Dorota Sylwia Majewicz
Koszalin University of Technology, Poland
ORCID 0000-0003-4568-3549

Jacek Maślankowski
University of Gdańsk, Poland
ORCID 0000-0003-0357-2736

Mediation Strategies for Conflict Prevention and Facilitation in Defense Education: Innovative Solutions and Challenges Faced by Higher Education Institutions

Introduction

In an increasingly complex global landscape characterized by heightened security threats and crises, the imperative for effective conflict management within defense education at higher education institutions has never been more pressing. Mediation, as a strategic intervention, plays a pivotal role in this context, facilitating dialogue, understanding, and resolution among diverse stakeholders, while also enhancing campus safety. This research paper explores the complex role of mediation in crisis management, drawing valuable insights from established practices in the United States and Germany, which have successfully integrated mediation strategies to navigate conflicts and prevent escalation. Focusing on Polish universities, the study identifies significant challenges in implementing these strategies, including the dissemination and consistency of defense information. Our investigation

reveals that while defense information is often accessible on university websites, critical resources such as evacuation plans are seldom published, and existing guidelines regarding response procedures for potential threats, including terrorism, lack coherence and reliability, resulting in a concerning dependence on external sources for vital information. Furthermore, the paper advocates for innovative solutions such as the development and strategic placement of infographics that convey essential emergency instructions, thereby promoting passive learning and ensuring quick access to crucial information during crises. By addressing the gaps in defense information availability and consistency, and proposing actionable recommendations for enhancing threat prevention measures, this research aims to contribute to a more robust framework for mediation in defense education, ultimately fostering safer and more resilient academic environments.

The goal of the paper is to show mediation strategies for conflict prevention and facilitation in defense education, based on the selected higher education institutions (HEI). Three research questions have been formulated, as follows:

RQ1: What are the major challenges of mediation strategies for conflict management at HEIs?

RQ2: Are the content and forms of defense-related activities robust enough at HEIs?

RQ3: What information related to conflict prevention is published on HEIs' websites?

According to the research questions, the following corresponding hypotheses were examined:

H1:   The major challenges of mediation strategies for conflict management are related to integration into the statutory framework of HEI as well as to recognize the diversity of cultural backgrounds.

H2:   Many forms of defense-related activities are oversimplified due to time and resource constraints.

H3:   The information related to conflict prevention published on HEIs' websites is mostly related to general evacuation procedures and how to behave in case of danger, without more specific and detailed information.

The research paper begins with an introduction presented in the current part, providing the background, context, and objectives of the study, highlighting the significance of mediation and modern tools in defense education. The second section, The Role of Mediation in Defense Education, explores the application of mediation techniques to foster collaboration and resolve conflicts within educational settings. Building on this, Mediation Strategies for Conflict Management explores specific approaches such as dialogue facilitation, peer mediation, and role-playing, assessing their effectiveness in addressing disputes. The fourth section, Availability and Consistency of

Defense Information, evaluates the accessibility and reliability of defense-related materials to ensure preparedness. Following this, Development and Use of Infographics for Emergency Instructions discusses the design and impact of visual aids in communicating critical safety protocols effectively. The sixth section, Safety of Students Based on the Content of Websites, examines how the quality and security of online resources influence students' safety and preparedness. Finally, the Conclusions synthesize the findings, highlighting the importance of integrated strategies for effective defense education and conflict management.

The Role of Mediation in Defense Education

Mediation plays a critical role in crisis management within higher education by facilitating constructive dialogue and creating a culture of understanding and resolution. By placing particular emphasis on active listening and sustained dialogue, mediation not only addresses urgent concerns but also illuminates and addresses the deeper, systemic factors that often underlie institutional crises. This approach enables students to develop essential conflict management skills, transforming them into agents of change who can offer a more constructive approach to handling crises.[1] Moreover, mediation in higher education serves as a positive instrument for dealing with conflict, providing opportunities for growth and learning that are crucial during times of crisis. Through these processes, mediation helps cultivate a school culture that values dialogue and conflict resolution, which is indispensable for effective crisis management, where both students and educators are better prepared to ultimately contribute to a more harmonious and resilient educational environment.

