

DEWALD PRETORIUS

THE IMPACT OF SOCIALISED CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES
WITHIN A LAW FIRM IN PORT ELIZABETH

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I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the Bachelor of Arts Honours in Psychology degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

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ABSTRACT:

The behaviour and values that we acquire from our culture can impact how we perform within the workplace setting (de Swardt, van Rensburg & Oosthuizen, 2017). Probably one of the most important factors to deal with in a culturally diverse workforce is conflict. Different cultures learn different ways of handling conflict; however, culture is not only limited to ethnic background. Organisations often socialise their employees to follow the organisational culture.

As such the aim of the study was to determine the impact of socialised conflict management techniques within a law firm within Port Elizabeth. The research was qualitative in nature and followed the interpretive paradigm. Data was collected through means of Skype interviews as the COVID-19 pandemic prevented face-to-face interviews to be done in person. The data analysis process involved content analysis of the interview transcripts. Three theories were utilised for this study: Thomas-Kilmann's Interpersonal conflict theory, Galtung's conflict triangle and Albert Banduras social learning theory. The study revealed that the law firm's workplace culture was the main factor influencing socialised conflict management techniques as opposed to ethnic cultural background.

Key Concepts: Socialisation, conflict management techniques, law firms

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Contextualisation

In order to better understand the value of the research that will take place some contextual information should be provided first. The purpose of the research will be to investigate the impact of socialised conflict management techniques within a law firm in Port Elizabeth.

The reason why socialised conflict management techniques will be researched is because learnt behaviour can influence professional conduct within organisations, either positively or negatively. This is where socialisation comes into play, as professional socialisation involves acquisition of values, attitudes and skills to be used in the workplace setting (Cornelissen & Van Wyk, 2007). However, there is a problem as socialisation occurs not only in the professional context; thus, socialisation in the personal context such as ethnic culture can interfere with professional socialisation. Research highlights that professionals enter the workforce with their own set of values and behaviour that have been learnt (de Swardt *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, influencing behaviour, such as conflict management.

Due to South Africa's diverse cultural background, organisational conflict might be more prevalent. As Martin (2014) says, a culturally diverse workforce increases organisational conflict. Therefore, it is important to manage this conflict within the South African context.

Nevertheless, conflict management does not mean that conflict will not occur or that occasional conflict is not healthy for an organisation. Short-term organisational conflict can lead to greater insight and heightened employee relationships as well as cooperation (Gilin Oore, Leiter & LeBlanc, 2015). As for the decision to select a law firm as the organisation for the intended research, it is attributed to the fact that a law firm needs to have excellent conflict management techniques in place. This is because law firms require both individual and organisation cooperation which creates the need to constantly learn and improve social skills to ensure business flexibility in any situation (du Plessis, 2011). One of these vital skills being conflict management techniques, which is why a law firm in Port Elizabeth will be chosen as the sample population.

1.2 Rationale

South Africa is a diverse country; however, the country is still learning how to maintain cooperation between the diverse cultures (Joubert, 2017). The country consists of eleven official languages which represents the country's diverse culture. As such, there is a vast difference in cultural norms which have been taught to individuals. This in turn influences how individuals deal with issues, such as conflict. The reason being that culture involves shared values, beliefs, expectations and attitudes (Awasthy, Kalra & Gupta, 2012). Therefore, influencing how individuals behave in all situations, even when managing conflict.

This is relevant in the workplace setting as organisational success often hinges on a group's ability to synergistically cooperate (Varella, Javidan & Waldman, 2012). As such, the management of conflict within the workplace of a country with such diversity is vital. In contrast, when workplace diversity is poorly managed it decreases the company's productivity, and as a result its competitiveness (Joubert, 2017).

Furthermore, conflict is a natural part of life and cannot be avoided. Nevertheless, it should be managed within the workplace setting as co-workers are dependent on each other to some degree and conflict which is poorly managed can be counterproductive (Elgoibar, Munduate & Euwema, 2016).

Socialisation of new employees is particularly important as they still have to learn how their organisation functions. Proper socialisation of new employees ensures their cooperation with other employees and loyalty to the organisation (Awasthy *et al.*, 2012). Nevertheless, socialisation is also important for existing employees. Since socialisation allows current employees to have a greater degree of co-operation (Awasthy *et al.*, 2012).

Finally, it should also be highlighted that culturally socialised conflict management techniques should be considered. Due to the fact that conflict management on its own is not effective without considering the probable cause of conflict, as this inevitably leads to failure (Khanaki & Hassanzadeh, 2010). Thus, the conflict management technique employees have learned prior to joining the organisation should be considered as culture does in fact influence the behaviour of individuals. Unfortunately, in the current literature there is little research combining both socialisation and conflict

management techniques (Awasthy *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, this research will serve to add to the existing literature by combining these two concepts that are often studied separately.

1.3 Problem Statement

Community psychology acknowledges that people's actions are influenced by their cultural, political and social settings (Duncan, Bowman, Naidoo, Pillay & Roos, 2018). These factors would also influence how people react to conflict within the workplace. This is particularly true for a high-stress organisational environment such as a law firm where employee collaboration is important. Lee (2018) points out that the most important resource law firms have, is employee collaboration. As such, the problem is that socialised conflict management techniques have an impact within law firms.

As the research will be focusing on the workplace environment, focus will be placed on the organisational definition of socialisation. Therefore, socialisation within the workplace is roughly defined as the process through which individuals learn how to become functional members of the organisation (Awasthy *et al.*, 2012). This would involve the individual learning their role within the organisation, the hierarchy and the way in which business is conducted within the organisation. Socialisation ensures job satisfaction, role clarity and a committed workforce (Awasthy *et al.*, 2012).

Taking all of this into consideration when talking about socialised conflict management techniques, reference is being made to conflict management techniques employees learn through the law firm. However, cultural, political and social factors also socialise individuals, as has already been mentioned; thus, impacting the organisational socialisation process.

1.4 Purpose Statement

The purpose of the research is to gain insight into how conflict management techniques differ across cultures or in people from different upbringings within Port Elizabeth. This research aims to specifically look at a law firm within Port Elizabeth to gain further understanding of this question.

The conflict management techniques that will be discussed for the purpose of this research undertaking is those proposed by Thomas-Kilmann. The basic premise of

the theory is that individuals can use one of five different conflict management techniques. These are sometimes also referred to as conflict management styles. The five different conflict management techniques are avoidant, accommodating, compromising, competing and collaboration (Khanaki & Hassanzadeh, 2010).

The main research objective is to determine the impact that socialised conflict management techniques have within a law firm in Port Elizabeth. Furthermore, the research will have three sub-objectives. The first objective will be to determine the definition of socialised conflict management techniques. The objective that will follow next will be to determine the importance of socialised conflict management techniques. The final sub-objective will then be to determine which socialised conflict management technique is most ideal to implement within a law firm.

The first two of these three sub-objectives will be fulfilled in the literature review section of this research report. Meanwhile, the third sub-objective and the main objective of the research will only appear later within the research report.

1.5 Research questions

Table 1: Research Questions

Main Research Question	
RQM:	What is the impact that socialised conflict management techniques have within a law firm in Port Elizabeth?
Sub-questions	
RQ1:	What is the definition of socialised conflict management techniques?
RQ2:	What is the importance of socialised conflict management techniques?
RQ3:	What is the ideal socialised conflict management technique to implement within a law firm?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to literature

The aim of this research is to gain insight into how conflict management techniques differ across cultures within the South African context. For the purpose of this research it will specifically focus on a law firm in Port Elizabeth. As such, the title for the research will be 'The impact of socialised conflict management techniques within a law firm in Port Elizabeth'.

