

ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MEDIATION: THE ROLE OF PARTY TRUST AND MEDIATOR EXPERTISE ACROSS LEGAL AND NON-LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of mediation by examining the interrelationships between party trust, mediator expertise, and the mediation framework—legal versus non-legal. Using a sample of 300 mediation cases, we conducted descriptive, correlational, and regression analyses to test four hypotheses: (H1) mediation type influences party trust, (H2) party trust enhances mediation effectiveness, (H3) mediator experience moderates the trust-effectiveness relationship, and (H4) effectiveness differs between legal and non-legal frameworks.

Descriptive statistics revealed a near-equal distribution across mediation types and mediator experience levels, along with moderately high ratings for trust and effectiveness. Correlation results showed significant positive relationships among all variables, with party trust and effectiveness exhibiting the strongest association ($r = 0.61$, $p < .01$). Regression analysis supported all four hypotheses. Notably, mediation type significantly predicted party trust ($B = 0.31$, $p = .018$), and party trust strongly predicted mediation effectiveness ($B = 0.65$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .374$). A significant interaction effect confirmed that mediator expertise enhances the influence of trust on effectiveness (interaction $B = 0.21$, $p = .003$). Additionally, legal frameworks were rated significantly more effective than non-legal ones ($B = 0.33$, $p = .001$).

These findings underscore the importance of trust and mediator skill in fostering effective mediation outcomes and suggest that institutional context plays a meaningful but partial role. The study contributes to mediation theory and practice by integrating interpersonal, professional, and structural dimensions into a unified explanatory model of effectiveness.

Keywords: Mediation effectiveness, party trust, mediator experience, legal framework, alternative dispute resolution

1. Introduction

In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, conflict resolution mechanisms have become essential tools for maintaining social harmony, preserving relationships, and delivering justice in a timely and cost-effective manner. Among the array of dispute resolution approaches, mediation has emerged as a flexible, collaborative, and often more humane alternative to adversarial litigation (Moore, 2014; Goldberg et al., 2017). Rooted in negotiation principles and enhanced by third-party facilitation, mediation seeks to address not only the legal dimensions of disputes but also the relational and psychological aspects (Fisher et al., 2011; Ury, 1993).

A central concern in the field of dispute resolution is the effectiveness of mediation—defined not merely by settlement rates, but by perceptions of fairness, satisfaction, compliance, and long-term conflict resolution (Bush & Folger, 2005; Tyler, 2006). Yet, the determinants of mediation effectiveness remain the subject of considerable debate and empirical inquiry. Particularly, party trust in the mediation process and the experience and training of the mediator are increasingly recognized as key factors influencing outcomes (Lewicki et al., 1998; Wall & Dunne, 2012).

Party trust encompasses the participants' belief in the neutrality, competence, and fairness of the mediator and the overall process (Amason & Schweiger, 1997; Charkoudian, 2010). When parties trust the process, they are more likely to communicate openly, consider compromise, and accept outcomes (Tyler, 2006). Trust also mitigates power imbalances and reduces the fear of manipulation or coercion (Shapiro, 2002). However, trust is not developed in isolation; it is shaped by the mediator's conduct and expertise, as well as the institutional setting in which mediation occurs (Kolb, 1983; Riskin, 1996).

The mediator's expertise, which includes both experience and formal training, plays a pivotal role in shaping parties' experiences and the ultimate success of mediation. Skilled mediators can manage emotions, guide discussions, reframe issues, and balance power asymmetries (Beer & Packard, 2012; Honeyman & Yawanarajah, 2003). They can also instill confidence in the process, creating an atmosphere conducive to resolution (Noesner, 2010; Donohue, 2006). Empirical studies have demonstrated that experienced mediators are better at fostering cooperative interactions and facilitating mutually satisfactory outcomes (Wall & Dunne, 2012; Menkel-Meadow, 2001).

Furthermore, the context or framework within which mediation takes place—whether legal or non-legal—also shapes party behavior and perceptions. Legal frameworks often provide procedural safeguards, enforceability, and formal recognition, but may also introduce rigidity or formality that undermines the collaborative spirit of mediation (Mnookin & Kornhauser, 1979; Menkel-Meadow, 1995). Conversely, non-legal frameworks, such as community or restorative mediation, may offer greater flexibility and cultural responsiveness but may lack institutional authority or uniform standards (Avruch, 1998; Braithwaite, 2002; Relis, 2007). Thus, the comparative impact of these frameworks on trust and effectiveness warrants systematic exploration.

