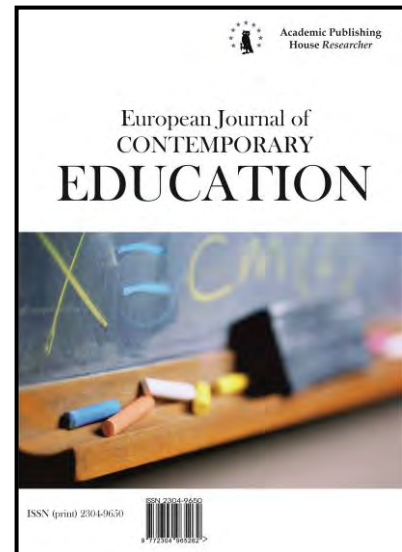




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An Approximation to Mediation from Within. The Case of Secondary Education in Spain

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Abstract

School coexistence is an educational challenge and the implementation of mediation is an essential tool for managing conflicts and improving interpersonal relationships. However, there are few studies that show its impact and even fewer that take into account students' perceptions. In this ex post facto research, we are interested in finding out the ratings provided by students from Spanish secondary schools where mediation takes place, paying special attention to those students who mediate conflicts. Specifically, the aim is to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of mediation from the perspective of the participating students and to detect any significant differences depending on whether or not the student is a mediator, their gender, the educational stage and school year. To this end, 1,198 students answered a validated questionnaire developed ad hoc. As general results, the descriptive and inferential analyses show that there is an overall positive assessment of mediation, even though the students who are mediators provide higher ratings. In addition, there are hardly any differences between boys and girls, ratings are generally more positive in the compulsory secondary school stage and, more specifically, in the first years of secondary school. Regarding initiatives that could strengthen school mediation practices, it is necessary to provide information on mediation services in the education centres, train all students and expand the scope of mediation.

Keywords: mediation, secondary education, student, peer mediator, democratic values, conflict resolution, interpersonal communication, interpersonal relationships.

1. Introduction

Recent studies have stressed the importance of creating relationships based on dialogue, respect and nonviolence. Schools, as settings for the learning of social and citizenship skills, must

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commit to the objective of teaching students how to coexist and relate to one another and, consequently, communicate peacefully (García-Raga, López, 2011; Nguyen-Thi et al., 2020).

From this standpoint, promoting democratic values such as peace, cooperation, responsibility and participation should be the main objective as well as an integral part of the school's vision.

Education reforms in most countries have increasingly made coexistence a prime concern and have implemented strategies targeted at improving school climate. One of these strategies is mediation, which entails a process of handling interpersonal conflicts. The conflicting parties volunteer to talk to each other in a confidential manner to transform the situation by themselves with the help of one or two impartial third parties (mediators). Peer mediators create optimal, fair conditions so that the process can be an educational learning experience (Boqué, 2018).

School mediation has been developed over several decades both at the theoretical and applied levels. In the United States, conflict resolution in educational institutions began in the 1960s with two different movements: cooperative learning and the culture of peace and justice. In the 1970s and 1980s, formal mediation programmes were initiated in schools in the USA, Canada, England and New Zealand. The 1980s saw the emergence of the first associations and institutions which tried to coordinate experiences, including the National Association for Mediation in Education and Educators for Social Responsibility. A decade later, programmes began spreading to other countries such as Spain (García-Raga, López, 2007), Germany, Italy and Russia (Kononov, 2014). In Latin America, it coincided with universal access to basic education (Possato et al., 2016; Chrispino, Chrispino, 2002; Highton, 1996).

Mediation is a way to tackle conflicts peacefully. While its main goal is to develop a culture of peace, the benefits of school mediation go beyond conflict resolution, as pointed out in several empirical studies (Caballero, 2010; Ibarrola-García, Iriarte, 2014; Leonov, Glavatskikh, 2017; Moral, Pérez, 2010; Nix, Hale, 2007; Paulero, 2011; Torrego, Galán, 2008; Turnuklu et al., 2010; Villanueva, Usó; Adrián, 2003) as well as theoretical studies (Bonafé-Schmitt, 2000; Boqué, 2003; García-Raga, López, 2007; García-Raga et al., 2012; Pulido et al., 2013; Tucker, Maunder, 2015). Mediation encourages student participation, strengthens interpersonal relationships, prevents violence and boosts democratic citizenship skills and values (Puig-Gutiérrez, Morales-Lozano, 2015); it also promotes dialogue, decision-making and the assumption of responsibility, among other objectives that are essential for coexistence.