Mediation interventions on campus offer a variety of benefits that enhance both individual safety and community well-being. By integrating mediation services, campuses can significantly improve their conflict resolution mechanisms and teach students integrative negotiation and mediation skills, crucial for maintaining relationships and building a supportive campus environment[2]. Furthermore, mediation interventions provide a cost-effective solution for creating safe and structured environments, significantly contributing to the overall safety of the campus without imposing excessive

---

[1] N.H. Katz (2019). *Mediation and dispute resolution services in higher education.* Taylor & Francis.

[2] D.W. Johnson, R.T. Johnson (1996). *Conflict resolution and peer mediation programs in elementary and secondary schools: A review of the research.* "Review of Educational Research", 66(4), 459-506.

financial burdens.[3] The adoption of such programs can lead to a reduction in conflicts and an increase in the perception of safety, creating a more conducive learning environment. Therefore, universities should prioritize mediation interventions as part of their broader strategy to enhance campus safety and ensure the well-being of their community.

The mediation strategies employed in the U.S. and Germany offer techniques and roles that inform one another, particularly through unconventional methodologies adopted in varied contexts.[4] In Germany, mediators are often required to navigate complex scenarios involving refugees and other marginalized groups, requiring a deep understanding of sociocultural dynamics and legal frameworks.[5] This contrasts with the U.S., where mediation strategies, including those employed by the military, emphasize structured training and often incorporate mediation as a tool to preemptively manage potential disputes.[6] The roles of mediators in both countries are crucial in replacing confrontation with dialogue, reflecting a shared goal of fostering understanding and cooperation.[7] Despite these shared objectives, the practical approaches diverge: Germany's mediation practices are deeply intertwined with its historical and legal contexts, whereas U.S. practices are more influenced by institutional frameworks and formal training programs.[8] To enhance the efficacy of mediation practices, both nations can benefit from a mutual exchange of strategies, particularly focusing on the U.S.'s structured methodologies and Germany's adaptability to sociocultural nuances. This exchange could lead to the development of hybrid strategies that are better equipped to handle the complexities of modern-day disputes, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning and adaptation in the field of mediation.

---

[3] U. Mentally, A. Law (2021). *The benefits of mediation in civil suits concerning bullying and hazing.* HeinOnline. https://heinonline.org [accessed: 20.11.2024].

[4] A. Georgakopoulos (2017). *The mediation handbook: Research, theory, and practice.* Routledge. New York.

[5] E. Carlin (2020). *Mediator knowledge competency: How various types of mediator training impact the success of the peace mediation process.* http://doi.fil.bg.ac.rs [accessed: 24.10.2024].

[6] *Ibidem.*

[7] I.W. Zartman, S. Touval (1985). *International mediation: Conflict resolution and power politics.* "Journal of Social Issues", 41(2), 27-45.

[8] C.A. Crocker, F.O. Hampson, P. Aall (Eds.). (1999). *Herding cats: Multiparty mediation in a complex world.* United States Institute of Peace Press. Washington D.C.

Mediation Strategies for Conflict Management

In defense education, conflict management emphasizes integrative negotiation and mediation techniques, commonly delivered through conflict resolution and peer mediation initiatives. These approaches train students to address disputes constructively and engage in dialogue rather than confrontation. Moreover, these strategies extend to using techniques that mediators employ to assist parties in finding amicable solutions and crafting specific settlements, often by managing defense mechanisms that arise during conflict situations.[9] This approach additionally enhances the overall communication and negotiation skills of those involved in defense education, preparing them for real-world scenarios where such skills are crucial. As these strategies are incorporated into defense education, they contribute to a culture of proactive conflict management, which is essential in both military and civilian contexts. This underscores the importance of continuous development and adaptation of conflict management strategies to ensure they remain relevant and effective in diverse situations.

