the role of manager influence the ability to conduct managerial mediation?

This question has been addressed by a number of scholars who highlight the complexities in the dual role undertaken by managers who mediate (Butts, 2016; Cohen, 1999; Goldblatt, 2006; Poitras et al., 2015; Teague & Roche, 2012). In line with much of this previous research, the findings of the current study reflect the fact that the managerial role has the potential both to enhance the practice of managerial mediation and to obstruct it. This study goes further, however, in exploring the practical ways that manager-mediators navigate the complexities in their role. Furthermore, it adds to current understanding of the way that certain management practices support managers who undertake managerial mediation as part of their role. In addition this study widens the lens of previous studies by examining the way that organisational policies and values influence the ability of managers to conduct managerial mediation. These points are discussed in further detail in the discussion which follows.

5.2.1 Embeddedness

5.2.1.1 Embeddedness as an enabler of conflict awareness and early intervention

My findings indicate that relational and positional embeddedness of managers enables both conflict awareness and early intervention. This concurs with previous findings indicating that managers are ideally suited to deal with interpersonal conflict among their staff because of their day-to-day proximity with them (Nehles et al., 2006; O'Donnell, 2009; Teague & Roche, 2012). The participants in my research also showed an understanding of the process of conflict escalation, and the importance of intervening early to prevent the problem becoming more serious. This is in line with findings by O'Donnell (2009), who found that attempts to solve problems at a low level, using managerial mediation, are efficient, because such attempts can prevent the dispute from becoming more complex, involving more people and more extravagant resources.

However, these findings of my research provide further important insight to that of the extant literature in explaining this ability to intervene early in disputes, in the sense that participants linked their awareness of disputes both to their people-centred management style, including an open-door policy, and to the relationships that they have with their team members. A number of participants indicated that a people-centred management style means that staff members feel comfortable approaching them with problems, and this enables timeous interventions, before the conflict escalates.

Some of the participants in my study also described their ability to intuitively understand when there is a problem, as a result of their relationships with people in their team and their understanding of team dynamics. Participants described, for example, their awareness of their team members' āhua, their behaviour, or the way they are interacting with others, and this awareness is evidence of their familiarity – both physically and relationally – with their team members. This means that they can intervene even before a person comes to tell them about a problem, tackling a problem close to its source (Ury et al., 1989) and thus, potentially, preventing the problem from developing into a more serious dispute (Zapf & Gross, 2001). Some scholars (Jenkins, 2011; Saam, 2010) have suggested that the most appropriate time to use mediation in cases of interpersonal conflict is very early in the process, before negative behaviours escalate and before formal complaints are raised. The findings of my study indicate that the manager's embedded role plays a large part in enabling early awareness of conflict and early intervention in conflict, thus supporting the possibility of effective managerial mediation.

5.2.1.2 Embeddedness as a challenge to impartiality

The previous section shows how the embedded position of managers enables them to become aware of conflicts at a very early stage, and to intervene timeously, thus enhancing the efficacy of managerial mediation. The same embeddedness can, however, pose challenges to the impartiality central to effective mediation (Poitras et al., 2015), and my findings show that managers who mediate are aware of these challenges and have devised a number of solutions to address this problem.

Mediator impartiality is a core feature of mediation (Boulle et al., 2008, 2015) and was considered an important attitude for managers who mediate by the employees in Poitras et al.'s (2015) study. My research adds to the understanding of how managers see impartiality, and how they seek to show that they are impartial. In the interviews, the words 'neutrality,' 'fairness' and 'impartiality' were all used to express a non-partisan attitude towards the disputing parties, and also to explain the concept of a fair process. Some of the participants in the study indicated that they go so far as to sever social ties with the members of their teams once they become managers, in order highlight their impartiality. This inevitably creates a tension with the people-oriented approach espoused by a number of the participants, whether or not this tension is acknowledged: the people-centred approach seeks to build relationships in order to create trust; while the maintenance of impartiality is sought through the severing of these very ties.