There exist different school mediation models (Kononov, 2014), but in Spain the most successful mediation practices are those that train secondary education students, aged 12 to 18, to mediate conflicts between their peers. With a long tradition in English-speaking countries (Burrell et al., 2003; Garrard, Lipsey, 2007), these initiatives are based on the idea that “peers are a source of knowledge and active members of the educational community, capable of promoting social and moral development in their schools” (Fernández, 2008: 142). Peer mediators appear to have a positive impact on mediation since they are better than adults at connecting with their peers (Cohen, 2005; Cowie, Fernández, 2006; Nix, Hale, 2007; Torrego, 2013). From this perspective, steps are taken to train a group of students who will listen to other students and help them to propose fair, realistic solutions to conflicts. With students at the forefront, there is an effort to introduce a philosophy of handling conflictive situations by improving negotiation and coexistence among people and their relationship systems (Avilés, 2019). In any case, peer mediators need essential training in communication techniques and the mediation process itself.

So far, very few programmes have attempted to analyse mediation processes from within and examine students' perceptions and opinions (García-Raga et al., 2018; Ibarrola-García, Iriarte, 2013a; Silva, Torrego, 2017). Thus, the aim of this paper is to introduce a renewed analytical perspective by highlighting the importance of its protagonists (students) and compare ratings between peer mediators and non-mediators as well as between different school year levels and different gender. Our findings enable us to assess school mediation practices and suggest improvements that can be considered in different educational settings.

2. Method Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the impact of school mediation from the perspective of secondary education students. Specific objectives are as follows:

- To gain feedback on school mediation from secondary education students of 18 schools located in different autonomous regions in Spain.
- To highlight the strengths and weaknesses of school mediation from the perspective of students who are taking part in this study.
- **To gain a deeper understanding of the main differences between students' perceptions, especially peer mediators' perceptions.**
- To detect any significant differences in mediation ratings according to gender, education stage and school year.
- To contribute to the discovery of the most characteristic profile of peer mediators and their role.

Sample

A total of 1,198 students from 18 state secondary schools located in various autonomous regions in Spain participated in the study. As observed in table 1, the regions with the highest participation were Valencia (36.4 %) and Catalonia (12.9 %). A non-probability sampling procedure was used to avoid adverse effects in the study.

Table 1. Sample distribution according to autonomous region

Autonomous Region	Frequency	Percentage
Andalucia	53	4.4
Aragon	17	1.4
Asturias	19	1.6
Balearic Islands	82	6.8
Canary Islands	92	7.7
Castilla – La Mancha	34	2.8
Castilla – Leon	20	1.7
Catalonia	155	12.9
Valencia Community	436	36.4
Galicia	128	10.7
Madrid	118	9.8
Murcia	44	3.7
Total	1198	100.0

Source: authors

Specifically, 541 male students (45.4 %) and 650 female students (54.6 %) took part, making a total of 1,191. Seven participants did not respond to this item. Students attended compulsory secondary education (89.8 %) or upper-secondary education, (10.2 %), called ESO and Bachillerato respectively in Spanish. In Spain, compulsory secondary education ranges from the ages of 12 to 16 while the non-compulsory subsequent stage ranges from the ages of 16 to 18. Different studies (Karatzias et al., 2002; Lino, 2007; Ng, Tsang, 2008; Pozzoli, Gini, 2021) demonstrate that compulsory secondary education is where most conflicts emerge; hence, it is where mediation is most needed. In addition, it is widely known that the maturity level of students is different in both stages, which affects mediation processes. In Table 2 we provide detailed data of the specific sample in our study.