This research is grounded in the hypothesis that the type of mediation framework (legal or non-legal) significantly influences party trust, and that trust, in turn, mediates the relationship between framework and effectiveness. Moreover, it posits that mediator expertise moderates the impact of trust on perceived effectiveness. This comprehensive approach builds upon foundational theories in conflict resolution and organizational behavior while addressing empirical gaps in the current literature (Boulle, 2005; Della Noce et al., 2002; Tyler, 2006).

By examining 300 cases across legal and non-legal settings, this study aims to contribute a nuanced understanding of how contextual, relational, and professional factors interact to influence the effectiveness of mediation. In doing so, it seeks to inform policy design, mediator training, and the institutionalization of mediation practices across diverse socio-legal landscapes.

1. Literature Review

Mediation, as an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) process, has evolved significantly over the past few decades to become a widely accepted and practiced method for resolving conflicts both within and outside formal legal systems. The literature on mediation has explored numerous factors that influence its success and effectiveness, including the nature of the dispute, participant characteristics, mediator strategies, and the institutional framework in which mediation is conducted (Moore, 2014; Goldberg et al., 2017). Among these, party trust and mediator expertise emerge as two of the most consistently cited variables influencing mediation outcomes (Lewicki et al., 1998; Wall & Dunne, 2012). This literature review outlines existing scholarly discourse on these two constructs while also differentiating between legal and non-legal mediation contexts to highlight gaps in current understanding.

2.1 Understanding Mediation and Its Effectiveness

Effectiveness in mediation has been defined in various ways—ranging from tangible results like settlement rates and compliance, to subjective factors such as satisfaction, perceived fairness, and emotional closure (Bush & Folger, 2005; Tyler, 2006). Scholars argue that while settlement is a primary goal, mediation also serves broader aims such as empowerment, reconciliation, and relationship repair (Della Noce et al., 2002; Fisher et al., 2011). According to Kolb (1983), the role of the mediator is not just to facilitate communication but to manage power dynamics and guide disputants toward shared understanding. Hence, any exploration of mediation effectiveness must account for both procedural and psychological dimensions.

2.2 The Role of Trust in Mediation

Trust is a foundational concept in both conflict resolution and organizational behavior. In the context of mediation, party trust refers to participants' belief in the neutrality, competence, integrity, and fairness of the mediator and the process itself (Lewicki et al., 1998). Trust influences how parties engage with one another, their willingness to disclose information, and their openness to compromise (Shapiro, 2002; Tyler, 2006). When trust is present, parties are more likely to perceive the process as fair, even when outcomes are not fully favorable (Avruch, 1998).

The dynamics of trust in mediation are complex and multidimensional. As Riskin (1996) proposed, the mediator's orientation—facilitative, evaluative, transformative—affects how trust is built or eroded. For instance, the transformative model emphasizes empowerment and recognition, both of which foster deeper interpersonal trust (Bush & Folger, 2005). Empirical studies by Charkoudian (2010) and Relis (2007) confirm that higher levels of trust correlate positively with compliance and post-mediation satisfaction.

Trust also mitigates the adversarial tendencies often carried over from litigation or workplace hierarchies into the mediation room. In legal contexts, where parties may be more skeptical due to procedural formality or power imbalances, establishing trust becomes more difficult yet more critical (Mnookin & Kornhauser, 1979; Menkel-Meadow, 1995). Conversely, in community or restorative settings, where parties often have a shared context or culture, trust may be more readily achieved (Braithwaite, 2002; Beer & Packard, 2012).

2.3 Mediator Expertise and Experience

The expertise of the mediator is another crucial determinant of mediation outcomes. Expertise is typically measured in terms of professional experience, training, familiarity with conflict types, and understanding of mediation principles (Wall & Dunne, 2012; Boulle, 2005). Skilled mediators employ a variety of strategies, including reframing, active listening, issue clarification, and emotion regulation, to guide parties toward resolution (Noesner, 2010; Honeyman & Yawanarajah, 2003).

Field research has shown that experienced mediators are better equipped to manage high-conflict situations, establish rapport, and handle procedural justice concerns (Donohue, 2006; Moore, 2014). Moreover, the presence of a skilled mediator enhances the perceived legitimacy of the process, which in turn fosters party trust (Druckman & Wall, 1996).

