

## **ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICTS MANAGEMENT**

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**Abstract:** The greatest part of his working hours, a contemporary manager spends in communication – direct conversations, at group meetings, in writing the reports, letters, communication via e-mail. Many experts in the field of organization, management and leadership believe that effective communication is a basis for the effectivity of the organization of any type. Conflicts occur as a consequence of poor communication within an organization, among other things. This paper has a task to examine what are the causes of the conflicts among people, to define them and also to determine the cause and consequences of the conflict and to find the ways in which it would be possible to avoid or overcome the conflicts.

Communication in a contemporary organization is one of the most significant strongholds of successful functioning and the indicator of most values related to the relational aspect of intellectual capital. The relations between the employees, between the employees and consumers, suppliers, associates at all levels make up one of the most important organization's values (Grubić-Nešić, 2006.).

D. Zelenović states the results of one research that was carried out in several companies, which show that:

1. An average business man spends about 60 – 90% of his regular business day engaged in communication, and only 10 – 40% in other activities,
2. Average time spent on daily business communication is further shared in the following way:
  - Listening to associates, business partners, representatives of other companies – 45%,
  - Direct oral information communicating, guidelines issuing and similar jobs – 30%,
  - Reading the reports, proposals, requests and similar demands – 16%,
  - Writing notices, designing the notes, designing the ideas **Error! Bookmark not defined.** – 9% (Zelenović, 1995.).

The term conflict has many meanings and it is used to describe the events that range from internal unrest that occurs because of opposite needs or wishes, to the open violence between entire societies. In the context of organizational behavior, the term conflict primarily describes the examples when individuals or groups of individuals within an organization work against each other instead of working for each other.

We are particularly interested in conflicts that emerge from the field of human work activity, having in mind the fact that work as a conscious and purposeful human activity is developed through a continuous process of creation and resolution of conflicts.

Key elements of conflict are:

- Opposed interests of individuals or groups,
- Recognition of such contradictions,
- Belief of both sides that the other side will thwart its interests,
- Actions that have negative consequences.

Conflict is a psychological situation in which there is an insurmountable obstacle to the accomplishment of individual's goal. Behavioural symptoms that occur until the conflict is resolved are the following:

- Depression,
- Withdrawnness,
- Moodiness,

- Aggression (Marković, 2008.).

Theorists have identified two types of conflicts, as a basis for understanding the way in which group behaviour should be managed. Those are cognitive and objective conflict. One type of conflicts can produce constructive effects, while the other side usually causes the weakening of influence (Table 1.).

**Table 1. Types of conflicts within a group**

<b>COGNITIVE CONFLICT</b>	<b>AFFECTIVE CONFLICT</b>
Related issues	Personified differences
Discussion without arguments	Prejudices lead to provocation
Focused on goals	Time-wasting on behaviour "winner-loser"
Harmless methods of dissent	There is dominance
Avoiding dominance or personal isolation	Main goals get into personal attacks
Open communication	

Source: *Dunđerović, 2004.*

The causes of conflicts at work are numerous and varied. Main causes are, primarily, in economic, technical, social, informational and organizational sphere of human work activity. Numerous empirical research clearly indicate that conflicts are most prominent in economic sphere of relations, which is understandable, if we have in mind the fact that it is mostly about the distribution of wages, premiums, prizes, dividends and the like, and even a slightest disturbance in those relations legally leads to conflicts. The second group of causes of the conflicts refers to technical sphere. It is about (non)provision of appropriate working conditions (lighting, ventilation, microclimate), or it is due to non-compliance with prescribed standards on the use of mandatory means of protection at work, and particularly for workplaces with "specific working conditions". The third group of causes of conflicts at work refers to social sphere, primarily to the nature and character of interpersonal relations. Disturbed interpersonal relations are the sources of gossips, mutual accusations, machinations, including various intrigues. The fourth group of causes refers to the system of informing. Primarily, it is about covering up and blocking the information, or placing untrue or half-true information, daily censorship and sending the "stale" and doctored information about work and operation of the organization. In the company that has a lack of real information, they are, as a rule, replaced by informal, distorted, even false and malicious information, which misinform the employees instead of informing them, particularly if it is about sensitive issues of business: distribution of wages, corruption in promotion and improvement of individual employees and the like. The fifth group of conflict sources comes from poor work organization, poor management system. In the conditions of poor work organization and poor management system, the interests of a large number of work groups, created by the system of labour division, clash. Their social and economic interests are jeopardized. In such relations, a tense situation is created in which management blames direct executors and vice versa, which leads to the creation of various "cliques" of interest and informal groups that, as a rule, encourage the destabilization of a company as a whole (source: <http://www.link-elearning.com/25.11.2010.>)

