IN PRACTICE

| A101 | **IMMERSIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILL TRAINING: GOING TO THE NEXT LEVEL** |

Gerry Gormley[1], Enda Young[2], Laurie Randell[2], Paul Murphy[1];
[1]Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, United Kingdom, [2]Mediation Northern Ireland, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Correspondence: g.gormley@qub.ac.uk

Introduction: Workplace conflict incurs a substantial cost to employers [1]. Research indicates that the primary cause of workplace conflict is differences in personality styles. Poor communication emerges as the most prevalent behaviour associated with workplace conflict, including the healthcare sector. Its repercussions can vary from decreased motivation to employee stress and turnover.

Although traditional conflict resolution (CR) courses offer valuable insights to theoretical frameworks, they often lack equipping practitioners with the necessary behavioural skills for navigating such challenging conversations and managing their emotions. To this end, we devised an innovative course that integrated theoretical perspectives with experiential, immersive learning.

Methods: We designed a pilot 3-day program: a 2-day theoretical programme on CR and a 1-day immersive session using simulation. Delegates, including leaders and managers, co-created simulation cases based on real experiences. A drama professional trained delegates to embody roles. Delegates rotated simulation roles in triads, practicing conflict resolution and mediation skills while also experiencing being facilitated. Simulations included pre-brief, simulation, and debrief, with a focus on de-rolling following such emotionally ladened simulations.

Results: The impact of this course surpassed expectations. Delegates were able to suspend disbelief and immerse themselves in their roles, and were comfortable with this transition. Within simulations, participants were able to experience important principles: 1) Drawing upon CR cognitive tools 'in-the moment'; 2) Being aware and learning from the emotional responses 3) Gaining a heightened awareness of the importance of communication skills especially micro-gestures; 4) Gaining deeper insights to what it is like to be informally mediated and learning from this empathic position. Guided debriefing helped delegates to learn from these experiences and provide a strong stimulus to take these new skills to the future.

Delegates rated the course highly in terms of enhancing their CR skills, managing emotional responses and confidence in handling such situations; this was echoed in qualitive evaluation feedback: 'Looking forward to going back and working on how to apply my learning into my own practice'; 'Great to have the opportunity to learn new skills and go out of my comfort zone'; 'The simulation provided some incredibly invaluable insights to my own practice'.

Discussion: In this innovative course, we were able to harness the power of simulation to develop CR skills. Not only enhancing confidence in applying CR skills into the workplace, but their emotional responses too; this signals a strong need to further research this important learning concept in conflict intervention.

Ethics statement: Authors confirm that all relevant ethical standards for research conduct and dissemination have been met. The submitting author confirms that relevant ethical approval was granted, if applicable.

REFERENCES

1. Saundry R, Urwin P. Estimating the Costs of Workplace Conflict, Acas. 2021. Available from: https://www.acas.org.uk/costs-of-conflict; Saundry, R. and Urwin, P. (2021) Estimating the Costs of Workplace Conflict in Northern Ireland, Labour Relations Agency. This research was funded by the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) and the Labour Relations Agency (LRA).