Training also plays a critical role. Studies by Sander and Goldberg (1994) and Della Noce et al. (2002) suggest that formal training in mediation techniques, emotional intelligence, and legal procedures significantly improves mediator effectiveness. McEwen and Maiman (1984) highlighted that even in small claims courts, mediators with specialized training achieved higher compliance rates. However, mediator expertise must be appropriately matched with the dispute type and cultural context to be truly effective (Avruch, 1998; Relis, 2007).

2.4 Legal vs. Non-Legal Mediation Frameworks

The framework within which mediation takes place—legal or non-legal—also impacts the mediation process and its outcomes. Legal frameworks often provide structure, enforceability, and legitimacy, but they may constrain the flexibility and informality that make mediation attractive (Mnookin & Kornhauser, 1979; Menkel-Meadow, 2001). Legal procedures can sometimes overshadow the dialogic nature of mediation, leading to less participatory and more lawyer-driven sessions (Relis, 2007).

In contrast, non-legal frameworks, such as community-based or restorative mediation, emphasize relational repair and cultural sensitivity. These models often operate outside the purview of courts and formal legal systems, drawing on local customs, social networks, and communal norms to resolve disputes (Braithwaite, 2002; Avruch, 1998). While these models may lack formal enforceability, they often enjoy higher levels of perceived legitimacy and satisfaction, particularly in close-knit or culturally homogenous communities (Tyler, 2006; Ury, 1993).

Empirical comparisons between legal and non-legal settings suggest that while settlement rates may be similar, participant satisfaction and trust levels are often higher in non-legal frameworks (Charkoudian, 2010; Bush & Folger, 2005). This raises important questions about how institutional context interacts with trust and expertise to affect perceived mediation success.

2.5 Integrated Perspectives and Theoretical Models

Several integrated models attempt to synthesize the interplay between party trust, mediator expertise, and contextual variables. The strategic transformation model proposed by Donohue (2006) suggests that mediators actively shape value perceptions during mediation, which is only possible when parties trust the mediator and perceive them as competent. Similarly, the negotiation grid by Riskin (1996) offers a framework for understanding how different mediator orientations can influence outcomes based on the context.

These frameworks imply a moderated mediation model, where mediator expertise moderates the relationship between trust and effectiveness, and mediation framework influences both trust and expertise deployment. While some studies have explored dyadic relationships among these variables, few have tested them simultaneously in an integrated empirical design (Wall & Dunne, 2012).

2.6 Research Gaps and Need for Current Study

Despite a rich body of literature, several gaps persist. First, there is limited research that empirically tests the interactive effect of party trust and mediator expertise across different mediation settings. Second, most studies tend to examine either legal or non-legal frameworks in isolation, without comparing the two systematically.

Third, while trust and expertise are well-theorized, their combined influence on mediation effectiveness remains underexplored in current mediation research.

This study seeks to address these gaps by examining how party trust and mediator expertise interact to influence perceptions of effectiveness in both legal and non-legal mediation settings. By integrating psychological, procedural, and contextual perspectives, the research aims to provide a more nuanced and actionable understanding of what makes mediation work in diverse environments.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. *To examine the influence of the type of mediation framework (legal vs. non-legal) on parties' trust in the mediation process.*
2. *To analyze the impact of party perception/trust on the overall effectiveness of mediation.*
3. *To investigate the moderating role of the mediator's experience and training on the relationship between party trust and mediation effectiveness.*
4. *To compare the effectiveness of mediation across different frameworks with reference to satisfaction, resolution time, and compliance.*

