

Types of Organizational Conflicts and Ways to Resolve Them

Manana Kharkheli¹, Davit Gavardashvili²

^{1,2}Faculty of Economics and Business, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

ABSTRACT: In the context of globalization, organizations are constantly focused on gaining a competitive advantage. This requires companies to implement specific changes, develop modern strategies and adopt innovative approaches. However, this process entails challenges that must be overcome. One such challenge is internal organizational conflict.

The functioning of any organization is accompanied by certain types of conflicts arising from various causes. Approaches to conflict resolution and management methods also vary. Accordingly, this article explores the nature of organizational conflict, the factors that trigger it and ways to neutralize it. It also examines employees' attitudes toward organizational conflicts.

KEYWORDS: The nature of conflict, Organizational conflicts, Types of conflict, Conflict management, Strategies.

I. INTRODUCTION

The article examines the causes and consequences of organizational conflicts, as well as ways to resolve them.

What causes conflicts within organizations? There is no organization that has not experienced at least some minor conflict situation at some point. When discussing conflict, various aspects must be considered – specifically, the fact that conflict can be understood in different ways, implying the existence of both negative and positive contexts. Generally speaking, conflict is inevitable in both human life and organizational activities.

By its very nature an organization consists of a group of individuals united to achieve a specific goal. Given that these individuals differ from one another; it is plausible for conflict situations to arise within the company regarding various issues. In general, conflict is detrimental to a company's operations. Consequently, it is crucial to examine and analyze all aspects essential for the organization's healthy functioning and conflict management is precisely one of these aspects.

Conflict management within a company is a comprehensive process aimed at ensuring the smooth conduct of business operations. Both management and employees play a significant role in this process. It is crucial for organizations to pay special attention to conflict management, as conflicts can hinder progress toward success. Consequently, the study of conflict management is currently a highly relevant topic for organizations.

II. MAIN TEXT

Conflict is a disagreement between people that arises from a clash of differing perceptions, desires, interests and actions. It is a phenomenon characteristic of all levels of human relationships. It is accompanied by anxiety and emotional tension, which affect an individual's productivity. There are various definitions of conflict: To better understand its essence, it is possible to divide conflict theories into functional, situational and interactional categories. Supporters of the functional approach believe that conflict performs a certain social function. Followers of the situational theory believe that conflict should be considered in a specific situational context and the third theory perceives conflict as an interactional process. The main starting point for **functionalists** is to understand why conflict arises? While followers of the **situational** theory ask the question – when do we have a conflict, in what environment does it occur? As for **interactionists**, they are interested in how the conflict proceeds and what methods are used in this process?

One representative of the functionalist school interpreted conflict as a means of resolving mutually antagonistic issues, aiming to achieve unity. (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014)

American sociologist Lewis Coser, defined conflict in his work as follows: It is a clash of values and interests, a tension between what exists and what some groups believe should exist. (Lewis A, Coser, 1964)

Types of Organizational Conflicts and Ways to Resolve Them

One of the representatives of the situational theory, Bercovitch, defines conflict as a situation that creates goals or interests between the parties that cannot be conceded. For Bercovitch, conflict depends on the situation. For example, conflict arises due to various conditions, it can be the influence of a person or some external factor. (Omisore & Abiudun, 2014)

According to the interactional approach, Folger defines conflict as the interaction of interdependent people who, due to incompatible goals, confront each other in the process of achieving their goals. (Folger, Poole, & Stutman, 2021)

Hocker and Wilmot define conflict as an openly expressed confrontation between at least two parties who perceive incompatible goals, limited resources and interference by the other party in achieving their goals. (Borisoff & Victor, 1998)

Also, according to one definition, conflict is a form of relationship between people characterized by incompatible demands and attitudes. (սծնոնծոյ & յաչոն, 2015)

From the given definitions it is clear that there is no single definition of conflict. Each person has an individual style and behaves differently from others in similar situations. Therefore, conflict can affect a person to varying degrees. In any case, conflict is fundamentally perceived as an obstacle that prevents a person or group from achieving their goals.

