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The Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences

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THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL *EDUCATION, REFLECTION, DEVELOPMENT*

THE MANAGEMENT OF INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS
IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT.
APPLICATIONS FOR THE PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL EDUCATION

Ph.D. THESIS
SUMMARY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section I

THE THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

CHAPTER III

THE TYPOLOGY OF THE CONFLICTS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT. RESOLUTIVE APPROACHES ADAPTED TO THE STUDENTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL 56

Section II

THE PRESENTATION OF THE EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH ON THE TOPIC:

"THE IMPACT OF THE *PEER MEDIATION* PROGRAMME IN INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT MEDIATION FOR STUDENTS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL"

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL DIRECTIONS OF THE EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH / 110

Key-words and phrases:

- ❖ the conflict, interpersonal conflicts among students, the management of the interpersonal conflicts, mediation, co-mediation, *Peer Mediation* programme, student/ peer mediators, collaboration and compromise, *win-win* solutions, the frequency of interpersonal conflicts in the primary school, interpersonal conflict management styles, the social inclusion of the students in the primary school, the quality of the social emotional and interrelational climate in the school environment.

The Ph.D. thesis having the title **The management of the interrelational conflicts in the school environment. Applications for the primary school** consists of two main parts.

The first part is named *The theoretical and conceptual fundamentals of the research* and it is structured in three chapters, in which we establish a theoretical basis, necessary for exploring the research problem of this study. The thesis topic is theoretically grounded from multiple knowledge perspectives: etymological, lexical, philosophical, social, educational, thus trying to render the central concept in a holistic approach: the conflict. Complementary, we highlight relevant perspectives upon the significance, dynamics, sources and the taxonomy of the conflicts, especially for the school environment, with emphasis on those involving very young students. Reaching a more particular level of investigation, in the theoretical approach with reference to sources and risk factors associated to triggering conflicts, we tackle with the problem of the social inclusion of the students having special educational needs and the challenges which one meets in the context of providing an inclusive education in the public education, then following this idea we are focusing on these cases of educable children, too in the practical application of the process. Adjacently, we approach analitically a possible relation of determinism existent on the axis of educative shortcomings-school success-social inclusion-conflict, targeting to lay emphasis on a real necessity of educational intervention in order to monitor the negative effects of the conflicts, knowing that these impact on students' school evolution and the degree of social inclusion. The theoretical section of the paper is brought to an end with an inventory of strategies and models, in which we focus on practical proposals, useful to teachers in the management of interpersonal conflicts in case of students in the primary school.

The theoretical foundation of the paper has required to apply a set of scientific methods specific to research, assuming systemic, critical and reflective approach upon the topic while exploiting sources from the bibliography in the area through complex processes: acknowledging, understanding, explanations, interpretations, generalization, making inferences and logical assumptions which lead to creating a theoretical explanatory pattern, accessible for practitioners. The theoretical arguments are supported through citing Romanian and foreign authors having expertise in the research of conflict situations or through reference to certain documents and studies having been carried out prior to this on the topics associated to our research topic. According to the specificity of each point dealt with in the theoretical research,

we employ: transversal studies (we approach it chronologically, analyzing the problem from the perspective of its evolution in time), research reading (we read and analyze carefully and critically, then we write down the relevant information), exegetical reading (we approach thematically, offering expanations and interpretations around the key concepts), self-observation and experiential observation(which contribute to the deep understanding of the phenomenon in study).

The second section of the paper, *The presentation of the experimental research on the topic:"The impact of the Peer Mediation programme in mediation the interpersonal conflicts for students in elementary education"*, consists of four chapters, in which, according to the set of theoretical knowledge built, we present our process of projecting and developing a research-action, respecting the sequence of the necessary stages: the pre-experimental stage, the experimental stage and the post-experimental stage. In this investigative context, we aimed at the implementation and test of an experimental programme of mediation of interpersonal conflicts, applicable to the students in the primary school. In this way, from the set of techniques of solving conflicts, *ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution)*, internationally recognized and accepted, we have chosen to apply *the mediation*, grounding the *Peer Mediation* programme on the *Theory of social interdependence*.

Throughout the progress of the psychopedagogical experiment and at the end of it, we aimed at the quantification of the effects of the programme *Peer Mediation*, measuring and interpreting the values recorded by the dependent variables mentioned in the hypothesis of our research. Thus, we point to check whether the implementation of an experimental programme of mediating the interpersonal conflicts, in case of primary classes, contributes to diminishing the frequency of conflicts among these, to the optimization of the styles in which they manage thier own conflicts with their colleagues, to increase their degree of social inclusion in the groups/classes they belong to, as well as to the improvement of the quality of the social emotional and interrelational climate in the school environment they develop their activity. Surely, they represent only some of the expected positive effects, in general, after developing such a programme. In the present research we stuck to monitor the ones mentioned above, following the evolution of these characteristics in the various stages of the experimental research, in order to conclude on the practical value of the operational pattern having been built and applied, at the end of the researcher's intervention.

We have considered that it is effective to teach the students not only about the nature of the conflicts, but also to teach them, especially towards applying an inclusive procedure, taking reasonable steps in order to mediate the interpersonal conflicts they confront with in the school environment. Valuable ideas from the literature have been brought together, relevant ideas for the intended research, provided by studies and international organizations, as well as alternative practical alternatives of managing the conflicts, in order to establish an operational framework, adapted to the students in the primary school and easy to implement by the teachers.

Therefore, the triad of *theory, research and educational practice* was exploited throughout the whole investigative process.

Chapter I – The Conflict. Theoretical studies and terminological analyses incorporates definitions and theoretical perspectives offered by literature upon the concept of conflict, to which we add a complex of perspectives related to various connotations of the conflict and the dynamics of the conflict situations.

The lexeme "conflict" comes from the Latin "conflictus,-us" with direct reference to "confligere", translated like "to clash, to hit". The Romanian language borrowed the term "conflict" through its francophone corespondent "conflit" and *the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian language DEXI* (2007) offers for it the following list of defining words: misunderstanding, clash (between two or among more people, groups and so on), disagreement, antagonism, quarrel, (violent) discussion, dispute, fight.

Larousse Dictionary (2018) defines conflict in rapport to three main reference areas: the military conflict, namely the war – a fight, especially an open one, between opposing forces: *,,Lutte armée, combat entre deux ou plusieurs puissances qui se disputent un droit"*; the conflict as "difference" – disagreement among ideas, principles or people: *"Violente opposition de sentiments, d'opinions, d'intérêts"* and the psychological conflict, regarded as a mental fight – the psychological state given by the opposition, mostly unconscious, among desires, needs, impulses and simultaneous, but incompatible tendencies: *,,Expression d'exigences internes inconciliables, telles que désirs et représentations opposés, et plus spécifiquement de forces pulsionnelles antagonistes. (Le conflit psychique peut être manifeste ou latent.)"*. In the present research we have focused on the second perspective, referring mainly to the social manifestations and implications of the conflict, particularily in case of interpersonal relationships for the students in the primary school.

A valuable explanatory database is offered by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2018), which facilitates understanding the notion of *conflict* from more points of view.

On one hand, the conflict is defined as a type of a tense and long-termed interpersonal rapport, materialized through disagreement and/or argument: *"A serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one"*. On the other hand, the conflict is explained as a state of mind, in which a person experiences simultaneous and opposing feelings, emotions, needs, wishes: *"A state of mind in which a person experiences a clash of opposing feelings or needs."* Moreover, based on the explanations provided by Oxford English Dictionaries one can carry on a direct correspondence between conflict as an intrinsic state of a person and the conflict as a form of interpersonal manifestation: "Contradiction among ideas, interests or feelings of various persons, which result in carrying out the action".

According to the statements of more philosophers, conflict represents a critical step in the evolution of the opposing contradictions and of the human being in general. R. Cohen (2005) stated about conflict that it is not only a normal side of life, but a necessary part: "Conflicts can make us more powerful and wiser...They can teach us better ways of solving problems, bring us closer to the people we care about, reveal new aspects of us and enlighten us about our position in world."

Solving the conflicts triggers a curative function upon the human being and society in general, offering occasions for the investigation of the alternatives in a circumstance of disagreement. At the same time, it re-establishes the balance and the normality of the relationships among people. The conflict and the process of its settlement facilitate the discussions and involve the parties engaged in conflict, in contexts in which they can choose to take positive alternative decisions, in order to find a solution to their disputes, the ones which have sparked off the conflicting tensions.

Many theoreticians associate the conflict with " the simultaneous appearance of two or more mutual opposing impulses or motivations" (F.B. Batubo, 2010, p. 395). Therefore, the conflict shapes in the context of an intrinsic disorder, having a personal, individual touch which triggers certain reactions, behaviors in case of any individual. The amplitude of the conflict is dependent on the force of these motivations and impulses which human beings experience, on the intensity of personal sensitivity towards this pressure, on the level of self-control and of the management of the specific dynamics of the emotional part.

Built in the context of four main dimensions, cognitive, motivational, emotional and executive, the conflict appears as an intentional-final programme. Under the circumstances of a conflict, one or more of the parties involved become aware of the incompatibilities they run into opposition to one another. There is a tension between opponents, which they feel and swing into actions that assure them with finalizing their intentions and getting gain. Thereby, the conflict is also a social, dynamic phenomenon, frequently found in interpersonal relationships, throughout the whole existential process.

Extrapolating to the level of social rapports, conflict is a phenomenon which appears as a result of the tendency of one involved, a person or a group of persons, in order to put forward his/her point of view or their own interests. In this context, G.D. Pruitt and Z.J. Rubin (1986) present conflict as a "perceived divergence of interest or the faith that the present wishes of the parties engaged cannot be simultaneously accomplished". Such a behavior leads to the appearance of a range of feelings of contrariness and even of frustration in the group of opponents. "In essence, the conflict refers to disagreement, dispute or controversy among the ideas or the points of view two or more people or groups had" (translation after O.P. Dokun Oyeshola, 2005, p. 106), a disagreement through which the parties engaged perceive a threat coming from others towards their needs, interests or preoccupations, threat which transforms it from a personal, private event in the psychological, intrinsic perspective into a social event shown interpersonal/intragroup/intergroup. Settling the conflicts in social is observed also by researcher C.T. Schelling (1960), who states that they are, at a great extent "situations of negotiations in which the ability of each participant to reach their goals is dependent on the other participant's choices and decisions."

Generically, in the school organizations, the educational crisis may appear also as a relational crisis, risking to affect the quality of the organizational climate, the health and security of the members of those particular organizations. We define **a situation of relational crisis** from an educational perspective as: *exceptional, position limit, apparently without solution, generated by the inconsistency and strong contradictions, the ones causing imbalance, expressed by the educational factors, from the position of the person disputing; a vulnerable, decisive state that appeared in critical conditions, felt, at an acute level, as a (temporary) disfunctionality of the interrelational relationships among the educational actors, thus needing immediate intervention through actions having a remedial purpose, control of the negative*

effects and exploring the formative valences coming from such a social experience. The situations of crisis at this level are approached through the theory and practice of the management of the crisis situations (in the school organizations), a component of the educational management. From this broader perspective, we narrow our discourse up to the concept of conflict and accessing some related meanings to the conflict situations from the school environment, for which examination a management of conflicts is necessary, as an integral part of the management of the relational crisis situations.

Not only are we are preoccupied of conceptualizing the conflict and the conflict situations from an educational perspective, but also we highlight some changes of perspective concerning the phenomenon of the conflict, considered by specialists as a means of progress. Prior to bringing details for this latter aspect, we offered a sort of definition of **the conflict situation**, in the school environment, in general, which we regard as: *a set of conditions of existence and human interrelation which unite for a variable period of time, in a social, practical context, when a conflict is in action; a social situation which may be characterized by the tension that appeared in the background of opposing or partially compatible interpersonal relationships fostered by the members of the school community (small or extended) as concerning the needs, the interests, preoccupations, wishes, beliefs or perspectives.*

The social character of the conflict manifests itself in the human interactions from early ages already, fact which led to queries, reflections and research upon the formative impact of the conflict in the educational, formal, nonformal, informal environment. The functional and constructive effects of the conflict situations, which the ones to be educated experience in the context of early education and young schoolchildren, were investigated and validated by specialists, theoreticians and practitioners in the field of education. A shift of stress from the negative, dysfunctional perceptions towards the formative, constructive valences is observed. This approach is much more encouraged among the teachers, both for changing, shaping the others' views and for supporting them in remodelling the styles of the preventive and resolutive approach of the conflicts from the school environment they work in.

Along the time, the research in the field made possible the change of the theoreticians' views, therefore we could distinguish certain new trends, defined as:

- *The theory of human relationships* – its followers consider the conflict as an inevitable result within any group and it is based on the principle: "The conflict determines unusual reactions of the persons involved.";

- *The theory of the interactionist approach* – in which the conflict is not only a positive force within each group, but especially its presence is necessary for the efficient functionality of the group, fact which implies preserving a certain functional degree of conflict.

Managing conflict situations is to have as a task the exact identification of the level of conflict which affects getting goals, namely the moment in which arousing conflict may have beneficial effects.

Chapter II – Sources of conflicts in the school environment analyzes at the beginning, some of the major risk factors, as triggering or boosted elements in conflicts, then following to highlight a series of taxonomies of the sources of conflict, mentioned in the literature, to bring under scrutiny aspects referring to the impact of the inclusive education in public schools, as wel as, to invite to reflection and to ameliorative actions, some connections between students' success/failure being known, as the conflicts they involve in.

We outline a definition of work related to the studied problem and to the school environment, namely a statement which supports our investigative endeavor relating to the **risk factors in conflicts**. We approach this category of risk factors as: *the totality of internal and external factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) the educational actors get in touch to, more or less direct, who, thanks to the level of their power of influence exert upon them or determines, at a certain time, the appearance of a conflict situation in their lives.* No matter the type of conflict, one should observe a series of risk factors, at a general level, then at a particular level. In this way, the major risk factors, generally speaking, would consist of:

- Disagreement

It is a part that is frequently present in the human interactions, which people mostly manage and continue to live with and work harmoniously with. Despite these, disagreement is a risk factor in case of the appearance of a conflict, context in which all individuals (e.g. students) begin feeling that there is a threat at their welfare, physical or emotional. In fact, the conflict is outlined when it is associated with significant levels of disagreeement, which exagerates the importance given by the parties to the disagreeement they have. Supporting the

parties for understanding the true nature of the disagreement is contributing to the identification of their real needs.

- The parties engaged

There is a risk factor also the fact that, sometimes, there are differences in understanding who are the individuals who are really involved in the conflict and who are not. There is the possibility for someone to find out with surprise that is part of the conflict or that, on the contrary, he/she was not included in the dispute happening. In many cases, persons who are seen as integral parts of a social group (e.g. the class of students, the group of friends) are influenced to become part of the conflict, for the simple fact that they are connected to the group they belong to, in a way or another. Both in the case of grown-ups and especially in the case of children, it happens that, very rapidly they *take one's side*, relying on their own perceptions (about events, colleagues and so on), on problems and relationships they had with the parts involved in the past, on the roles each of them has within the group or on other personal factors. Consequently, the clarification of the parties involved in conflict must be given carefully. Otherwise, it leads to new forms of disagreement and conflict.