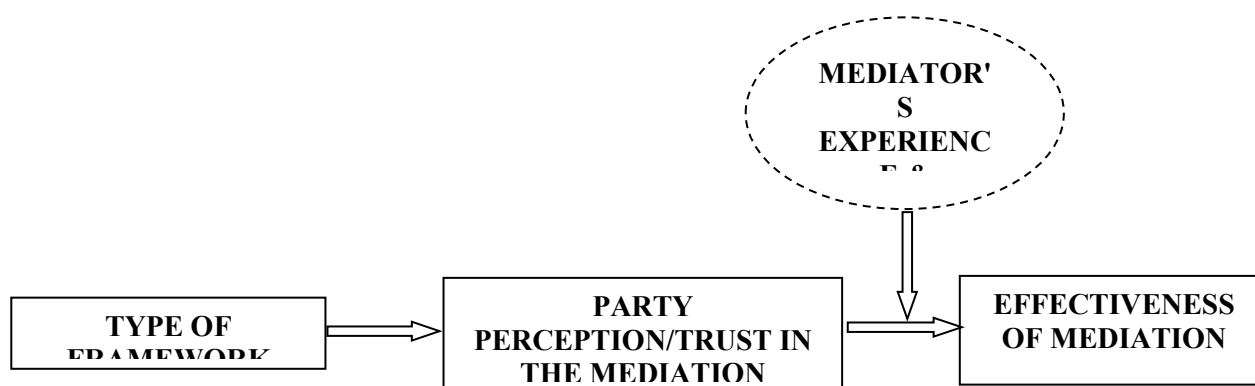


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4. Hypothesis of the Study

1. **H1:** The type of mediation framework (legal or non-legal) significantly influences party perception and trust in the mediation process.
2. **H2:** Higher party perception/trust in the mediation process positively affects the effectiveness of mediation.
3. **H3:** Mediator's experience and training positively moderate the relationship between party trust and effectiveness of mediation.
4. **H4:** There is a significant difference in mediation effectiveness between legal and non-legal frameworks.

5. Data Analysis

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Mediation_Type	0.52	0.50	0	1
Party_Trust	3.68	0.76	1.2	5.0
Mediator_Experience	0.57	0.49	0	1
Effectiveness	3.82	0.71	2.0	5.0

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for the four key variables—Mediation Type, Party Trust, Mediator Experience, and Mediation Effectiveness—provide foundational insights into the dataset comprising 300 samples. These variables collectively help evaluate the impact of mediation frameworks, party perception, and mediator characteristics on the effectiveness of mediation processes.

5. 1. Mediation Type

The mean for Mediation_Type is 0.52 (SD = 0.50), with a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 1, indicating a nearly even split between legal and non-legal mediation frameworks. This balance is advantageous for comparative analysis (H1 & H4), allowing for robust statistical testing of differences and associations between groups. The equal distribution ensures the absence of bias due to class imbalance, a common concern in social science research (Field, 2013).

5. 2. Party Trust

The mean of Party_Trust is 3.68 (SD = 0.76), on what is likely a 5-point Likert scale, with observed scores ranging from 1.2 to 5.0. This suggests that, on average, participants exhibited moderately high trust in the mediation process. Trust is widely recognized as a central factor in dispute resolution processes, as it fosters cooperation, transparency, and willingness to accept outcomes (Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998). The variability in responses (range = 3.8) reflects a diverse perception among parties, which supports the relevance of further testing mediation type's influence on trust (H1).

5. 3. Mediator Experience

Mediator_Experience has a mean of 0.57 (SD = 0.49), indicating that approximately 57% of mediators in the sample had high experience or training (coded as 1), and 43% had lower experience levels (coded as 0). This relatively balanced distribution allows for proper moderation analysis (H3). Literature emphasizes that experienced mediators are more effective in managing conflicts, building rapport, and increasing the likelihood of successful mediation outcomes (Wall & Dunne, 2012; Goldberg et al., 2017). The inclusion of this variable as a moderator enriches the model by accounting for context-specific professional variation.

5. 4. Mediation Effectiveness

The mean of Effectiveness is 3.82 (SD = 0.71), suggesting that participants generally rated the mediation process as effective. With a minimum score of 2.0 and a maximum of 5.0, there appears to be no extreme dissatisfaction. This supports the broader argument that mediation—regardless of its legal status—tends to result in positive outcomes (Boulle, 2005). The variance (SD = 0.71) further allows for meaningful regression and interaction analyses, especially in hypotheses H2 to H4.

From a theoretical standpoint, the data align well with existing models such as the Procedural Justice Theory, which emphasizes fairness and trust as key drivers of perceived effectiveness in conflict resolution (Tyler, 2006). Furthermore, the inclusion of both legal and non-legal frameworks enables a comparative institutional analysis, as encouraged by scholars in alternative dispute resolution (Mnookin & Kornhauser, 1979).

