



# International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research (IJSBAR)

ISSN 2307-4531  
(Print & Online)

<http://gssrr.org/index.php?journal=JournalOfBasicAndApplied>



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## Conflict Resolution in Organization through Strategic Management

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### Abstract:

This study reveals the *conflict Resolution in organization through Strategic management*. There are different causes of conflicts within Organization and impact of conflicts on organization performance. The past decade researches identify the negative relation of conflict with employee performance. The research methodology was case study approach of different National and Multinational companies. The aim of study is to alleviate conflicts in organization through strategic management for enhancing organizational performance and managing change in order to attain competitive edge in this dynamic era.

This paper covers the role of strategic management in resolving and minimizing conflict that brings positive impact on organization. Conflict in the workplace just seems to be a fact of life. The fact that conflict exists, however, is not necessarily a bad thing: As long as it is resolved effectively, it can lead to personal and professional growth. Conflict in the workplace is a painful reality and a key reason for poor productivity and frustration. Conflict does not magically go away and only gets worse when ignored. So to resolve conflicts strategic management is important.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Conflict Resolution, Strategic Management, Organizational performance.

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### **1.0 Introduction:**

Conflict is inevitable among humans. When two or more social entities have different attitudes, values, beliefs, and skills. Small irritating events such as negative attitudes occur repeatedly over time and can cause people to strike out at each other. In many cases, conflict occurs at the senior level of the organization. It is all about conflict, a normal and natural part of our workplace. Conflict can be helpful in making necessary changes within the home or work environment. However, unresolved conflict can result in feelings of dissatisfaction, unhappiness, hopelessness, depression, and other emotions. It can result in behaviors such as physical or emotional withdrawal, resignation from jobs, dissolution of personal relations, aggression, and even violence. In these situations some kind of intervention is needed. Anything that disrupts the office, impacts on productivity or poses a threat to other employees needs addressing. The degree to which one tolerates a situation before intervention may vary. A manager may not feel it necessary to intervene when a minor exchange of words occurs between employees unless such an incident becomes a daily occurrence and expands beyond the employees initially involved. However, a situation where one employee threatens another requires immediate action.

### **2.0 Conflicts:**

“Conflict is the perception of differences of interests among people” [1].

Another definition of conflict

“A process of social interaction involving a struggle over claims to resources, power and status, beliefs, and other preferences and desires. The aims of the parties in conflict may extend from simply attempting to gain acceptance of a preference, or securing a resource advantage, to the extremes of injuring or eliminating opponents” [2].

### **3.0 Conflict in Organizations:**

Organizations are living systems consisting of interacting units performing a task in a mutually dependent manner within a structure of scarce resources [4]. It seems commonplace to suggest that conflicts would be present in such a setting. The parties in an organization may have a conflict about the distribution of resources, or they may have a more fundamental conflict about the very structure of their organization and the basic nature of their interaction [5]. Once the parties are in a situation of goal incompatibility, their conflict develops in a dynamic fashion, initiating valuable and much-needed constructive changes or leading to escalating strategies and destructive consequences [6].

### **4.0 Process of conflict:**

Process of conflict consists of 4 stages or levels according to which the development of relationships between the sides involved in conflict is shown [16].

#### **4.1 Latent stage:**

In which certain characteristics, like communication, structure and personal variables, can lead to conflict. It is important to point out that it is not necessary to have the simultaneous occurrence of all three factors, but occurrence of just one. Communication in organization is very important, in case there is lack of communication in the organization this can lead to conflict. But also to much communication, as well as obstacles in communication, possible lack of understanding or noise in the communication channel can produce conflict as a consequence.

#### **4.2 Cognition and Personalization**

Stage represents the outcome of the impact of first phase factors.

There are two sub stages in this stage:

- Perception of the participants in conflict which does not mean that conflict has occurred,
- Not until there has come to articulation of feelings and expression of awareness of conflict, can we say that the conflict itself occurs

#### **4.3 Conflict Manifestation:**

There is hostile behavior among participants in conflict and we say there comes to the so called open disagreement.

#### **4.4 Conflict Outcome:**

The last stage in this process of conflict is the conflict outcome which shows the further relationship development of the participants in conflict and consequences of conflict. Consequences of conflict can be manifest through increased working efficacy of the organization in whole or quite the contrary, the decrease of working efficacy.