- The threat perceived vs. the real threat

We point out the difference between what an individual perceives as threat and what a threat/danger is in reality. In case it is perceived, a threat is anticipated or waited, which implies its presumed existence and not necessarily that it already exists. In conflict situations, the persons involved most likely respond to a perceived threat, than to a real one, which they really face in that moment. The fear of an identified threat is very high, reason why people's behaviors and feelings are changing as they occur and the perception of a threat develops.

In this way, they come to have reactions as a response to the perceived threat.

For an efficient management of the conflicts while they may be solved in a constructive manner and even prevent the future conflicts, supporting the students is crucial, so that they understand, interpret and assess the real threats they face. Once they have identified the real problems they must have faced, resolutive strategies tailored to the discussed case can be applied.

- Needs, interests and concerns

In the school environment, the conflicts among students may be more complex than the problems belonging to the school tasks are assigned on long term. The activity in a group-class

implies permanent relationships among schoolchildren, as well as complex elements correlated with their emotional dimension.

Within such a context, the needs, interests and concerns can have different forms and levels of importance in a conflict, (directly/indirectly) influencing the degree of intensity. Educators have to consider these three categories of factors, either they are tangible (material needs) or intangible (e.g. the feeling of security, the emotional need, the desire for vengeance and so on). Apart from the basic, general needs, often there are procedural and psychological needs, too, which should be addressed suitably for the conflict situation and throughout its process of efficient management. The presented risk factors may vary and may interfere, influencing the nature and the intensity o the conflict.

The generic sources of the conflict come around in risk factors which are to be found at various levels of human existence. In this chapter we make references to the risk factors found at the level of the individual, of the family environment, as well as of the tight and extended community.

Intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts represent a reality of the personal and social life and the literature mentions various sources of the conflict situations. Researchers in the educational field, as A. Stoica-Constantin (1998) and M. Bocoş, R. Gavra (2008) suggest the next taxonomy of the sources of conflict:

1. not meeting the human's basic needs, such as: freedom, self-actualization, success, knowledge and the need to be active;
2. different values (morale social, professional); the teacher and the student belong to different generations, they have particular beliefs, they think distinctively, they have different cultural levels and have rapports independent from each other with distinct systems of value;
3. different perceptions upon reality; when individuals apprehend a certain thing differently or they think distinctively regarding something, thus there is the risk of conflict situations to arise;
4. different interests lead to different concerns, distincitive explanations and judgements, fact which represents a possible source of conflict;
5. limited resources, coordinations as space, time, logistics, the availability that endangers the efficient interaction between teacher and student;

6. altered psychological needs such as: self-esteem, intrapsychic stability (the inner peace), good understanding, affection, happiness have as a consequence the occurrence of inner conflicts, conflicts which often provoke disputes with the other educational actors.

A special relevance to the subject under discussion is the fact that the human individuals develop in different cultures, share distinct beliefs that have a different rapport with certain values, reason why sometimes incisive conflicts can arise. Particular interests make people be concerned about various activities and the conflicts may occur on the basis of diverging valorizations they express upon these. The limited material resources (insufficient goods) can cause stress, tension and implicitly, interpersonal conflicts. Psychological needs such as freedom, happiness, equality or self-esteem, which each human's inner peace rely on are on many occasions altered, situations in which inner conflicts with high potential of provoking other conflicts with other human individuals arise.

According to A. Constantin and A. Neculau (1998), on a broader level, the most important sources of conflict are: some traits of personality, opinions, attitudes, values, needs, tastes and preferences.

Therefore, the most relevant sources of conflict make direct reference to the persons' differences and imcompatibilities, poor communication, losing self-esteem and/or values, principles, not respecting the explicit or implicit norms, inappropriate behaviors, maladaptive up to aggression, but also elements of the external environment, as status, power and prestige.

Inclusive education represents a challenge both at macro educational level and at micro educational level, a challenge through which it is required, implicitly and explicitly the change of attitudes, mentalities, politics and practices of exclusion and segregation. The concept of inclusion claims that the school/education, in its quality of provider of education services, under the present conditions, must extend its goal and role in order to meet the requirements of a greater diversity of schoolchildren. At a global level, the inclusive school is the environment in which one learns the acceptance of the physical, mental, economic, social, cultural diversity, also it puts more emphasis on the individual progress and less on the comparisons among students, the study through cooperation being encouraged, suggesting a differentiated curriculum for the special needs and different groups and using the resources of the community in a constructive and common way.

On the basis of the inclusive education there are main principles which shall be imposed:

- The principle of equal rights (for a development according to its own potential);
- The principle of the uniqueness of the learning characteristics, interests, abilities, motivation and needs;
- The principle of diversity, of complying with the misconduct from the normal standards;
- The principle of the access and participation of all according to their abilities and development level.

The latest research, UNESCO-IBE (2015), underlines the importance of providing with an inclusive education, creation of an integrative school also from the perspective of the management of the conflicts among students. Before any coherent process having as a goal students' inclusion, grounding an inclusive culture at the school level, in general, is necessary. In this respect, the leaders/managers of the education institutions must develop new connotations and interpretations about diversity, promote inclusive practices among schools and bridge the gaps, consistent links among schools and communities. In such school environment, not only do students recognise the situations of conflict and violence, but also they feel confortable to discuss with an adult (the teacher) and they are more open-minded to solve the situations in a constructive manner, having lasting and convenient solutions for all the involved parties.

Chapter III – The typology of the conflicts in the school environment. Resolutive approaches adapted to the students in the primary school ends the first section of the paper**,** presenting certain types of conflicts**,** specific to the school environment**,** by reference to various classification criteria and largely approaching a complex of strategies and patterns to be applied in efficiently approaching conflicts in which young schoolchildren are engaged.

Categorizing conflicts can support teachers practitioners in understanding the nature of conflicts the students groups confront with. At the same time, the classification of conflicts represents orientative directions in developing the methods of interventions in conflict situations, because defining conflict presumes making assumptions related to its nature. The conflicts in the school environment may be classified with reference to numerous criteria, but we refer mostly to the parties involved, we study the conflict of interpersonal type and we focus

on the investigative initiatives upon the conflicts of interpersonal type among students. According to the criterion of the involved parties, we could distinguish:

➕ The intrapersonal conflict

This type of conflict occurs at the individual's intrinsic level, as a consequence of the frustration he/she feels related to the personal goals, plans or achievements. Moreover, an intrapersonal conflict may be a result of some conflicting personal values or of some questions of consciousness.

At a more complex level of analysis we can observe some subtypes of intrapersonal conflicts. In the school environment (and not only), an intrapersonal conflict may be understood as:

- o a person's incapacity of making a decision = motivational conflict;
- o an inner fight between good and evil = moral conflict;
- o a gap between reality and ambition (unfulfilled wish of unbalanced self-appreciation).

It is important to remember that an intrapersonal conflict is not necessarily negative, but it may be a good indicator for a stage of personal development one individual experiences at a certain time. The inner fight a student has proves that a process of reflection, of introspection takes place, which may represent the premise of a personal progress.

➕ Interpersonal conflict

C. Malek (2013) described the interpersonal conflict in the document *"International Conflict, Conflict Resolution Information Source"* as being: "a situation in which one or both persons in a relationship encounter dificulties in working or living with one another. This fact usually occurs because of some goals or different or incompatible styles.", perspective which leads to the fact that such a conflict, arisen between two persons, may come back on a regular basis along their relationship. The category of interpersonal conflicts comprises some subcategories of conflicts specific to the school environment, represented by:

- conflicts between superiors and subordinates;
- conflicts among teachers;
- conflicts among teachers and students;
- conflicts among students;
- conflicts among the representatives of two or more cultural groups.

Conflicts of interpersonal type are generally associated with a series of negative personal feelings as: fury, distrust, betrayal or even hatred. Choosing the ways of the resolutive approach of the interpersonal conflicts may differ if the power is equally or inequally divided among the parties engaged. The dynamics of power – the symetry of power – may vary from a case to the other, as well as the results and the consequences of the conflict.

​♣ The intergroup conflict

Such a conflict may be triggered among different formal and informal groups in the school environment: among the school cultural groups, among certain school departments, between a teacher and the school board, between teachers and students, between class and one single student in the class. The intergroup conflicts are not superposable with the intrasocial or social conflicts. The main factor that differentiates them is the importance the problem at the core of the conflict has for the society, as well as the concerns of the society, the consequences, the public resonance and the scale they develop. The intrasocial conflicts are often correlated to the idea of competition and power. For example, the violence among the groups of students coming from different ethnic groups, the fight among gangs, discrimination and/or violence towards a minority (vulnerable) group are intrasocial conflicts.

Both categories of conflicts are important for the groups because they contribute to building their identity. The members of the groups tend to look for a shared leader and to set up values and norms to guide by, which they respect and which assure them with preserving their identity. In the domain of psychology, this way to build identity is similar to *in-group favoritism* or *out-group discrimination.*

In *"Educational management for Institutions of Education"* (M.E.C., I.S.E., 2001) it is presented a typology of the conflict situations according to the "actors" engaged. Thereby, there are: conflicts among students, conflicts between teachers and students, conflicts between teachers and parents and conflicts among teachers. This typology is largely dealt with in the second section of the present study.

We claim that the patterns and the strategies of prevention and solving of the conflicts among students should be outlined by reference to an actual macro perspective upon the problem of the conflicts and violence in the school environment. In this respect, we suggest as guiding elements the priority actions put forward by UNESCO in order to accomplish the Agenda 2030:

- leadership and firmer commitment from all the educational actors in order to eradicate violence in school;
- the promotion of the awareness of violence upon children and among children, of the harmful impact of the violent conflicts in school and of the benefits of the schools lacking such violent behaviors;
- creating partenerships, including the active participation of children in order to eradicate violence in school;
- increasing the capacity of teachers to avoid violent conflicts in school and to respond with appropriate measures in such cases;
- establishing some mechanisms to report conflicts and the acts of violence in school and to provide with some support service (programme);
- the improvement of the system of data about the causes, the nature, the spread and the impact of violence and of the violent conflicts in schools and about efficient solutions against them.

Any solution to conflicts includes a better communication with students. The better and more complete the communication, the more likely to create a climate of physical and mental safety and the conflicts would be easier to be solved. Some specialists in the field of the research in education, M. Bocoş (2008 – adapted from I.O. Pânişoară, 2004), claim that firstly there should be applied a series of *communicative strategies of prevention of the conflict*. Simultaneously with the strategy/strategies adopted for the prevention of conflicts in the school environment, there should be implemented in practice certain **communicative** *strategies of reducing the conflict*. A role of great importance in reducing the conflicts is criticism. This must be used in a positive, constructive way, which does not fuel the conflict and it must be always applied in direct relation to the appreciative elements. Expressing constructive criticism implies clarity and specificity, having as a centre of interest the inappropriate behavior that is intended to be changed and not the student who displayed it.

The management of the conflicts can be regarded as a broad concept, which implies solving the conflicts and the transformation which is necessary, but also as a commitment and a long-term commitment. This implies insights and institutional procedures of solving the conflicts on long-term. In our vision, *solving conflicts* in our school organizations, emphasizing the social character of the conflicts, may be defined as: *a conscientious, controlled, assumed,*

intentional and strategic process, whose purpose is represented by the identification of alternative variants of solving a conflict, action naturally followed by the selecting, applying, reconfiguring and sensibly adjusting a state of balance at the level of the realtionships among the disputate ones, as well as at the individual level (intrinsic). The manner one acts in a conflict is influenced by the importance of the assumed objectives and of the relationship among the persons engaged in the conflict situation.

There is a set of basic strategies that may be applied within a conflict, namely:

➢ *Avoidance* – it applies in situations in which the problem has a low relevance, the chances to win are reduced, the reduction of the existent tension is necessary, calming and gaining the perspective upon the problem or more information in necessary;

➢ *Competition* – becomes operative when a quick, decisive action is necessary, when there are vital problems for the good functionality or when a protection against people who take advantage of the uncompetitive behavior;

➢ *Agreement* – finds its applicability in situations in which a party involved becomes aware of the fact that others' problems are more important than theirs, when they must obtain credit for other situations, when the stability and the harmony of the group matters and also realize that it can learn from mistakes;

➢ *Compromise* – comes to be accepted when the goals are not important or partial solutions of some problems are necessary, when "the enemies" have equal powers and are fond of their goals, but also when other stategies (for example, collaboration) were unsuccessful;

➢ *Collaboration* – is preferrable when their own objective is to learn, so they aim at uniting different points of view, obtaining consent and combining opposing opinions.

Any the strategy or set of strategies applied to ameliorate, negociate and solve the conflict situations, there are a series of specific actions necessary: the identification of the real reason, the one which generates the tensional state of stress, the comparative analysis, with great objectivity, of the exposed variants, the individual discussion for completing the causal information, the discussion at the group level, as a case study, using the reward system, organizing discussions in groups, making excuses at the group or class level, offering the necessary explanations and searching the positive, formative aspect in any tensional state.

- ❖ The teachers must be aware of the children's intentions and help them clarify their own understanding of the conflict, being necessary the distinction between a conflict which children really try to solve or it is a simple wordplay, mutually accepted.
- ❖ The students' capacity of solving conflicts increases as their verbal competence and their capacity of taking into consideration other points of view and perspectives increases. If the students engaged in a conflict are verbal and empathic, the teachers should leave them work alone at producing a solution accepted by all the parties involved.
- ❖ The teacher's decision to intervene should be made after the conflict between students was observed, as well as the visible problems that had provoked it. The problems about possession and nicknames generate fewer contradictory discussions about the problems linked to deeds and decisions of the game.
- ❖ The children who mutually explain their actions are more predisposed to create their own solutions. In the conflicts in which the schoolchildren resort to physical strategies and simple verbal oppositions, teachers should help them find more words to use (in a constructive way).
- ❖ Teachers should notice whether the students have played together before the conflict occured. The interaction and the friendship that have been developed before motivate children to solve the disputes on their own.
- ❖ Teachers can reduce the frustration of a constant conflict through making the (indoor/outdoor) playgrounds accessible and offering diverse materials the students may share.
- ❖ Children often rely on adults who are frequently available to offer a solution which is considered by them right. Teachers should offer their children time to develop their own resolutions and allow them to choose negotiation, changing the activity, abandonimg the problem or creating new rules.
- ❖ Many conflicts do not imply aggression and children are on many occassions capable of solving their disputes. The teachers should offer appropriate guidance, but also allow children to handle their own conflicts and solutions (translated and adapted from E.J. Wheeler, 1994, p. 226-299).

For choosing a management strategy of conflicts and a managerial style, we encourage the practitioners from the school environment to bear in mind several considerations. The parties in the conflict are the ones who *hold the conflict* and, consequently, they should be responsible for solving them, too. An agreement to end the conflict will be considered legitimate and much more stable if the conflict parties were involved in outlining it. In return, if a resolution is imposed from outside, without considering the concerns and needs of all the parties, the chances of a lasting solution are reduced and the risk the conflict to re-appear is higher. To exclude the persons and the groups from the process of conflict management, a method which is often used to punish the ones who fight back the suggested solutions does not offer any reason to the parties rejected to adopt and to respect the resolution. Therefore, to benefit from lasting changes, we recommend the involvement of all the players in the conflict.