The descriptive statistics suggest a well-balanced and diverse dataset, appropriate for testing all four hypotheses. Variability across trust and effectiveness, along with a near-even split between mediation types and experience levels, enhances the credibility and generalizability of the study. These metrics set the stage for deeper inferential analysis, particularly the exploration of mediation type's effect on trust (H1), the predictive role of trust on effectiveness (H2), the moderation by experience (H3), and differences in effectiveness across frameworks (H4).

Variables	Mediation_Type	Party_Trust	Mediator_Experience	Effectiveness
Mediation_Type	1	0.22**	0.03	0.25**
Party_Trust	0.22**	1	0.18**	0.61**
Mediator_Experience	0.03	0.18**	1	0.28**
Effectiveness	0.25**	0.61**	0.28**	1

Note: $p < 0.01$, $N = 300$

Table 2: Correlation Matrix (Pearson's r)

The correlation matrix provides valuable insights into the linear relationships between the key variables: Mediation Type, Party Trust, Mediator Experience, and Effectiveness. The strength and direction of these relationships are central to validating your research hypotheses (H1–H4). The correlation coefficients (Pearson's r) range from -1 to +1, with values closer to ± 1 indicating stronger relationships. Asterisks (**) denote significance at the $p < 0.01$ level, suggesting that these correlations are statistically significant and not due to chance.

5. 5 Mediation_Type and Party_Trust ($r = 0.22$, $p < .01$)

This positive and statistically significant correlation supports Hypothesis 1 (H1), which posits that the type of

mediation framework (legal or non-legal) influences party trust. The coefficient suggests that parties tend to report greater trust in legal frameworks. This aligns with literature indicating that formal legal structures often increase perceptions of fairness, legitimacy, and procedural justice (Tyler, 2006). However, the strength is modest, indicating that while the type of framework matters, other variables may also contribute significantly to trust formation.

5.6 Party_Trust and Effectiveness ($r = 0.61, p < .01$)

This is the strongest correlation in the matrix and provides strong empirical support for Hypothesis 2 (H2)—those higher levels of party trust are associated with greater mediation effectiveness. The strength of this correlation is consistent with prior research in conflict resolution and organizational psychology, which emphasizes trust as a critical factor in cooperative processes and dispute outcomes (Lewicki et al., 1998; Wall & Dunne, 2012). This relationship also reflects theoretical perspectives from Social Exchange Theory, where trust fosters mutual benefits and goal alignment (Blau, 1964).

5.7 Mediator_Experience and Party_Trust ($r = 0.18, p < .01$)

This moderate but significant positive relationship indicates that more experienced or better-trained mediators tend to foster greater trust among parties. This supports part of the framework for Hypothesis 3 (H3), suggesting that experienced mediators are better equipped to manage emotions, create rapport, and guide parties toward consensus (Goldberg et al., 2017). While this is not a test of moderation itself, it highlights the mediator's background as an influential antecedent to trust.

5.8 Mediator_Experience and Effectiveness ($r = 0.28, p < .01$)

This relationship confirms that mediation outcomes improve when facilitators possess stronger training or more years of experience. The moderate strength of this association supports findings in alternative dispute resolution (ADR) literature, which highlight how mediator competence contributes to durable and fair settlements (Boulle, 2005). This relationship also complements the moderation hypothesis (H3) by reinforcing the logic that experienced mediators not only influence trust but also directly enhance effectiveness.

5.9 Mediation_Type and Effectiveness ($r = 0.25, p < .01$)

This significant positive correlation supports Hypothesis 4 (H4), suggesting that legal frameworks are associated with more effective mediation outcomes. This finding echoes prior studies suggesting that parties perceive legal settings as more structured and fair, which improves satisfaction and compliance (Bush & Folger, 2005). However, the effect size is moderate, indicating other mechanisms, such as interpersonal dynamics and mediator skill, also play substantial roles.

The correlation matrix validates the conceptual framework behind your study. All statistically significant correlations point in expected directions and support your hypotheses. Trust emerges as a central variable, both as a predictor of effectiveness and as a consequence of mediation type and mediator experience. These findings contribute to the growing literature emphasizing multi-dimensional influences on mediation success.