Conflict is a phenomenon characteristic of every individual's life. It is a natural and in some cases necessary factor. It can even stimulate innovative thinking if it is managed correctly. Constructive conflict can form the right opinion and find the optimal solution to the issue. Based on the different perceptions of conflict, three views related to it have been formed:

- 1) Traditional understanding
- 2) From the perspective of human relations
- 3) Interactionist understanding

In the traditional understanding, conflict avoidance is necessary because it is an indicator that the group has a problem. Conflict is perceived negatively and is associated with dysfunction. It is the result of a lack of communication and trust between people. According to this view, all types of conflict should be avoided. Accordingly, in order to improve the effectiveness of the group and the organization, it is necessary to identify and eliminate the causes of conflicts. (Rahim, 1986)

From a human perspective, conflict is a natural characteristic of a group and does not necessarily have to be negative. It can also play a positive role and contribute to the group's success. According to this approach, conflict is considered an inevitable result of the joint work of people in groups and teams. Accordingly, it should not be perceived only negatively, on the contrary. It can be positively assessed as a potential contributing force for improving performance. (Robbins, 2003)

From an interactionist perspective, some conflict is necessary for a group to function effectively. Conflict resolution involves rethinking routine processes and increasing productivity. However, not all types of conflict are beneficial. According to this approach, several types of conflict are distinguished. Namely:

- Task-related
- Interpersonal
- Process-related

Task-related conflict is related to the scope and goals of the work. For example, resource allocation and procedure. Task-related conflicts involve different ideas and opinions, which may be accompanied by active discussion and tension.

Interpersonal conflict is related to personal relationships. This occurs when there is an incompatibility of values among group members. Personal conflict leads to mistrust, tension and irritation, which ultimately leads to unproductiveness. Process-related conflict refers to methods of doing work. It is a disagreement about how a task should be performed and how authority or responsibility can be distributed. (Leung, 2010)

In today's conditions, we cannot say that conflict is only a negative context. The effect of conflict – positive or negative – depends on its type. In particular, it is necessary to distinguish between the following types of conflicts.

- **Functional conflicts**
- **Dysfunctional conflicts**

Functional conflict is the same constructive conflict that supports the goals of the group and is focused on improving its results. The starting point of functional conflict is the fact that group members confront each other with different ideas, which allows the problem and new ways to solve it to be clearly identified. Functional conflict motivates individuals to formulate innovative ideas and set ways to achieve it.

Dysfunctional conflicts prevent a group from achieving its goals. This is a destructive type of conflict that can damage personal relationships and the organization as a whole. Such conflicts lead to a decrease in productivity, which is manifested in the fact that personal individual interests take precedence over the overall interests of the business. (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007)

Whether a conflict is functional or dysfunctional depends on the types of conflict mentioned above. Interpersonal conflicts are generally dysfunctional because negative attitudes between people prevent communication and goal achievement, both individually and organizationally. Small-scale conflicts related to a process or task are functional because they are focused on

Types of Organizational Conflicts and Ways to Resolve Them

improving performance. However, process-related conflict is productive when it is minimal. Otherwise, heated arguments over work methods, role assignments, or task performance can become completely dysfunctional, making it impossible to understand who is responsible for what.

The causes of conflict are diverse. It can be related to lack of resources, different goals, roles and expectations, interdependencies, etc. Conflict, as a rule, has negative consequences for both the individual and the organization. It can lead to:

1) Psychological reactions

- Inattention to other matters
- Lack of interest in work
- Job dissatisfaction and work-related anxiety
- Alienation from others

2) Behavioral reactions

- Excessive smoking
- Alcoholism
- Aggression towards others
- Decreased communication