Solving conflicts esentially aims at the intervention in order to change and facilitate the development of a conflict. Generally, solving conflicts offers the possibility to interact with the parties engaged, having as a goal to reduce the intensity and the negative effects of a conflict. Solving the conflict situations claims to apply some specific patterns of the management of conflicts in the school environment. In our research we implement and test the efficiency of an experimental programme for students created after the model ***Peer Mediation***, in which we exploit the strategies of negotiation and intercession of the interpersonal conflicts among students.

Negociation is the procedure that cannot be missing from the collection of the effective and efficient solving methods of the conflict situations, inherent to the boards of the school organizations and to the management of the groups of students. This presumes the development of a strategy, prepared and enhanced cautiously, because only in this way the decision or the solution resulted will reach the optimal level followed. Generally speaking. the negotiation may be defined as: *interaction among groups or persons initially having divergent interests and objectives which, after discussing and confronting the positions, aim at an agreement and reaching an agreement and making some shared decisions.* In case of the present study, we analyze the way of negotiation in which the resolutive process is coordinated, conducted, adjusted and ended by a person having the role of a negotiator of the conflict situation among the parties.

Mediation could be defined as a *"process of solving the disputes, in which a formal, impartial and neuter mediator assists the opposing parties to reach an agreement, through their own will, through the promotion of cooperation, communication and through the facilitation of the negotiations, agreeement that establishes the future behaviors and maintain the relationships among the parties."* (A. Stoica-Constantin, 1998, p. 224). The process of mediation implies a high degree of efficiency in solving the conflicts that have occured in the school environment. This unfolds as a form of assisted negotiation when the persons, in this case the students, being found in a dispute lack the suitable skills in order to solve the conflict or they do not succed in using them in a constructive way, due to the strong emotional states they experience in the conflict situation.

Mediation helps the parties engaged in the conflict negotiate, shift the focus, from the event in the past upon the present reality and in accordance to their future needs. Mediation could be used to solve any type of interpersonal conflict, named **ADR** *(Alternative Dispute Resolution)*. The arguments and the interests are more focused on the future and on the constant attempt of fixing the interpersonal relationship, than on the opponent, regarded in the context of mediation as a collaborator in solving the conflict constructively. The result is often an accepted mutual agreement, kept private and within which the present parties are free to fully engage. There is a solution of type *win-win*, in which there is recorded winning for each student engaged in the conflict.

The process of mediation could be transformed in learning and development experiences through the support of an effective interaction between mediator and the students involved in the conflict situation. This fact is achievable because there intefere variables as: the approach win-win (where the parties approach the problem together), creative answers (thanks to which the students are guided to search solutions), the necessity of assuring empathy (the mediator being preoccupied with showing each that he/she takes care of him/her and encourage the active listening), the appropriate assertivity (the encouragement of the ones involved), making the participants to use the power in a cooperating way, the control of the emotions (guiding the students so that they neither neglect the emotions, nor they stir them up), process based on the mutual respect, inducing the mood of solving the conflict, leading the exploration of all the children's needs and fears, through the outline of the map of the conflict and the

projection of the variants (searching any information that has the power ot create new possibilities of solving the conflict).

The mediation within the programme *Peer Mediation*, begins when the parties involved in conflict (the students) try to clarify/to solve a problem and approach a mediator voluntarily. While in primary and low-secondary school **the students mediators** work **in pairs** , either in the classroom or in the courtyard, in the halls or in the cafeteria, within a less formal framewok, to guide their colleagues step by step, the ones who are in conflict, so that they can generate the solutions independently. **Co-mediation** applies in this case, which can be approached and practised in two styles: co-mediators either follow step by step, alternatively, selectively the steps of mediation, or one of the pair leads the whole process while the other is in charge with writing down (the deeds, the suggested solutions, the agreement established between the parties).

Chapter IV – The general coordinates of the experimental research highlights essential aspects related to the process of the experimental research having the topic *"The impact of the programme Peer Mediation in the mediation of the interpersonal conflicts at the level of the students in the primary school"*. In this chapter we present: elements of appropriate specificity to our endeavor with reference to certain taxonomic criteria, the research design (the goal, the objectives, the questions, the hypothesis and the variables of the research), the methodologic system valued in research, the calendar according to which our inquiry unfolds, the operation of sampling (a sample of participants and a sample of content), as well as a general view upon the three main stages our experimental research was carried out (the pre-experimental stage, the experimental stage and the post-experimental stage).

The general goal of our research was in holding a complex inquiry upon the phenomenon of conflict in the school environment, from the perspective of causality, processuality, typology, prevention and its management, as well as in testing the efficiency of an experimental programme of mediation of the conflicts among students, according to the model of *Peer Mediation*, customized for the students in the primary school, context in which we expected to influence significantly the decrease of the interpersonal conflicts, the development of some styles of efficient management of the interpersonal conflicts and a better social inclusion among the young schoolchildren.

From a **theoretical** point of view, throughout the experimental research we pointed to:

$O_{t-f.1.}$ Identifying some specific apsects to the phenomenology and dynamics of the conflicts in the context of the interrelationships among the students in the primary school;

$O_{t-f.2.}$ Highlighting some aspects from the school environment or corelated to this which influence the proportion of conflicts among students, the degree of social integration of the schoolchildren in the groups/classes, as well as the quality of interpersonal relationships (of type student-student, student-teacher, teacher-family).

From a **praxeologic** point of view, **at a general level**, we aimed at:

$O_{p-a.1.}$ Designing, drawing up, implementing and testing the efficiency of an experimental programme of mediation of the conflicts among students, according to the model *Peer Mediation*, customised for the schoolchildren in the primary school.

The specific objectives of our research were:

$O_{s.1.}$ The assessment of the specificity and of the frequency of the manifestation of the interpersonal conflicts at the level of the school school;

$O_{s.2.}$ The identification of the similarities and differences with reference to the management styles of the interpersonal conflicts the students adopt in relation with their colleagues in the school environment, in the various stages of the experimental research, as well as the teachers in relationship with the students and their parents;

$O_{s.3.}$ Designing and applying an intervention programme to contribute to the development of the communication skills, as well as of the ones of prevention and efficient management of the interpersonal conflicts at the level of schoolchildren in the primary school;

$O_{s.4.}$ Pursuing longitudinal studies to record, monitor and compare the effects obtained about the frequency of the conflicts among the students from the experimental classes, in which the application of the strategies of the conflict management were used, based on mediation and negotiation and of the development of the styles of the management for collaboration and compromise;

$O_{s.5.}$ Monitoring the degree of students' social inclusion in the groups/classes, in the diverse stages of the experimental intervention, through the systematic assessment of the indices of sociometric status and of the choice status of them.

In accordance with the pedagogical research having been carried out, the investigative approach and the experimental intervention were directed thanks to a set of **research questions** correlated with the problem under scrutiny:

↓ Which are the most frequent types of interpersonal conflicts manifested among the students in the primary school?

↓ Which are the management syles of the conflict and the intervention modalities with a preventive and ameliorating character, most frequently approached in the process of the conflict management in the school environment?

↓ Which are the formative and the informative valences of a mediation programme of conflicts among students, having practical applications for the primary school?

↓ Has running a mediation programme of the conflicts among students the potential to influence positively the social inclusion of them in the groups/classes?

The actions of investigation and the ones of experimental intervention aimed at examining the following **hypothesis of research** at the level of students:

The implementation of a programme of type *Peer Mediation*, based on strategies of prevention, mediation and negotiation of the conflicts at the level of students in the primary school is leading to the significant diminution of the frequency of the situations having a conflicting character among students, is contributing to the optimization of the managerial styles of the interpersonal conflicts, towards collaboration and compromise, is facilitating the social inclusion of students and is influencing positively the quality of their social emotional and interrelational climate.

We intervened through *the independent variable* at a practical level:

I.V.: The implementation of a programme of type *Peer Mediation*, based on strategies of prevention, mediation and negotiation of the conflicts, at the level of the students in the experimental primary school;

Both throughout the formative experiment and in the pre-experimental and post-experimental stages we measured the values recorded by the following *dependent variables*:

D.V.$_1$. – the frequency of the situations having a conflicting character at the level of the experimental classes;

D.V.$_2$. – the efficiency of the styles adopted by students in managing their own interpersonal conflicts;

D.V.$_3$. – the degree of social inclusion among students;

D.V.$_4$. – the quality of the social emotional and interrelational climate at the level of students;

With a view to adopt accurate measures and interpretations of the results of the experimental research, we have taken into consideration the possible influences manifested by certain *external variables*:

E.V.$_1$.: the attendance of some students at the individual meetings of psychological counselling;

E.V.$_2$.: the number of students in each class;

E.V.$_3$.: the physical/mental afflictions of some students;

Furthermore, we monitored and interpreted the differences generated by the **moderating variable**:

M.V.$_1$.: the chronological age of the students.

In the process of undertaking the present scientific research, we integrated in a complex and coherent methodological system a series of research methods and procedures which belong both to the general methodology and to the particular methodology of the research in the domain of the education sciences. The selected research methods and the specific instrument they rely on were adapted, customised and combined, so that they would action convergently in order to facilitate a unitary approach of the researcher, to allow collecting relevant data from different samples of participants and to answer the investigation, understanding, analysis and ameliorating needs of the educational and social phenomenon under scrutiny, as it is shown in chart no. 1.IV.

Tabelul nr. 1.IV. A summarized presentation of the research methods and instruments used to examine the dependent variables of the research

Dependent variables	Methods of research	Research instruments
D.V.1. The frequency of the conflicting situations at the level of the experimental classes;	The psychopedagogical experiment	The research project
	The inquiry method based on questionnaire	*The Aggression-Problem Behavior Frequency Scale (the variant of 12 items)* L.L. Dahlberg, S.B. Toal, M. Swahn, C.B. Behrens (2005) – questionnaire translated and adapted for students

	Methods of measuring, summarizing, organizing, presenting, processing and the mathematical-statistical interpretation of the research data.	IBM SPSS® Statistics 26.0 Programme Statistical group: statistical charts Statistical graphs: structure chart (pie chart), comparison chart, histograms, polygons and curves of distribution of the frequencies. Indices and statistical factors Student-T test of comparison and the Table of Student.
D.V.2. The efficiency of the styles approached by students in managing their own interpersonal conflicts;	The psychopedagogical experiment	The research project
	The inquiry method based on questionnaire	*Conflict Approach Tendencies, Modified Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument* – questionnaire translated and adapted for students and teachers *The Dutch Test for Conflict Handling* - C. K. W. de Dreu, A. Evers, B. Beersma, E. S. Kluwer, A. Nauta (2001) – questionnaire translated and adapted for teachers
	Methods of measuring, summarizing, organizing, presenting, processing and the mathematical-statistical interpretation of the research data.	IBM SPSS® Statistics 26.0 Programme Statistical group: statistical charts Statistical graphs: structure chart (pie chart), comparison chart, histograms, polygons and curves of distribution of the frequencies. Indices and statistical factors Student-T test of comparison and the Table of Student.
D.V.3. The degree of students' social inclusion;	The psychopedagogical experiment	The research project
	Sociometric methods	Sociometrice tests
	The self-observation method	*The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)*, (2007) – multiple-choice of support questions for students with educational special needs.
	The method of systematic observation	The observation protocol Scale to monitor the behavior of the students with educational special needs

	Methods of measuring, summarizing, organizing, presenting, processing and the mathematical-statistical interpretation of the research data	IBM SPSS® Statistics 26.0 Programme Sociometric matrices Indices of choice status Statistical groupings: summarized tables Statistical graphs: structure chart (pie chart), comparison chart, graphic modeling
D.V.4. The quality of the social-affective and interrelational climate at the level of the schoolchildren.	The psychopedagogical experiment.	The research project.
	The method of observation as a participant	*The Effective Classroom Management Walk-Through Protocol* – H.M. Knoff (2011) – monitoring sheet of the experimental classes, translated and adapted.
	The interview method.	The interview guide – semi-structured interview adapted to students. Audio recording device SWOT analysis of the social emotional and interrelational climate
	Methods of measuring, summarizing, organizing, presenting, processing and the mathematical-statistical interpretation of the research data	Metrology instruments: scales of qualitative evaluation Statistical groupings: summarized tables

Our activity of research was carried out throughout three school years (2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020), period in which the cognitive, investigative, diagnosis, operational, ameliorating, analysis and reflection endeavors were organized according to certain specific stages and steps for a pedagogical research created and carried out after the action research model. Consequently, the present research, regarded also as a process of solving problems was conducted during two essential stages: the diagnosis stage and the intervention stage and it also

presumed being carried out through some specific stages for the pedagogical research of experimental type: the preexperimental stage, the experimental stage and the postexperimental stage.

To establish and to size **the samples of subjects** represent essential actionable initiatives to carry out the experimental research in an ideal way and to allow data extrapolation and their conclusions through statistic inference, at the level of the school population in discussion.

In the process of the selection of the samples of subjects, we made use of applying two practice models of collecting the samples of subjects agreed on in the pedagogical research:

a) *The quantitative dimensioning of the samples of participants;*

b) *The qualitative dimensioning of the samples of participants.*

For the experimental research the following samples of subjects were selected:

1) The experimental sample of students who learn in the primary school

The quantitative dimensioning of the experimental sample of students was made so that the groups of experience formed, to which the independent variable I.V. is introduced, must be representative for the general school collectivity where from they were taken. Determining the volume of this sample of participants was influenced both by variables relating to the research methodology and by variables appropriate to the organizational framework. The experimental sample of students were selected from the total school population existent at the level of the primary school, at "George Barițiu" National College in Cluj-Napoca.
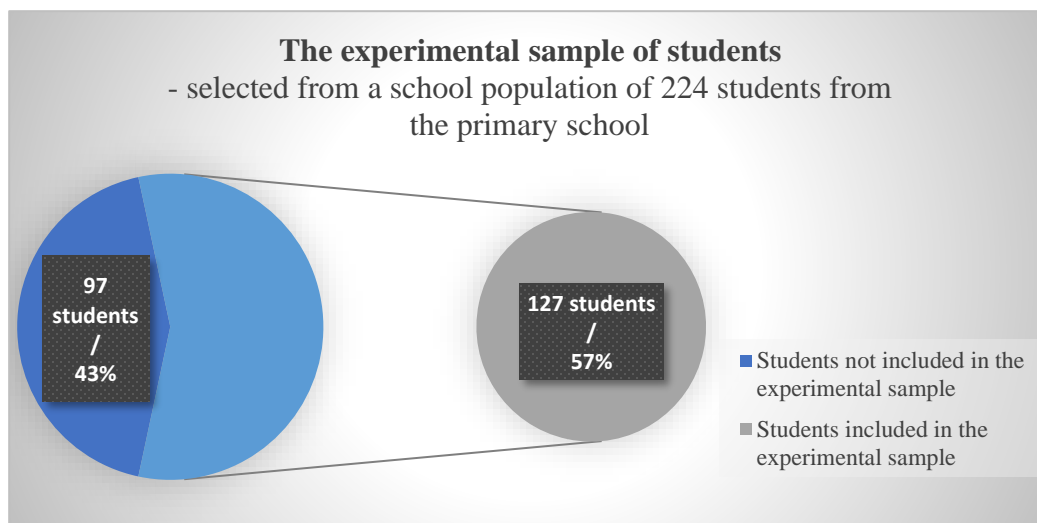
Figure no. 1.IV. The illustration of the quantitative dimensioning of the experimental sample of students

33

Thus, in a community consisting of 224 students who study in the primary school in the educational institution mentioned above, were selected 127 students to participate in the experimental research. From a statistical point of view, these respresent a percentage of 56,69% from the total of students in the primary school (figure no. 1.IV.).