Polish universities face several challenges in implementing mediation and conflict management strategies, crucial for a conducive educational environment. One of the primary challenges is the integration of mediation practices within the existing statutory frameworks and educational curricula. While institutions may maintain lists of mediators as part of their statutory tasks, the practical application of these strategies requires comprehensive restructuring and alignment with current educational goals.[10] Implementing mediation methods such as Rahim's Conflict Management Model requires specialized training and resources to accommodate the varied needs of faculty and students, making it both costly and challenging to apply uniformly across different universities. Additionally, there is a need for a cultural shift within academic institutions to embrace conflict resolution as an integral part of the educational process, which involves overcoming resistance from traditional pedagogical approaches.[11] To effectively address these challenges, it is essential for Polish universities to collaborate with international institutions and implement best practices in mediation and conflict management,

---

[9] K. Domenici, S.W. Littlejohn (2001). *Mediation: Empowerment in conflict management.* Waveland Press.

[10] E. Gmurzyńska (2022). *The nature and role of academic ombudsman at the Polish higher education institutions.* "ADR in Higher Education Journal", 3(1), 55-67. https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=1176722 [accessed: 12.11.2024].

[11] K. Łudzińska (2021). *Expectations and reality: Towards management programs for academic leaders in higher education.* "Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej". Seria: Organizacja i Zarządzanie, 199, 353-359.

ensuring these strategies are not only theoretically sound but also practically viable and sustainable in the educational context.

The implementation of mediation services in educational settings requires recognizing the diversity of cultural backgrounds present within these environments and adapting mediation strategies accordingly. Mediators should move beyond broad cultural assumptions and address each participant's distinct background. By integrating culturally sensitive strategies, mediation becomes more effective, especially in diverse educational settings.[12] Those strategies should be highly adaptable, recognizing the need for humility and an extensive grasp of diverse techniques suited to specific contexts and disputes in cross-cultural settings, embracing inclusiveness and effectiveness for all involved parties. By integrating these culturally adaptive strategies, mediators can better support the complex cultural dynamics present in educational settings and beyond, ultimately leading to more effective conflict resolution outcomes.

Availability and Consistency of Defense Information

Universities play a pivotal role in the dissemination of defense information, often acting as conduits between governmental defense agencies and the broader academic and research communities. The Defense Department (DOD) typically categorizes information as sensitive but unclassified (SBU), necessitating consistent policies across institutions to manage and disseminate such data effectively.[13] University-affiliated research centers and development centers are common channels through which defense information is shared, yet the process is frequently complicated by inconsistent data handling practices and definitions among different universities.[14] Furthermore, the dissemination process must align with sound information security policies, which are crucial in maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of defense information while ensuring that universities fulfill their educational and research missions.[15] To

---

[12] C. Menkel-Meadow (2023). *Cross-cultural disputes and mediator strategies.* In: D. Busch (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of Intercultural Mediation* (Chapter 2). Routledge. New York.

[13] G.R.S. Knezo (2006). *"Sensitive but unclassified" information and other controls: Policy and options for scientific and technical information.* Congressional Research Service Report. https://www2.law.umaryland.edu [accessed: 27.11.2024].

[14] J. Riposo, M. McKernan, J. Drezner, G. McGovern (2015). *Issues with access to acquisition data and information in the Department of Defense: Policy and practice.* RAND Corporation. https://www.dair.nps.edu/handle/123456789/3722 [accessed 21.11.2024].

[15] N.F. Doherty, L. Anastasakis, H. Fulford (2009). *The information security policy unpacked: A critical study of the content of university policies.* "Computers & Security", 28(1-2), 67-75.

address these challenges, there is a pressing need for universities to adopt uniform policies and robust information security frameworks that can handle the unique demands of defense information dissemination, thereby safeguarding sensitive data and enhancing inter-institutional cooperation.

Inconsistencies in responding to threats like terrorism are exacerbated by deficient training and planning frameworks. A major issue is the over-simplification of exercise procedures due to time and resource constraints, leading to unrealistic training and inadequate emergency preparedness, often neglecting worst-case scenarios, impairing responders' ability to manage unexpected threats. Additionally, emergency responders typically find themselves unprepared for atypical situations due to reliance on overly simplistic plans that do not capture the complexities of real incidents. This problem is compounded by insufficient commitment among agencies to implementing plans, resulting in uncoordinated and ineffective responses. Furthermore, the absence of a unified command structure intensifies these issues, as multiple agencies struggle to collaborate effectively in high-pressure environments.[16] To address these challenges, there is an urgent need for a more integrated approach to training and planning that emphasizes realism, comprehensive preparation, and inter-agency collaboration, ensuring that responders are equipped to handle the full spectrum of potential threats.