3) Physiological reactions

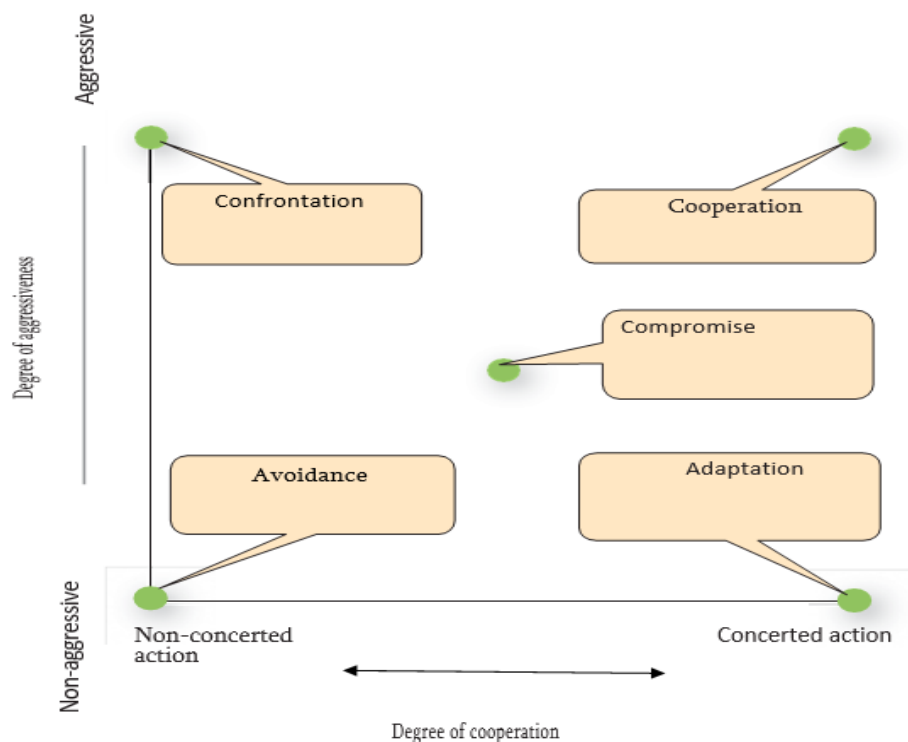
- Increased adrenaline
- Increased heart rate
- Headache

Therefore, conflict affects not only work, but also a person's health. Conflict sometimes has a motivational value. It pushes a person to find ways to solve a problem, contributes to the generation of innovative ideas, understanding of the existing problem and better coordination of activities.

The existence of conflict is a natural phenomenon and the ways to resolve it are different. Its elimination is possible with the following techniques – management, resolution and transformation.

5 main conflict management strategies are distinguished, taking into account the degree of aggressiveness and agreement.

Table 1. Conflict management strategies



Source: K. Thomas, „Conflict and Negotiation Process in Organizations, “in M. D. Dunnette and L. J. Hough (eds.), Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 2 ed. vol. 3 (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1992), p. 668. Used with permission by Leaetta Hough-Dunnette

Types of Organizational Conflicts and Ways to Resolve Them

As for conflict resolution, it involves reaching an agreement between the parties involved and ending the conflict. The main methods of conflict resolution are: **Mediation, facilitation, negotiation and dialogue.**

Conflict transformation itself is based on management and resolution approaches. However, it aims to deal with the deep causes of the conflict to change the processes that led to the conflict. (ჯრემავაძე, 2023)

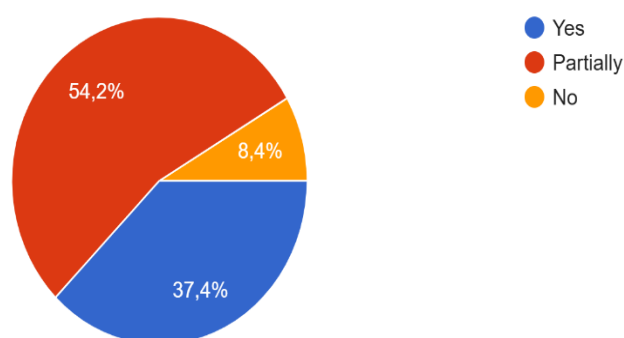
A practical study was conducted in relation to the research topic. The quantitative research method – questionnaire was used as the research methodology. The questionnaire was structured – multivariate. The number of respondents surveyed was 107. The study was conducted with employed people. The purpose of the study was to see how frequent conflict situations are in organizations and what methods are used to resolve them.