Table 2. Distribution of the sample according to school year level

School year level	Frequency	Percentage
First year of compulsory secondary education (1 st ESO)	212	17.8
Second year of compulsory secondary education (2 nd ESO)	272	22.8
Third year of compulsory secondary education	345	28.9

(3 rd ESO) Fourth year of compulsory secondary education	242	20.3
(4 th ESO) First year of upper secondary education (1 st Bachillerato)	68	5.7
Second Year of upper secondary education (2 nd Bachillerato)	54	4.5

Source: authors

Regarding peer mediators, they represent 7.6 % of all the participants (91 students). In this part of the sample, 57 participants are female and 34 are male. The school year with most mediators is the second year of ESO (27), followed by third and fourth years with 22 and 21 students, respectively. Conversely, in the first year of ESO there are only 9 students and in upper secondary education there are 7 in the first year and 5 in the second year.

Instruments

The instrument used to gather information from students was an ad hoc questionnaire (García-Raga, Grau, 2017). This technique is a frequent procedure within the framework of social sciences. J. Pérez (Pérez, 1991: 106) defines it as “a set of various types of questions, normally prepared systematically and carefully, on the facts and aspects that are of interest for the research or assessment and can be applied in various ways”. Its design is based on educational approaches and objectives for school mediation by various authors that have been previously cited and by the analysis of other questionnaires linked to the topic (Ibarrola-García, Iriarte, 2012).

In a previous study (García-Raga, Grau, 2017) the instrument was subjected to a validation process. A group of ten judges reviewed the construct validation, a well-established procedure for this type of study (Bakieva et al., 2018); they assessed the quality of the instrument based on relevance and pertinence criteria. As a result, the instrument was first fine-tuned. Subsequently, we conducted a pilot study with 153 secondary education students from a state school in Valencia (Spain). The reliability of the instrument, measured by Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.72$), exceeded the minimum required for non-cognitive tests ($\alpha = 0.72$), thus confirming the metric quality of the scale.

A definitive proposal of 66 Likert-type items was outlined. The questionnaire was structured into three sections with questions or statements, according to the type of respondents: all students (items 1 to 19), students who have used the mediation service (items 20 to 42) and peer mediators (items 43 to 66).

In the mediation-related questions, all respondents have four options to choose from. These are on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 4, in which 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree and 4 = strongly agree.

Procedure and data analysis

Participants responded through an online platform* and we made a commitment to return the results to each participating school. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 was used to analyse the information by carrying out descriptive and inferential analysis on the gathered data. Through the questionnaire we gained feedback from students regarding all the components and dimensions of the mediation service provided in schools. Once the distribution of the sample was verified as normal, the ANOVA test was conducted to identify the existence of statistically significant differences in gender and school year level between independent samples.

3. Results

We now present some of the most representative results that allow us to respond to the proposed objectives. To that end, we analyse items 1 to 19 and 43 to 66 of the questionnaire. If we analyse the responses of the entire sample, the items referring to the school's mediation service

* A web tool for online questionnaires [Electronic resource]. URL: <http://www.encuestafacil.com>

(items 5 to 8) demonstrate that a high percentage claim that they do not know what school mediation consists of (65.5 %), whereas 34.5 % claim they do. Specifically, the responses to the **item referring to knowledge of the school's mediation service follow the same line in that 33.4 %** claim that they know about it, whereas 66.6 % do not. It is noteworthy that 62 % are not aware of peer mediators while 38 % are.

Only 50.5 % have received training compared to 49.5 % who did not. Of those who claim they have received training, the data analysed reveal that the most common training processes include school workshops (74 %), courses held in schools (68.6 %), seminars (67.5 %), training in class (67.5 %) and conferences (65.6 %). On the contrary, if we observe data on peer mediators, we can verify that all participants have received training in this area even though they claim that they are not completely aware of the mediation service in its entirety and depth. This training was mainly received in school-organised workshops and courses (66 %), followed by conferences and seminars on mediation (41 %).

The ranking of mediation (items 9 to 18 on the questionnaire) demonstrates that students show overall agreement on the questions regarding mediation and its usefulness in the school setting. The mean score of each item for peer mediators and non-mediators is reflected in [Table 3](#).