The mediation literature around impartiality seeks to explore some of these tensions – which also exist for outside mediators – and to offer possible ways of resolving them. For Cloke (2001), there is no such thing as neutrality in cases of conflict, because all third parties have their own experiences and biases which affect the way they see situations, and which also enable them to empathise with parties in conflict. For him, it is more important for mediators to seek to be "omnipartial" (Cloke, 2001, p.13) – on both parties' sides at the same time, treating each party as equally worthy of being listened to and not pre-judging either of them (Poitras et al., 2015). This will create a perception of fairness and of procedural justice on the part of the parties (Cohen, 1999). This approach suggests that knowledge around mediation process is important for managers who mediate, as it allows them to design a fair and even-handed intervention (Cohen, 1999).

In discussing their effectiveness as managerial mediators, a number of participants indicated that they had to have a relationship of trust with their team members as managers

before they could establish a similar relationship as mediators. They also explored the importance of a people-centred approach, and of an empathic approach to their team members' lives and problems. Several mediation scholars (Boulle et al., 2015; Moore, 2014; Posthuma & Poitras, 2013) hold that trust in the mediator is vital to the success of the mediation process. The relationship between trust, empathy and impartiality is explored in some detail by Posthuma and Poitras (2013), who posit that trust in mediators is built up through the use of empathy to build relationships during caucus, or separate meetings, and the use of impartiality during joint meetings. This is represented in Figure 10:

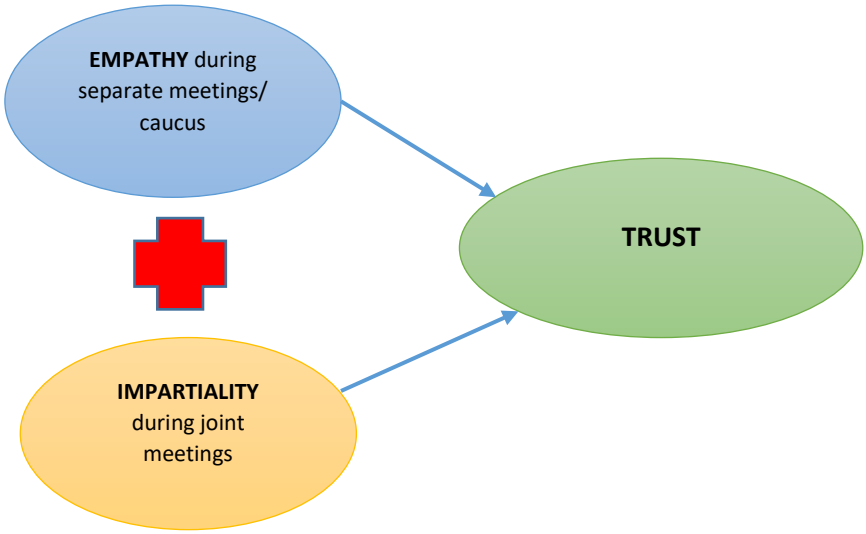


Figure 10: **Relationship between empathy, impartiality and trust (Posthuma & Poitras, 2015)**

The findings of my research suggest that there is a similar relationship between these concepts in managerial mediation, but that the empathy is built up during the relationship that the managers have with their team members in general. As shown in Figure 11, the impartiality would then relate to their ability to conduct an even-handed, fair process when they mediate conflicts arising between these team members.