Organizations often rely on external sources for threat prevention due to technological mismatches and incompatible standards, which hinder the effective deployment of automated measures. These challenges are especially pronounced in distributed operations that employ diverse technological systems. Additionally, many institutions lack both the infrastructure and expertise for independent implementation, prompting the use of ad hoc controls and external assistance. Certain tasks – such as adjusting firewalls to block unauthorized connections – continue to require human judgment, and a necessity for human oversight in threat management.[17]

Development and Use of Infographics for Emergency Instructions

The use of infographics for emergency instructions offers numerous advantages, primarily due to their ability to convey complex information quickly

---

[16] A. Donahue, R. Tuohy (2012). *Lessons We Don't Learn: A Study of the Lessons of Disasters, Why We Repeat Them, and How We Can Learn Them*. Naval Postgraduate School. http://faculty.nps.edu/dl/HFN/documents/DisasterLessons.pdf [accessed: 24.10.2024].

[17] M. Workman, W. Bommer, D. Straub (2008). *Security lapses and the omission of information security measures: A threat control model and empirical test*. "Computers in Human Behavior", 24(6), 2799-2816.

and effectively. Emergency situations often require the rapid dissemination of critical information, and infographics excel in presenting such data in a clear and concise manner. For instance, emergency physicians have shown a preference for infographics because they simplify the process of understanding and communicating emergency protocols.[18] Moreover, the design process of infographics, which includes usability testing and iterative improvements, ensures that the final product is user-friendly and accessible in high-pressure scenarios.[19] This is particularly important in emergencies where every second counts, and the ability to immediately comprehend instructions can have life-saving implications. Furthermore, the visual appeal and structured layout of infographics help to reduce cognitive load, enabling individuals to process information more efficiently. By incorporating visual references and clear guidance, infographics assist not only in immediate understanding but also in long-term retention of emergency procedures.[20] Overall, the deployment of infographics as a tool for emergency instructions is a strategic approach that enhances both the delivery and comprehension of vital information, necessitating continued development and integration of these visual aids into emergency preparedness plans.

To ensure maximum visibility and learning, the placement of infographics should be strategically planned within educational settings, particularly in environments that aim to foster conflict management skills. Infographics, when designed effectively, have the potential to enhance comprehension and retention of information, which is crucial in mediating school environments where crisis management is taught.[21] The utilization of visible cues and consistent design elements can aid in organizing information, making it more accessible and easier to digest for students.[22] This structured approach not only complements traditional learning methods but also aligns with the

---

[18] L.J. Martin, A. Turnquist, B. Groot, S.Y.M. Huang, E. Kok, B. Thoma, J.J.G. van Merriënboer (2017). *Exploring the role of infographics for summarizing medical literature.* https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2452301117300792 [accessed: 24.10.2024].

[19] M. dos Santos Lonsdale, D.J. Lonsdale, M. Baxter, R. Graham, A. Kanafani, A. Li, C. Peng (2019). *Visualizing the terror threat: The impact of communicating security information to the general public using infographics and motion graphics.* "Visible Language", 53(2), 36-71.

[20] V. Setianingrum, A. Huda, G. Aji (2020). *Design development of infographics content for Covid-19 prevention socialization.* Proceedings of the International Joint Conference on Arts and Humanities (IJCAH 2020). Atlantis Press. https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/ijcah-20/125947217 [accessed: 21.11.2024].

[21] A. Kardgar (2021). *Effectiveness of using automatically advanced vs. manually advanced infographics in health awareness.* Hammer Repository. https://hammer.purdue.edu [accessed: 21.11.2024].