Table 3. Rating of mediation and significant differences between the study groups

Item	Peer mediators (PM)	Non-mediators (NM)	Signific. asymptote bilateral
9. Mediation is used by students in my school to resolve conflicts	3.36	3.13	.086
10. I think that mediation has helped to reduce the number of disciplinary punishments in my school	2.95	2.62	.004*
11. Mediation has increased respect among classmates	2.70	2.55	.386
12. Mediation has encouraged dialogue among classmates	2.86	2.58	.016*
13. Mediation has improved relationships between students and teachers	2.61	2.47	.348
14. Mediation has increased student participation in resolving school conflicts	3.1	2.68	.000*
15. Mediation has helped to resolve minor conflicts that could turn into more serious problems	3.38	2.96	.000*
16. Since school mediation began in my school, teachers can teach better	2.43	2.26	.307
17. I think that mediation has improved school coexistence	3.12	2.69	.000*
18. Conflicts can be resolved using mediation	3.47	3.16	.002*

Source: Authors

*p < .05

The most highly ranked items by both groups include item 9 (PM = 3.36; NM = 3.13), which refers to the use of mediation as a resource to resolve conflicts; item 15, which refers to the use of mediation as a tool to resolve minor conflicts that could turn into more serious problems, with a mean score of 3.38 for peer mediators and 2.96 for non-mediators; and item 18, which acquired a score of 3.47 and 3.16 respectively and demonstrates that a large number of students value mediation as a way to resolve conflicts.

Peer mediators rank mediation the most positively. Their ranking for all items exceeds that of non-mediators with significant differences in some items, namely items 14,15 and 17 (see [Figure 1](#)). In this context, no significant values were found.

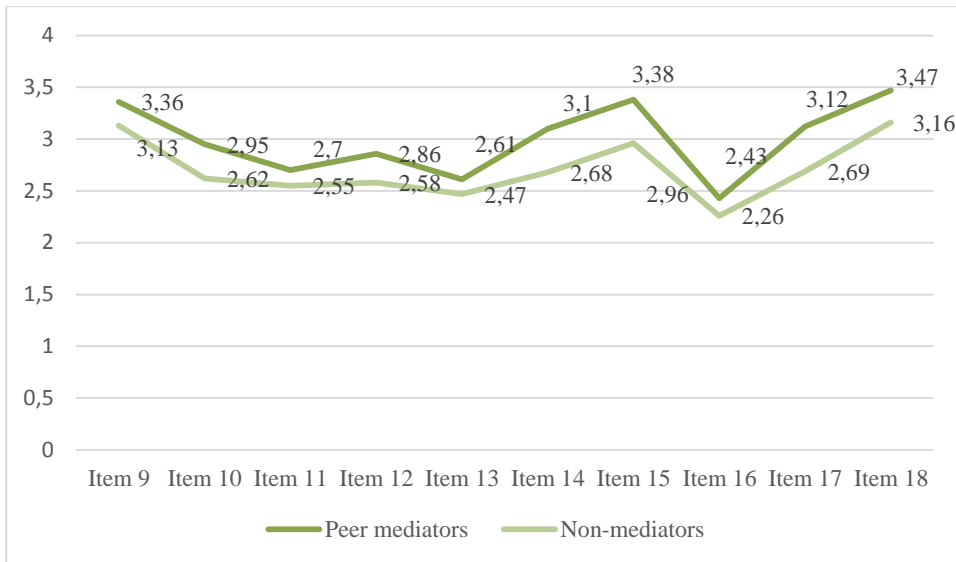


Fig. 1. Rating by peer mediators and non-mediators
Source: authors

Lower-ranked items, but still equally positive, include item 11, which refers to increased respect among classmates (PM = 2.70; NM = 2.55), and item 13, related to improved relationships between students and teachers (PM = 2.61; NM = 2.47).

The first part of the questionnaire ends with item 19: “Would you recommend mediation?”. The results show that neither peer mediators (59.3 %) nor non-mediators (62.6 %) recommend mediation, whereas 36.3 % and 35.7 %, respectively, do consider mediation to be a good strategy to resolve conflicts. As far as peer mediators are concerned, it should be noted that 38.5 % participated in mediation processes (item 43) on one occasion only, followed by 21.5 % who participated on 2 occasions, 9.2 % on 3 occasions, 7.7 % on 4 occasions and 1.5 % on 5 and 7 occasions, respectively.

The most common origin of mediated conflicts (item 44) can be seen in [Figure 2](#). Disagreements account for 62.8 % and rumours account for 60.9 %. Less chosen items, but still with a high percentage, include cultural reasons (33.3 %) and name-calling (32.7 %).