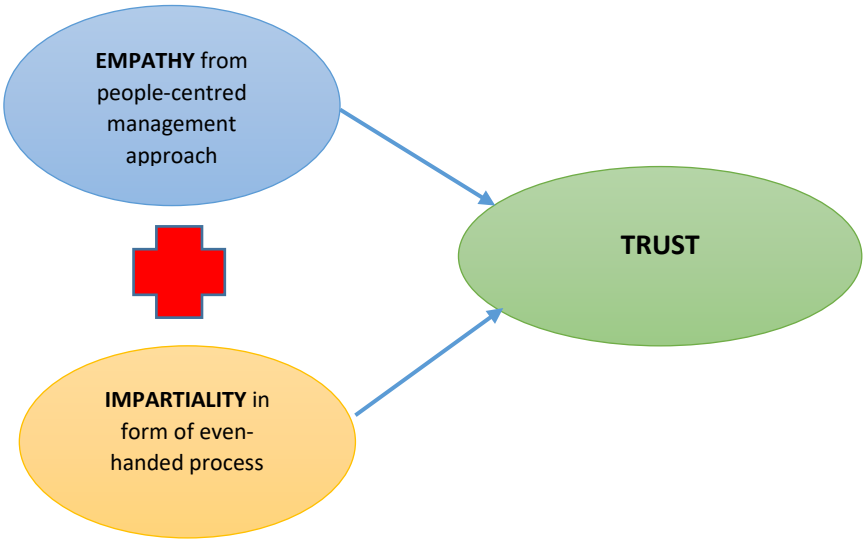


Figure 11: **Relationship between trust, empathy and impartiality in managerial mediation**

My findings suggest, therefore, that managers who mediate need to be familiar with mediation skills and techniques in order to show impartiality as they facilitate even-handed, fair mediation processes when disputes arise between their team members. They suggest, furthermore, that the relationships that managers have with their team members by virtue of the way they manage their teams are also important for these processes, because these relationships foster trust in the third party and in the mediation process. It is unlikely that people who do not trust their manager will trust that she will be able to mediate a dispute between them in an impartial and fair way.

Training in mediation techniques can help manager-mediators to uphold impartiality in the mediation process while still embracing their people-centred approach to management. This combination is likely to foster trust both in the manager-mediator and the mediation process, by building on the trust that exists between the parties and the manager in the practice of their daily work. Figure 12 provides an illustration of the relationship between trust, impartiality and mediation skills.

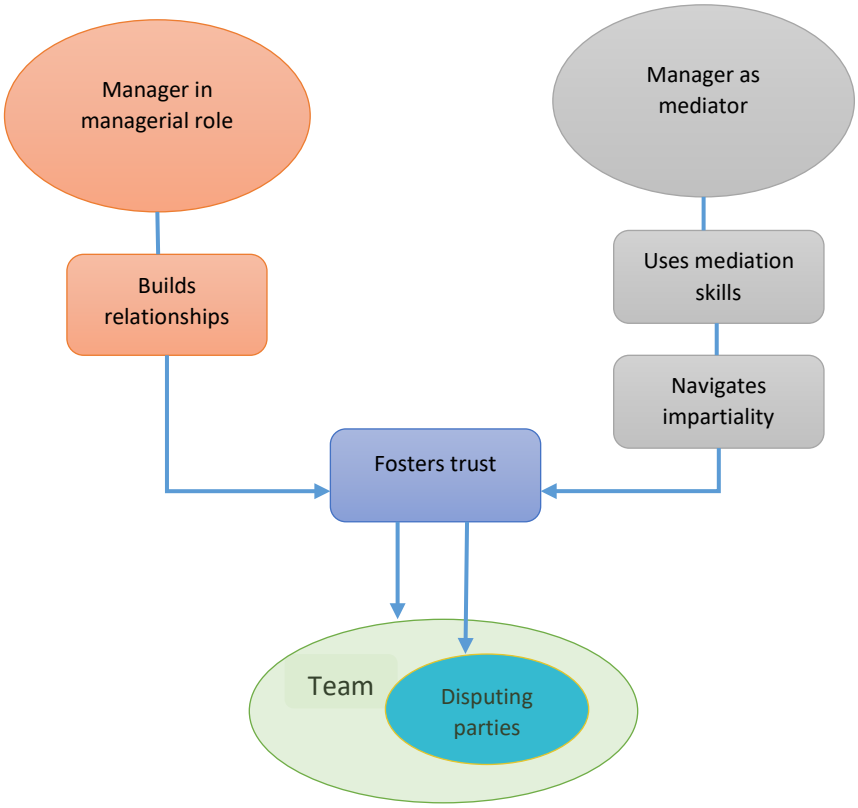


Figure 12: **Trust, impartiality and mediation skills in managerial mediation**

5.2.2 Challenges

The previous section explored the embeddedness of the manager, and the implications that this has in the practice of managerial mediation. The dual role of the manager-mediator also creates a number of challenges and these constitute obstacles to effective managerial mediation.