As such, the literature review that follows will conceptualise the concepts relevant to the study such as conflict, stress and globalisation. Thereafter, three key theories that hold relevance to the research will be discussed and explained. This discussion will include Thomas-Kilmann's interpersonal conflict theory, Galtung's conflict triangle theory and Albert Bandura's social learning theory. Thomas-Kilmann's interpersonal conflict theory looks at the different conflict management styles that an individual can utilise. This will follow with Galtung's conflict triangle theory which consists of the three possible forms which conflict can take. Finally, Bandura's social learning theory will be looked at which relates to the ways in which behaviour can be learnt through social interactions.

2.2 Organisational conflict, stress and globalisation

Conflict is part of life and occurs in all areas of life, including the workplace. Conflict could result in a decrease in the productivity of an organisation. Shah (2017) points out that conflict within an organisation will arise when there is a misunderstanding, which in turn results in distress and an ineffective work environment.

It should be noted that there have been various attempts at defining conflict. Prause and Mujtaba (2015) view conflict as fighting that occurs between individuals on the basis of opposing desires, wants and needs. An example of this within the workplace setting would be when conflicting opinions arise between co-workers on the approach to a certain project. An alternative definition of conflict is opposing goals, interests and values between two or more individuals who are interdependent who perceives the other party as hindering their own goals, interests or values (Putnam & Poole, 1987, as cited in Altmäe, Türk & Toomet, 2013). As such, according to this definition, conflict

can only occur within an organisation when the parties involved are interdependent on each other in some way.

The organisation relevant to this study is a law firm in Port Elizabeth that will be studied. An organisation is defined as “collection of people who work together and coordinate their actions to achieve a wide variety of goals or desired future outcomes” (Jones & George, 2014, 5, as cited in Prause & Mujtaba, 2015, 14).

There are a variety of factors that can contribute to conflict within the workplace setting. Shah (2017) points out that conflict can occur due to a stressful environment, difficulty achieving goals and misunderstandings between co-workers. Employees in law firms experience high stress levels due to the high-risk nature of their profession. The drawback of high stress levels within a profession is that it could cause interpersonal conflict to occur among co-workers (Shah, 2017).

South Africa also provides its own contextual factors that can contribute to conflict within an organisation. A research study conducted in 2008 studied the causes of conflict, both within the private and public sector in South Africa. Two main findings were presented in the research. Globalisation and the diverse cultural setting within South Africa were the main sources of workplace conflict; secondly, there is a lack of organisation conflict studies within the South African context (van Tonder, Havenga & Visagie, 2008).

Despite the research being somewhat dated, it still holds value since more modern research has found similar issues with globalisation causing conflict, not just in South Africa but all over the world. For example, a study done in 2013 looked at the differences in conflict management between cultures. The research findings were that different cultures tend to utilise different conflict management techniques to solve problems (Sadri, 2013). Therefore, the same issue would be handled differently depending on the individuals' cultural background. Furthermore, the study highlighted that due to the rapid advances in technology, globalisation has caused more people from different cultural backgrounds to be working together than ever before (Sadri, 2013).

More recent studies in South Africa have also identified similar causes of conflict as the two aforementioned studies. The factors contributing to high levels of workplace

conflict in South Africa includes resource restraints, social influence and environmental factors such as high levels of unemployment and the country's poverty levels (Jordaan & Cillié, 2016). As such, it can be appreciated that there are many factors in South Africa that contribute to high stress levels and, as a result, conflict.

If conflict is not effectively handled between co-workers within an organisation, especially one with a diverse workforce, it could have serious setbacks for the organisation. A study was conducted in South Africa in 2017 to look at the effects of both good and bad diversity management within organisations. The findings of the research indicated that when diversity within an organisation was managed well it reduced conflict among co-workers; however, when it is not properly managed it resulted in a decrease in productivity (Joubert, 2017).

Joubert (2017) showcased that if conflict occurs within an organisation due to workplace diversity, it could result in stereotyping, prejudice, misunderstandings and potential language or communication barriers. This is especially concerning for a country such as South Africa with a very diverse population.

The issue of globalisation has also made it so that English is the default language spoken within most organisations. Valentino (2017) mentions that the decisions of an organisation to make English the default language of practice sets a roadblock to those who are not native English speakers; thus, delaying their rate of productivity and as a result their income. The relevance to the current study undertaken is that South Africa is a diverse country which hosts eleven official languages. Meaning that not everybody within the workforce has English as their home language; thus, it would influence their productivity and income.

2.3 Interpersonal Conflict Theory

Taking the aforementioned into account, the first theory that will be discussed is Thomas-Kilmann's interpersonal conflict theory. Thomas-Kilmann's theory suggests five conflict management techniques or styles. These techniques consist of one of two domains which is the concern for others' needs versus the concern for your own needs (Valentino, 2017). As such, the conflict management techniques are dependent on how much the individual takes into account their own needs versus that of their co-workers.

The first conflict management technique is termed avoidant or passive style. This conflict management technique is identified by a lack of addressing the source of conflict which then results in a negative relationship between the parties involved (Valentino, 2017). An example of this within the organisational setting would be if an employee feels that the employer is assigning too much work; however, instead of discussing this with the employer, the issue is just avoided.

This is arguably the least effective conflict management technique as the conflict is never handled. Research published in 2019, that looked at positive organisational culture, highlighted the fact that conflict does in fact have a productive function within organisations. Sharma and Singh (2019) suggest that there are negative consequences of conflict within organisations; however, it is also beneficial as it brings to light problems that had previously been ignored; thus, forcing a solution to be found.

The second conflict management technique is known as accommodating conflict management. This technique essentially involves a high degree of cooperation combined with a low degree of assertiveness (Sadri, 2013). As such, one of the individuals involved would have to neglect their own concerns in favour of the other party's concern. As Valentino (2017) states, one party is losing while the other one is winning.

The next conflict management technique involved in the theory is the competing or forcing technique. This involves a low concern for the other individuals' needs in favour of your own needs (Valentino, 2017). This technique for solving conflict is extremely unilateral. This technique is only useful when authoritative actions need to be taken in crisis situations (Prause & Mujtaba, 2015). For example, when a financial crisis arises within an organisation, an authoritative conflict management technique would be the preferred method of handling the problem. The nature of this conflict management technique allows executive decisions to be made quickly without much input from the other parties involved in a high stakes situation; such as a financial crisis which requires a practical solution rather than a solution that satisfies all parties involved.

One of the more preferred conflict management techniques within organisations is the compromising technique. This technique is a midway between assertiveness and cooperation (Sadri, 2013). Therefore, both parties would benefit from the resolution partially; however, they would still suffer a partial loss. Nevertheless, there is a major

shortcoming with this technique in the long term. Research done on the topic in 2015 has shown that this technique only temporarily resolves the root cause of the conflict (Prause & Mujtaba, 2015). This is to be expected since both parties have suffered a loss during the conflict resolution process.

The final conflict management technique that falls within the theory is that of collaboration. This technique results in a mutually satisfactory end result for all parties involved (Valentino, 2017). This is the ideal technique in most organisational conflict situations. It is the only technique which results in a win-win scenario; thus, all parties are content (Prause & Mujtaba, 2015).

A study conducted in 2016 looked at the ideal conflict management techniques to reduce burnout in the workplace; identified the best and worst conflict management techniques. The findings were that more cooperative conflict management styles proved to be ideal, while less cooperative styles proved to be the least ideal (Rahim, 2016). This would mean that collaboration would be the ideal conflict management technique while avoidant and competing are the least effective conflict management techniques.

Nevertheless, despite the simplicity of the theory, there are a few limitations in it. Some researchers argue that conflict management techniques provide only temporary relief for conflict (Valentino, 2017). This would mean that conflict is bound to occur again within the organisation despite the usage of the ideal conflict management technique.