Conflicts management is a process and activity aimed at prevention of dysfunctional and destructive consequences of conflicts and at routing the energy from conflict situations and opposed groups to the action of identification and problem-solving. The effectiveness of organization depends on the method and success of conflict management. There are various approaches to conflicts management and resolution, with various effects. Those are avoidance, adaptation, confrontation, compromise, cooperation and coalition. In order to manage the conflicts properly, it is necessary to be familiar with conflicts situation,

previous relations between the opposed ones, to know the time of the conflict and the time available for the resolution of conflict (source: <http://wmd.hr/rječnik-pojmovi-u/web/upravljanjekonfliktima/25.11.2010.>)

Organizational conflict is an important subject in the field of organizational behaviour and one of the subjects that reasonably requires our full attention. Several basic models very carefully take into account all the facts, implying that conflict, as organizational and interpersonal process, can most easily be understood when it is spoken about two key dimensions:

- Distribution, concern for own results and
- Integration, concern for the results of the others.

Examination of a great number of evidence indicates that these two dimensions are important and largely independent. Thus, in particular situations, it is possible to take the actions that have a high level of distribution and integration, or low level of both dimensions, or a high level of one and low level of the other dimension.

Combination of these motives is in the basis of five different styles of resolving the conflicts with the others:

- Competition is a style of conflicts resolution that reflects a high level of concern for own interests, but a low level of concern for the interests of others.
- Avoidance reflects a low level of concern in relation to both dimensions.
- Collaboration is looking for maximal results on both sides and it reflects a high level of concern for both dimensions.
- Adaptation is to give the others whatever they want and it is low by distribution and high by integration.
- Compromise is based on dividing the problems in two halves, and and it has a central position with respect to both dimensions. It reflects a moderate level of concern for own interests and the interests of others.

The concept of conflicts management is significantly different than the concept of conflicts resolution. The attitude that conflict needs to be maintained at the same level for problem resolution should be the basis of this concept and we must not insist on an unconditional resolution and elimination of conflict.

There are several methods that can serve for conflicts management. Some methods include the procedures that are suggested for conflicts resolution, which is not unexpected, because in the phase of conflict management, when it needs to be worked on its reduction, it is logical to use the methods for its resolution.

In the theory of conflicts management, the set of methods suggested by Blake and Maunt is most frequently mentioned one:

- Confrontation – phase that aims to present a problem in order to observe its characteristics. It is mostly used for the revival of the conflict and its introduction to the phase of clear confrontation.
- Withdrawal – phase of refraining from discussion. Procedure that ensures for the conflict to die down in the situation when it grows to be too intensive and destructive.
- Enforcement – method in which one party imposes its interest and its point of view. This method corresponds to the method of coercion and threats in conflict resolution.
- Mitigation – method that is oriented on finding common interests of the parties to the conflict. Starting point is the assumption that common interests lead up to conflict mitigation.
- Negotiation – the most common technique where parties to the conflict exchange the offers, counter-offers and concessions. It can be directly or through intermediaries. If the negotiation is successful, the solution that is acceptable to both parties is reached. Negotiation can also be unsuccessful and then it can intensify the conflict.

- Third party intervention – implies the intervention of a person that is not involved in discussion. The third party can assume intervention in mediation or arbitration.
  - o In mediation, the third party aims at bringing the conflicting parties to an agreement, clarifies the issues, enhances communication and suggests a solution. Mediation is often ineffective because it implies a voluntary consent of both parties. Mediators are merely a means for the conflicting parties to reach the solution.
  - o In the arbitration, the arbitrators have more power. They impose their provisions of the agreement and all the elements of the solution that both parties are obliged to accept.
- Compromise – method that is defined in various ways. One of the definitions is that it is a method in which each party gives a little in order to get a little. In the concept of conflicts management, it does not bring anything new and it is based on conflict mitigation. This strategy is characterized by concern for oneself and the others, because both parties need to give up a part of their interests in order to reach a common solution. This logic is not so easily accepted by those conflicting parties that have greater power. Very often, it is not so easily accepted by equal parties as well, because giving up a part of the interests is an ability that requires the maturity of an individual, as well as the maturity of social environment. Reaching a compromise largely leads up to final resolution of conflicts, because compromise is the result of will and agreement between opposed parties. Compromise is the highest achievement of our civilization in conflicts resolution.