#### **5.0 Types of Conflict:**

Conflicts that originate in the individual person, conflicts that have their basis in the relationship between individuals, and conflicts that occur as a result of interactions between groups [7]. These may be described as:

- (1) Intrapersonal conflict
- (2) Interpersonal conflict
- (3) Interdepartmental conflict

#### **5.1 Intrapersonal Conflict:**

Intrapersonal conflict is internal to the individual and is perhaps the most difficult form of conflict to analyze and manage. Intrapersonal conflict is basically a conflict between two incompatible tendencies. It arises when a stimulus evokes two different and incompatible tendencies and the individual is required to discriminate between these tendencies. In such a situation it is common for individuals to experience frustrations and to allow their conflict situation to be expressed in a range of behavioral strategies ranging from apathy and boredom to absenteeism, excessive drinking or destructive behavior [8].

#### **5.2 Interpersonal Conflict:**

Interpersonal conflict emphasizes the interaction of human factors in an organization.

There are two classes of factors as conflict sources.

**5.2.1 Personal.** Individuals are not identical, constant or consistent. When two individuals are brought together and kept together, each with his own qualities, needs and skills, a conflict may ensue if their attributes are not meshed together in a coordinated way. Interaction between individuals with different attitudes, values and needs can produce conflict behavior and affect organizational performance [9].

**5.2.2 Functional.** Individuals in organizations have roles which are expected sets of behavior associated with their position. In theory, individuals are not expected to engage in any discretionary behavior. Such specification would be consistent with organizational preferences for consistency and predictability. In practice, however, role specifications tend to be ambiguous and incomplete, and in their interaction with others, some individuals often feel dissatisfied with their role or position, or they may feel that their aspirations for higher positions are being frustrated [9].

#### **5.3 Interdepartmental Conflict:**

The third major cause of organizational conflict is structural. Organizations are designed around product lines, regions or technical specialties. These activities are assigned to departments that often have mutually exclusive structured interests and goals and that interact within a framework of scarce resources and task dependence. When resources are relatively fixed and when one department's gain is at the expense of another, conflict should be expected [10].

Factors which affect the interaction structure between departments and create the conditions for interdepartmental conflict include:

- Different attitudes between line and staff units
- Organizational size (directly related to level of conflict)
- Standardization(inversely related to conflict)
- Physical or communicational barriers between departments
- Unequal access to authority rewards or organizational resources
- Ambiguity or uncertainty in assigning tasks or rewards to different departments[11].