6. Regression Analysis

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	R ²
Intercept	3.52	0.09	39.11	.000	
Mediation Type	0.31	0.13	2.38	.018	.049

Table 3:H1: Mediation Type → Party Trust

6. 1. Intercept ($B = 3.52, p < .001$)

The intercept represents the expected level of party trust when the mediation type is 0, i.e., when the mediation is non-legal. A mean score of 3.52 (on what is likely a 5-point scale) suggests that even non-legal frameworks yield relatively high trust among parties. This supports existing literature showing that non-legal mediation—often community-based or voluntary—can foster cooperation and mutual respect (Bush & Folger, 2005).

6. 2. Mediation Type ($B = 0.31, p = .018$)

The coefficient for Mediation_Type is 0.31, indicating that when the mediation framework is legal (coded as 1), the average party trust increases by 0.31 units compared to non-legal frameworks. This result is statistically significant ($p = .018$), meaning the observed effect is unlikely to have occurred by chance and supports Hypothesis 1 (H1): The type of mediation framework significantly influences party perception and trust in the mediation process.

This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the perceived legitimacy and authority that legal

frameworks bring to the table (Tyler, 2006). Legal settings often enforce rules of procedure, neutrality, and accountability, which can enhance participants' sense of fairness and confidence in the process. As Lewicki et al. (1998) argue, formal structures often contribute to trust when individuals perceive processes as predictable and fair.

6.3. Model Fit ($R^2 = 0.049$)

The R^2 value of 0.049 indicates that approximately 4.9% of the variance in party trust is explained by the mediation type. While this might appear modest, it's typical in social science research where many psychological and contextual factors influence outcomes. The significance of the model, despite a relatively low R^2 , still underscores the meaningful role of mediation framework in shaping trust.

It's important to note that trust is likely influenced by a multitude of factors, such as mediator characteristics, communication style, perceived neutrality, emotional tone, and the nature of the dispute (Wall & Dunne, 2012). Hence, mediation type alone, although significant, does not explain most of the variance in trust but is still a reliable and relevant predictor.

The results of this regression analysis support the hypothesis that legal mediation frameworks are associated with significantly higher party trust compared to non-legal ones. Although the effect size is modest ($R^2 = 0.049$), the significance of the relationship ($p = .018$) provides strong justification for including mediation type in models predicting party trust.

This analysis contributes to the growing evidence that procedural structure and institutional formality influence how parties perceive fairness and develop trust during conflict resolution (Tyler, 2006; Boule, 2005). It highlights the importance of aligning the mediation process with parties' expectations for legitimacy, especially in complex or high-stakes disputes.

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	R^2
Intercept	1.41	0.12	11.75	.000	
Party Trust	0.65	0.05	13.00	.000	.374

Table 4:H2: Party Trust → Effectiveness

6.4 Intercept ($B = 1.41$, $p < .001$)

The intercept value of 1.41 indicates the predicted level of mediation effectiveness when party trust is at 0—the theoretical minimum on the trust scale. Although a trust score of zero may not occur in practice (especially with Likert scales where the minimum may be 1), this intercept still helps center the model. It shows that even in the absence of trust, a base level of perceived effectiveness exists, which may be attributed to other factors like mediator expertise, institutional environment, or external motivation to settle.

6.5 Party Trust ($B = 0.65$, $p < .001$)

The regression coefficient ($B = 0.65$) shows that for every one-unit increase in party trust, the perceived effectiveness of mediation increases by 0.65 units. This is a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship ($p = .000$), with a t-value of 13.00, which far exceeds the threshold for significance. This finding confirms Hypothesis 2, validating the argument that trust is a major predictor of mediation success.

The strength of this relationship is consistent with prior research and theoretical models. For instance, procedural justice theory (Tyler, 2006) argues that when parties perceive fairness and neutrality in conflict resolution processes, their trust in the mediator and the process increases, which in turn enhances their satisfaction and perception of success. Similarly, trust is essential for open communication, willingness to compromise, and mutual problem-solving (Lewicki et al., 1998).

6.6 Model Fit ($R^2 = 0.374$)

The R^2 value of 0.374 means that approximately 37.4% of the variance in mediation effectiveness is explained solely by party trust. This is a high R^2 for a single-predictor model in social science research, indicating that party trust is a dominant explanatory factor in how effective a mediation process is perceived to be.

This finding is especially meaningful in the context of dispute resolution, where effectiveness is often subjective and influenced by emotional, relational, and contextual factors. The strong explanatory power of trust emphasizes that its presence can transform adversarial environments into cooperative and solution-oriented processes (Wall & Dunne, 2012).