Another limitation of the conflict management techniques is that some research has shown that leadership styles also play a role in conflict management techniques (Altmäe *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, it is suggested that the ideal research scenario would include both the interpersonal conflict theory and supporting leadership theories.

Other than that, it should be mentioned that most of the research done on the interpersonal conflict management technique have predominantly only been used in studies that focus on negative conflict (Sharma & Singh, 2019). Therefore, there is a lack of current literature that incorporates the theory within a context of positive organisation conflict.

Nevertheless, the interpersonal conflict management theory does have the advantage of simplicity and ease of use. The conflict management theory provides a system for

handling conflict for organisations that is straight forward, easy to comprehend and provides a quick solution to conflict situations (Meyer, Gemell, & Irving, 1997, as cited in Valentino, 2017).

Another advantage of the interpersonal conflict theory is that it provides a functional solution to conflict management. Rahim (2016) states that conflict management techniques have a functional purpose within organisations as it reduces work related burnout. In other words, managing the type of conflict management techniques used within an organisation would result in a decrease of stress and burnout for all employees.

Finally, the issue of the theory only providing short term solution to conflict should also be addressed. It is true that conflict management techniques only provide a temporary solution for conflict; however, not all conflict is bad. The main aim of conflict management techniques is to achieve stronger relationship with co-workers in the long term and to learn more about their needs and your own within the organisation (Sadri, 2013). As such, the aim is not to eliminate conflict forever but to strengthen the organisations ability to have its employees cooperate with each other. This is important as organisations are more pressured than ever before to achieve synergistic relationships between its members to achieve success due to the melting pot of cultures (Prause & Mujtaba, 2015).

As such, all of the limitations and strengths of interpersonal conflict theory have been considered. Despite the limitations presented, the theory will be used for research due to the theory's relevance and the alignment to the purpose of the study.

2.4 Galtung's Conflict Triangle

Another theory that will be used for this research is Galtung's conflict triangle. The main premise of the theory is that conflict can be divided into two types. Direct violence - which involves direct verbal, as well as bodily harm and indirect violence; it is then divided further into structural and cultural violence (Guilherme, 2017). Therefore, the theory suggests three potential forms that violence can take that shapes the so-called triangle of the theory. Due to the nature of the research, emphasis will be placed on structural and cultural violence.

As such, the concepts of structural and cultural violence should be further explained. Structural and cultural violence presents itself through the exclusion of a certain group of individuals or privileges that are given to a certain group of individuals based on structural or cultural factors (Bajaj, 2019). An example of this within an organisation would be if an individual is excluded from making important decisions relating to the organisation that impacts them based on factors such as their culture or age.

The rationale behind this theory is that it is important to deal with the root cause of conflict. It is far better to deal with the root cause of conflict, that is to say cultural and structural violence, before it erupts into direct violence (Guilherme, 2017). Therefore, this theory would supplement the interpersonal conflict theory, as combined they would cover both the root cause of conflict and the symptoms of conflict when it arises.

The culturally diverse workforce of South African organisations makes it an ideal place for structural and cultural conflict to occur. The reason being that the different beliefs, values and approaches makes it a complicated process of working together in a culturally diverse setting (Corkindale, 2007, as cited in Prause & Mujtaba, 2015). This provides the rationale for the relevance of this theory within the current research project.

Furthermore, this theory also suggests two ways in which conflict might be dealt with. Either those involved come to a peaceful resolution through dialogue or they oppose each other through dialogue (Guilherme, 2017). This is essentially a summarised explanation of the interpersonal conflict theory as all the conflict management techniques either fall under an attempt to create a peaceful resolution or to oppose the other person.

It is also important to consider this theory for the purpose of cultural and structural factors related to conflict. Conflict management begins by understanding that an organisation with a diverse workforce see things from a different perspective as a result of their background (Weiner, 2011, as cited in Prause & Mujtaba, 2015). Therefore, Galtung's conflict triangle provides the grounds on which to consider these factors when it comes to conflict management techniques. Furthermore, the theory proposes that larger cultural and structural forces are the main cause of conflict within organisations (Bajaj, 2019). This proves relevant within the South Africa context due to the country's history of racial and cultural segregation during Apartheid.

The relevance of the theory has been discussed; however, there are a few limitations and factors to consider when it comes to using the theory in the current research project. One of these being that similar to the interpersonal conflict theory some argue that Galtung's theory only provides temporary relief for conflict (Bajaj, 2019). The argument behind this is that it only addresses conflict before it occurs; however, that is why it is useful to combine Galtung's theory with the interpersonal conflict theory. Furthermore, it has already been discussed that not all conflict is bad; therefore, occasional conflict is useful for organisations.

The other gap in the literature that should be considered is that previous research has only been grounded in local knowledge (Bajaj, 2019). Therefore, there has not been much application of the theory within the South African context and even less so within Port Elizabeth. There is no knowledge of how this impacts the research; however, it is still a factor to consider especially as the focus is on structural and cultural violence.

2.5 Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura was the inventor of the social learning theory which suggests that learning occurs as a result of our interactions with others during social interactions (Nabavi, 2012). As such the theory proposes that learning through observing others is a vital part in developing skills.

The literature on the theory has also referred to this type of learning as observational learning. Observational learning in this case meaning acquired behaviour and attitudes through observation of others' behaviours (Baron & Branscombe, 2017). Relating this back to the conflict management techniques, if one were to use this theory, one might come to the conclusion that conflict management techniques could be learned through social observations.

It should also be noted that learning theorists defined learning as the process through which performance changes occur as a result of interaction with the environment (Driscoll, 1994, as cited in Nabavi, 2012). This plays an important role in the concept of socialisation. As the purpose of the research is focused on the organisation setting; organisation socialisation will be referred to. Organisational socialisation is essentially the process of adapting to an organisation through means of learning the social structure, values, beliefs and behaviours of the organisation (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly,

Wolf, Klein & Gardner, 1994). As such, the way in which one is socialised will determine one's behaviour within the organisation. This would mean that socialisation might potentially play a role with regards to learning conflict management techniques.

Research conducted in 2012, suggested that organisational success is directly related to the ability of a group to work together (Varella *et al.*, 2012). The study focused on the role of social learning and how it impacted group cohesion in the workplace. The result of this study was that social learning does indeed play a significant role on group cooperation (Varella *et al.*, 2012).

There are two important factors to consider when it comes to social learning of conflict management techniques. Firstly, that social learning is often an unconscious process; however, it does not always lead to change (Nicholas, Deacon, Van der Merwe, Semanya, Kadish, Mpofo, Penny, Baloyi, Damianova & Foxcroft, 2016). As such, social learning is not the sole determining factor when it comes to the acquisition of conflict management techniques. However, it also implies that social learning often occurs passively; thus, one might argue that social settings would passively impact the socialised conflict management techniques of an individual.

The second consideration is that life experiences would shape an individual's reactions to certain situations, such as workplace conflict. The reasoning behind this is that an individual's perception shapes the course of events as well as their beliefs (Nicholas *et al.*, 2016). For example, if an individual has only ever been exposed to a submissive style of conflict management then they might perceive it as the only way of handling conflict.

Nevertheless, despite the value that the social learning theory holds to the current research objective there are a few critiques and limitations to the theory. Bandura himself pointed out that social learning "[may] or may not result in behaviour change" (Bandura, 2006, as cited in Nabavi, 2012). This would mean that despite individuals learning certain conflict management techniques in social settings, they might not necessarily incorporate these techniques themselves.

Meanwhile, when it comes to socialisation and as a result observational learning there has been critique about the type of research conducted. Some researchers have stated that there is a lack of empirical research regarding these theoretical concepts

(Chao *et al.*, 1994). As such, this should be taken into consideration as a potential reliability issue with the construct.