Numerous studies (Ferris, 2004; Karambayya & Brett, 1989; O'Donnell, 2009; Stanley & Algert, 2007; Teague & Roche, 2012) have shown that lack of training in conducting mediation is a significant hindrance to managerial mediation, and the findings of my research concur with this literature. Numerous participants indicated that they had not had sufficient training in this area, and had learned what they had by intuition, on the job. The findings of my research also suggest, however, that training in mediation techniques alone may be insufficient for managers to be able to conduct effective managerial mediation, which also requires a solid foundation which is laid down outside the mediation, during day-to-day interactions between managers and their teams.

As discussed above, an understanding of mediation techniques can help manager-mediators to reconcile impartiality in the mediation process with their people-centred approach to management. In addition, training can assist manager-mediators in handling emotions during conflict management interventions (Boulle et al., 2015; Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Khan, 2012). As discussed previously, emotions can block communication and obstruct possible ways forward for disputing parties (Poitras et al., 2015), and so an understanding of how to deal with emotions in a constructive way is an important mediator skill.

While a lack of training was highlighted as one obstacle to effective managerial mediation, my findings also reflect the fact that managers often find it difficult to intervene in conflicts in a meaningful way owing to their workload, and this concurs with previous studies (Khan, 2012; Nehles et al., 2006). My research reveals that managers are better able to conduct successful managerial mediation, as well as other conflict management interventions, if their conflict management role is acknowledged by the organisation and if they are given extra time to perform this part of their job – rather than being expected to cram it in around the edges of their other roles.

The obstacles posed by timing has been less thoroughly examined than that of workload in the existing literature, and the findings of my research add to an understanding of timing issues in the nursing context. Within the nursing environment, senior charge nurses perform a complex and demanding role, in which they must balance clinical leadership with administrative and managerial functions (Rankin et al., 2016). This means, in practical terms, that they are often fully engaged in clinical duties and are unable to address the conflicts as early as they like. This is important in the sense that conflict is best addressed close to its point of origin (Ury et al., 1989), and there are often occasions when this will be difficult.

5.2.3 Organisational policies and values

Managers do not exist and operate in a vacuum: they are "intermediaries between those who hire them and those whom they manage" (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2012, p.19), subject to organisational rules and expectations (Caza et al., 2018). While managers might agree with constructive conflict management methods such as mediation and be willing and able to put them into action, based on a solid foundation built through their management style, they will find it difficult to do so if the organisational environment does not support positive conflict resolution attitudes and processes (Butts, 2016). In the current study, a

number of participants mentioned the importance of organisational support for their informal mediation approaches, as well as that of organisational policies and values.

This is in line with research showing that, in many organisations, early interventions like managerial mediation are lauded as an important early intervention to prevent conflict escalation, but formal processes like complaints and grievances are used more commonly, as they provide familiarity and structure to managers, as well as offering protection against possible litigation (Deakin, 2016). The use of informal, early interventions like managerial mediation therefore needs to be supported by an organisational context which encourages proactive and cooperative attitudes to the management of conflict (Butts, 2016; Deakin, 2016; Teague & Roche, 2012) – such as support from senior personnel, organisational policies, and organisational values.

The findings of the current study indicate that mediating managers need to be able to rely on the backing of HR personnel, and of senior managers – with several participants explaining that they regularly approach HR and senior managers for advice as to what to do if they need to address a conflict. This concurs with findings by Saundry, Jones and Wibberley (2015), who suggest that trusting relationship between managers and HR means that managers can address issues at an early stage, thus reducing the need for formal procedures. Without this support, there is a possibility that managers will choose more formal processes because of the pressure to meet performance targets, and because setting a formal procedure into action passes the problem on to somebody else, thus relieving workload pressures (Saundry et al., 2015). My research recruited only managers who choose informal mediation as a way of addressing disputes within their teams, so further research is warranted into whether managers who do not choose this method of intervention are influenced in their decision by a lack of support from HR and senior management.