The first question was about job satisfaction, which shows that 54,2% of respondents are partially satisfied with their jobs, 37,4% are completely satisfied and a small percentage of 8,4% are dissatisfied.

Table 2. Job satisfaction rate

Are you satisfied with working at the company?

107 პასუხი

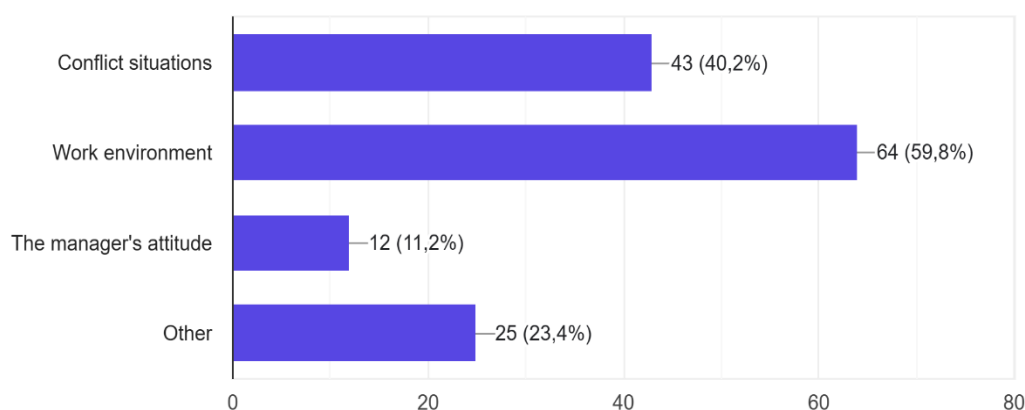


Satisfaction or dissatisfaction, of course, has its own causative factors. According to the next question, it can be seen that the main factors causing dissatisfaction are an inadequate work environment (59,8%) and also internal organizational conflicts (40,2%).

Table 3. Factors causing job dissatisfaction

What factors contribute to your dissatisfaction?

107 პასუხი



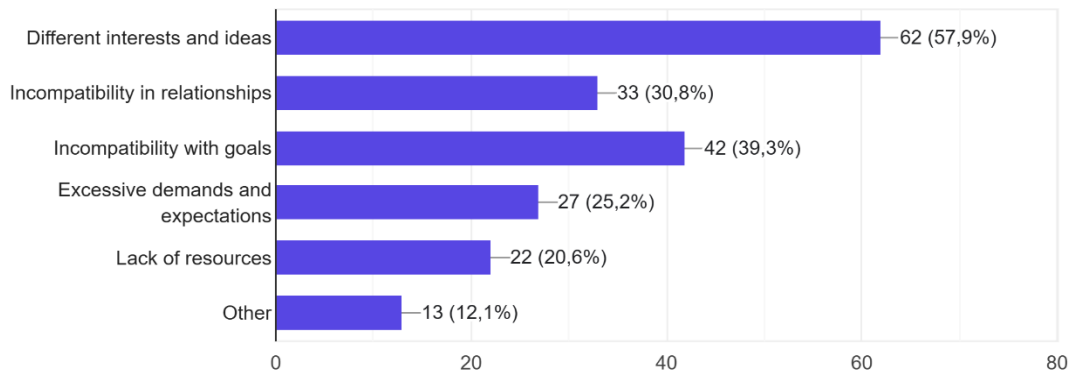
The causes of conflict in an organization are various. The next question was also about determining the causes of conflict. The question was allowed to record several answers at once. Basically, the study revealed that different ideas (57,9%) and inconsistency with goals (33,3%) cause intra-organizational conflict, in addition, 30,8% of respondents stated that they also face interpersonal conflicts at work.

Types of Organizational Conflicts and Ways to Resolve Them

Table 4. Causes of the conflict

Which of the following are the primary causes of conflict situations in your organization?