Authors of this paper have sought to determine the effects of conflicts in organizations from the territory of the city of Požarevac, i.e. whether and to what extent the conflicts affect the working atmosphere in enterprises. The research goal was to examine to what extent the conflict is present in communication among the employees in enterprises, at what levels the conflict most frequently occurs and what measures are taken to eliminate conflict situations. For the needs of this paper, an appropriate questionnaire is created, which is distributed on a sample of 120 respondents. The questionnaire was anonymous and meant for the employed individuals who attend some of the courses in the agency „CODEX“. The following hypothesis were set on theoretic work basis and rich literature, both the older and more contemporary, which perceives conflicts as relevant factors that affect the creation of bad working atmosphere in work organizations:

General hypothesis

H<sub>0</sub> – Conflicts are the relevant factors in the process of designing the communication.

Specific hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub> The employees in enterprises consider that working atmosphere is average.

H<sub>2</sub> The age is a relevant factor in the creation of conflict situations

H<sub>3</sub> Conflicts occur in enterprises

H<sub>4</sub> Employees in enterprises believe that conflict is destructive

H<sub>5</sub> Conflicts most frequently occur at the same hierarchical level

By analyzing the results obtained from the survey, we can conclude that the sample of 120 respondents includes 30% of male respondents and 70% of female respondents. (Table 2.)

**Table 2. Respondents' gender**

Respondents' gender	Answers offered	Frequency of answers	%
Employees	Male	36	30
	Female	84	70
	Σ	120	100

As for the age of respondents, the least number of respondents is aged 46 to 56 (13%). We can conclude that there are a lot of young people employed in the enterprises in Požarevac. About 27% of respondents are aged up to 25 years, 29% of them are aged 26 to 35 and 31% of the respondents is aged 36 to 45 (Table 3.)

**Table 3. Respondents' age**

Respondents' age	Answers offered	Frequency of answers	%
Employees	Up to 25 years	33	27,50
	From 26 to 35 years	35	29,17
	From 36 to 45 years	37	30,83
	From 46 to 56 years	15	12,50
	Σ	120	100,00

About 86% of respondents believe that their working potential is average used. About 12% believe that their working potential is not used, while 2% of respondents believe that their working potential is maximally used (Table 4.).

**Table 4. To what extent is your working potential used in your workplace?**

Type of respondents	Answers offered	Frequency of answers	%
Employees	Above average	2	1,67
	Average	103	85,83
	Below average	15	12,50
	Σ	120	100,00

Almost all respondents, 90% of them, believe that working atmosphere in organizations is average. Only 4% of respondents believe that it is below average, while 6% believe that it is very good for work. Based on this question, the specific hypothesis H1 can be confirmed (Table 5.).

**Table 5. How do you assess the working atmosphere in your organization?**

Type of respondents	Answers offered	Frequency of answers	%
Employees	Below average	5	4,17
	Very good and suitable for work	7	5,83
	Working atmosphere is average	108	90,00
	Σ	120	100,00

As for the relations with colleagues, majority of respondents, about 46%, believe that they could do their job better if interpersonal relationships were better. About 37% of respondents believe that the most important thing is for the colleagues to be fair in joint tasks, and they are not interested in their private life. Only 16% of respondents socialize with colleagues from work after working hours. (Table 6.).

**Table 6. What are your relations with colleagues like?**

Type of respondents	Answers offered	Frequency of answers	%
Employees	It is important that my colleagues are fair in joint task and in I am not interested in their private life	45	37,50
	I think I would do my job better if interpersonal relations were better	56	46,67
	Even after working hours, I socialize with my colleagues	19	15,83
	Σ	120	100,00

By analyzing the distribution of answers in Table 7, we reach the conclusion that the age is a relevant factor in creating a relationship with colleagues. We can conclude that younger respondents socialize with their colleagues more than the older ones. Younger respondents make friends more easily than older respondents. Respondents up to 25 years, more than 50% of them, socialize with their colleagues after the working hours.

Based on this question, we can confirm the additional hypothesis H2 (Table 7.).

**Table 7. The age and relations with colleagues**

Respondents' age	Answers offered	Up to 25	26-35	36-45	46-56	Frequency of answers	%
Employees	It is important that my colleagues are fair in joint task and in I am not interested in their private life	4	5	28	8	45	37,5
	I think I would do my job better if interpersonal relations were better	12	28	9	7	56	46,7
	Even after working hours, I socialize with my colleagues	17	2	0	0	19	15,8
	Σ	33	35	37	15	120	100

When we speak about the the relation with the superior, we can conclude that more than a half of respondents, i.e. 55% of them believe that the superior only assigns tasks and that he is occasionally willing to listen the ideas of employees. About 28% believes that the superior is always willing to hear the ideas of employees and to discuss about them. While 17% of respondents believes that superiors cooperate on the route: command – report on execution. (Table 8.).