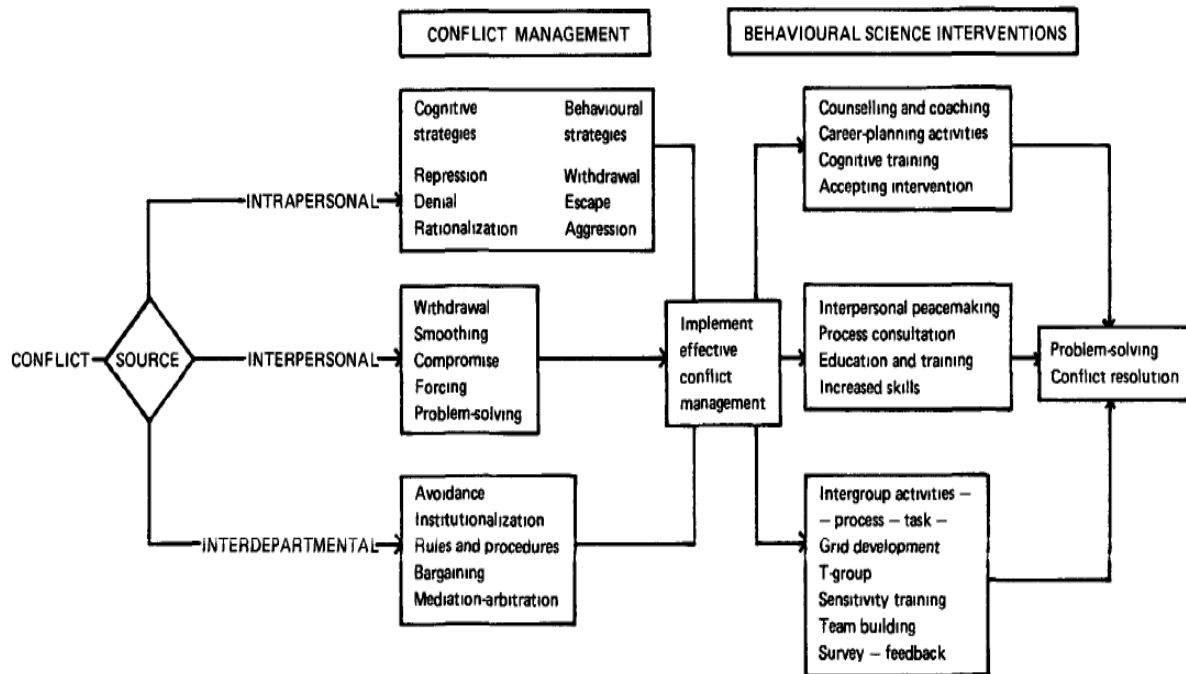


Figure 1 [11]

### 6.0 Conflict Management:

A moderate amount of conflict, handled in a constructive fashion, is necessary for attaining an optimum level of organizational effectiveness. Unfortunately, there are still people who recommend conflict elimination.

Conflict management skills are important for managers and that managers are interested in learning more about organizational conflict and its management.

### 7.0 Conflict-Handling Modes:

When people find themselves in conflict, their behavior can be described in terms of where it lies along two independent dimensions assertiveness and cooperativeness.

Assertiveness is the degree to which you try to satisfy your own concerns, and cooperativeness the degree to which you try to satisfy the other person's concerns. The figure below shows the main choices in a conflict the conflict-handling modes.

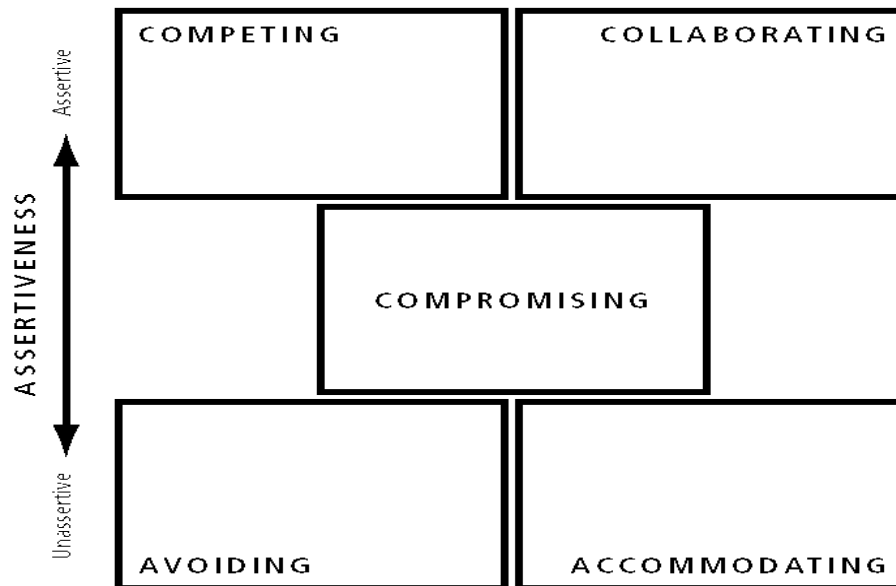


Figure 2

**7.1 Competitive:** It creates win lose situation. People who tend towards a competitive style take a firm stand and know what they want. They usually operate from a position of power, drawn from things like position, rank, expertise, or persuasive ability.

*Use:*

- This style can be useful when there is an emergency and a decision needs to be made fast.
- When the decision is unpopular; or when defending against someone who is trying to exploit the situation selfishly. However it can leave people feeling bruised, unsatisfied and resentful when used in less urgent situations.

**7.2 Collaborative:** It creates win-win situation. People tending towards a collaborative style try to meet the needs of all people involved. These people can be highly assertive but unlike the competitor, they cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important.

*Use:*

This style is useful when you need to bring together a variety of viewpoints to get the best solution.

- When there have been previous conflicts in the group.
- When the situation is too important for a simple trade-off.

**7.3 *Compromising:*** It creates Lose-lose situation. People who prefer a compromising style try to find a solution that will at least partially satisfy everyone. Everyone is expected to give up something and the compromiser him- or she also expects to relinquish something.