Nevertheless, the theory and its supporting constructs still hold value. Cacioppo & Freberg (2016) state that observational learning often overrides our other behaviours simply because we are social beings. Also, the research purpose incorporates the issue of cultural impact on socialisation of conflict management techniques. Thus, it should be remembered that culture is simply socially transmitted information transferred by groups about ideas and behaviours (Cacioppo & Freberg, 2016). Therefore, social learning theory still holds value for the current research being undertaken.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the conceptualisation of the relevant concepts namely conflict, stress, and globalisation has been discussed. This was followed with a look at the three key theories that are to be used for the research. The first being Thomas-Kilmann's interpersonal conflict theory followed by Galtung's conflict triangle theory and finally Albert Bandura's social learning theory. Some of the limitations of these theories have been discussed; however, the reasoning behind why they are still to be used has also been given in their defence.

The title of the research is 'The impact of socialised conflict management techniques within a law firm in Port Elizabeth' which is why the literature review looked at theories concerning conflict management techniques, forms of conflict and the role of social learning in behaviour. Furthermore, the purpose of the research is to gain insight into how conflict management techniques might differ across cultures. For the purpose of this research it will be done by focusing on a law firm in Port Elizabeth.

Thus, the research will aid in countering some of the limitations in the current literature on the topic. One of these limitations that have been discussed, is the lack of organisation conflict studies within the South African context. Therefore, due to the setting of the research being in Port Elizabeth it will combat this limitation. The other limitation that will be addressed through this research is the lack of research that incorporates positive organisation conflict. However, due to the research focusing on organisational conflict in general rather than either negative or positive organisation conflict

separately. It will avoid this issue and add to the existing literature that incorporates positive organisation conflict.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Paradigm

This research project will undertake the interpretive paradigm as its design. This is essentially the lens through which the research is viewed typically in the field of social science (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001, as cited in Maree, 2019). As such, it would be the ideal paradigm to use within the current research, as it is psychological research; thus, it falls within the field of social science.

Furthermore, the research will be looking at socially embedded factors namely socialised conflict management techniques. This would involve consideration for the cultural factors that caused the socialisation of these conflict management techniques within South Africa. Thus, the interpretivist paradigm is suited since it is an approach that attempts to understand the world by looking at the social structure of the world in a subjective approach to do so. (Günbayi & Sorm, 2018).

Finally, the research will also follow a qualitative design. It is for this reason that the interpretive paradigm is well suited for this research. The reason being that taking a subjective view during research about socialisation as this is important to showcase the research participants' view of the phenomenon being studied; thus, a qualitative approach is needed (Chao *et al.*, 1994).

3.2 Research Design

The proposed paradigm in which this research will fall under is the field of interpretivism. This means that a more subjective approach will be used which avoids the standard methods of natural science (Maree, 2019). This is selected since the purpose of the research is to gain insight into the research problem rather than to find statistical data that will provide a solution. This simply means that the research is exploratory in nature. The term exploratory research refers to the aim to “inquire or find out more about a phenomenon” (Maree, 2019, 34).

The research also forms part of the field of interpretivism as the research will attempt to gather in-depth knowledge of each individual's perception of reality. As Scotland (2012) says, interpretivism believes that reality is subjective, and that reality is an

individual construct. Therefore, proving that it is a suited paradigm for the intended research.

Furthermore, the research will take the position that both knowledge and behaviour is culturally derived. This once again follows the principles of interpretivism as interpretivism does not attempt to question beliefs but rather accept them with the aim of bringing into consciousness social forces and structures (Scotland, 2012). Taking all of the aforementioned into account, it is logical that interpretivism would be a suited paradigm for the research undertaking.

Meanwhile, the research approach and design will be qualitative in nature. This approach and design allow for a more in-depth look at the research problem and allows for a subjective view of the research question (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Therefore, it would be fitting to the study as the purpose is not to control or predict future behaviour as is the case with a quantitative approach and design.

Qualitative research is also ideal for most psychological research scenarios. This is due to the fact that qualitative research involves scientific research that produces knowledge about the nature of a phenomenon especially those of social processes (Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow & Ponterotto, 2017). Therefore, qualitative research would be applicable to the research due to it being a psychological research studying social processes.

A qualitative research approach is also appropriate since the purpose of the research is not to provide a solution but rather to investigate the phenomenon as a means to contribute to the existing body of research on a minor scale. Afterall, qualitative research produces original knowledge through a slow gradual process of combined research efforts (Levitt *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, the proposed research would make a small contribution to this gradual research process.

Another reason why a qualitative study would be useful is due to the lack of qualitative research in the organisational setting, which in this case is the law firm in Port Elizabeth. There have been requests for an increase of qualitative research both in the workplace setting and organisational setting (O'Neil & Koekemoer, 2016).

Therefore, by taking a qualitative approach this research would be fulfilling that need in the current literature.

The final rational as to why the research approach will be qualitative is due to the limited sample size being used, this will be discussed later on. Qualitative research delivers credible results despite a small sample size due to the in-depth nature of the research (O'Neil & Koekemoer, 2016). Thus, despite the small sample size that will be used for the research, it will still deliver credible research results.

3.3 Population

The selected sampling population that was used for the research were personnel at a law firm in Port Elizabeth. The target population was a single law firm in Port Elizabeth, as a means to set a specific criterion that all participants share. In this case it was that all the participants were employees at the same law firm in Port Elizabeth.

Therefore, as the research focused only on a single law firm the viable population size was naturally limited. It should also be taken into account that not all the employees from the target population participated in the research. The reason for this is that participation in the research was completely optional and as a result of this only those that were willing to participate did. Therefore, not the entire target population could be utilised for the purpose of the research.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the population parameters were set in accordance with the main research question. The main research question being 'What is the impact that socialised conflict management techniques have within a law firm in Port Elizabeth?'; therefore, the research population is limited due to the basis of the main research question focusing on a single law firm. As such, it would be recommended that future research on the topic expands the target population and tailor the main research question to accommodate the larger population size.

3.4 Sampling

The sampling method that was used for the study was non-probability sampling. This means that the sample of the population was not randomly chosen and is instead based on coincidence or the ability to make contact with the participant (Du PlooyCilliers *et al.*, 2014). The reason for this sampling method is that there were

difficulties to gain access to the entire target population; therefore, five participants were used from the target population. The reason for this is that the entire target population was not able to participate in the research due to time constraints. Other than non-probability sampling, purposive sampling was also used. The sample was chosen for the purpose of representing a group in relation to a specific criterion (Maree, 2019). In this case it was the fact that all the participants were from the same law firm; therefore, increasing the ease of accessibility.

The sample population included, two Afrikaans males, two Xhosa females and one coloured female. The research focuses on socialised conflict management techniques; therefore, it was vital to include a culturally diverse sample group. The reason for this is that culture is the socialised knowledge, skills and traits that people have acquired from others that share their heritage (Pagel, 2012). Therefore, due to the main focus of the research it was necessary to ensure a culturally diverse sample group was selected.

As has already been stated the sample size was quite small. Nevertheless, the small sample size was not a major concern as the research is qualitative in nature; thus, a large population would not necessarily enhance the value of the data. This is due to the factor of data saturation. Data saturation being the point at which the researcher has gained a sufficient amount of data at; thus, further data is no longer adding any additional useful information (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar & Fontenot, 2013). Full data saturation might not have been attained for this research. However, a sufficient amount has arguably been obtained. As a sample size of five is quite small; nevertheless, that sample size should be considered in the context that only a single law firm was the focus of the study. Therefore, five participants in reality form a large percentage of the intended target population. Furthermore, it should be considered that there are no clear guidelines with regards to population size used in qualitative research because the sample size should depend on the research question itself (Marshall *et al.*, 2013).