**Table 8. What are your relations with immediate superiors like?**

Respondents	Answers offered	Frequency of answers	%
Radnici	He is willing to listen to the ideas and discuss them	34	28,33
	Mostly assigns tasks and he is occasionally willing to hear my ideas	66	55,00
	We work by the system: command – report on execution	20	16,67
	Σ	120	100,00

By the analysis of responses, we can conclude that conflicts occur in enterprises. Namely, about 90% of respondents believe that conflict situations exist or that they have existed in enterprises in Požarevac. Only 11% of respondents do not think in the same way.

Based on this question, we can confirm additional hypothesis H3 (Table 9.).

**Table 9. Are there any conflicts in your working organization?**

Respondents	Answers offered	Frequency of answers	%
Employees	Yes, there are	58	48,33
	They occur in particular sectors	49	40,83
	No, there aren't	13	10,84

	Σ		120		100,00
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About 77% of respondents believe that conflict is destructive, about 22% of respondents believe that conflict is partially constructive as well, while 1% of respondents believe that conflict is constructive (table 10.).

**Table 10. What is your opinion of conflict?**

Respondents	Answers offered	Frequency of answers	%
Employees	Conflict is constructive	2	1,67
	Conflict is partially constructive	26	21,67
	It is destructive	92	76,67
	Σ	120	100,00

The respondents believe that their colleagues have a similar opinion about conflict. Almost all respondents, about 71% believe that the others also think that conflict is destructive. About 25% believe that other colleagues from work find that conflict is partially constructive as well, while 4% believe that their colleagues think that conflict is constructive.

Based on this question, we can confirm the additional hypothesis H4. (Table 11.).

**Table 11. In your opinion, how do the others in your work environment look at the conflict?**

Type of respondents	Answers offered	Frequency of answers	%
Employees	Conflict is constructive and functional	5	4,17
	Conflict is partially constructive	30	25,00
	Conflict is destructive and non-functional	85	70,83
	Σ	120	100,00

About 56% of respondents believe that conflicts most frequently occur at the same hierarchical level, while 24% of respondents believe that conflicts exist among the employees and superiors, while 20% of respondents believe that conflicts occur between employees in various sectors regardless of the hierarchical level.

Based on this question, we can confirm additional hypothesis H5 (Table 12.).

**Table 12. At which levels the conflict most frequently occurs in your organization?**

Type of respondents	Answers offered	Frequency of answers	%
Employees	Between the employees at the same hierarchical level	67	55,83
	Between the employees and superiors	24	20,00
	Between the employees in different sectors regardless on the hierarchical level	29	24,17
	Σ	120	100,00

Majority of respondents 82% believe that in the enterprises of Požarevac, only those conflicts that are directly related to productivity are solved, while 18% of respondents believe that the conflicts are always solved. There were no respondents who think that there are no conflicts in enterprises (Table 13.).

For the resolution of conflicts and creation of healthy working environment, the respondents are willing to greatly solve the conflicts during the working hours – about 82% of them, while only 17% of respondents are willing to stay after the working hours to resolve the conflict (table 14).

**Table 13. In reality, are the conflicts in your organization resolved?**

Type of respondents	Answers offered	Frequency of answers	%
Employees	Yes, we always solve the conflicts	22	18,33
	We solve only those that are directly related to productivity	98	81,67
	We do not have any conflicts in organization	0	-
	Σ	120	100,00

**Table 14. In order to resolve the conflicts and create a healthy working environment, you are willing to:**

Type of respondents	Answers offered	Frequency of answers	%
Employees	Work on the resolution of problems during the working hours	98	81,67
	Stay after working hours, if necessary	21	17,50
	My workplace is such that it does not leave time for such a thing	1	0,83
	Σ	120	100,00

The occurrence of conflicts directly influences the creation of bad working environment. We have concluded that conflicts and good working environment are in inverse proportion. As we know, good working environment affects better performance. For that reason, managers must create participation models of group behaviour, settle the conflicts in a constructive way and give active participation in decision-making to employees at lower hierarchical level. Elimination of conflicts is an important factor for the creation of good atmosphere necessary for good performance. Based on these findings and confirmation of additional hypotheses, we reach the final conclusion and confirmation of general hypothesis, i.e. that the conflicts are relevant factors in the process designing the communication.

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