[22] M. Baxter (2023). *Improving the effectiveness of public health infographics through design principle application.* White Rose eTheses Online. https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/31443/ [accessed: 24.10.2024].

principles of dialectical mediation by presenting information in a manner that encourages reflection and dialogue. Furthermore, the integration of dynamic infographics that adapt to the learning context can further potentiate learning by engaging students in an immersive experience that mirrors real-life crisis scenarios.[23] Hence, the strategic placement of such infographics within educational curricula can significantly contribute to the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are vital in addressing both immediate and underlying issues in crisis situations.

Improving Threat Prevention Measures

To enhance the consistency of threat response guidelines, universities must implement a comprehensive framework that integrates both human and technological resources. A key recommendation is for universities to establish high and consistent prevention skills across their institutions, ensuring that all staff are adequately trained and equipped to handle potential threats, together with the development of additional guidance documents that offer clear recommendations for schools, thus promoting proactive prevention and preparedness.[24] Furthermore, incorporating advanced technologies such as automated intrusion prevention systems can significantly boost the efficacy of threat response strategies. These systems can provide consistent, quality-driven procedures that help universities maintain a robust defense against potential intrusions.[25] By combining these elements, universities cannot only improve their immediate response to threats but also establish a sustainable model that enhances long-term safety and security across their campuses.

In the context of enhancing access to threat prevention information, technology plays a crucial role by facilitating the development and dissemination of critical resources. The widespread use of web-based resources illustrates how technology enhances access to information on natural threats and security events, enabling effective preparation and response by individuals and organizations. This is supported by governmental initiatives like the Federal Computer Incident Response Center (FedCIRC), which provides

---

[23] G. Hartnett (n.d.). *Dynamic InfoGraphics: A Concept for Presentation and Transparency of System Behaviors for Situation Awareness*. https://search.proquest.com [accessed: 12.11.2024].

[24] J. Sprague, H. Walker (2005). *Safe and healthy schools: Practical prevention strategies*. Guilford Press.

[25] R. Ruefle, A. Dorofee, D. Mundie (2014). *Computer security incident response team development and evolution*. IEEE Xplore. https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/6924672/ [accessed: 21.11.2024].

centralized platforms for disseminating threat-related information, emphasizing the importance of coordinated prevention efforts. Additionally, intelligence agencies such as the FBI's National Infrastructure Protection Center utilize advanced technologies to distribute critical threat data, ensuring timely access for stakeholders to mitigate threats effectively.[26] These technological interventions underscore the need for continued investment in technological infrastructure to improve the accessibility and efficacy of threat prevention strategies, and by integrating these technological resources, both governmental and private sectors can enhance their threat assessment capabilities, thereby creating a more secure environment.

Building on the foundation of mediation services as a key aspect of conflict resolution in educational settings, higher education institutions can further enhance their collaborative efforts by integrating structured partnerships with industry and community stakeholders. One effective strategy is establishing science parks and incubators that provide spaces for academic start-ups to prosper and facilitate the exchange of commercialization methods. This not only helps translate research into viable products but also fosters collaboration between academic and industry professionals around common goals. Additionally, universities can enhance research impact through equity-based ventures and collaborative public-private projects. These ventures bridge the gap between theoretical research and practical application, ensuring effective implementation of innovative methods. Further, campus-based industrial extension services can forge links between academia and the broader business community, promoting continuous interaction and practice exchange.[27] Through these strategic collaborations, higher education institutions can significantly enhance their role as catalysts for innovation and societal advancement, necessitating proactive engagement and the cultivation of symbiotic relationships with various stakeholders.

The findings of this research emphasize the vital role that mediation plays in crisis management within higher education institutions and highlight its benefits for individual safety and community well-being. Mediation not only enhances conflict resolution mechanisms but also empowers students with essential skills in integrative negotiation and peer mediation, promoting a culture of understanding and constructive dialogue. Such a transformative approach positions students as agents of change, ready to handle crises effectively. However, the implementation of such mediation

---

[26] G. Stoneburner, A. Goguen, A. Feringa (2002). *Risk management guide for information technology systems* (NIST Special Publication 800-30). National Institute of Standards and Technology. Technology Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.5555/2206240 [accessed: 22.11.2024].