The sample size for qualitative research depends heavily on the available resources and time (Marshall *et al.*, 2013). The resources as well as the time available for the research were very limited which in turn meant that the population and sample size were restricted. Ideally future research on the topic would require further access to

resources and time in order to expand the population and sampling size. The reasoning for this is that it is beneficial to consider the unselected population and sample as a missing data problem (Mendoza, Stafford & Stauffer, 2000). This is because the unselected sample or restricted population if taken into account into a research undertaking would change the data and potentially the interpretation of the data. Therefore, revealing additional information that was not available with the original research sample. Thus, re-administering a research procedure to a larger population and gathering a wider sample range would deliver a more unbiased research finding (Mendoza *et al.*, 2000). For example, this research did not include any English or Zulu participants simply because of issues with availability of such participants. Thus, providing a focus area for future research.

3.5 Data Collection Method(s)

The data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews. The benefit of this was that it allowed a greater degree of insight into the opinion and views of the participants (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). As such, it proved fitting for the purpose of the research as individuals have their own conflict management techniques, which, are possibly influenced by cultural socialisation. Therefore, the data collection method of in-depth interviews was chosen as a means of gathering insight into the participants perception of reality and how they manage conflict.

Initially the interviews were planned to be conducted face-to-face; however, the unforeseen event of the COVID-19 pandemic removed this as a viable option. This is due to the WHO (World Health Organisation) recommendation of social distancing that was put in place to prevent further spread of the COVID-19 virus (Lewnard & Lo, 2020).

As a result, the interviews were instead conducted through Skype due to the COVID-19 pandemic limiting the movement of individuals within South Africa. Nevertheless, the use of Skype interviews provided similar benefits to traditional face-to-face interviews for the data collection process. One of the benefits was that it did not limit the range of participants that were able to be interviewed, simply on the basis of not being physically accessible to the researcher (Lo Iacono, Symonds & Brown, 2016). However, despite the physical distance that the Skype interviews created it still remained fairly similar to the traditional face-to-face interview process. This proved to be advantageous since face-to-face interviews allow for spontaneous answers as well

as for the presence of non-verbal communication that cannot be expressed in telephonic interviews (Opdenakker, 2006). The only major disadvantage with the use of Skype interviews was that some participants tended to be less comfortable with digital communication than some of the other participants. However, this is typically only seen with more reserved individuals (Lo Iacono *et al.*, 2016). In this case this proved to be true as the more reserved individuals did appear to struggle more during the interview process.

The data-collection process was conducted on Friday 14 August 2020 and included a sample size of five participants. The sample population included two Afrikaans men, two Xhosa women and one coloured woman who formed part of the workforce of the chosen law firm in Port Elizabeth. The research participants were interviewed separately, which involved answering twelve open-ended questions relating to culture, socialisation, conflict management in the workplace and workplace stress. The questions were designed with these concepts in mind as the literature review, which was presented in the research report, revealed that these are all the factors relevant to the aim of the research. The research aim being to gain insight into how conflict management techniques differ across cultures or in people from different upbringings in Port Elizabeth. Furthermore, the interviews were recorded with permission from the research participants both in written format, with the informed consent letter, and verbally prior to the interview. These recordings were later used for the data analysis process which will be discussed further on in the study.

The interview process involved open-ended questions with a specific intention in mind. Open-ended questions in this context refers to in-depth questions that aim to understand either the processes of something or the gain insight into any potential observable casual relationships between different factors or phenomena (Weller, Vickers, Bernard, Blackburn, Borgatti, Gravlee & Johnson, 2018). Thus, the interview process relied mostly on open-ended questions to gain greater insight into the research question. However, this is not the only reason why this design was chosen. A further reason why the interview relied so heavily on open-ended questions was because of data salience. Salience refers to the frequency with which certain items are repeated or the order in which they are presented (Weller *et al.*, 2018). Open-ended questions make it easier to observe data salience. In turn, data salience is a more important factor to consider within qualitative research especially with a small

sample size. The reason for this is that qualitative research aims to collect the most important data rather than as much data as possible; therefore, data salience proves more useful than data saturation (Weller *et al.*, 2018). Thus, it proved particularly useful for the purpose of this research as it has been aforementioned in the previous section that it was difficult to acquire data saturation due to the small sample size. Thus, more emphasis was placed on data salience for the purposes of this research which is another reason why open-ended question were so heavily incorporated.

3.6 Data Analysis Method(s)

The first step that was taken in the data analysis process involved transcriptions being made of the interviews. This was then followed with textual analysis of the interview transcripts. Focus was placed on any recurring trends in the participants' statements and opinions on conflict, stress and behaviour regarding conflict management in their own culture. This was done through means of content analysis. Content analysis is a data analysis method that summarises large textual sources by objectively and systematically identifying the characteristics of messages (Maree, 2019). For example, if a specific conflict management technique is seen to be more common in a specific cultural group, then this would be identified as a recurring trend. Content analysis was chosen as it is a systematic and objective method of describing a phenomenon (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In this case, the phenomenon being describe is socialised conflict management techniques that the chosen law firm's employees use.

The data analysis method included the use of the qualitative research tool called ATLAS.ti. One of the major reasons for this was because there has been an increasing demand for local research in South Africa to utilise qualitative research tools such as ATLAS.ti (Schurink, 2003). The research tool served to simplify the data analysis and coding process of the research data collected. Thus, it was useful in saving time during the research process.

The data analysis process followed the three phases of content analysis. These phases involve preparation, organisation and reporting of the research data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The first phase in this process involved adding the interview transcripts to ATLAS.ti; thereafter, the transcripts were read through a few times. The reason behind this is that in the preparation phase of the content analysis process the researcher is required to first familiarise himself with the content (Morse & Field, 1995,

as cited in Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Thus, this allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the content as a whole. The next step that followed was to decide on what was to be analysed. The component that is chosen to be analysed during content analysis is always related to the research question (Duncan, 1989, as cited in Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Therefore, it was decided on that themes and sentences were to be analysed rather than single words as it would provide a greater degree of insight into the research question which focuses both on socialisation and conflict management. The final step that was taken during the preparation was to summarise the text. This ensured that the organisation of the data was more manageable (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

The second phase of the content analysis process involved the organisation of the data. This phase involved the categorisation of data by grouping certain repeated trends together (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This was done by grouping data together in relation to the individual's ethnic culture. For example, the data collected from the Xhosa participants were categorised together. Thus, allowing the researcher to observe any similarities or differences that arise between the individuals. Furthermore, the data was also categorised in terms of repeated trends across all participants of the law firm irrespective of their cultural group. This was done so that the research data could be compared to each other not only on the basis of ethnic cultural background but also occupational background. As socialisation occurs both in the context of ethnic culture but also in other areas of life such as in the workplace setting. For example professional socialisation involves the acquisition of values, attitudes and skills to be used in the workplace setting (Cornelissen & Van Wyk, 2007). Thus, it is beneficial to the research project to see whether the law firm has had any impact upon the participants' socialisation of conflict management techniques.

The final phase of the content analysis process involves the reporting of the data. This essentially involves the interpretation and explanation of the data that has been analysed (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). However, this section of the research project does not focus on the interpretation of the research data. Therefore, this phase of the content analysis process will be only be discussed in the next stage of the research project.

In conclusion, the population, sampling, data-collection method and the data analysis process has been discussed in relationship to the research project titled 'The Impact Of Socialised Conflict Management Techniques Within A Law Firm In Port Elizabeth'.

It was mentioned that the population consisted of individuals from the chosen law firm in Port Elizabeth. Furthermore, the sample used during the research included five participants both male and female and consisted of three different cultural backgrounds. The data collection method used was in-depth interviews done through Skype videocalls which consisted of open-ended questions. Finally, the data analysis process was described in detail in which content analysis was the chosen data analysis method.