Further, the findings of my study highlight the important effect that organisational policies and values have on managers in the practice of managerial mediation. While policies such as codes of conduct, or the Speaking up for Safety programme, were seen as providing a useful anchoring point to acceptable behaviour in the workplace, policies that were not backed up by senior management support were seen as "tick box" exercises, as a disingenuous compliance with organisational requirements. Similarly, a perceived dissonance between policies and organisational values was viewed with a level of cynicism. While

policies provide the formal scaffold for organisational culture, and they are complemented by values, which make up the informal component (Kuo & Tsai, 2019).

Organisational values, such as compassion, respect, and staff and patient safety, were seen as giving meaning to the policies, as providing a paradigm for managers to utilise informal mediation approaches for addressing disputes in their teams. An organisation's values provide guiding principles for organisational members, prescribing acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour (Lawrence & Lawrence, 2009; Liddiard, 2017). Employees are more likely to behave according to organisational values when these values are congruent with their own (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Shao et al., 2018), but they are wary of values espoused by the organisation through published mission statements if these are not reflected in organisational practice, practised by senior management and used to guide work activities (Lawrence & Lawrence, 2009).

5.3. Inter-relationship of themes

When I started this study, I imagined that the managers I interviewed would talk about managerial mediation in the same way that I had conceptualised it, from a mediation perspective. What I found was that they regarded it very much as part of their management role, and saw their mediation skills as entwined with their managerial skills – with trust building, for example, being started in their day-to-day management role, and carrying over into their role as managerial mediators. This indicates, in line with findings by Goldblatt (2006), and by Teague and Roche (2012) that mediation skills can be seen as part of core management competencies. Moreover, these skills need to be supported by management skills such as communication and trust-building, and by organisational policies and values, if the role of the manager is to allow for effective managerial mediation. It is therefore difficult, in terms of managerial mediation, to see mediation skills as a discrete set of practices and competencies which can be taught in isolation. In light of this, I propose the framework illustrated in Figure 13, which attempts to show the inter-relationships of the themes, and the various levels of influence upon managers who mediate.