The qualitative dimensioning of the experimental sample was made according to the general characteristics which are presented by the school population regarded in the study and by the procedure of sampling that was applied.

The implementation of the experimental programme *Peer Mediation* to the primary school requires the selection of some experimental classes in which students are between minimum 8 years old and maximum 11 years old as chronological ages, due to the fact that the specificity of the activities developed calls on functions and instruments of rationing specific to the stage of practical procedures. The criterion of age had a major role in the process of sampling, taking into account that only after the age of 7 students pass through the pre-operational thinking to the concrete operational thinking, one which is more flexible, circumscribed to the real experiences they have had and which allow them to draw inferences on the account of the analysis of the elements in a particular context. In order to respect the criterion of age, we operated a stratification of the school population from which the experimental sample was selected. The pie chart presented in figure no. 2.IV. highlights a relatively homogenous structure of the experimental sample, in rapport to the chronological age of the subjects.

To carry on the experimental research we resort to the usage of sample classes, a frequent procedure in the practice of the pedagogical research which allows the researcher to maintain the number of 127 students, in our case organised in experience groups composed naturally, which activate in the proper context of the organization in public schools (in classes), which are also considered samples preexisting to the research. We opt for this modality of sampling due to the fact that we aim at assuring the representativity of the experimental group of the subjects and at creating the possibility to generalize certain conclusions of the research.
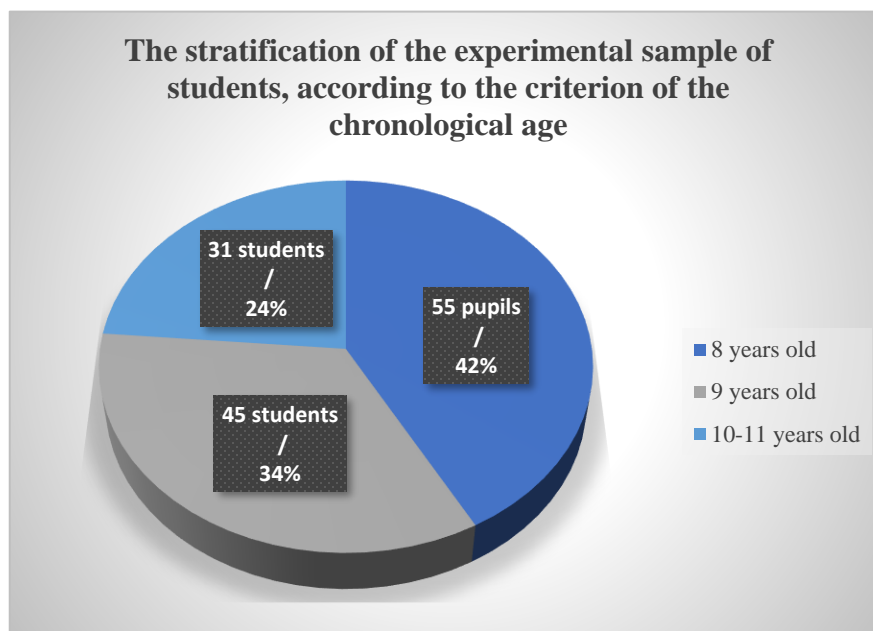
Figure no. 2.IV. The illustration of the stratification of the sample of students according to the criterion of their chronological age

2) Sample of teachers who teach in primary school

Our research activity also implies carrying out an investigative process at the level of the teachers who activate in the primary school. In essence, we need a general view upon the managerial styles they adopt in situations of interpersonal conflict with students and their parents. Having a role of observing, of diagnosis, the investigative action at the level of teachers are performed only in the pre-experimental stage. For this purpose, we combine the procedure of rational sampling with the simple randomisation. Therefore, the list of teachers consists of:

✓ 5 teachers from "George Barițiu" National College, intently selected, because they teach and have the quality of class counsellor at the involved experimental classes and, in this way, they belong to the implementation of the programme *Peer Mediation* for students;

✓ 45 teachers who teach at the primary school in school institutions from Cluj-Napoca and from other towns from Cluj county.

The affiliation of practitioners to the list of teachers stipulated in our research is certified through the free consent expressed by them.

The formative intervention mostly focuses on performing a programme destined to the students in primary school, which has like an educational outcome the ability of the

schoolchildren in terms of an efficient management of the interpersonal conflicts in which they are in, thorough mediation, directly or indirectly, with the classmates or schoolmates.

The content sample, valued in the experimental initiative, at the level of students, is drawn up and presented in an integrated manner, in the form of the programme *Peer Mediation*. This construct represents a programme of mediation of interpresonal conflicts especially created and adapted for the schoolchildren in the primary school. Therefore, the operation of content sampling is related to the characteristics of age of this category of individuals. Using techniques of educational communication specific to the dialogue with young schoolchildren and working instruments that facilitate the experiential knowledge, the researcher aims at exploring a comprising content sample. Approaching content with the related details does not represent a rigid multi-stage process, but it consists of an assemblage of integrated actions, which will be resumed any time is necessary throughout the programme *Peer Mediation*, because performing the involved activities is flexible in consonance with the students' needs. At the same time, it is influenced by the frequency of the interpersonal conflicts that occur and in which they engage in the school environment. Certain content could be taught to students in an explicit manner, methodically, and in the case of others, more abstract, the meaning, the significance and the objectual value are perceived by the research individuals in an experiential way, in the context of the mediation sessions of interpersonal conflicts.

Chapter V – The preexperiential stage presents methodological, procedural aspects, as well as interpretations operated on basis of the recorded results in the first stage of the experimental research. Performing the experimental intervention was preceded, naturally and necessarily, by a stage of observing, set out in the research calendar of 2017-2018 school year, a temporal interval in which the actions of the research team were oriented towards probing certain dimensions of the educational reality and diagnosing the problem researched.

Then, the action processes were subordinated to a *pretesting stage*, planned in 2018-2019 school year. In this preliminary stage of the psychopedagogical experiment specific outcomes were established, a coherent assemblage of research methods, the necessary instrumentation to apply them accurately and the statistical sampling was operated, both at the level of human subjects and at the level of scientific content, which was planned to be exploited throughout the researcher's intervention. Once the selection of the samples of participants had been completed, the researcher went forward towards the phase of *administration of the*

pretesting, in which there were exploited the research instruments planned for teachers and students.

Thus, the data obtained prior to this were completed, through exegetical reading and through consulting official documents, with truthful information from experiences that are proffesional and/or educational empirical personal, individual, collective experiences and from the data recorded in administering the pretest. These results were written down, organized, systematized and qualitatively and mathematically statistically interpreted by the researcher.

The objectives of the pre-experimental stage is subordinated to the general and specific outcomes of the research and are formulated in consonance with the hypothesis of the planned experimental research. The investigative efforts which precede the actual formative experiment focus on the direction of the finding and examining the pre-existent values under investigation: the teachers' preference for certain styles of the management of interpersonal conflicts with the students from the primary school and their parents, the frequency of the interpersonal conflicts in case of the students from primary schools, the conflict management styles, socio-centrality and the social inclusion at the level of the group-classes, the degree of inclusion/acceptance or social rejection of the students with special needs in the group-classes they belong to, the quality of the social emotional and interrelational climate within the groups of students in the primary school.

The questionnaire *Conflict Approach Tendencies, Modified Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument* was administered to the list of teachers to determine the measure in which they tend to practise each of the planned styles – *avoidance, agreement, control, compromise, collaboration* – in managing the interpersonal conflicts with the students' parents.

Following the mathematical statistical processing of the recorded data and of the associated qualitative interpretations we found that in such situations most teachers are oriented towards solving the disputed problems, as well as towards maintaining the interpersonal relationships at an optimal qualitative level.

There is a major recurrence for the following cases: 44% from the questioned teachers prefer resolutive approaches based on collaboration, through which they generate solutions of type *win-win,* 34% are more prone to arrive at compromises with parents, identifying solutions that partially satisfy all the persons involved in the dispute and 16% practise a combination between the two styles.

Table no. 1.V. The descriptive statistical presentation of managing the conflicts with the students' parents, on the basis of the statistical indices of the central tendency and of the misconduct from the central tendency determined for the recorded values in case of the list of teachers

Style of managing the interpersonal conflicts		Avoidance = No way = A+F+K	Agreement = Your way = B+G+L	Control = My way = C+H+M	Compromise = Half way = D+I+N	Collaboration = Our way = E+J+O
N	Valid	50	50	50	50	50
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean (m)		4.98	4.84	4.28	7.42	7.78
Std. error of mean (E)		.191	.149	.121	.172	.149
Median (m_d)		5.00	5.00	4.00	7.00	8.00
Mode (m_0)		5	5	4	7	9
Std. deviation (σ)		1.348	1.057	.858	1.214	1.055
Variance (σ^2)		1.816	1.117	.736	1.473	1.114
Range (A_a)		5	5	4	4	3
Minimum		3	3	3	5	6
Maximum		8	8	7	9	9
Total score		249	242	214	371	389
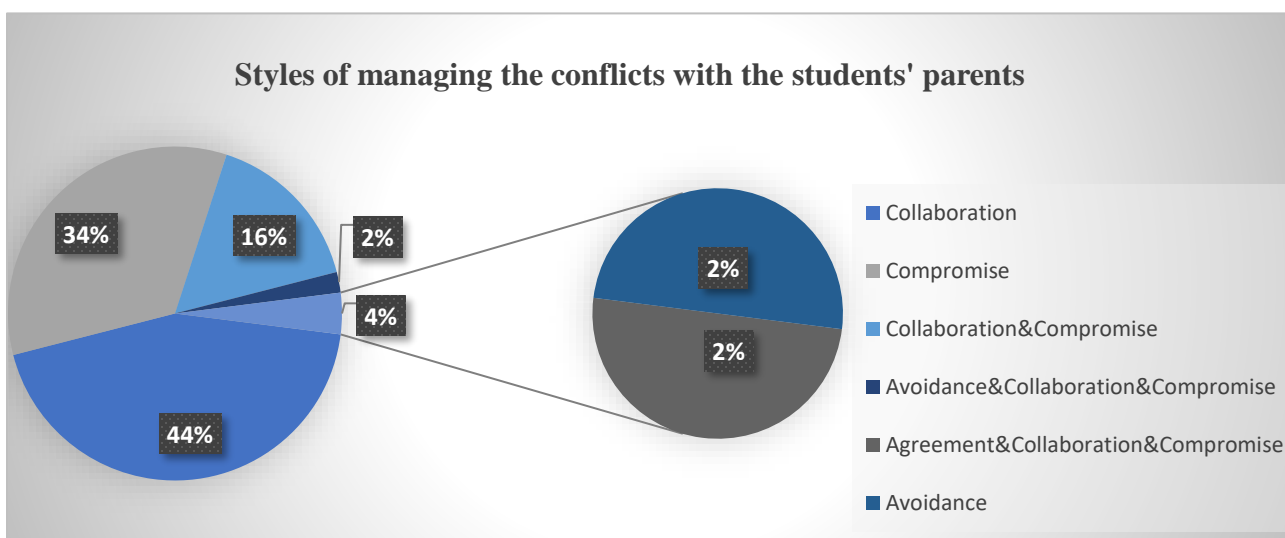
Figure no. 1.V. The percentage expression of the frequency of the styles of management adopted by the teachers in solving the interpersonal conflicts with the students' parents

Complementary, the investigation implies applying the questionnaire *The Dutch Test for Conflict Handling* to examine the predominant styles of managing the interpersonal conflicts with students. We discover that in such situations having a conflicting character, the teachers

prone more to the collaboration with students than to their parents, investing more effort in developing the interpersonal relationships with schoolchildren and in generating constructive solutions to reach the goals of all the ones engaged in conflict.

Table no. 2.V. The descriptive statistical presentation of the styles of managing the conflicts with students, based on the statistical indices of the central tendency and of the deviation from the central tendency determined for the recorded values which are recorded at the list of teachers

Style of managing the interpersonal conflicts		Avoidance = Avoiding = e+j+o+t	Agreement = Yielding = a+f+k+p	Control = Forcing = c+h+m+r	Compromise = Compromising = b+g+l+q	Collaboration = Problem solving = d+i+n+s
N	Valid	50	50	50	50	50
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean (m)		10.48	10.82	8.88	15.42	17.56
Std. error of mean (E)		.489	.369	.418	.526	.420
Median (m_d)		10.00	11.00	9.00	16.00	19.00
Mode (m_0)		10	13	10	16	20
Std. deviation (σ)		3.460	2.608	2.953	3.720	2.970
Variance (σ^2)		11.969	6.804	8.720	13.840	8.823
Range (A_a)		16	12	12	14	11
Minimum		4	4	4	6	9
Maximum		20	16	16	20	20
Total score		524	541	444	771	878

The results show two dominant situations: a preponderance of 62% of the teachers who are mostly characterized by the management style based on collaboration and 20% of the ones who combine this style with the one relying on compromise. In approaching the interpersonal conflicts with the students, the teachers identify themselves often with the management style based on collaboration, which is recorded with the highest arithmetic average: m = 17.56, having also indices of the central tendency having the larger value: the median (m_d) = 19.00 and the manner (m_0) = 20. The corresponding scores of the management style based on establishing a compromise focus on around the average m = 15.42, the median (m_d) and the manner (m_0) having equal values (16). One may notice at this style the highest degree of dispersion of the values around the average and an increased level of homogeneity of the sample, fact rendered by the deviation from standard (σ) = 3.720. In case of all the series of processed data, the function of probability has one single local peak and through the calculation

of the modal values, we discover in case of each style of management unimodal distributions of prevalance. We ascertain that the management styles based on compromise and/or collaboration are recorded the highest values both at the minimum scores (6 and 9) and at the maximum ones (20), are preferred by most teachers in the process of solving the interpersonal conflicts with students.