4 FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction to findings and interpretation of findings

The interpretation and findings of the research undertaking titled 'The Impact Of Socialised Conflict Management Techniques Within A Law Firm In Port Elizabeth' will be presented in this discussion. The research participants consisted of five participants from a law firm in Port Elizabeth: namely, two Xhosa women, two Afrikaans men and one Coloured woman. The interpretation and findings will be done in accordance with the interpersonal conflict theory, Galtung's conflict triangle and the social learning theory as was presented in the literature review section of the research report.

4.2 Presentation of Findings

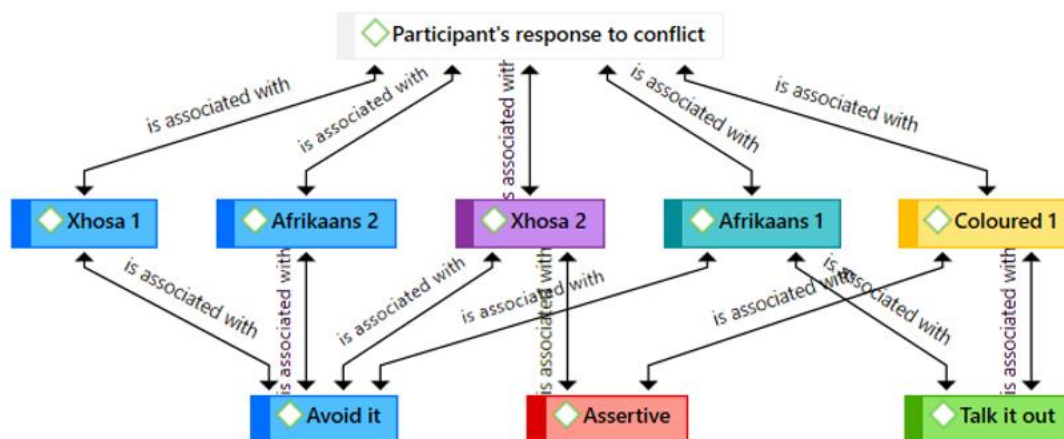
Table 2: Dominant conflict management techniques of participants

	Xhosa 1	Afrikaans 2	Coloured 1	Afrikaans 1	Xhosa 2	Totals
○ Aggressive	0	0	0	0	0	0
○ Assertive	0	0	1	0	0	1
○ Avoid it	1	1	0	1	1	4
○ Talk it out	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	1	1	1	1	1	5

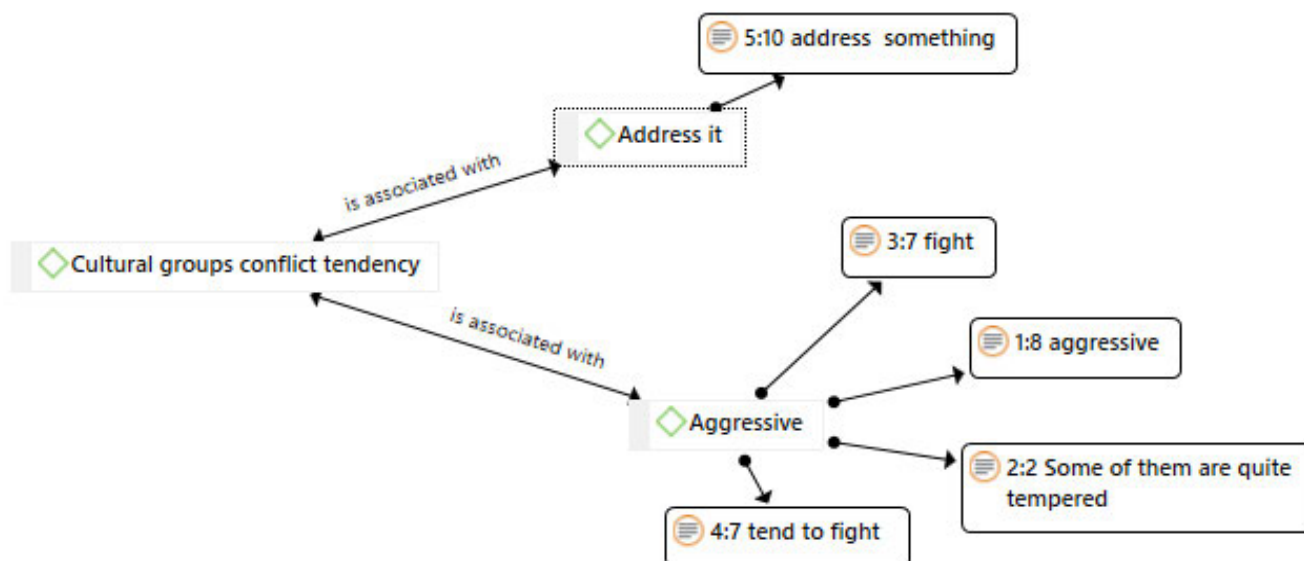
The table above represents the interpretation of the research data gathered from the transcriptions of the Skype interviews with the participants. The data includes information relating the participants' own personal conflict management techniques as. The data presented only focuses on the dominant approach to conflict management of the participants. The data presented in the table reflects the repetition of conflict management technique patterns that were visible in participants responses to the research questions during the interview.

From the data gathered during the research interview it can be seen that the typical response of the research participants in the law firm is to avoid conflict; however, some did showcase that they might either respond to conflict either by talking it out or using a more assertive conflict management technique if avoiding the conflict is not an viable option. It should also be noted that only Coloured participant 1 did not indicate an avoidant conflict management style but rather an assertive style. This is presented in the illustration below.

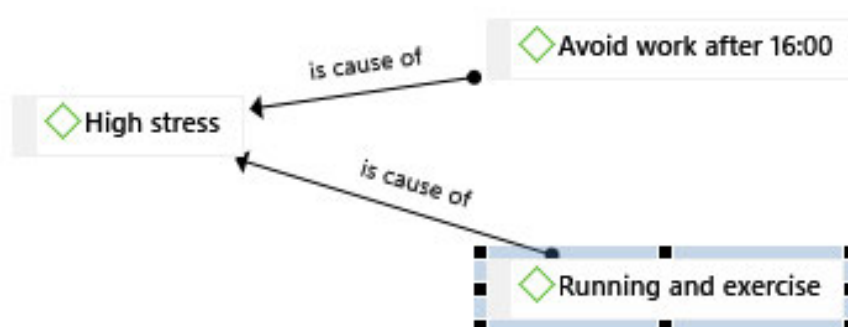
Figure 1.1: Participant's response to conflict



Furthermore, the data gathered during the research interviews revealed that all the participants perceive that individuals from their cultural group typically responds to conflict in a more aggressive and direct manner, with the exception of Xhosa participant number 2. Figure 1.2 below illustrates this point in the form of a data network.

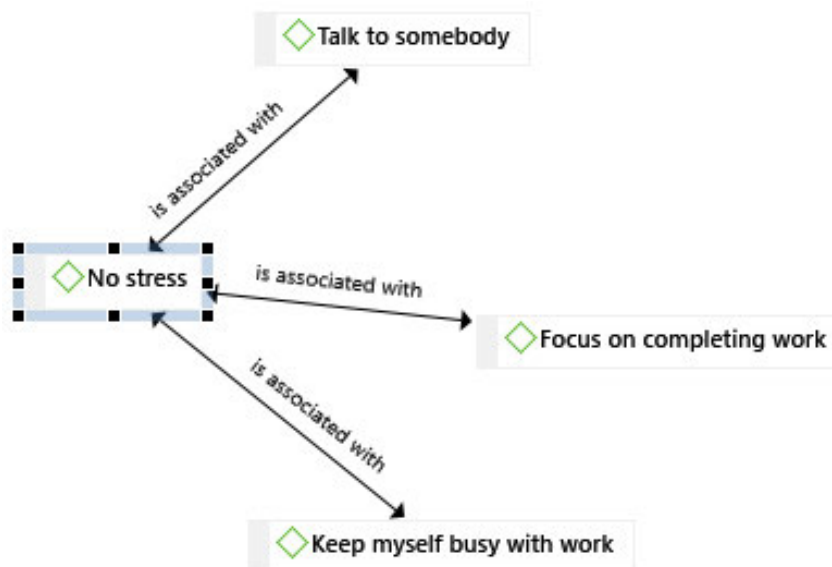
Figure 1.2: Cultural groups conflict tendencies

The research data also revealed that only one of the research participants felt that he was working in a stressful environment. Figure 1.3 illustrates Afrikaans participant 2's response regarding the stressful work environment and his method of managing workplace stress.