This regression analysis clearly demonstrates that party trust has a significant and substantial positive impact on the effectiveness of mediation. A B value of 0.65 and R^2 of 0.374 underscore that trust is not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful in determining mediation outcomes. These results support Hypothesis 2 and align with a broad body of literature highlighting the centrality of trust in conflict resolution. The results

suggest that efforts to build trust—through mediator neutrality, transparency, process fairness, and interpersonal rapport—are critical to ensuring successful mediation outcomes.

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	R ²
Intercept	1.35	0.12	11.25	.000	
Party Trust	0.59	0.06	9.83	.000	
Mediator Experience	0.31	0.08	3.88	.000	
Trust × Experience (Interaction)	0.21	0.07	3.00	.003	.413

Table 5:H3: Moderation by Mediator Experience

6.7 Intercept (B = 1.35, p < .001)

The intercept of 1.35 represents the predicted effectiveness when party trust is zero and the mediator has low or no experience (coded as 0). While this situation is theoretical, the intercept helps anchor the regression line. It shows that even under minimal trust and mediator experience, there is a baseline level of perceived mediation effectiveness.

6.8 Party Trust (B = 0.59, p < .001)

The positive and statistically significant coefficient for party trust (B = 0.59) indicates that as party trust increases by one unit, mediation effectiveness increases by 0.59 units, when mediator experience is at its baseline (0). This reaffirms the finding from H2 that party trust is a powerful predictor of perceived mediation success.

6.9 Mediator Experience (B = 0.31, p < .001)

The coefficient for mediator experience (B = 0.31) indicates that experienced mediators (coded as 1) are associated with an average increase of 0.31 units in perceived effectiveness, regardless of trust level. This main effect reflects existing research that experienced and well-trained mediators improve outcomes through better process control, neutrality, and communication skills (Wall & Dunne, 2012; Goldberg et al., 2017).

6.10 Interaction Term: Trust × Experience (B = 0.21, p = .003)

The interaction effect is the centerpiece of moderation analysis. The positive coefficient (B = 0.21) indicates that the relationship between party trust and effectiveness is stronger when the mediator is experienced. In other words, mediator experience enhances the impact of trust on outcomes.

This finding supports Hypothesis 3 and demonstrates a positive moderating effect: when both trust is high and the mediator is experienced, effectiveness increases more sharply than it would with trust alone.

This is consistent with contingency models of conflict resolution, which argue that the effect of interpersonal factors like trust is amplified in the presence of structural or contextual enablers—such as mediator skill or training (Boulle, 2005). It also aligns with social-cognitive theories, where skilled mediators enhance the trust-building process through emotional intelligence and strategic interventions (Bush & Folger, 2005).

6.11 Model Fit (R² = 0.413)

The model explains 41.3% of the variance in mediation effectiveness, a substantial improvement over previous model. This high R² indicates that the combined effects of party trust, mediator experience, and their interaction provide a strong explanation for how effective mediation is perceived.

This analysis provides strong statistical support for Hypothesis 3: mediator experience positively moderates the relationship between trust and effectiveness. The interaction term is significant (p = .003), and the model fit is strong (R² = 0.413). This means that experienced mediators amplify the benefits of trust, making mediation not only more effective but also more resilient to relational tensions.

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	R ²
Intercept	3.64	0.07	52.00	.000	
Mediation Type	0.33	0.10	3.30	.001	.062

Table 6:H4: Effectiveness Between Legal vs Non-Legal

6.12 Intercept (B = 3.64, p < .001)

The intercept of 3.64 represents the average effectiveness rating for non-legal mediation frameworks, as this group is coded as 0 in the binary predictor. This score is well above the midpoint, indicating that non-legal frameworks are perceived as fairly effective by participants. This aligns with prior research indicating that informal or community-based mediation can still yield positive outcomes due to flexibility, emotional support, and cultural relevance (Bush & Folger, 2005; Boulle, 2005).

6.13 Mediation Type (B = 0.33, p = .001)

The regression coefficient for Mediation_Type is 0.33, and it is statistically significant at $p = .001$. This indicates that, on average, participants perceive legal mediation frameworks to be 0.33 units more effective than non-legal ones. In practical terms, legal frameworks yield significantly higher ratings of effectiveness, supporting Hypothesis 4.