Styles of managing the conflicts with the students
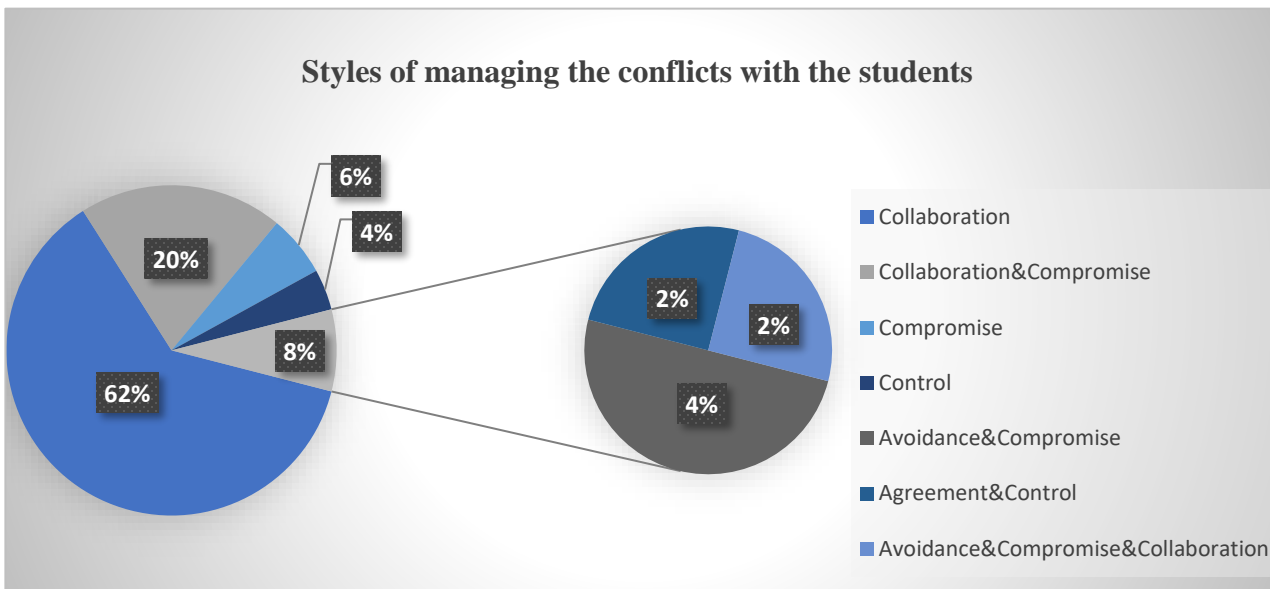
Figure no. 2.V. The percentage expression of the prevalance of styles of management appraoched by the teachers in solving the interpersonal conflicts with students

The operational nucleus of the pre-experimental stage is represented by the administration of the pretest at the level of the samples-class which compose the experimental sample of students. We highlighted the condensed values as following the inquiry of the prevalance of the interpersonal conflicts, of the management styles used in handling the conflicts with their colleagues and of assessing the degree of social inclusion of the students in the group-classes from the primary school. In order to interpret the results of the pretest we have added a SWOT analysis of the social emotional and interrelational climate from the classes of the selected students, carried out after applying the method of the interview.

In order to exploit the method of the inquiry, the students answered the questionnaire *The Aggression-Problem Behavior Frequency Scale (the variant with 12 items)* for investigating the prevalance of the interpersonal conflicts that occur among them during a week.
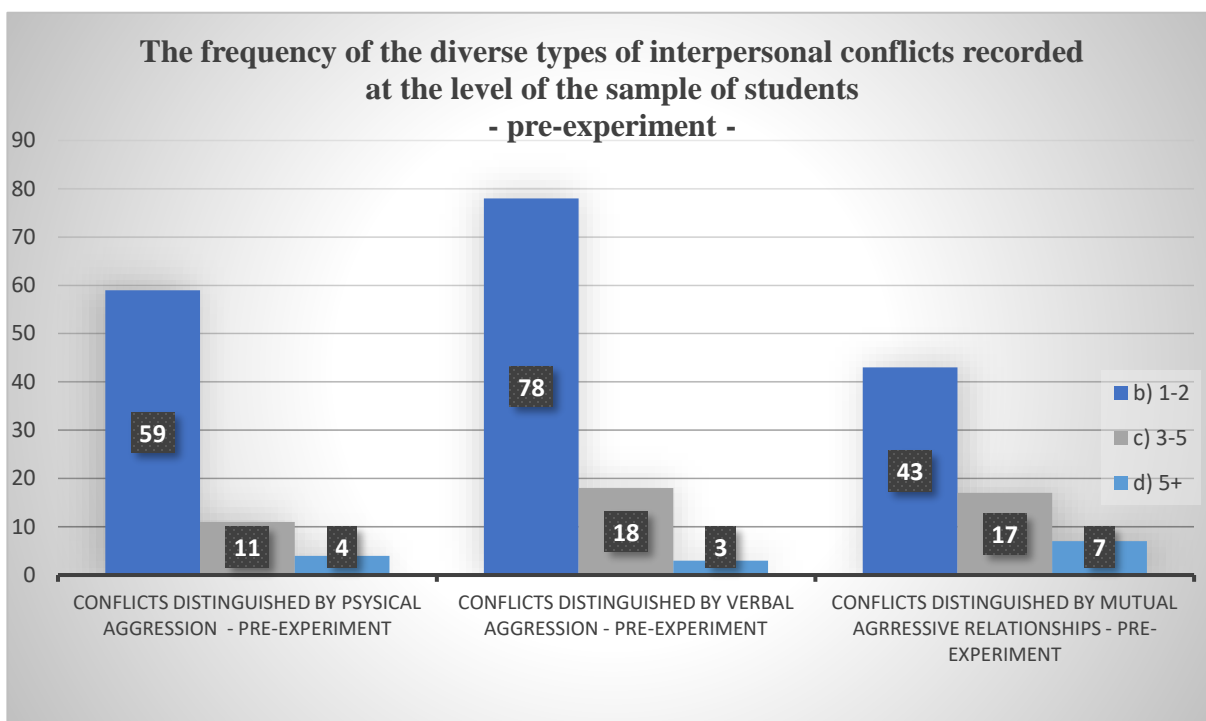
Figure no. 3.V. The comparison of the prevalance of diverse types of interpersonal conflicts, recorded at the level of the students sample, in a week' time – pretest

Based on the recorded results, we discover the predominance of the conflicts characterized by verbal aggression at the category of one-two times a week, with 78 cases. At the same category of periodicity we have identified 59 cases in which conflicts are characterized by verbal aggression and 43 cases in which mutual aggressive relationships among the subjects occur. Having a frequency of three-five times a week, there were recorded 18 cases in which conflicts mainly arise from verbal aggression, 17 cases in which the aggressive relationships were mutually maintained among students and 11 cases in which the specific of the conflicts was the physical aggression. All these types of interpersonal conflicts were also identified in the frequency category of 5+ times a week, the majority being the ones in which the mutual aggressive relationships prevail. Seven cases were identified, followed by four cases in which the physical aggression occured more than five times a week and three cases in which the conflicts characterized by verbal aggression have this frequency. We have used the term *cases* for individuals, for particular situations discovered.

The pretest also involved the administration of questionnaire *Conflict Approach Tendencies, Modified Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument*, in a translated and adapted way for students, as a necessary part for the present inquiry. Thanks to the nature of the items

which are part of the structure in this research instrument it was facilitated the investigation of the management styles the students use to handle their own interpersonal conflicts with colleagues from the school environment.

Table no. 3.V. The descriptive statistical presentation of the styles of managing conflicts, based on the statistical indices of the central tendency and of the deviation from the central tendency, indices determined for the recorded values at the sample of students – pretest

Style of managing the interpersonal conflicts		Avoidance = No way = A+F+K	Agreement = Your way = B+G+L	Control = My way = C+H+M	Compromise = Half way = D+I+N	Collaboration = Our way = E+J+O
N	Valid	127	127	127	127	127
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean (m)		4.80	5.14	3.84	7.31	7.50
Std. error of mean (E)		.121	.095	.101	.132	.126
Median (m_d)		5.00	5.00	3.00	8.00	8.00
Mode (m_0)		5	5	3	8	9
Std. deviation (σ)		1.359	1.074	1.144	1.484	1.425
Variance (σ^2)		1.847	1.154	1.308	2.202	2.030
Range (A_a)		6	5	5	6	6
Minimum		3	3	3	3	3
Maximum		9	8	8	9	9
Total score		609	653	488	929	952

The results recorded by students passed through complex processes of anaysis and interpretation in order to build holistic images as close to reality as possible. We discovered that the predominant management style is not the same in case of all the classes involved, but, at a general level, the resolutive approach based on problem-solving has the highest prevalance, followed by a combination between collaboration and compromise and of that in which providing compromise solutions are predominant. It was assessed as a priority the frequency of the management style based on problem-solving, because this is the resolutive approach which was meant to be promoted and developed through our formative intervention. The attitude of problem-solving presents the highest approach rate (33.6%), followed by the one that presumes a combination between problem-solving and compromise (29.6%). The agreement on compromise is, in contrast, an approach having a relatively low recurrence of being used (22.4%). The management styles that do not presume producing fair solutions, namely

avoidance, agreement or control, are at an important difference from other styles, covering 14.4%.
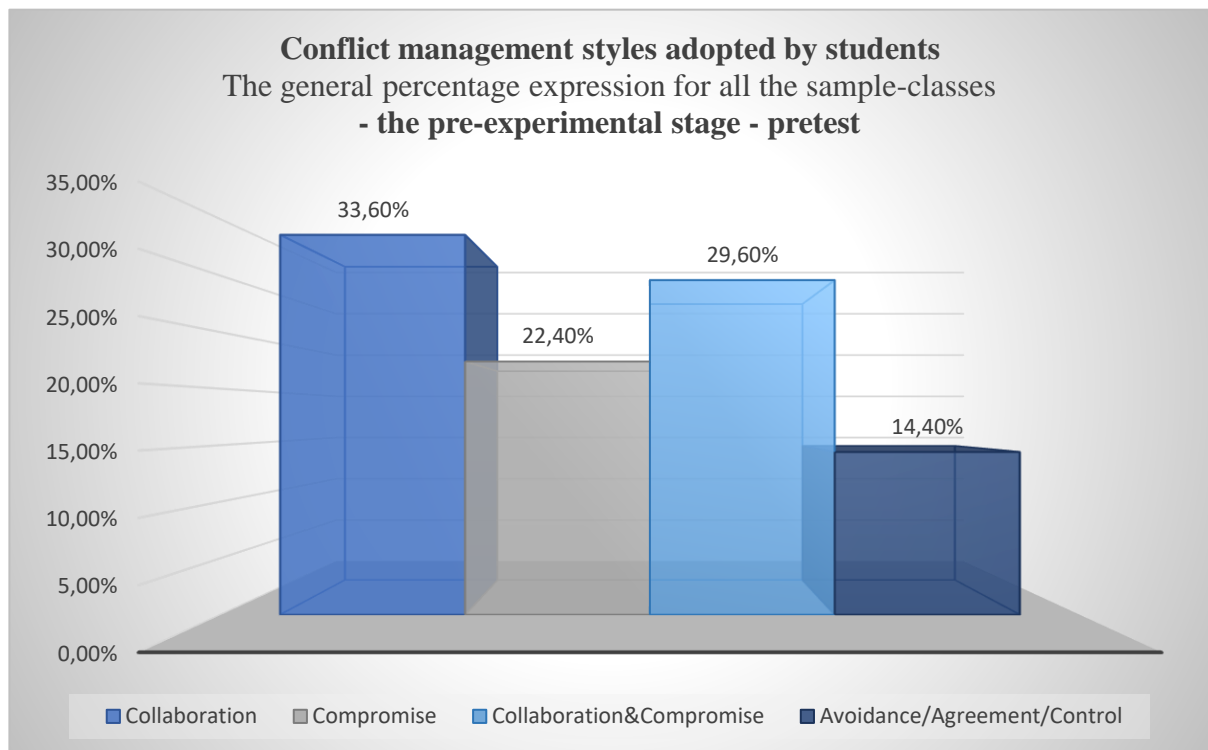
Figure no. 4.V. The comparison chart: The percentage expression of the frequency of the management styles approached by the students in primary school, based on the results recorded in the pretest

The higher complexity of the features investigated at the sample of students from the primary school required a corroboration of those research methods and instruments that allow the detailed study of the phenomenon under scrutiny. The inquiry relying on questionnaires was completed by exploiting the sociometric method, through the administration of a sociometric test, designed by me. Thus, the degree of social inclusion of the schoolchildren in the groups-classes they belong to was investigated, through determining the values of the indices of sociometric status, of the indices having a choice status and through the identification of the power of the social choice categories in which the individuals of the investigation are included. The level of sociocentrality was determined for each participant through the calculation of the index of sociometric status (I_{SS}), adding up vertically the choices received from the group and applying the specific formula: $I_{SS} = \frac{n}{N-1}$, where n = the number of individuals who choose a certain student and N = the total number of individuals from the group taken into consideration.

We carried out a connection between expansiveness and status and we analysed the choice structures at the level of sample-classes, calculating the index of choice status (I_{SP}) of each individual, namely the position held by each student in the group they belong to. For this purpose, we applied the specific calculation formula: $I_{SP} = \frac{Na - Nr}{N - 1}$, where Na = the number of the choices expressed by each student , Nr = the number of the rejections received from each student and N = the total number of individuals in the investigated classes. The determination of the index of the choice status allowed a qualitative analysis of the data, because it was based on both the category of the choices and of the ones of rejection and the values taken in each particular case assessed the measure in which an individual is accepted or rejected by the class members he/she belongs to.

In the interpretation of the index values of choice status and in the assessment of the degree of students' social inclusion we worked on five categories with power of the social choice:

- ✓ *Very popular* individuals ► $I_{SP} > 0.50$;
- ✓ *Popular* individuals ► $I_{SP} = 0.20 \rightarrow 0.50$;
- ✓ *Accepted* individuals ► $I_{SP} = 0 \rightarrow 0.20$;
- ✓ *Indifferent* individuals ► $I_{SP} = 0$;
- ✓ *Rejected* individuals ► $I_{SP} < 0$.

The centralization results allowed extracting essential information about the social structure of the classes that form the sample of students. On the account of the positive index values of the choice status ($I_{SP} = 0 \rightarrow 0.20$), we find that there is a proportion of 63% of the students that are part of the power of the social choice of the individuals considered accepted by the group-class they belong to. More than a quarter of the sample, to be exact 29% is represented by the students who record negative index values of the choice status ($I_{SP} < 0$) and who are rejected by his classmates. The difference of 8% is represented by the students who have as an index of choice status a null value ($I_{SP} = 0$), which makes them indifferent. Both for these individuals and for the ones with negative values of I_{SP}, the degree of social inclusion is very low. In the light of these data, we focused on the formative intervention to create conditions of improving the chances of social inclusion for more and more of the students involved in the psychopedagogical experiment, especially for the ones rejected or being given a cold shoulder by their colleagues. The students with special needs selected in the pre-experimental stage were

examined individually, in order to assess the degree of social inclusion they have been recorded with in the groups-classes they belong to. Individuals C and E obtained indices of sociometric status with a null value ($I_{SS} = 0$), having a low degree of sociocentrality and entering the category of isolated students, individuals A and D are described by indices of sociometric status with values calculated at $I_{SS} = 0.07$ and the individual B has indices of sociometric status equal with $I_{SS} = 0.11$. The categories of the power of the social choice in which these students are assigned were determined according to the values totalled at the indices of choice status. Based on the report between the number of of the expressed appreciations and the number of the rejections received, we discovered that all these schoolchildren have indices of choice status with a negative value and that they are included in the category of the individuals rejected by the group. Individuals B and D have $I_{SP} = - 0.03$, individual A obtains an $I_{SP} = - 0.07$, individual D has an $I_{SP} = - 0.019$ while individual C records an $I_{SP} = - 0.65$, being one of the most serious cases of social rejection identified.