[27] B. Jongbloed, J. Enders, C. Salerno (2008). *Higher education and its communities: Interconnections, interdependencies and a research agenda.* "Higher Education", 56(3), 303-324.

strategies is not without challenges. Institutions face the difficulty of integrating these practices within existing statutory frameworks and educational curricula, necessitating a careful balance between traditional educational methodologies and innovative mediation techniques. Moreover, the research reveals a divergence in mediation practices across different cultural contexts, particularly between the U.S. and Germany, where historical and legal factors shape the approach to conflict resolution. This presents an opportunity for mutual learning, particularly in adopting structured methodologies from the U.S. while embracing the adaptability of Germany's practices to socio-cultural nuances. Additionally, the integration of technological advancements in mediation, such as automated threat prevention systems, emerges as a critical area for future exploration. These technologies can enhance threat assessment capabilities and contribute to a more secure educational environment. Furthermore, the emphasis on cultural sensitivity in mediation practices highlights the necessity of adapting strategies to cater to the diverse backgrounds present within educational settings. This adaptability not only addresses critiques of ethnocentrism in mediation but also ensures inclusivity and efficacy in conflict resolution. Future research should focus on developing hybrid strategies that encapsulate these diverse mediation approaches, enhancing their relevance and effectiveness in addressing contemporary disputes. Overall, the study advocates for higher education institutions to prioritize mediation interventions as integral components of their broader strategies for enhancing campus safety and fostering a supportive educational environment, ultimately contributing to the advancement of conflict resolution practices in defense education and beyond.

Safety of Students Based on the Content of Websites

To ensure robust preparedness for defense, a pilot study was conducted to evaluate how effectively universities in Poland address the safety of students and staff in both civil and military defense contexts. The study primarily utilized data from the official websites of public universities in Poland, focusing on departments involved in defense, as well as relevant documents published online. Typically, defense-related responsibilities within these institutions are managed by a designated defense specialist or department, and sometimes by individuals responsible for classified information.

The pilot study involved a systematic analysis of the online presence of units handling defense matters, aiming to identify which defense-related aspects are most frequently addressed through guidelines, training, or procedures for handling potential threats.

The research methodology consisted of the following stages:

1. Identifying websites of public universities in Poland that provide information on preparedness for threats such as terrorism, warfare, or other similar risks.
2. Downloading the content from the websites identified in the first stage.
3. Cleaning the downloaded content by removing extraneous elements like HTML tags, JavaScript code, and meta description.
4. Filtering out "stop words," which are words deemed irrelevant for the contextual analysis.
5. Applying the WordCount algorithm to calculate the frequency of key defense-related terms.
6. Interpreting the results based on the frequency analysis.

A total of 21 websites related to defense, affiliated with public universities in Poland, were analyzed in this pilot study. The method used is non-probability sampling. In fact, it was a purposive sampling based on the availability of information on defense at public universities in Poland. It does not cover all general and technical universities in Poland, and it cannot be treated as a representative sample. The reason why it is not a representative sample is that on many university websites, the information on defense does not exist.

In Figure 1, there is a list of words (in Polish) which are related to the subpages having the component of defense strategy and tactics related to the threats that may occur at the universities.

Figure 1. Word count analysis of the content of selected websites
Source: own study.

Figure 1 illustrates that the majority of the information provided by universities focuses on defense strategies against security threats, including scenarios such as warfare. This information is closely associated with aspects of data security, particularly the protocols for safeguarding sensitive information during emergencies. Notably, most universities have established a dedicated center or designated personnel responsible for maintaining the accuracy and currency of such information. These entities or individuals are also tasked with educating students and faculty on potential threats, thereby enhancing institutional preparedness and resilience.

An analysis of university websites reveals that information about positions responsible for defense matters is readily accessible on nearly all the platforms examined. This availability underscores the general effort to ensure transparency and accountability in matters related to campus safety and preparedness. However, evacuation plans, a critical component of emergency preparedness, are rarely found on these websites. This omission may be attributed to universities' reliance on regular fire drills and other hands-on training sessions to disseminate this information.

A significant disparity is observed in the availability of information regarding response procedures for more complex threats, such as terrorism or armed conflict. In many instances, universities did not provide direct access to detailed guidelines on their websites. Instead, they often referred users to other units or external sources, offering generic guidelines in the form of downloadable PDF documents. This approach may limit the accessibility and immediacy of vital information during emergencies.