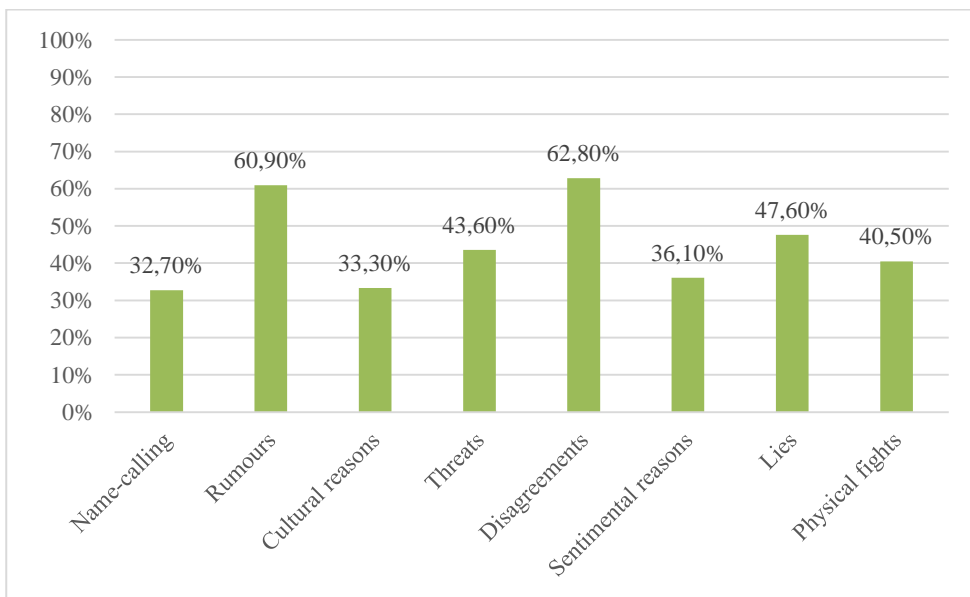


Fig. 2. Origin of conflict
Source: authors

If we delve a little deeper into this aspect, the data obtained indicating the gender variable show that females have dealt with more conflicts based on rumours, disagreements and physical fights, while males have dealt with a larger number of conflicts based on name-calling (Figure 3).