The administration of the pretest to the students was completed with performing some semi-structured interviews, through which there were investigated features of the social emotional and interrelational climate from the level of the groups-classes. Using statements written by individuals a detailed picture of the specific of the intergroup networking. In the formative processes that came after this stage the positive aspects formulated by students were exploited and we took action in the remedial directions for inhibiting, eliminating, destructurating and restructuring of those aspects they consider negative, destructive or threatening. Normally, not all of these could have been apprached within the researcher's investigation, but it was emphasis on diminishing the frequency of the interpersonal conflicts, on developing some styles of efficient approaching them, on facilitating the social inclusion of more students, as well as on improving the social emotional and inter-relational climate. These action directions covered a large part from the requests formulated by students in the category of *opportunities*, during the interviews.

All the statistical data referring to students were obtained after the complex process of 376 models among the three research instruments applied in the pretest and after the interviews with the students participants happened.

Chapter VI – The experimental stage describes central and aspects of detail that define the researcher's formative intervention, referred to in the research calendar for

2019-2020 school year and destined to testing the impact of the experimental programme, at the level of the classes from the selected primary classes. The outcomes associated to this stage of intervention, established for this category of participants, were subordinated to the general teleology of the research ans were in direct concordance with the expressed hypothesis.

At *the level of the students in the primary school*, there were aimed at the following objectives in the experimental stage:

O_{e1}: The implementation of an experimental programme of mediation of the conflicts among students according to the model *Peer Mediation*, customized for the primary school, having the duration of a semester in a school year;

O_{e2}: The application of some methods and spcific techniques for the process of mediation of conflicts among the young students;

O_{e3}: Carrying out periodic assessment of the prevalance of interpersonal conflicts at the level of the students in the sample-classes participant in the experimental programme *Peer Mediation*;

O_{e4}: The full observation of the groups of students included in the psychopedagogical experiment, in the perspective of the existent networking of type student-student and student-teacher, in the conditions of the researcher's participation as a full observant;

O_{e5}: Monitoring the selected students with special needs from the perspective of the social inclusion in the groups-classes they belong to and of the interpersonal conflicts they have wiht other colleagues from the school environment.

For a semester of 2019-2020 school year, the endeavours of the researcher were oriented towards practical, formative outcomes, active through the introduction of the independent variable, namely the implementation of the experimental programme *Peer Mediation*, at the level of the sample of students formed by five classes from the primary school (127 selected students). The first two weeks from this stage (September 2019) were spent for the selection and preparation of the future students mediators and for conveying the most relevant information about the programme in the school community in which it occurs. Simultaneously, the school working team was formed from the teachers who have the sattus of class teachers in case of the selected experimental classes. Both teachers and students were trained about the implementation procedure of programme *Peer Mediation*. The development of the specific activities/sessions of mediation of the interpersonal conflicts by students had a flexible

character, its periodicity/frequency being influenced by the daily, real and particular needs of each class of students. The schoolchildren benefited from learning activities in which they had the opportunity to discover, to apply and to work on methods and techniques specific to the process of mediation in case of interpersonal conflicts at a young age as a student.

During the experimental stage there were sessions of mediating the conflicts, contexts with an important intake in providing the students with the skills to solve their own interpersonal school conflicts independently, efficiently and in a constructive way. The students were motivated by the problem-solving activities which openly explore the problems they confront with, in which they communicate in an assertive way and they produce original solutions of solving the disputes with the classmates, which they are committed to respect, after they have written them down in an agreement of reconciliation. This approach had an element of novelty, a marvellous, anxious moment for all the students participants to the formative experiment and it stimulated them to invest time, energy and ideas in order to participate any time they need. The students were trained and guided to be co-mediators throughout the development of the programme, they took this role responsibly and they respected all the mediation steps in guiding their classmates who were in the conflict.

The researcher constantly monitored the manner in which the programme was run in case of any engaged class of students and he/she established a partenership agreement with all the teachers who have the role of class teachers of these classes, to permanently be sure that the mediation activities developed according to the practical instructions in the research project.

The school community was receptive to the programme *Peer Mediation*, showing a high level of interest for the activities it comprised and for the benefits expected to be gained following its application. Both the partener educational institutions and the students' parents expressed in writing the consent to develop this psyhopedagogical experiment.

Concomitantly with the experimental programme implemented, the researcher applied the method of inquiry based on questionnaires and diverse types of observation, as methods of the basic inquiry based on questionnaire, as supplementary research methods, in order to methodically search the effects produced by the formative intervention. Through the periodical administration of the questionnaire *The Aggression-Problem Behavior Frequency Scale (the variant of 12 items)* progress assessments were made, addressed to all the students, in order to monitor their development with reference to the frequency of the interpersonal conflicts, which

is one of the dependent variables of the research. The partial data, recorded and summarized on the account of 635 of copies from this questionnaire, are periodically analysed and interpreted, from a longitudinal perspective, highlighting the real tendencies of reducing the frequency of interpersonal conflicts among students.

In a relation of complementarity with these actions, the researcher ran systematic observation sessions of some students with special needs and with negative values of the indices of choice status. The selected individuals were monitored as particular cases and it was aimed at the level of the social inclusion in the belonging group-class and the frequency of the interpersonal conflicts they had with their classmates from the school environment. For this purpose, the established observation protocol was followed weekly and the observation scales designed by the researcher were filled out and they contain various relevant observation indicators for the examined problem. These students were engaged in the self-observation actions of their own risk behaviors, by filling out weekly the multiple-choice questions: *The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) – the support multiple-choice for the students with special needs, who practise the self-observation of their own conflict situations.*

The methodological system exploited in the experimental stage was supplemented by practising the observation as a participant by the researcher, who periodically assessed the dynamics of the interpersonal relationships at the level of the sample-classes during the course classes. It was aimed at the influences of the teachers as managers of the classes of students to remain constant during the experimental programme. Monthly, it was used the instrument *The Effective Classroom Management Walk-Through Protocol – Observation sheet: The teacher – manager of the class of students from the perspective of prevention and handling the interpersonal conflicts,* to monitor the effects of the programme analytically and rigorously.

The interactions and the interventions of the research team respected the ethic of the pedagogical research and they point to creating a learning context in which abilities of constructively solving the interpersonal conflicts among students are developed. Up to the end of the programme, the researcher systematically promoted the importance of educating the collective mental state towards the approach of the style based on problem-solving and/or compromise and producing solutions of type *win-win* in the management of the interpersonal conflicts.

Chapter VII – The post-experimental stage necessarily reunites in a comprehensive presentation certain measures having an evaluative, conclusive and prospective role which were taken consecutively to the experimental stage. The researcher applied the same research methods and instruments as during the administration of the pretest in the posttest stage, at the experimental sample of students. All the instruments specified for this research moment represented final samples and the quality of being identical with the ones from the preexperimental stage facilitated reading the evolution of the individuals in case of this research, from a longitudinal perspective, as a consequence of their participation in the experimental programme run in the precedent stage. The data collected and summarized within the posttest were statistically examined and interpreted in the context of some complex processes of comparison to the results recorded in the pretest, being exploited both in the paradigm of qualitative research and in the quantitative one. We corroborated the two approaches in order to establish as objectively as possible the values of the dependent variables. Thus, we aimed at the identification of the general tendencies at the level of the sample of students taking into account the standard errors and the ones of the obtained average, also to investigate whether the differences recorded by the group of experience in pretest and in posttest are significant from a statistical point of view. We established the relevance of these differences and the measure in which the experimental sample stands out of the initial situation. Because the applied experimental design was one of the type intraindividuals, we aimed at determining if there is a difference $Ree*** – Ree* \neq 0$ ($Ree*$ = the results of the experimantal sample in pretest, $Ree***$ = the results of the sample in posttest), at the level of the students who were engaged in the experimental programme of conflict mediation. In the analysis of the formative impact of the experimental programme of mediation for students, we highlighted the changes and the optimizing transformations provoked by the researcher's intervention and by exploiting $Ree**$ ($Ree**$ = the results of the experimental sample in the experimental stage).

Up to the end of the post-experimental stage, we intended to check the hypothesis of the present pedagogical research, to establish the efficiency of the promoted praxeological approaches promoted in the experimental stage, regarding the conflict mediation among students and, consequently, to forward a set of ideas with an ameliorative function in the school reality, based on the triad: theory, research and educational practice, exploited by researcher.

The administration of the posttest and the complex interpretation of the recorded data allowed the access to relevant information related to the impact of the experimental programme run at the level of the sample of students from primary school. During the post-experimental stage there were set up and processed databases referring to the situation of the group of experience which was involved in the psychopedagogical experiment, consequently checking the formative impact of the experimental factor introduced in a controlled way, namely the independent variable I.V. The formative force of this intervention of the researcher was assessed from the perspective of the values the four dependent variables had, as they were examined in the present pedagogical research at the level of students from the primary school.

Re-applying the questionnaire *The Aggression-Problem Behavior Frequency Scale (the variant of 12 items)* facilitated the outline of a final image upon the frequency of expression in case of the interpersonal conflicts among the students involved in the study. The analyses and the interpretations made in this respect focused both on knowing the particular situation of each type of conflicts which was investigated from the perspective of the frequency of manifestation among students, as well as on generating a holisic image, representative for the whole sample of individuals, as a consequence of their involvement in the experimental programme of mediation the conflicts *Peer Mediation*. The formative influence of this independent variables (I.V.), exterting in the direction of reducing the frequency of the interpersonal conflicts among students, was reflected in the diminished values recorded in the posttest for all the types of conflicts and for all the categories of prevalance under investigation. The final results were strongly improved in comparison with the initial situation, prior to the development of the psychopedagogical experiment while the differences between the two testing moments were statistically important.

As concerning the frequency of the conflicting situations among students, there were two statistical hypotheses examined:

H_0: The implementation of the experimental programme of mediation *Peer Mediation* does not make differences statistically significant between the level of the frequencies of manifestation of the conflicts among students in pretest and in posttest.

H_1: The implementation of the experimental programme of mediation *Peer Mediation* make differences statistically significant between the level of the frequencies of manifestation of the conflicts among students in pretest and in posttest.

We investigated the relationships among the individual values recorded at students, the position of the values from posttest regarded the average, the correlation between the variables and the measure in which the independent variable produced these improved results. Firstly, the coefficients of simple correlation (r) and the ones of correlation of the ranks (rho) were calculated at the statistical level $P < 0.01$, with $N = 127$, for each behavior associated to the type of interpersonal conflicts characterized by physical aggression and examined at the level the experimental sample of individuals. We added to these data the numerical and percentage expressions corresponding to the coefficients of determination (D) produced through statistical operations. The obtained results are briefly presented in table no. 1.VII. and they are exploited in analyses and statistical interpretations relevant for our research.

Table nr. 1.VII. Statistical correlations determined on the basis of the data in the pretest and in the posttest concerning the frequency of conflicts characterized by physical aggression

The behavior inquired	Coefficients of correlation and coefficients of determination			
I_1 Have you thrown anything at a colleague to harm her/him?	Pearson correlation (r)	**0.454****	Spearman's rho (ρ)	**0.380****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	127	R Square (R^2)/(D)	0.206/(20%)
I_2 Have you been involved in a fight in which anyone was harmed?	Pearson correlation (r)	0.141	Spearman's rho (ρ)	0.156
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.114	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.079
	N	127	R Square (R^2)/(D)	0.020/(2%)
I_3 Have you shoved or pushed by another child?	Pearson correlation (r)	**0.397****	Spearman's rho (ρ)	**0.301****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
	N	127	R Square (R^2)/(D)	0.157/(15%)
I_4 Have you slapped or kicked any other child?	Pearson correlation (r)	**0.540****	Spearman's rho (ρ)	**0.480****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	127	R Square (R^2)/(D)	0.291/(29%)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

We observed the existence of some positive correlations, statistically significant berween the results from the pretest and from the posttest in case of the behaviors examined through items I_1, I_2 and I_4 set out in the administered questionnaire. The values of simple correlation between 0.35 and 0.65 (L. Cohen, L. Manion, 1998) and are determined at level of $P = 0.000$, obtaining: $r = 0.454$, $r = 0.397$ and $r = 0.540$. Investigating the statistical significance of the coefficient of simple correlation (r), we discovered that their values calculated are higher

than the tabular value of the coefficient of critical correlation at the level of P = 0.01, which means that they are coefficients statistically deeply significant (r = 0.454, r = 0.397, r = 0.540 > |r| ≈ 0.23, df > 120). These indicate an important improvement of the behaviors, namely a reduction of the number of cases and of the frequency of manifestation of the interpersonal conflicts characterized by physical aggression, in the context of the participation of students at the experimental programme of mediation. The more such aggressive behaviors displayed were discouraged, the more their rate was reduced up to the end of the intervention. For the same behaviors of the students, assessed through the items mentioned before, we got coefficients of correlation of the ranks (rho) ρ = 0.380 and ρ = 0.480, at level of P = 0.000 and ρ = 0.301, at level of P = 0.001. There are in these cases, too, relations statistically significant, but between the ranks from the pretest and the ones from the posttest. To (+) sign for the coefficients of correlation Spearman indicates the directly proportional association of the investigated variables. After the calculation of the coefficients of determination we obtained the following rapports: R^2 = 0.206 la I_1, R^2 = 0.020 for I_2, R^2 = 0.157 la I_3 and R^2 = 0.291 for I_4, what means that the independent variable (pthe programme *Peer Mediation*) explains in proportion of D = 20% (I_1), D = 2% (I_2), D = 15% (I_3) and D = 29% (I_4) from the variability of the dependent variable, namely from diminishing the frequency of manifestation of the four behaviors investigated and of the conflicts characterized by physical aggression.

Test t was applied and the students' average scores were compared related to the manifestation of this type of conflicts, with the purpose of testing out the statistical hypotheses and of establishing if the independent variable really led to the improved hypotheses which had been presented before. To establish if these results are statistically significant and they are not due to the random factors, when we made the calculations we established the level of significance of P = 0.01, with a number of degrees of freedom (df) n = 126. Thus, for the appropriate modification of item I_2 we obtained the value of t = 2.920, at the level of P = 0.004, while for the one from item I_3 we have the value of t = 4.629, at the level of P = 0.000, both being higher than the tabular value of *t* from the table of Student, read at the level of P = 0.01 (t = 2.58). Consequently, the difference between the average scores at pretest and at posttest is statistically significant, the modifications examined before being due to the introduction of the experimental factor. The frequency of the physically aggressive conflicts is at the significant level (P < 0.01), lower than in the previous intervention phase, fact that indicate the efficiency

of the mediation programme for this type of behaviors among students. Taking into consideration the data presented, we accept the specific hypothesis (H_1) and neglect the nule hypothesis (H_0).