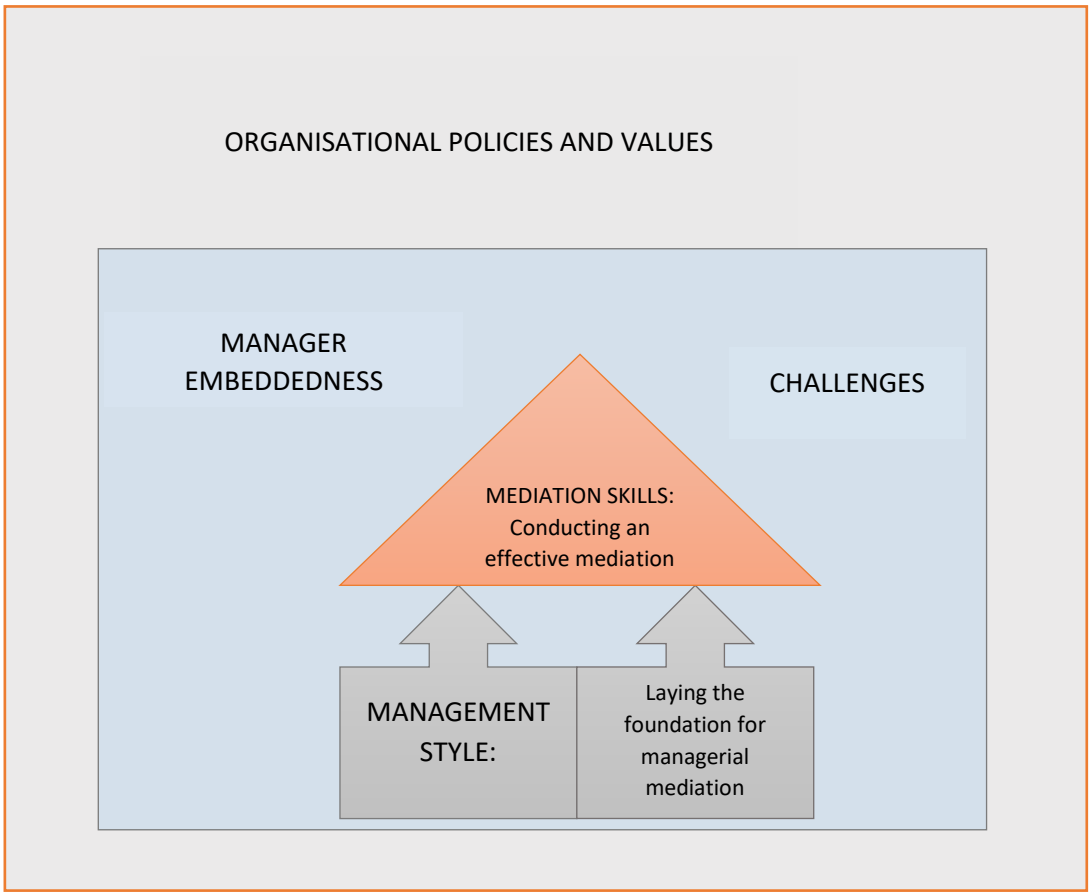


Figure 13: **Inter-relationship of themes**

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Chapter 5 discussed the main themes of the study, relating them to one another, and to the research questions, and proposing a relevant framework. Chapter 6, the final chapter of this study, involves a summary of the main theoretical contributions made by the study and described in Chapter 5. It also assesses implications for practice and describes the limitations of the study.

6.1 Theoretical contributions

This study makes a number of contributions to the theoretical understanding of managerial mediation, mainly with regard to management style, trust and impartiality. These contributions are discussed below.

The findings of my study provide important insight into the relationship between management style and conflict management style. While this has been explored to some extent (Saeed et al., 2014; Stanley & Algert, 2007), the current study examines managers' beliefs and attitudes towards management, as well as their understanding of their relationship with their teams, and the strategies they use to further their management goals. It proposes a link between these attitudes and behaviours and the use of informal mediation by suggesting that certain management styles, characterised by a collaborative, people-centred approach, predispose managers to mediation-style interventions in conflict. In addition, the study proposes that management style is important in laying the foundation for effective managerial mediation.

In addition, the study broadens the framework provided by Poitras et al. (2015), by adding managers' perspectives to those of employees. As shown in the Discussion chapter (Chapter 5), there is significant overlap between these two perspectives, with a considerable difference regarding the importance of emotional skills on the part of managers. This is a matter which requires further research.

The study also adds to an understanding of role of trust in managerial mediation, and the relationship between empathy and impartiality in the building of trust. It proposes an extension of the trust framework offered by Posthuma and Poitras (2013) by suggesting that trust is built up in managerial mediation by the relationships which managers have with their teams by virtue of their day-to-day interactions with them. According to the findings of this

study, mediation skills alone are not sufficient for manager who mediate, and the tenor of their relationships with their team, and the way they communicate with them on a day-to-day basis, are important aspects of the conflict management role too.

Further, the study confirms the challenges faced by manager-mediators with regard to impartiality when they are mediating disputes that arise within their teams (Cohen, 1999; Poitras et al., 2015). This aspect of managerial mediation is particularly challenging in light of the relationship-centred management style which tends to favour mediation-type approaches. By referring to Posthuma and Poitras's (2013) framework, the current study proposes that training in mediations skills is likely to enable managers to consciously design even-handed processes which will ensure fairness in mediation without their having to compromise their people-centred managerial approach.

6.2 Implications for practice

There are a number of implications for management practice arising from this study, and these are discussed in the paragraphs which follow.

The study contributes to an understanding of managers' ability to intervene extremely early in conflicts which arise within their teams – this is by virtue of their embeddedness, and the relationships which they have with their teams. Very early intervention is important because it means that conflicts can be addressed before they become more serious, and often before a complaint is raised.

The study suggests that effective managerial mediation requires managerial mediators to operate from a position of trust with their staff, and that this cannot be built in the mediation alone. The development of trust occurs during the managers' interactions with their staff in the course of their normal duties. It is, therefore, important for managers to be trusted as good managers before they can be trusted as good mediators. Managers considering mediation processes should be advised that that this trust arises from managers' empathy towards concerns of their staff, and as a response to consistency, integrity and authenticity on the part of managers.