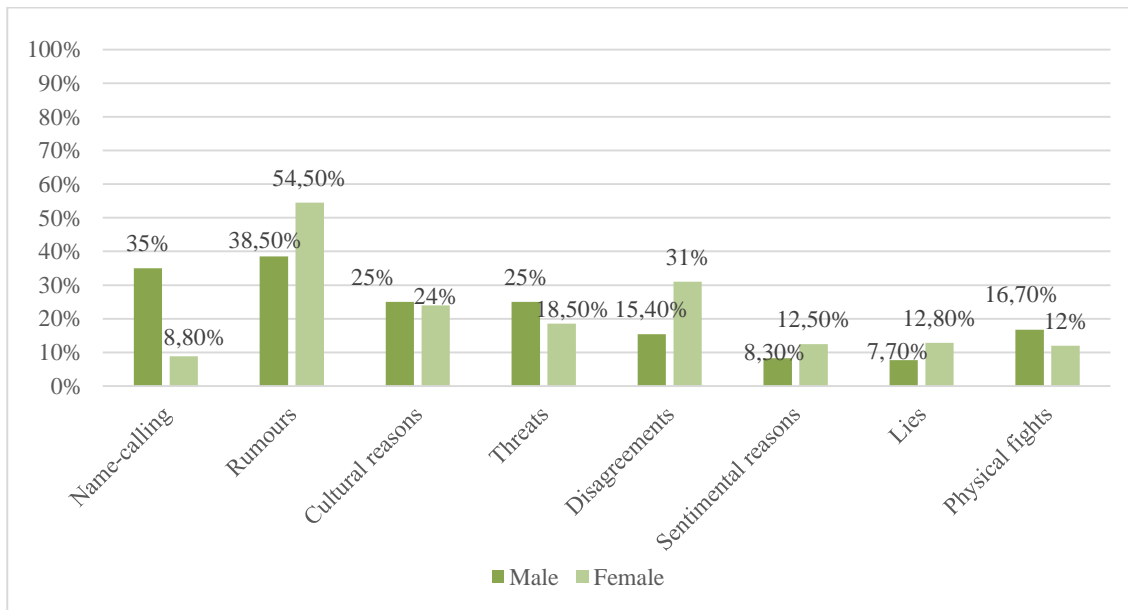


Fig. 3. List of causes of conflict according to gender
Source: authors

Item 45 (“What is the main reason you became a mediator?”) shows that a large part of the sample (36.8 %) did it voluntarily, whereas 20.6 % became mediators because it seemed interesting and 14.7 % were appointed by their peers. The least chosen reasons were regarding a teacher (11.8 %) or other classmates (11.8 %) being mediators.

Items 46 to 66, about rating mediation by peer mediators, are obviously rated positively (Table 4).

Table 4. Rating of mediation by peer mediators

Item	Mean
46. I believe I have the suitable characteristics to be a mediator	3.19
47. I like being a mediator because I am a peaceful person and I feel bad when there are problems	3.01
48. I like being a mediator because my classmates trust me to resolve conflicts	2.99
49. I like being a mediator to collaborate with the teacher	2.78
50. Besides being a mediator I participate in other school activities to improve coexistence in my school	2.69
51. One advantage of being a mediator is that I can miss class hours	2.35
52. I like being a mediator because I feel valued by the teachers	2.58
53. I have felt more responsible since I became a mediator	2.67
54. I have felt criticised for being a mediator	1.78
55. My family understands my work as a mediator	2.93
56. I am satisfied to be a mediator	3.23
57. Being a mediator has helped me to actively participate in school	3.04
58. In mediation processes I have learnt skills that are not taught in school subjects	3.35
59. Being a mediator has helped me to understand other people’s point of view	3.32
60. Being a mediator has helped me to express my feelings	2.74

61. Being a mediator has taught me to listen better to others	3.18
62. Being a mediator has helped me to communicate better with others	3.05
63. Thanks to being a mediator I reflect on different ways to resolve a conflict	3.21
64. Being a mediator has helped me to be more respectful with others	3.09
65. After the experience I would recommend being a mediator to a friend	3.28
66. Being a mediator has helped me in other situations in my life and not only at school (with my family, groups of friends...)	3.22

Source: authors

As we can observe, the highest rated items are item 58 (X = 3.35), item 59 (X = 3.32) and item 68 (X = 3.28). Conversely, the least rated item by far is item 54, which indicates a positive result. Therefore, the overall results show that the feedback provided by peer mediators in 18 schools is positive.

Comparing these responses according to gender, we can affirm that there is no significant difference in any item related to ranking mediation by peer mediators.

However, there are significant differences when we compare the results according to the school year level (Table 5). In item 50, the differences are between third- and first-year students in compulsory secondary education (ESO) since the latter participate more in other activities than the former. Item 57 shows differences between third-year students, who agree that mediation has helped them to participate more in school, and fourth-year students (ESO), as well as first- and second-year students of upper secondary education (Bachillerato), who think otherwise.

Table 5. Rating of mediation by peer mediators according to school year level

Item	School Year level						Sig. ANOVA
	Mean 1 st year ESO	Mean 2 nd year ESO	Mean 3 rd year ESO	Mean 4 th year ESO	Mean 1 st year Bachillerato	Mean 2 nd year Bachillerato	
Item 46	3.29	3.48	2.95	3.14	3.29	2.80	.119
Item 47	3.43	3.00	2.90	3.31	3.00	2.60	.576
Item 48	3.29	3.09	2.84	2.93	2.71	3.20	.698
Item 49	3.00	3.14	2.86	2.47	2.57	2.00	.053
Item 50	3.33	3.00	2.19	2.84	2.14	2.80	.024*
Item 51	2.43	2.50	2.05	2.68	2.57	1.40	.125
Item 52	3.14	2.77	2.38	2.58	2.43	2.00	.369
Item 53	2.86	2.95	2.50	2.53	2.57	2.60	.545
Item 54	1.57	2.14	1.77	1.58	1.57	1.60	.404
Item 55	3.00	3.09	2.91	2.74	2.86	3.00	.845
Item 56	3.14	3.41	3.23	3.05	3.43	3.00	.769
Item 57	2.86	3.18	3.36	2.79	2.71	2.60	.044*
Item 58	3.57	3.41	3.45	3.16	3.29	3.20	.664
Item 59	3.43	3.27	3.59	3.00	3.57	3.00	.141
Item 60	2.71	2.82	2.68	2.94	2.57	2.20	.613
Item 61	3.14	3.32	3.14	3.11	3.29	3.00	.943
Item 62	3.00	3.09	3.09	2.95	2.86	2.80	.970
Item 63	3.29	3.18	3.32	3.05	3.43	3.00	.831
Item 64	3.14	3.23	3.18	2.89	3.00	2.80	.723
Item 65	2.86	3.41	3.41	3.16	3.29	3.20	.628
Item 66	2.86	3.45	3.32	3.00	3.57	2.60	.190