Figure 1.3: Afrikaans participant 2 response to workplace stress

Meanwhile, three of the participants namely, Xhosa participant 1, Coloured participant 1 and Afrikaans participant 1 felt that they work in a low stress environment. Their responses to the questions related to workplace stress is illustrated in figure 1.4 below.

Figure 1.4: Xhosa participant 1, Coloured participant 1 and Afrikaans participant 1 response to workplace stress



Finally, Xhosa participant 2 had a mixed opinion regarding the workplace stress. She felt that her occupation was mostly without stress; however, at certain times it can be quite stressful. Her response is illustrated below in figure 1.5.

Figure 1.5: Xhosa participant 2 response to workplace stress



4.3 Interpretation of Findings

Taking the aforementioned into account it can be seen that most of the research participants typically utilise an avoidant conflict management technique. This is a result of them displaying a low degree of both assertiveness and cooperativeness during conflict situations at the workplace (Sadri, 2013). This can be seen in figure 1.1 as majority of the participants typically respond to conflict by simply avoiding it. However, Xhosa participant 2 does occasionally resort to an assertive conflict management technique. Therefore, she could potentially be classified as having a compromising conflict management technique. This is the case as she displays a moderate amount of cooperativeness as well as assertiveness (Sadri, 2013). Meanwhile, Afrikaans

participant 2 also occasionally deviates from the avoidant conflict management technique in an attempt to rather solve the conflict through discussion. Therefore, Afrikaans participant 2 can be classified as having an accommodating conflict management technique. This is because of the high degree of cooperativeness display along with the lack of assertiveness (Valentino, 2017). Finally, Coloured participant 1 seems to be an outlier in the data as she does not utilise an avoidant conflict management technique to any degree. Instead, she tends to resolve conflict through direct dialogue in an assertive manner. Therefore, she displays a collaborating conflict management technique as her response to conflict is both high in assertiveness and cooperativeness (Sadri, 2013).

In terms of the participants' observations regarding conflict management techniques used within their own culture most of the participants indicated that people from their cultural group typically respond to conflict through direct conflict and at times even physical violence, as can be seen in figure 1.2. Therefore, these cultures utilise a competing conflict management technique due to the high level of assertiveness and low level of cooperativeness (Sadri, 2013). The only exception is Xhosa participant 2 who indicated that her cultural group tends to respond to conflict in the same manner as she does, in terms of assertiveness.

Taking all of this into account, it can be seen that the social learning theory does not seem to apply to the research participants in terms of assimilating the conflict management techniques of their cultural group with the exception of Xhosa participant 2 who was raised in a Xhosa group that, according to her, holds very strong Christian values. This might potentially serve as an intervening variable which future research could look into. However, it is interesting to note that the organisational culture seems to play a larger role in terms of the socialisation of conflict management techniques amongst the participants. This is seen in figure 1.1 as nearly all the participants' default response to conflict is to use an avoidant conflict management technique.

Therefore, in terms of the social learning theory it can be argued that the research participants have been socialised in their workplace to respond to conflict with an avoidant conflict management technique despite three out of the five of the participants never having had received conflict management training. Thus, it seems that they have acquired their conflict management techniques through means of social observation

and assimilation of behaviour (Nabavi, 2012). It should also be noted that all the participants indicated that they have no issue working with people from other cultural groups. Thus, it would be easier for them to identify with the cultural group of the law firm. Socialisation and as a result cooperation in organisations are higher when the members of the group identifies with the groups' culture (Varella *et al.*, 2012).

It can be seen in figure 1.4 and 1.5 that most of the research participants experience little or no stress at the law firm. The only exception being Afrikaans participant 2 as is displayed in figure 1.3. This potentially also contributes to the avoidant conflict management technique being the dominant technique used in the law firm. The reason for this is that high levels of workplace stress is often accompanied by low levels of cooperation amongst colleagues (Shah, 2017). Thus, the low levels of workplace stress results in higher levels of cooperation amongst colleagues, which promotes the workplace culture and in turn socialisation.

Finally, when applying Galtung's conflict triangle theory to the research it can be seen that the research participants do not experience either physical violence or cultural violence at the law firm. However, they are somewhat susceptible to structural violence. The reason for this is that structural violence results due to a lack of a public space for discussion (Guilherme, 2017). As majority of the employees of the law firm resort to an avoidant conflict management technique, they potentially expose themselves to structural violence. However, this is not conclusive evidence as the sample size of the research was rather small. It is recommended that a longitudinal study be conducted to further investigate the scenario over the long term.

4.4 Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness

Taking all of this into account, there are several things that were done to enhance the trustworthiness and rigour in which the research was conducted. The first of which being that the research was "strategic, flexible and contextual" (Carcary, 2009, 13). This was accomplished by means of asking the same questions for each participant that was been strategically chosen. However, these questions still remained flexible and contextual in the sense that the questions were open-ended; thus, allowing participants to consider their contextual factors when they provided their responses.

The second way in which trustworthiness was enhanced was through means of engaging in active scrutiny of the data collected as well as the theory used (Carcary, 2009). This was ensured by careful analysis of the research data while at the same time incorporating the limitations of both the theory that was used for the research and limitations of the research as a whole.

Finally, the trustworthiness of the research has been enhanced by ensuring transparency between the researcher and participants. This was done by means of providing participants transcriptions of the data collected (Maree, 2019). Thus, ensuring that the participant's true meaning during the interview process had been properly conveyed.

Meanwhile, when it comes to ensuring the rigour of the research, two main methods were used. The first was through member checking of the data. This simply means that both the researcher and the participant ensured that the research data was correct (Smith & McGannon, 2018). Practically speaking this meant that the research data was checked; thereafter, it was presented to the research participant to confirm that the data was indeed correct. The data was then again be checked one last time by the researcher in order to ensure it was trustworthy.

The second way in which the rigour of the research had been enhanced was through means of ensuring the research process was systematic. This had been achieved by avoiding data or participants purely on the basis of confirming a pre-existing idea of the research results (Maree, 2019). Therefore, all the research data had been included within the final research report whether it delivers positive, negative or even a lack of research results. Thus, ensuring an accurate depiction of the research findings.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of findings

In conclusion, it can be seen that the impact of socialised conflict management techniques within a law firm in Port Elizabeth is rather limited in terms of ethnic cultural backgrounds impact on the scenario. However, from the research it can be seen that the organisational culture seems to play a more crucial role in the socialisation of conflict management techniques of the law firm's employees. This is seen as the dominant conflict management technique amongst employees of the law firm is an avoidant conflict management technique. However, it should be noted that majority of the participant's stated that the trend for people from their own cultural group is to respond to conflict with a competing conflict management technique. This would mean that ethnic cultural background does seem to socialise South Africans to use a specific conflict management technique to some degree. Furthermore, it should be noted that the law firm seems to add little stress to the employee's lives.