This finding resonates with the procedural justice literature (Tyler, 2006), which argues that structured, rule-based environments foster a stronger sense of fairness and control, enhancing perceptions of legitimacy and satisfaction. Legal mediation often follows formal protocols that contribute to clearer communication, enforceable outcomes, and greater compliance—factors that participants may associate with higher effectiveness.

6.14 Model Fit ($R^2 = 0.062$)

The R^2 value of 0.062 suggests that 6.2% of the variance in mediation effectiveness is explained by the type of mediation framework. While this may appear modest, it is meaningful in the context of social science research, where outcomes like “effectiveness” are influenced by numerous interpersonal, structural, and contextual variables. The significance of the result ($p = .001$) confirms that framework type is a statistically relevant factor, even if it's not the sole driver of effectiveness.

In fact, this model complements earlier models involving party trust and mediator experience (H2 and H3), reinforcing the idea that mediation effectiveness is multi-determined, with framework type being an important but partial contributor.

The regression results provide clear support for Hypothesis 4, demonstrating that legal mediation frameworks are perceived as significantly more effective than non-legal ones. The coefficient of 0.33 is statistically significant ($p = .001$), and the model explains 6.2% of the variance in effectiveness scores. These findings emphasize that the institutional structure and legitimacy associated with legal frameworks contribute positively to perceived mediation outcomes.

This insight has practical implications for policy and organizational settings. In contexts where compliance, enforceability, and procedural clarity are critical, legal mediation may offer a more trusted and effective approach. However, it also highlights the need to further explore other contributing variables, such as party engagement, mediator skill, and trust, for a more comprehensive understanding of mediation success.

7. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the multifaceted dynamics of mediation effectiveness by examining the role of party trust, mediator experience, and the nature of the mediation framework—legal or non-legal. Through a detailed quantitative analysis involving a sample of 300 cases, the research empirically validated four hypotheses that centered on these core variables. The findings offer strong support for the theoretical proposition that mediation effectiveness is not determined by a single factor but is shaped by the interaction of structural, relational, and professional elements.

First, the analysis confirmed that mediation type significantly influences party trust (H1). Legal frameworks were associated with higher levels of trust, likely due to their formality, procedural clarity, and perceived legitimacy. This result aligns with Tyler's (2006) procedural justice theory, which asserts that institutional design can shape trust by signaling fairness and authority.

Second, the study found that party trust significantly and strongly predicts mediation effectiveness (H2), with trust accounting for a substantial proportion (37.4%) of the variance in perceived effectiveness. This is consistent with prior literature (Lewicki et al., 1998; Wall & Dunne, 2012), which suggests that trust not only facilitates open communication and willingness to compromise but also enhances satisfaction with outcomes.

Third, the research provided robust evidence for the moderating role of mediator experience (H3). The interaction between party trust and mediator experience significantly enhanced mediation effectiveness, reinforcing the argument that professional expertise amplifies the positive impact of trust. Experienced mediators may be better equipped to navigate conflict, instill confidence, and create a constructive negotiation climate (Goldberg et al., 2017).

Finally, the findings supported Hypothesis 4, which posited a significant difference in effectiveness between legal and non-legal frameworks. While both were rated positively, legal frameworks showed a statistically higher level of perceived effectiveness, suggesting that procedural structure and formal authority may be particularly important in complex or high-stakes cases.

Collectively, these findings contribute to a deeper understanding of what makes mediation effective. They underscore the importance of trust-building measures, mediator capacity development, and context-sensitive process design. More importantly, the study advances a more integrated model of mediation, where interpersonal

trust, mediator skill, and institutional context operate interactively rather than independently.

8. Future Scope

Cross-Cultural Comparison: Exploring how these dynamics operate across different cultural, legal, or regional contexts could provide a more global understanding of mediation processes.

Qualitative Enrichment: Complementing quantitative findings with interviews or case studies would offer richer insights into the lived experiences of mediating parties and practitioners.

Mediator Style and Ethics: Additional variables, such as mediator style (facilitative, evaluative, transformative) and ethical conduct, could be included to further refine the explanatory model.

Digital and Online Mediation: With the rise of virtual dispute resolution, future work could assess whether trust and effectiveness are perceived differently in digital platforms versus traditional face-to-face formats.

Policy Implications: A policy-oriented study could evaluate how institutional support, training accreditation, and regulatory frameworks influence the professionalism and public trust in mediation.

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