The study proposes, further, that mediation skills training can help managerial mediators to achieve impartiality as mediators without sacrificing the relationships that are important in the development of trust. Mediation skills training is vital, because there are specific skills required for managers to mediate effectively. The study also suggests,

however, in light of the previous paragraph, that mediation skills training on its own is not sufficient for the creation of effective managerial mediators. Managers also need training in management skills, particularly those which involve communication and emotional intelligence, if they are to build the sort of relationships with their teams which allow them to mediate disputes effectively.

Another implication for practice which arises from this study is that managerial mediators tend to see conflict management, including informal mediation, as part of the continuum of their managerial role. They are, however, sometimes hindered in their ability to perform managerial mediation by workload and timing restraints, as well as by a lack of confidence. This means that organisations which have an interest in managers performing managerial mediation need to ensure that these managers have the necessary support in the form of training, and that their conflict management role is recognised as part of their workload.

This study suggests, moreover, that organisational policies and values are important for managerial mediators. Managers manage in particular ways if the organisation encourages it, and they are more likely to use informal, mediation-type interventions for the resolution of conflict if this type of intervention has the genuine support of the organisation, reflected in organisational policies and values, and modelled through the behaviour of senior management and HR personnel.

6.3 Limitations and future research

There were a number of limitations to this study and these are addressed below.

Importantly, the study recruited only nurse managers who had used informal mediation to address disputes within their teams during the last two years, because the research question required a perspective and nurses meeting these criteria were considered most relevant to addressing the research question. It would be interesting to understand more about the perspectives of managers who choose not to intervene in this way and the reasons behind their choice, as this would add to an understanding of the various tensions and pressures in the managerial role. The struggles with recruitment, described in the Methods chapter (Chapter 3) possibly suggest that not many managers use informal mediation as a means of addressing disputes which arise within their teams. It would be interesting to look into the reasons why this is the case, and to investigate the obstacles to managerial mediation in a comprehensive way.

In addition, the study focused only on nurse managers in the public health sector, and it would be of interest to extend the study to other public sector organisations and also to private sector organisations in order to gain a better understanding of the way that informal mediation is used, or not, in workplaces in New Zealand.

Although this was not intended to be a gendered study, all of the participants were women, and this provided a particular perspective. Although attempts were made to recruit male participants so as to include diversity and representativeness in the sample, I was unable to achieve this. A male perspective on these issues would provide a broader understanding of the managerial perspective on managerial mediation.

6.4 Concluding statement

In New Zealand, the use of early, low-level, informal managerial mediation in addressing interpersonal disputes in the workplace is encouraged by both the Employment Relations Act 2000 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015. This type of intervention has been discussed by a number of researchers, in both organisational (Nehles et al., 2006; O'Donnell, 2009; Saam, 2010; Teague & Roche, 2012) and dispute resolution (Cohen, 1999; Goldblatt, 2011) literature.

While a number of these studies have focussed on the theoretical problems involved with an embedded manager mediating disputes between people with whom they have a relationship and over whom they exercise authority, the current study highlights the fact that manager-mediators themselves are more pragmatic about the issues, seeing this role as just one of the many that they exercise as contemporary managers.

In light of this, future research on managerial mediation needs to focus both on management skills and mediation skills, and also on organisational values and policies which support these skills. It needs to focus on the role of managerial mediation as part of an organisational conflict management system. This study has highlighted the fact that managers are embedded in organisations, that their role both enables and hinders their ability to practice managerial mediation. The ability of managers to conduct informal managerial mediation as part of their conflict management toolkit is important in preventing the escalation of disputes, but this role is not one that can be performed by managers who are unable to communicate effectively with their teams, or who are not trusted by their teams, nor can it be performed effectively and on an ongoing basis by managers who do not have the support of the organisation.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Exploring the role of managerial mediation in the management of interpersonal conflict in the workplace

My name is Megan Gordon and I am a mediator and researcher at Massey University. I am inviting you to participate in a research project that I am undertaking for my Master's degree.