We preserved the conditions of calculation and we determined the values of the coefficients of simple correlation (r), of correlation of ranks (rho) and of determination (D) in the problem of the frequency of verbal conflicts at students. On the account of the obtained results, briefly presented in table no. 2.VII., we discovered the fact that the values of all the coefficients of correlation are produced at level of significance of $P = 0.000$ and varies between 0.35 and 0.65. Both the relationships among the individual values measured and the correlations among the ranks from the pretest and posttest are moderate, positive and statistically significant at the level of $P < 0.01$ and the risk to make mistakes is lower than 1%.

Table no. 2 VII. Statistical correlations determined on the basis of the data in the pretest and in the posttest related to the frequency of the conflicts characterized by verbal aggression

The behavior examined	Coefficients of correlation and coefficients of determination			
II$_1$ Have you offended another colleague to enrage her/him?	Pearson correlation (r)	**0.398****	Spearman's rho (ρ)	**0.430****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	127	R Square (R^2)/(D)	0.159/(16%)
II$_2$ Have you offended another colleague directly ?	Pearson correlation (r)	**0.462****	Spearman's rho (ρ)	**0.409****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	127	R Square (R^2)/(D)	0.213/(21%)
II$_3$ Have you cast hostile glances to a colleague?	Pearson correlation (r)	**0.357****	Spearman's rho (ρ)	**0.453****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	127	R Square (R^2)/(D)	0.127/(12%)
II$_4$ Have you threaten any child?	Pearson correlation (r)	**0.464****	Spearman's rho (ρ)	**0.528****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	127	R Square (R^2)/(D)	0.216/(21%)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The calculated values of the coefficients of simple correlation (r) are higher than the tabular value of the coefficient of critical correlation at the level of $P = 0.01$, which means that they are coefficients deeply statistically significant ($r = 0.398$, $r = 0.462$, $r = 0.357$, $r = 464 > |r| \approx 0.23$, df > 120) at this level. For the four examined behaviors, upon which we intervened through the experimental factor, for the reduction of the frequency of manifestation, we

discovered moderate correlations of the ranks (rho): $\rho = 0.430$, $\rho = 0.409$, $\rho = 0.453$ and $\rho = 0.528$, P = 0.000, statistically significant at the level of P < 0.01. We produced the values of the coefficients of determination and we observed that the independent variable introduced in a controlled way influenced the variance of the dependent variable, for reducing the frequency of manifestation in case of all the four behaviors investigated and associated to the type of conflicts characterized by verbal aggression, in proportion of D = 16%, D = 21% and D = 12%, because the following values were recorded: $R^2 = 0.159$ la II_1, $R^2 = 0.213$ la II_2, $R^2 = 0.127$ la II_3 and $R^2 = 0.216$ at II_4.

It was checked the validity and the statistical significance of the results that highlight the differences in an ameliorative way, between the stage of pretest and the one of posttest, by applying the test *t*. We compared the recorded average scores and we calculated t = 2.614, at the level of P = 0.010, for the item II_1, t = 3.013, at the level of P = 0.003, for the item II_2 and t = 3.951, at the level of P = 0.000, for the item II_3. The difference among the average scores had the highest scores in case of the first three behaviors out of the four investigated at this type of interpersonal conflicts, and the calculated values of *t* were higher than the tabular value that correspond to them, at the level of P = 0.01, in the table of Student (t = 2.58), for a number of degrees of freedom calculated at (df) n = 126. Thus, we discovered the fact that the changes made, concerning the reduction of cases and the frequency of manifestation of the verbal conflicts among students are statistically significant at the level of P < 0.01 and are due to the independent variable introduced. In case of the investigated behavior through the item II_4 there were obtained coefficients of correlation with higher values and the difference among the average scores was the lowest and it is statistically significant at the level of P < 0.10, because we obtain t = 1.816, at the level of P = 0.072 and this exceeds the tabular value that corresponds to the level of significance P = 0.10 (t = 1.64), for a number of degrees of freedom (df) n = 126. The probability that the improved results to be due to chance is lower than 0.01, for three behaviors out of the four investigated, situation in which a new specific hypothesis (H_1), is confirmed while the nule hypothesis (H_0) is disproved. Most of the differences acquired from students for this type of conflicts are strongly significant at the level of P < 0.01 and are due to the independent variable introduced as an experimental programme of mediation.

The longitudinal analysis of the frequency of the conflicts characterized by mutual aggressive relationships led to the discovery of some moderate correlations, positive and

statistically significant between the individual values recorded by students in pretest and in posttest, in case of the first two behaviors assessed in this case. The calculated values of the coefficients are written down in table no. 3.VII. and are exploited in order to produce inferences and statistical interpretations.

Table no. 3.VII. Statistical correlation determined on basis of the data from pretest and from the posttest as regarding the frequency of the conflicts characterized by mutual aggressive relationships

The investigated behavior	Coefficients of correlation and coefficients of determination			
III$_1$ Have you told a classmate that you do not like him/her unless he/she does what you want him/her to do?	Pearson correlation (r)	**0.447**[**]	Spearman's rho (ρ)	**0.513**[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	127	R Square (R^2)/(D)	0.200/(20%)
III$_2$ Have you spread false rumours about a classmate?	Pearson correlation (r)	**0.446**[**]	Spearman's rho (ρ)	**0.376**[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	127	R Square (R^2)/(D)	0.199/(19%)
III$_3$ Have you intently left out of the group a child while a common activity?	Pearson correlation (r)	**0.264**[**]	Spearman's rho (ρ)	**0.362**[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	127	R Square (R^2)/(D)	0.070/(7%)
III$_4$ Have you left a child out of the group only because you were angry with him/her?	Pearson correlation (r)	**0.312**[**]	Spearman's rho (ρ)	**0.203**[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.022
	N	127	R Square (R^2)/(D)	0.097/(9%)

[**] Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

[*] Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

For the behavior examined through the item III$_1$ a coefficient of simple correlation was calculated r = 0.447, while for the item III$_2$ was obtained r = 0.446, both coefficients being produced at the level of P = 0.000. At the same level of statistical significance we determined the values of the coefficients of correlation of ranks (rho) ρ = 0.513 (III$_1$) and ρ = 0.376 (III$_2$), taking into account the position of the individual values around the average. Both the calculated values of the coefficients of the simple correlation and the ones of the correlation of the ranks are higher than the tabular value of the coefficient of the critical correlation, at the level of P = 0.01 (|r| ≈ 0.23, df > 120), fact which indicates that they are deeply significant at the level of P < 0.01, with 1% chances to be mistaken about the statistical significance at the level of the population inquired. In case of the results obtained for the last of the inquired behaviors, we

observed present correlations, but low, between pretest and posttest, having r = 0.264, at the level of P = 0.003 (III$_3$), and r = 0.312, at the level of P = 0.000 (III$_4$). The correlation between the initial phase and the final stage of the intervention is, also, low for these two items which investigate rejection behaviors in the context of the interpersonal conflicts among students. This reasoning rely on the values (rho) calculated: ρ = 0.362, at the level of P = 0.000 (III$_3$), and ρ = 0.376, at the level of P = 0.022 (III$_4$), the first coefficient being statistically significant at the level of P < 0.01 and the last one at a P < 0.05. As we can observe from the centralized data, too (table no. 3.VII.), the influence of the independent variable which the researcher introduced in a controlled way was the most powerfully exerted upon the improvement of the first two inquired behaviors. In this respect, we obtained R^2 = 0.200 (III$_1$) and R^2 = 0.199 (III$_2$) that point out, in each case, a relationship between variables of 20%.

The statistical hypotheses were checked in order to establish if these differences in an ameliorative way are produced by the independent variable or are atributed to chance, namely the nule hypothesis (H$_0$). Applying the test of comparison *t*, we obtained the values t = 2.024, at the level P = 0.045 (III$_1$) and t = 3.083, at the level P = 0.003 (III$_2$). The calculated values of *t* exceed the tabular values that correspond to the levels of statistical significance P = 0.05 (t = 1.96 < t = 2.024 < 2.58), namely P = 0.01 (t = 2.58 < t = 3.083), for a number of degrees of freedom (df) n = 126 and in this way, the improved results are considered statistically significant at these levels and represent positive effects of the introduction of the independent variable.

The comparison of the calculated values of *t* with the tabular values read in the table of Student, at the levels of significance P = 0.01 and P = 0.05, for a number of degrees of freedom df) n = 126,led us to the conclusive idea according to which the improved results present at half of the behaviors investigated at students are statistically significant at the level of P < 0.01 while for one of the behaviors (III$_1$) there are statistically significant at the level of P < 0.05, thus being a lower probability of 0.01 (1%), namely of 0.05 (5%) for them to be due to some random factors. As a consequence of checking the statistical hypotheses, the nule hypothesis is neglected (H$_0$) and the specific hypothesis (H$_1$) is accepted, in this way confirming the fact that the identified differences, the ones concerning the frequency of manifestation of conflicts among students, occur on the basis of the formative influence of the independent variable introduced in the form of the programme *Peer Mediation*.
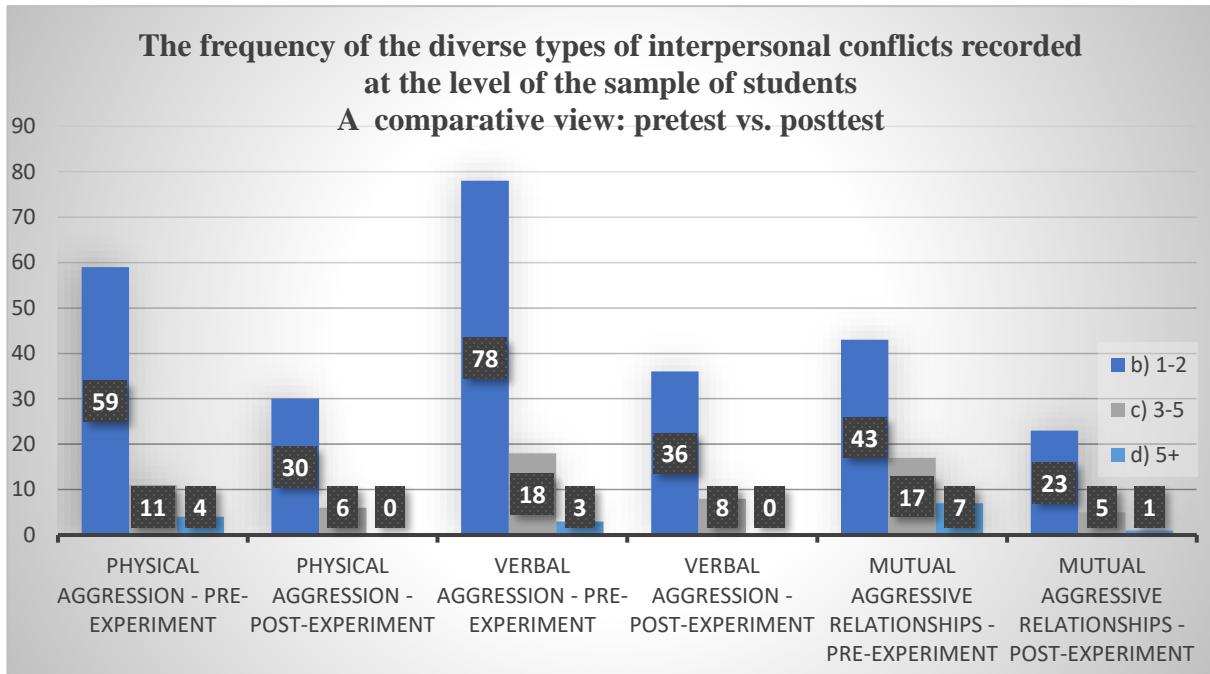
Figure no. 1.VII. The comparison of the recorded data in case of pretest and posttest, related to the frequency of the diverse types of interpersonal conflicts, related to the experimental sample of students

In the timeframe destined to the development of the psychopedagogical experiment and, implicitly, while the implementation of the mediation programme for students, we observed the fact that in case of all the categories of frequency, the number of active cases in which conflicting interactions take place, were considerably reduced up to the moment of the posttest. The proportion of cases in which the conflicts among students ocurred with a frequency of 1-2 times and 3-5 times a week was reduced by more than half: from 180 of cases in pretest to 89 cases in posttest, namely from 46 cases it reached the value of 19 cases. At the category of frequency 5+ times a week, the number of cases was completely reduced: out of 14 existent cases in the moment of pretest, only one active case remained in posttest. In case of most of the individuals who were fitted in this category there was an improvement of the social behavior and the conflicts they were engaged to had a frequency of expression that is more reduced (1-2/3-5 times a week), their complete removal not being possible.

The frequency of the interpersonal conflicts among students
A general comparative view: pre-experiment vs. post-experiment
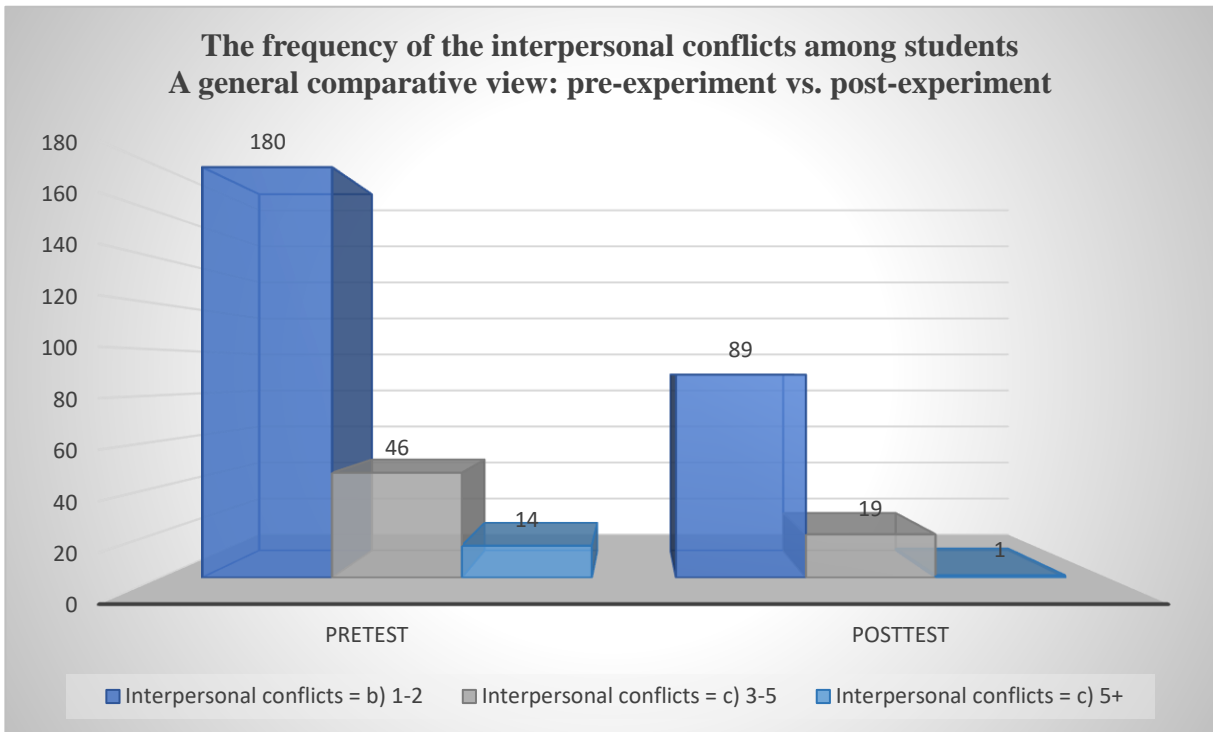
Figure no. 2.VII. The comparison of the total values recorded in pretest and posttest, regarding the frequency of interpersonal conflicts among students

Based on all the data subject to analysis and interpretation in this subchapter, we can neglect the nule hypothesis (H_0) and accept the specific hypothesis (H_1), due to the fact that there are statistically significant differences between the results recorded in pretest and the ones from the posttest, related to the frequency of manifestation of the interpersonal conflicts among students, as a consequence of the introduction of the independent variable I.V., namely the participation of the individuals from the sample classes in the experimental programme of mediation of the conflicts Peer Mediation, implemented by researcher.