While some institutions provide initial training sessions at the beginning of the academic year to enhance preparedness, relying solely on these sessions may not suffice for long-term readiness. To address this gap, a proactive strategy is recommended: the development and strategic placement of infographics. These visual aids can effectively communicate critical instructions during emergencies, enabling passive learning as they are displayed in frequently visited areas. Such a method ensures rapid access to essential information, fostering a culture of preparedness across the university community.

Conclusions

The conclusions can be divided into two different directions that should be addressed by the higher education institutions. One direction refers to the mediation and shows how the mediation strategy is important in the context of the education defense. It includes, among other things, preparing a good set of infographics showing how to defend in case of emergency situations.

The second part of the conclusions concentrates on the websites. It seems that with minimal effort from the universities, websites can provide lots of useful information related to defense education. Our study shows that information about positions responsible for defense matters is available on the websites of nearly all universities examined. However, evacuation plans are infrequently found on university websites, which may be attributed to regular training conducted during fire drills. A significant disparity exists in the availability of information regarding procedures for responding to threats such as terrorism or armed conflict on university websites. In many cases, universities did not provide direct access to such guidelines; instead, they referred users to other units or to generic guidelines available as PDF documents from external sources. While detailed instructions are necessary, a single mandatory training session at the beginning of the academic year may not be sufficient for long-term preparedness. A recommended strategy involves using infographics that can quickly convey critical instructions during emergencies. These visual aids should be placed in frequently visited areas throughout the university, allowing for passive learning and ensuring rapid access to vital information in the event of a threat.

In the paper, we have asked three research questions and found the answers according to the corresponding hypotheses. The study concludes that mediation strategies for conflict management in higher education institutions (HEIs) face significant challenges, primarily concerning their integration into the statutory frameworks of HEIs and the need to address cultural diversity among stakeholders (H1). Additionally, defense-related activities at HEIs are often oversimplified due to limitations in time and resources, which may reduce their effectiveness in preparing for potential threats (H2). Furthermore, the analysis of HEIs' websites reveals that published information on conflict prevention is largely superficial, focusing mainly on general evacuation procedures and basic safety guidelines, while lacking in-depth and specific instructions (H3). These findings highlight the need for HEIs to strengthen their conflict management and prevention strategies by incorporating more comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and detailed approaches to ensure a safer and more inclusive academic environment.

Bibliography

Baxter M. (2023). *Improving the effectiveness of public health infographics through design principle application*. White Rose eTheses Online. https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/31443/ [accessed: 24.10.2024].

Carlin E. (2020). *Mediator knowledge competency: How various types of mediator training impact the success of the peace mediation process*. "Global Security and

International Relations After the Escalation of the Ukrainian Crisis". http://doi.fil.bg.ac.rs [accessed: 24.10.2024].

Crocker C.A., Hampson F.O., Aall P. (Eds.). (1999). *Herding cats: Multiparty mediation in a complex world*. United States Institute of Peace Press. Washington D.C.

Doherty N.F., Anastasakis L., Fulford H. (2009). *The information security policy unpacked: A critical study of the content of university policies*. "Computers & Security", 28(1-2).

Domenici K., Littlejohn S.W. (2001). *Mediation: Empowerment in conflict management*. Waveland Press.

Donahue A., Tuohy, R. (2012). *Lessons We Don't Learn: A Study of the Lessons of Disasters, Why We Repeat Them, and How We Can Learn Them*. Naval Postgraduate School. http://faculty.nps.edu/dl/HFN/documents/DisasterLessons.pdf [accessed 24.10.2024].

Dos Santos Lonsdale M., Lonsdale D.J., Baxter M., Graham R., Kanafani A., Li A., Peng C. (2019). *Visualizing the terror threat: The impact of communicating security information to the general public using infographics and motion graphics*. "Visible Language", 53(2), 36-71.

Georgakopoulos A. (2017). *The mediation handbook: Research, theory, and practice*. Routledge. New York.