The purpose of the research
The purpose of the research is to explore the way that managers mediate disputes which arise within their teams. By the term 'mediate' I am referring to informal, facilitated meetings where the disputing parties are encouraged by their manager to address their differences and agree on a way forward. I am interested in finding out how the managers conduct these meetings, and how they decide whether this is the way that they will intervene in the dispute. This research has come about because I believe that these meetings, facilitated by managers, could play a key role in managing workplace conflict at a very early stage before it possibly escalates to bullying. I am interested in understanding how the process is being used in the nursing context, and how it is experienced by managers.

She is interested in informal mediations conducted by managers and has chosen to base her research in the nursing context, where from what I understand in.

Participant Identification and Recruitment
To ensure that the information obtained will contribute to the aims of the study, I would like to speak to you if you meet the following criteria:

1) You have held a managerial position for at least six months; AND
2) In the past two years you have used informal, facilitated meetings in order to address disputes arising among your staff. These facilitated meetings involved you encouraging the disputing parties to address their differences and agree on a way forward.

Project Procedures
If you agree to take part in this study you will be asked to discuss your experiences of informal facilitation/ mediation as a means of addressing interpersonal conflict in the workplace. You will be asked to discuss reasons why you might (or might not) find this an effective method of managing conflict, and also the challenges that you feel you face. The interview will be semi-structured, will last up to 1 hour, and will be digitally recorded with your permission. The interviews will be conducted in late August and early September, 2018.

Participant's Rights
You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study (up until one week following the interview);
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your identity will remain anonymous in the findings of the research, and in any publications resulting from this study.
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Project Contacts
If you have any further questions or would like to accept this invitation to participate, please contact me on the details provided below.

Megan Gordon (lead researcher)
Email: M.Gordon@massey.ac.nz
Address: School of Management
Massey University
Private Bag 11222
Palmerston North, 4442

Appendix B: Advertisement on New Zealand, hear our voices (Facebook page)

I am conducting research into the use of informal mediation by clinical nurse mangers who use informal mediation as a way of dealing with interpersonal conflict within their teams. The research involves interviews which can be conducted face-to-face, by phone or by Skype, and participants' identities will be fully anonymised.

I would like to speak to clinical nurse managers who:

3) have held a managerial position for at least six months; AND

4) in the past two years have used informal, facilitated meetings in order to address disputes arising among their staff. These facilitated meetings involved the manager encouraging the disputing parties to address their differences and agree on a way forward.

Please contact me by Messenger for further information.

Appendix C: LinkedIn advertisement

(https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/attention-nurse-managers-megan-gordon/)

Are you a nurse manager? Do you use facilitated discussions to address disputes arising in your teams?

I am conducting research into the use of facilitated discussions as a way of dealing with interpersonal conflict within nursing teams, and would like to speak with nurse managers who, in the last two years, have used facilitated meetings to address disputes arising among their staff.

I understand that workplace conflict is an embedded and complex issue, and I am not seeking to promote facilitated discussions/ informal mediation as a universal solution. The research simply aims to explore whether facilitated discussions are being used as part of a managerial toolkit, and whether they are considered of value in nursing teams.

If you are a nurse manager and would be willing to participate in a phone or face-to-face interview (30 - 40 minutes max) or would like more information, please send me an email at M.Gordon@massey.ac.nz.

With many thanks,

Megan

(Megan Gordon)

About me: I am a teacher and mediator, and I am now studying for a Master's degree at Massey University. This research is being undertaken within the context of my studies and has been approved by the Ethics Committee at Massey University

Appendix D: Ethics notification

Date: 16 October 2017

Dear Megan Gordon

Re: Ethics Notification - **4000018579** - **Managers who mediate: a qualitative study.**

Thank you for your notification which you have assessed as Low Risk.

Your project has been recorded in our system which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

If situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your ethical analysis, please go to http://rims.massey.ac.nz and register the changes in order that they be assessed as safe to proceed.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:
"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 3569099 ext 86015, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz. "

Please note, if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to complete the application form again, answering "yes" to the publication question to provide more information for one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Brian Finch
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Research Ethics Office, Research and Enterprise
Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand **T** 06 350 5573; 06 350 5575 **F** 06 355 7973
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz **W** http://humanethics.massey.ac.nz