It can be concluded from the research findings that it seems that an avoidant conflict management technique seems to be the ideal conflict management technique for the chosen law firm in Port Elizabeth. As such, this conflicts with the conventional findings within the literature as was presented in the literature review section. The research shows that an avoidant conflict management technique is often the least effective in most organisations (Valentino, 2017). As such, future research might look into this to determine whether an avoidant conflict management technique shows to be the ideal conflict management technique within the context of Port Elizabeth law firms only or whether it is a general trend within Port Elizabeth organisations.

Further research is recommended on the topics covered during this research. As there is limited research on the topic of organisational conflict within the local and private sectors of South Africa (van Tonder *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, the research was limited in terms of time, resources and accessible population. Finally, future research might consider looking at the concepts covered from a different perspective or alternative context.

5.2 Anticipated Contribution

The research will contribute to the existing body of literature in two ways. The first contribution will be that the research has combined the concepts of both socialisation and conflict management techniques within the same study. Therefore, concepts have been researched together that are often researched separately. This was done through means of utilising the three chosen theories which were Thomas-Kilmann's' interpersonal conflict theory, Galtung's conflict triangle theory and Bandura's social learning theory.

Other than this the research also contributes to the existing literature by adding to the body of qualitative research in organisational settings. Despite the increase of qualitative research in organisational settings over the past several decades there is still a lack of local qualitative research in the South African organisational context (Schurink, 2003). As such, this research serves to fulfil the need in the current literature for more local qualitative research in the organisational context.

5.3 Ethical Implications

One of the primary ethical concerns was that participants might potentially be mistrustful of the true intent of the research. A simple way in which this was combated was by providing the research participant with the transcripts of the interview in order to be transparent with the research participant of how the data was collected and analysed (Maree, 2019).

Another ethical concern that was consider beforehand was the fact that participants might not be truthful when giving responses. It was also taken into account that participants might possibly provide answers that they assume the researcher wants. Therefore, it was important to ensure the research participants understood the importance of providing honest answers. Furthermore, participant answers were kept anonymous; thus, ensuring that they were more comfortable with providing honest answers and trusting towards the researcher.

The final ethical consideration relates to the storage of data. The research data was stored virtually; however, South Africa is a country with a high theft rate which means data can be easily lost or stolen (Maree, 2019). As such ethical steps were taken to ensure that copy of the research data was stored on a second device in case of data

being lost. Furthermore, the data was stored in password protected files in all of the locations.

5.4 Limitations of the study

Other than the ethical considerations relating to the research there were also be a few general limitations present within the study. There were three main limitations namely, the sample size, the use a non-representative sample and access to participants.

The first issue being the small sample size that was used. Due to the small sample size used, the validity of the research is somewhat negatively impacted. Validity in this case referring to the accuracy of a measurement (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2018). Therefore, the small sample size makes it difficult to determine whether the research conducted was accurate in relationship to the larger South African population. Another limitation that was present during the research was the fact that a non-representative sample had been used. Therefore, the results of the research are not generalisable to the general South African population. The final limitation was the access to participants. The research focused on a single law firm within Port Elizabeth; thus, there were limitations to the access of participants as has previously been mentioned.

There was no clear way of mitigating these limitations due to the structure of the research and the chosen population. However, due to the qualitative nature of the research these limitations do not discredit the value of the research. The purpose of the research was simply to explore the conflict management techniques used within a single law firm in Port Elizabeth. No intensions existed to generalise the findings of the research but simply to explore the phenomenon and to apply the theory within a context which it has not yet been researched in the current literature.

The goal of qualitative research is not to generalise but rather focuses on transferability. Transferability invites the reader to make connections between the research and their own setting or research in order to determine which elements are applicable for their purposes (Maree, 2019). This can be done in one of two ways, by explaining how typical the sample being used is to the standard context or through means of explaining the context to which the research findings apply. Thus, for the purpose of this research the findings have been explained in the context to which it

applies. Furthermore, description of the context, participants and research design has been used to minimize the limitations of this research (Maree, 2019).

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7 ANNEXURE A: EXAMPLE CONSENT FORM

Consent form for research interview

Dear Participant,

I am a psychology honours student at Varsity College conducting research on the impact of socialised conflict management techniques within a law firm in Port Elizabeth. The purpose of the research is to investigate whether there are any trends with regards to conflict management techniques between people from different backgrounds in the South African context.

Your participation in the research is completely voluntary. You can withdraw from the research at any point if you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions. The research process will involve a brief Skype interview. There are no correct or incorrect answers as the goal is to gain insight into your own personal experiences. If you are comfortable with it, your permission is also requested to record the Skype interview. It should also be noted that you will receive a transcript of the interview afterwards to confirm that you are satisfied with the answers you provided during the interview.

The law firm and all participants will remain anonymous for the purpose of the research. The research has been given ethical clearance by The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee. If you have any further concerns, feel free to contact the research supervisor Carol Anne Cash at [REDACTED] or through email at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Participants initials Participants signature: Date:

8 ANNEXURE B: EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed: xx August 2020

Interview: x

1. Could you please describe your cultural background?

Participant x:

2. Do you have difficulty working with people from other cultural backgrounds? If so, please explain why.

Participant x:

3. What is your personal understanding of the concept of conflict?

Participant x:

4. During your childhood and adolescent years were you ever taught any specific ways to handle conflict?

Participant x:

5. Have you noticed any trends with regards to conflict management from people who share the same cultural background as you?

Participant x:

6. Have you ever received professional training, for example through workshops or conferences, relating to conflict management?

Participant x:

7. How do you typically respond to conflict situations within your workplace?

Participant x:

8. When you are required to manage conflict between yourself and one of your colleagues or conflict between two of your colleagues, how do you approach the situation?

Participant x:

9. Do you feel that you work in a high stress environment?

Participant x:

10. Have you noticed that conflict within your workplace is more likely during stressful periods?

Participant x:

11. How do you go about managing workplace stress?

Participant x:

12. Do you feel that workplace conflict hinders any of your professional goals?

Participant x:

9 ANNEXURE C: GATEKEEPER PERMISSION LETTER

28 July 2020



Request for Permission to Conduct Research

[Redacted]

My name is Dewald Pretorius, a Psychology student at the Varsity College, Port Elizabeth Campus. The research I wish to conduct for my Honours research proposal involves the impact of socialised conflict management techniques within a law firm in Port Elizabeth.

I am hereby seeking your consent to interview the staff members of your law firm with the intent to use the interview answers in my research proposal.

I have provided you with a copy of the preamble letter and informed consent form to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the research ethics approval letter which I received from the Campus Research Ethics Committee.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me [Redacted] or email me at [Redacted] or my supervisor [Redacted] or email her at [Redacted]. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Dewald Pretorius
Varsity College

Carol Anne Cash
Varsity College

10 ANNEXURE D: ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER



KWAZULU-NATAL
DORRAN BENTON
T: (031) 075 8038
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WITVATERSBURG
T: (011) 000 8400
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PITERSBURG
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GAUTENG
JANISMAN
T: (011) 784 0000
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WITENBURG
T: (010) 000 0000
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PRETORIA
T: (011) 000 0000
F: (011) 000 0000

WESTERN CAPE
CAPE TOWN
T: (021) 000 0000
F: (021) 000 0000

EASTERN CAPE
PORT ELIZABETH
T: (041) 000 0000
F: (041) 000 0000

21 July 2020

Student name: Dewald Pretorius

Student number: 17230577

Campus: IIE Varsity College Port Elizabeth

Re: Approval of Honours Psychology Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

The campus research panel wishes you all the best with your research.

11 ANNEXURE E: SUMMARY DOCUMENT TABLE

Title: The Impact Of Socialised Conflict Management Techniques Within A Law Firm In Port Elizabeth

[illegible]