107 პასუხი

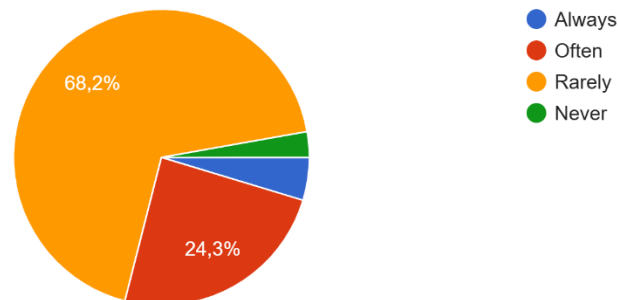


It should be noted that 68,2% of respondents rarely, but still, encounter various types of conflict, while 24,3% of respondents state that they often encounter conflict situations.

Table 5. Frequency of conflict situations

How often do you find yourself in conflict situations?

107 პასუხი

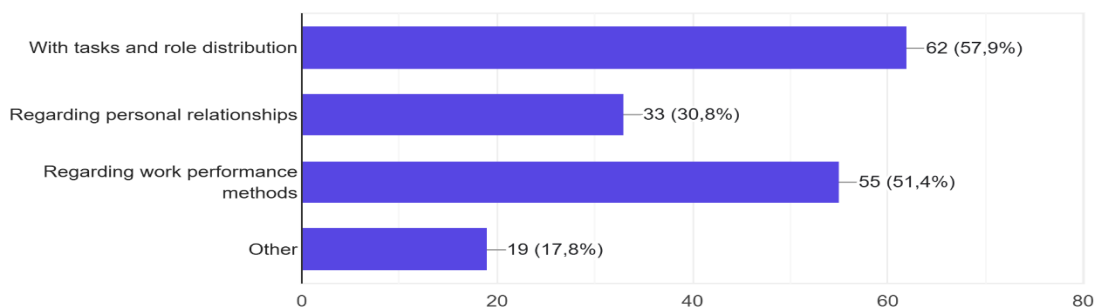


As mentioned, there are different types of conflict. The next question allowed for multiple answers. The results show that conflicts related to task and role allocation are the most common (57,9%), although interpersonal conflicts are also common (30,8%).

Table 6. Types of conflict situations

Most of your conflict situations are related to

107 პასუხი



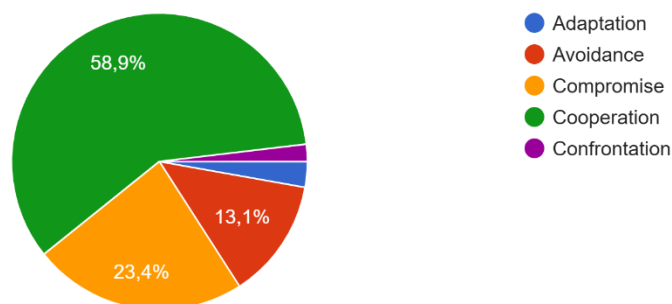
Among the techniques for managing conflict situations, 58,9% of respondents use the cooperation strategy, while 23,4% use the compromise method and a small percentage of 13,1% try to avoid any kind of conflict.

Types of Organizational Conflicts and Ways to Resolve Them

Table 7. Conflict management strategies

Which conflict resolution method do you primarily use?

107 პასუხი

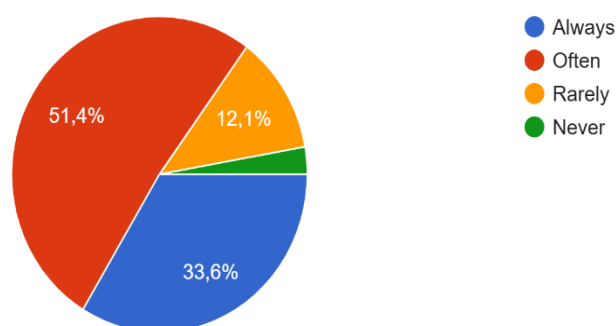


In terms of conflict resolution, a special role is assigned to the manager. Both personal and task-related conflicts can develop into complex forms. Accordingly, Conflict management is of particular concern to managers. According to the results of the next question, 51,4% of respondents say that their manager often helps employees resolve conflicts, 33,6% believe that he always does, while a small figure of 12,1% says that the manager rarely helps employees resolve conflict situations.