Source: Authors

*p<.05

4. Discussion

In accordance with our first objective on how secondary education students perceive school mediation, we must highlight the favourable opinion they have, as it is deemed to be beneficial in **conflict resolution and in preventing violent situations**, as L. Villanueva, I. Usó, J.E. Adrián (Villanueva et al., 2013) indicated in their study. S. Ibarrola-García, C. Iriarte (Ibarrola-García, Iriarte, 2013b) also share this idea even though their study is focused on the perceptions of teacher mediators. It is conflict management under the peer mediation model, as revealed by B. Hansberry, C. Hansberry (Hansberry, Hansberry, 2018), which will lead to positive outcomes in the school setting. Extending this mediation model to other schools and even to other countries, considering their own particularities and regulations, could lead to a more positive school climate.

However, when asked if they would recommend mediation processes, the results are not as positive. This might be because they have not participated in these processes or they might be unaware of the existence of mediation services; only 34.5 % of students admit they know about this service (38 % in the case of peer mediators). As stated in M.P. García-Longoria (García-Longoria, 2002), students need to be informed about the mediation service that exists in their schools so that they can use it when needed. Providing information on mediation services is an aspect that needs to be improved, as underscored in other studies that have examined experiences of this nature (Pulido et al., 2014). Information could be made available at the beginning of the academic year through workshops, posters, videos and leaflets. Schools could also exchange mediation experiences and raise awareness of the educational potential.

These data and the findings that claim that only half of the students (50.5 %) have received training entice us to propose a change of the current model. It should be remembered that, in general, only those students who are going to be mediators receive information through workshops and courses organised by their schools or perhaps a specialised seminar or conference. But if the objective is to build a culture of mediation that creates a climate of coexistence in the education community, training should be targeted at all students; the mediation team may be **highly trained but “if the rest of the education community is unaware of basic mediation aspects, the likelihood of limited use increases”** (Boqué, 2018: 78).

With reference to our second objective referring to highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of mediation, we stress that conflict resolution must be one of the virtues of mediation because the solutions adopted are assumed to be positive for the affected students (Sezen, Bedel, 2015). However, the most important aspect is not the solution, it is the learning of conflict management skills that mediation programmes often promote in students, as shown in the meta-analysis conducted by F. Turk (Turk, 2018). Fostering a positive attitude towards the development of interpersonal relationships is an indisputable benefit of the implementation of these processes, and the school itself is a privileged setting for students to build positive social relationships by reinforcing ties with their peers. What is more, it is constructive for students to perceive an improvement in teacher-student relationships, even though it is one of the items that attained a lower score.

As stated previously, the observed weaknesses should be mentioned in order to improve. We discovered that in addition to the lack of information provided in schools regarding mediation services, there is a shortage of awareness policies. This makes it difficult to build a culture of mediation to motivate many students; we are a long way from designing models suitable for training a large part of the education community and spreading a cooperative attitude in favour of mediation processes.