The second dependent variable investigated in our research refers to the optimization of the styles approached by the students from the primary school, in order to manage their own interpersonal conflicts from the school environment. In the postexperimental stage it was examined whether the implementation of the programme of conflicts mediation, *Peer Mediation* led to improved results in this respect, comparatively to the identified situation in pretest. Consequently, in posttest the questionnaire *Conflict Approach Tendencies, Modified Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument*, was administered again and the obtained results were analysed and interpreted from longitudinal perspective, appying different mathematical statistical methods.

Table no. 4.VII. Descriptive statistical presentation of the styles of managing the conflicts, based on the statistical indices of the central tendency and of the deviation from the central tendency, determined for the values recorded in case of the sample students – posttest

Style of managing the interpersonal conflicts		Avoidance = No way = A+F+K	Problem-solving = Your way = B+G+L	Control = My way = C+H+M	Compromise = Half way = D+I+N	Collaboration = Our way = E+J+O
N	Valid	127	127	127	127	127
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean (m)		4.54	4.90	3.65	7.38	7.78
Std. error of mean (E)		.123	.118	.095	.117	.119
Median (m_d)		4.00	5.00	3.00	8.00	8.00
Mode (m_0)		3	5	3	7[a]	9
Std. deviation (σ)		1.390	1.332	1.073	1.321	1.345
Variance (σ^2)		1.933	1.775	1.151	1.745	1.808
Range (A_a)		6	6	5	6	6
Minimum		3	3	3	3	3
Maximum		9	9	8	9	9
Total score		577	622	463	937	988

[a] Multiple modes exist.The lowest modal value is presented.

According to the postexperimental data and inferences, for the majority of the students involved in the psychopedagogical experiment positive modifications at the level of the styles of conflict management were made, so that there were predominant the resolutive approaches through mediation, based on collaboration (40.4%) or on the combinations between the style centred on collaboration and the one centered on compromise (28%). The resolutive approaches that put the emphasis on conflict mediation through collaboration and compromise were promoted throughout the experimental programme and the results processed in the postexperimental stage confirmed the optimization of managing the styles adopted by students, most of them getting to follow these directions preponderently. The changes made in an ameliorative way represent the expected effects of the experimental factor introduced (I.V.), which confronts with the school reality through the values of the dependent variable D.V.$_2$.

A goal of the researcher's intervention was that, thanks to the nature of the activities developed within the experimental mediation programme of the interpersonal conflicts, the social inclusion of the students in the belonging groups-classes to be facilitated, including here also the schoolchildren with special needs. For this component from the hypothesis of our

research, we had two additional working/statistical hypotheses which we focused on throughout the experimental process and which were checked at the end of the sociometric analysis from the posttest:

H_0: The degree of social inclusion in case of the students participants in the mediation experimental programme *Peer Mediation* is not higher than in pretest.

H_1: The degree of social inclusion in case of the students participants in the mediation experimental programme *Peer Mediation* is higher in posttest than in pretest.

The evaluation of the degree of social inclusion was carried out in the postexperimental stage through exploiting the sociometric method and through re-applying the sociometric test that had been administered to the students in pretest, too. We discovered ameliorative situations for 64.56% (82 individuals) among the students who were engaged in the psychopedagogical experiment run by researcher. The positive changes related to the social inclusion were highlighted both generally speaking, through the increase of the number of cases of students included in the category of the power of social choice of the individuals *accepted* by the group and particularily speaking, through the increase of the values of the indices of sociometric status (I_{SS}) and/or the ones of choice status (I_{SP}) recorded by the individuals. The presence of the cases of students considered accepted by the classmates increased from 63% (80 individuals - pretest) to 69.3% (88 cases - posttest) and the presence of the rejected students diminished from 29% (37 cases - pretest) to 22% (28 cases - posttest). At an individual level, 20% (25 students) out of the individuals of the experimental sample knew an increase of the values of the indices of sociometric status (I_{SS}), getting a degree of sociocentrality higher than in pretest, 32% from students (41 individuals) presented plus values of the indices of choice status (I_{SP}), proving a degree of social inclusion better than in the previous stage of the formative intervention and 13% from participants (16 individuals) stood out through the high values for both types of calculated sociometric indices (I_{SS} and I_{SP}), having both degrees of sociocentrality and degrees of improved social inclusion in posttest, in comparison with the stage they were in pretest.

The participation in the programme of mediation of the interpersonal conflicts was also beneficial for the students with educational special needs who were monitored in the present research. The level of sociocentrality and/or the degree of social inclusion they presented prior to the researcher's intervention were modified in an ameliorative way. According to the values of the indices of choice status ($I_{SP} < 0$), all these students belonged in pretest to the category of

choice power of the individuals rejected by group. Among them, the individuals A (-0.07 ►
0.11), B (-0.03 ► 0.03) and D (-0.03 ► 0.07) came to the choice category of the ones
considered accepted, having indices $I_{SP} > 0$ in posttest. The individuals C (-0.65 ► -0,53) and
E (-0.19 ► -0.03) remained in the category of power of the social choice of the students rejected
by their classmates, but they also show improvement of the indices of choice status. In case of
the present research, the psychopedagogical experiment facilitated an ascending process of the
degrees of social inclusion for all the students with educational special needs who were involved
in the mediation programme.
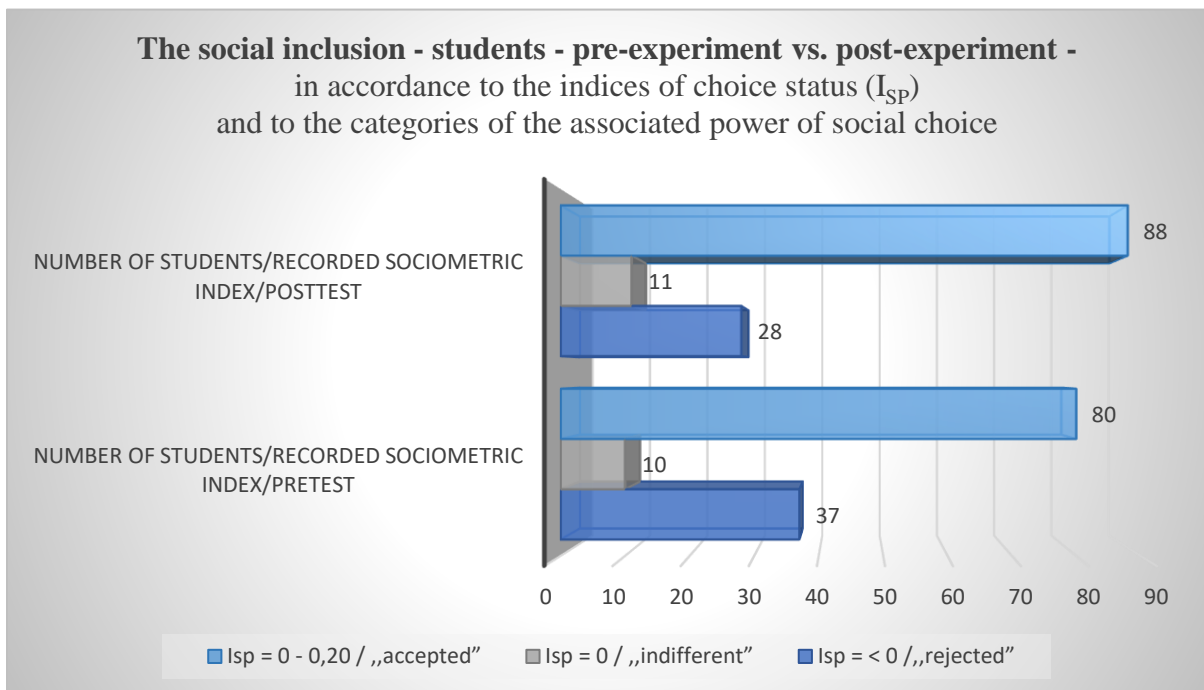
*Figure no. 3.VII. The comparison of the students in rapport with the degree of social inclusion
in the group-class – the numerical expression of the existent cases in pretest and in posttest*

Exploiting all the analyses and interpretations carried out in the postexperimental stage,
we observed the fact that, based on the participation in the mediation experimental programme
of the interpersonal conflicts (I.V.), the degree of the students' social inclusion became higher,
including the students with educational special needs in the group-classes. The independent
variable influenced the values the dependent variable D.V.$_3$ kept, being a positive correlation
between them. Consequently, we neglected the nule hypothesis (H$_0$) and we accepted the
specific hypothesis (H$_1$), confirming the formative value of the experimental intervention in the
present research, through the recorded results at the level of students.

The last dependent variable whose values were assessed in the postexperimental stage refers to the quality of the social emotional and interrelational climate (D.V.$_4$) which the students benefit from in the class they are in. As a consequence of the involvement of the schoolchildren in the experimental programme of conflict mediation (I.V.), we expected that the qualitative level of this climate to be superior to the identified one in pretest. Within the framework of the semi-structured interviews that developed with the students from the experimental sample it was discovered, due to their answers and statements, the fact that certain negative aspects they were referred to in prestest were improved or even eliminated up to the end of the intervention. In the category of the positive aspects, The students included in posttest more social behaviors they appreciate at their classmates and which help them to keep harmonious interpersonal relationships. The schoolchildren highlighted the empathetic attitude, the availability to listen, the expression of friendship, respecting the promises/the agreements, offering the necessary support, expressing goodwill as main positive expressions at the classmates as a consequence of their participation in the experimental programme. The discussions held in the interviews conducted in the postexperimental stage were summarized in the form of a SWOT analysis for the whole sample of students. They continually want the reduction of the frequency of the physical and verbal conflicts, but they make reference to *opportunities* of more complex level, as well as, making sure of the integration of all the classmates, creating the feeling of unity at the level of the group, expressing the mutual respect and assuming responsability. Reflecting at what prevent them from better getting along with the classmates, the students interviewed succeeded in doing an introspection exercise and in identifiying real, sensitive problems they confront with each of them, at a personal level (low level of self-esteem, lack of patience, irritability and so on). The main ideas expressed by students were analysed in detail in the subchapter VII.3.4. and it constitutes authentic proofs, taken over from the natural environment in which the individuals take part in the educational activity, that confirm the improvement of the quality of the social emotional and interrealtional climate from the school environment.

A relevant observation, to be reckoned with in the studies and in the future formative studies, refers to the level of responsiveness of the students towards the programme of conflicts mediation, related to the chronological age. Starting from the beginning of the psychopedagogical experiment developed we monitored the influence of this moderator

variable (V.M.$_1$) and we observed that the younger students are more open to the resolutive approaches promoted through the activities included in the programme *Peer Mediation*. The sooner the programme is implemented in the first school years, the more are the chances of the positive effects of this programme to be reflected in: the diminuation of the frequency of the interpersonal conflicts among students, in forming and developing efficient styles of managing the situations having a conflicting character, as well as in assuring an increased degree of the social inclusion of the students in the group-classes, based on creating a harmonious social emotional and interrelational climate.

The analyses and interpretations from the postexperimental stage relied on the results obtained after processing 376 copies from the 3 instruments of research applied to the students participants in posttest and on the statements offered by them in the context of the collective, semi-structured interviews carried out by researcher.

Chapter VIII – Conclusions outlines the main conclusive ideas of the research conducted and it highlights a series of possible directions of investigation, thanks to which one could continue and complete the research effort of the topic approached. The theoretical approach from the first section of the thesis followed the path: descriptive – explanatory – normative- prescriptive – praxeological, being connected to the second section of the paper, in which the methodology of the experimental research conducted by the researcher. The hypothesis of the research, stated even in the argumentation part, was tested out in the context of a research-action and of the experimental process which presumed the implementation of a programme of type *Peer Mediation*, set up by the researcher in a particularized form for the students from the primary school, based on prevention, mediation, negotiations strategies of interpersonal conflicts which they experience in the school environment. At the same time, the technique of triangulation, more precisely the one of triangulation in time, because the experimental design is one of type intra-individuals and the modifications produced through the introduction of the independent variable are analysed longitudinally. The endeavor of analysis and the ones of statistical interpretation of the results obtained after the process of the exprimental programme *Peer Mediation* attested the formative valences of mediation of conflicts at the students in the primary school, both in the direction of prevention and of efficiently resolving the interpersonal conflicts at this category of schoolchildren. Therefore, the stated hypothesis was tested out and based on the effects obtained following the effects

obtained after the introduction of the experimental factor, we can state the fact that the hypothesis of our research is confirmed/is valid.

In the light of the data analysed within this study we identified relevant answers at all the research questions that had been stated. At the same time, we conclude upon the fact that the present research contributes to creating a theoretical explanatory, informative and coherently formative pattern, addressed to the teachers, as educational factors, who can manage the conflicts among students optimally, supporting them, likewise the schoolchildren to develop the skills of solving autonomously and constructively of their own interpersonal conflicts. The mediation programme set up and implemented by the researcher confirmed the practical value and represents an element of novelty and of origninality, suggesting an alternative, structured, achievable approach of the activities of efficiently managing the conflicts in which are engaged in the students from the primary school.

One of our aspiration consists of acceding to a legislative framework that allow developing the programme of mediation the conflicts, at a large scale, as well as creating some instruments and curriculum support inspired by the programme *Peer Mediation*, to be adopted in the Romanian schools, in a coherent, comprehensive and systematic manner. In accordance with these ideas of perspective, we aim at developing the subject related to the teachers'training so that, from the form it is highlighted in the actual research, to make progress and to put forward a set of proffesional development courses for the teachers who are interested in the implementation of the programmes of type *Peer Mediation* at the classes or in the school institutions they activate. Just like a future direction of research, we propound to test the efficiency of the experimental programme *Peer Mediation* at the classes of students from the primary school, part of the rural area from Romania. The results obtained as a consequence of the interventions in the diverse educational backgrounds can broaden new horizons upon perfecting the framework and the strategies of implementation in case of the mediation programme and, implicitly, upon some effective ways of managing the interpersonal conflicts among students. We put forward these future directions of research in accordance with certain goals followed in consonance with the *Agenda 2030* drafted by UNESCO (2011), guidelines that were highlighted in the theoretical section of the present Ph.D. thesis.

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