Gmurzyńska E. (2022). *The nature and role of academic ombudsman at the Polish higher education institutions*. "ADR in Higher Education Journal", 3(1). https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=1176722 [accessed: 12.11.2024].

Hartnett G. (n.d.). *Dynamic InfoGraphics: A Concept for Presentation and Transparency of System Behaviors for Situation Awareness*. https://search.proquest.com [accessed: 12.11.2024].

Johnson D.W., Johnson R.T. (1996). *Conflict resolution and peer mediation programs in elementary and secondary schools: A review of the research*. "Review of Educational Research", 66(4).

Jongbloed B., Enders J., Salerno C. (2008). *Higher education and its communities: Interconnections, interdependencies and a research agenda*. "Higher Education", 56(3).

Kardgar A. (2021). *Effectiveness of using automatically advanced vs. manually advanced infographics in health awareness*. Hammer Repository. https://hammer.purdue.edu [accessed: 21.11.2024].

Katz N.H. (2019). *Mediation and dispute resolution services in higher education*. Taylor & Francis.

Knezo G.R.S. (2006). *"Sensitive but unclassified" information and other controls: Policy and options for scientific and technical information*. Congressional Research Service Report. https://www2.law.umaryland.edu [accessed: 27.11.2024].

Łudzińska K. (2021). *Expectations and reality: Towards management programs for academic leaders in higher education*. "Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej". Seria: Organizacja i Zarządzanie, 199.

Martin L.J., Turnquist A., Groot B., Huang S.Y.M., Kok E., Thoma B., van Merriënboer J.J.G. (2017). *Exploring the role of infographics for summarizing medical literature.*

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2452301117300792 [accessed: 24.10.2024].

Menkel-Meadow C. (2023). *Cross-cultural disputes and mediator strategies*. In D. Busch (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of Intercultural Mediation* (Chapter 2). Routledge. New York.

Mentally U., Law A. (2021). *The benefits of mediation in civil suits concerning bullying and hazing*. HeinOnline. https://heinonline.org [accessed: 20.11.2024].

Riposo J., McKernan M., Drezner J., McGovern G. (2015). *Issues with access to acquisition data and information in the Department of Defense: Policy and practice*. RAND Corporation. https://www.dair.nps.edu/handle/123456789/3722 [accessed: 21.11.2024].

Ruefle R., Dorofee A., Mundie D. (2014). *Computer security incident response team development and evolution*. IEEE Xplore. https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/abstract/document/6924672/ [accessed: 21.11.2024].

Setianingrum V., Huda A., Aji G. (2020). *Design development of infographics content for Covid-19 prevention socialization*. Proceedings of the International Joint Conference on Arts and Humanities (IJCAH 2020). Atlantis Press. https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/ijcah-20/125947217 [accessed: 21.11.2024].

Sprague J., Walker H. (2005). *Safe and healthy schools: Practical prevention strategies*. Guilford Press.

Stoneburner G., Goguen A., Feringa A. (2002). *Risk management guide for information technology systems (NIST Special Publication 800-30)*. National Institute of Standards and Technology. Technology Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.5555/2206240 [accessed: 22.11.2024].

Workman M., Bommer W., Straub D. (2008). *Security lapses and the omission of information security measures: A threat control model and empirical test*. "Computers in Human Behavior", 24(6).

Zartman I.W., Touval S. (1985). *International mediation: Conflict resolution and power politics*. "Journal of Social Issues", 41(2).

Abstract

This study emphasizes the critical role of mediation in defense education within higher education institutions globally, particularly in crisis management. It highlights the benefits of mediation interventions for enhancing campus safety, drawing insights from effective practices in the U.S. and Germany. The research examines mediation strategies for conflict management during crises, focusing on Polish universities' challenges in implementing threat prevention measures. Key findings reveal that while defense information is widely available on university websites, evacuation plans are rarely published, and there is significant inconsistency in the information regarding response procedures to threats, such as terrorism. Most guidelines are not directly provided by universities, leading to reliance on external sources. The study advocates for the development of infographics for critical emergency instructions, suggesting their placement in high-traffic areas to promote passive learning and ensure quick access to vital information during threats.

Keywords: mediation, defense education, crisis management, infographics, higher education, conflict prevention