Regarding the objective of gaining a deeper understanding of the main differences between peer mediators and non-mediators, it has been demonstrated that mediators show more positive opinions. This situation is understandable since those who have first-hand experience in school mediation are more capable of detecting its educational potential, as shown in other studies (Andronnikova, Radzikhovskaya, 2020; Hansberry, Hansberry, 2018). Undoubtedly, mediation provides valuable lessons for being a decent person and living with others; in the case of mediators, it also provides practical tools that strengthen these skills beyond the school setting. Peer mediators, as indicated above, promote communicative and participatory skills. The advantages have also been detected in other studies. Research conducted by C. Cassinerio, P.S. Lane-Garon (Cassinerio, Lane-Garon, 2006) focused on how school mediation improves school climate, prevents violent situations and develops certain skills and perceptions such as empathy in students. It should be noted that the study carried out by S. Ibarrola-García, C. Iriarte (Ibarrola-

García, Iriarte, 2013a), showed that mediation leads to emotional, social cognitive and moral learning in mediators.

While we understand that the study of the profile of peer mediators demands more extensive research, in our attempt to approach this reality we want to highlight that a mediator should develop skills such as being patient, reflexive, empathetic, unbiased, assertive, trustworthy, as well as mindful of opportunities for personal growth. Above all, mediators need to have a great ability to establish a conversation to share opinions, needs and wishes. It is true that in our study a great majority of peer mediators are in the second year of compulsory secondary education (ESO) and are mostly female. This should be considered when making an overall assessment, although it is quite common for them to acknowledge that they feel confident in carrying out this task and value positively the recognition towards their work by their classmates and teachers.

There were no differences detected in terms of the positive assessment of mediation **processes based on participants' gender** (regardless of whether they are mediators or non-mediators). However, as observed in other studies (Moral, Pérez, 2010), **feedback provided by female students was slightly more positive than male students' feedback; perhaps the roles transmitted by families and the context of associating helping behaviour with the female role may explain these findings** (Naylor, Cowie, 1999). Differences found regarding the source of conflict are interesting from the peer mediator perspective since female mediators have attended to more conflicts caused by rumours, disagreements and physical fights than their male counterparts, who have attended to a larger number of name-calling conflicts, which is consistent with studies carried out by J. Ng, S. Tsang (Ng, Tsang, 2008). A future line of analysis could be based on a more in-depth approach to the factors that influence these differences. Students who have conflicts do not choose voluntarily their mediators in many schools; the mediator could be a female or male regardless of the situation. It might be more insightful to analyse if conflicts differ according to the gender variable. There are studies that detect differences, underscoring that male students usually show more physical aggression whereas female students tend to show more relational aggression. (Murray-Close, Ostrov, 2009; Toldos, 2005).

5. Conclusion

Finally, regarding differences between school year levels, it can be observed that the overall assessment is more positive in the first years of compulsory secondary education, which can be justified because the sample of students who turn to mediation is generally higher in those years. Broadly speaking, students in the first years of secondary education use mediation services more because there are more school conflicts, **as indicated in studies by J.M. Avilés, I. Monjas (Avilés, Monjas, 2005)**, whose results show that more individual aggressors appear between the ages of 13 and 14 and that these numbers decrease with age. In the upper secondary education stage (Bachillerato) students usually show maturity in handling their conflicts, they are also more interested and responsible towards everything that happens at school.

By synthesising the data presented in the study, we found that school mediation is considered advantageous and a top-notch educational opportunity for students. It makes it easier for peer mediators and non-mediators to tackle their own conflicts and learn different interpersonal and **social skills. In any case, we coincide with A.J. Morales, C. Caurín (Morales, Caurín, 2014)**, stating **“mediation still hasn't developed its potential” (p. 6) because, among other issues, it does not avoid underuse in other settings (Ballard et al., 2011) beyond conflict management among students, without addressing structural conflicts linked to traditions rooted in the so-called school culture.**

Accordingly, we think the trajectory of school mediation has only just begun, especially if we are able to head towards building a culture of mediation that reaches the entire education community. A culture that means a proactive attitude towards tolerance, the acceptance of the richness of diversity, active listening, and ultimately, the enhancement of a special awareness, not only of the training of conflict management skills, but also a privileged educational aid to improve coexistence. We are committed to the training capacity and the transformative character of mediation, which transcends the limited version of a mere instrument for conflict resolution.

In short, even though **students' perspectives demonstrate that schools promote coexistence** based on mediation, we must reflect on these results and strive for more in-depth research on how to effectively implement proactive strategies for positive conflict management at a wider scale. And

even more so in the current pandemic, in which the unreplaceable role of schools as settings for coexistence has been highlighted.

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