Table 8. Degree of supervisor involvement in conflict situations

Does your supervisor help you resolve conflict situations?

107 პასუხი

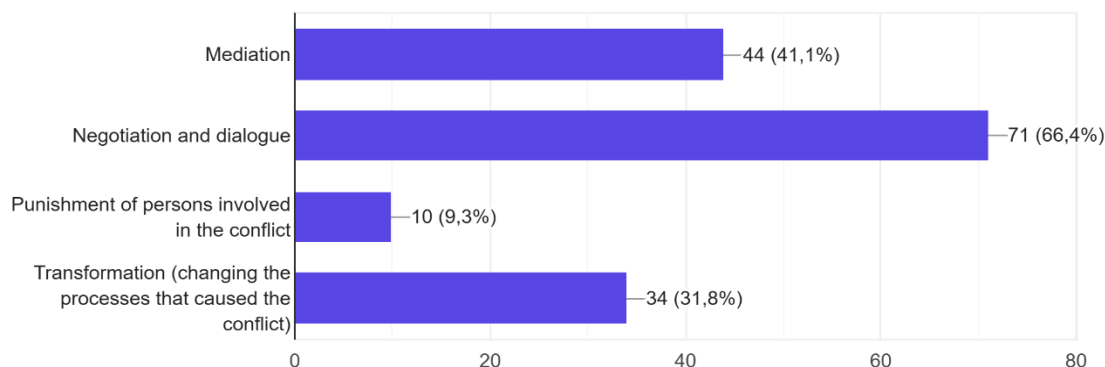


During a conflict situation, a manager can use various methods to resolve it. The next question was about what methods a manager uses during a conflict. Respondents could record several answers to this question at once. The results of the study revealed that managers mainly use negotiation and mediation techniques and 31,8% of respondents also stated that managers also use transformation methods, during which the manager completely changes the processes that caused the conflict.

Table 9. Conflict resolution methods

Which conflict resolution method does your supervisor primarily use?

107 პასუხი



Types of Organizational Conflicts and Ways to Resolve Them

Thus, the results of the study revealed that conflict situations are inevitable. Accordingly, they require proper management and analysis of the problem that caused the conflict.

CONCLUSIONS

Conflicts are an integral part of the functioning of organizations. They are the confrontation of different ideas, needs and attitudes. Conflict damages organizational activities and reduces employee productivity, therefore, it is necessary to manage it properly. The best way to resolve a conflict is through negotiation and cooperation between the parties.

According to the conducted research, it is clear what types of conflicts employees have to deal with. The results show that the majority of the surveyed respondents rarely, but still, face conflict situations, which are caused by different ideas, goals and personal relationships. These conflicts are mainly related to the task and work process; therefore, it can be said that functional type conflicts occur. However, sometimes they also face conflicts related to relationships. As for the way to resolve the conflict, the respondents prefer the way to resolve the conflict through cooperation or compromise. The active involvement of managers in conflict situations is also necessary. The result of the research also shows that a small percentage (12,1%), of respondents' state that their manager rarely helps in resolving the conflict. Accordingly, it is essential that in conflict situations, the manager ensure open communication with the opposing parties and conduct negotiations or change the processes that caused the conflict.

As for the recommendations, the following recommendations are issued based on the results of the study;

- ❖ The parties involved in the conflict should analyze how much this process harms the organization and how the conflict can be resolved.
- ❖ Actively use the strategy of cooperation and compromise to resolve the conflict.
- ❖ When a conflict situation arises, the manager should ensure dialogue and open communication with the parties involved.
- ❖ In order to ensure smooth work, productivity and avoid conflicts, the organization should ensure the well-being of employees and the proper organization of processes.
- ❖ Management should actively listen to all employees and help all parties involved in ending the conflict.
- ❖ Training should be provided for the organization's employees on conflict resolution and management.

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