*Use:*

- Compromise is useful when the cost of conflict is higher than the cost of losing ground
- When equal strength opponents are at a standstill.
- When there is a deadline looming.

**7.4 *Accommodating:*** It creates Win-win situation. This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at the expense of the person's own needs. The accommodator often knows when to give in to others, but can be persuaded to surrender a position even when it is not warranted. This person is not assertive but is highly cooperative.

*Use:*

- Accommodation is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party
- when peace is more valuable than winning
- When you want to be in a position to collect on this "favor" you gave.

However people may not return favors, and overall this approach is unlikely to give the best outcomes.

**7.5 *Avoiding:*** It creates Lose-lose situation. People tending towards this style seek to evade the conflict entirely. This style is typified by delegating controversial decisions, accepting default decisions, and not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings.

*Use:*

- It can be appropriate when victory is impossible
- When the controversy is trivial
- When someone else is in a better position to solve the problem

However in many situations this is a weak and ineffective approach to take.

Once you understand the different styles, you can use them to think about the most appropriate approach (or mixture of approaches) for the situation you're in. You can also think about your own instinctive approach, and learn how you need to change this if necessary. Ideally you can adopt an approach that meets the situation, resolves the problem, respects people's legitimate interests, and mends damaged working relationships.

## **8.0 Making Conflict Management a Strategic Advantage:**

### **8.1 *Building Conflict Management Skills:***

Once individuals learn their styles, training and coaching can help them develop three levels of skills to supplement the skills they already have.

### **8.1.1 Choosing the Right Conflict Mode:**

The most fundamental conflict skill is the ability to select the conflict mode that will be most productive for a given situation. For example if there are personality conflicts in organization they have strong negative consequences in organizations and should be avoided. Conflicts become personalized when people focus their energy and attention on what is wrong with each other rather than on substantive conflict issues. People become irritated with each other, engage in blame, express anger, and otherwise behave negatively toward each other. This negative emotionality interferes with decision making, undermines cohesiveness, reduces job satisfaction, and increases turnover. So to solve any conflict related issues in organization management should choose the right conflict mode.

### **8.1.2 Implementing a Mode Effectively:**

The second level of skill involves successfully implementing the conflict-handling mode you have chosen. Because collaborating is especially important for decision quality, conflict management programs tend to ensure that people learn key skills for collaborative problem solving.

### **8.1.3 Reducing the Costs of a Mode:**

The third level of skill involves reducing the costs, or negative consequences, of the mode you have chosen. Managers who are less skilled at conflict management often accept some collateral damages normal or inevitable, rationalizing that “You have to break some eggs to make an omelet.”

In contrast, more adept managers find ways to minimize these costs. For example, managers can learn how to compete when necessary without antagonizing people, how to avoid an issue without being evasive, how to accommodate without looking weak, and so on [12].

## **8.2 Involving Top Management:**

Human resources departments can take responsibility for training programs on conflict management, and these programs alone will help an organization. Looking at organizations that have made conflict management a core competency, however, it is clear that top management must also be actively involved in building openness into the organization’s culture and modeling constructive conflict management.

### **8.2.1 Building Openness into the Culture:**

Each organization’s culture has a built-in mind-set about conflict. As a result, different cultures seem to favor different conflict modes. The prevailing mind-set in some organizations is that conflict is threat to relationships and team cohesiveness, so people should do what they can to accommodate others’ views and needs. Some organizations view conflict mostly as a potential drain on time and energy, so conflict issues should be avoided whenever possible. Other organizations see conflict as a challenge to one’s credibility and authority, so one needs to counter it strongly that is, take competitive stand and protect one’s position. Still other organizations see mutual concessions and compromise as the only pragmatic way to settle conflicts.

### **8.2.2 Improving Strategic Decision Making:**

When top managers manage conflict constructively, they do more than provide examples for others. They also improve their strategic decision making [13].

#### **8.2.2.1 Case Study:**

Dartmouth professor Sydney Finkelstein studied business failures highly unsuccessful strategic decisions. His team of researchers identified 51 companies that had suffered a major business failure, collecting extensive interview and documentary evidence. They found an impressive consistency across all the cases. These organizations operated in a way that stifled dissenting views, allowing bad decisions to be made and then dismissing evidence that things were going badly. Surprisingly, the failures all involved organizations and CEOs with a strong track record of success, which was part of the problem. These top managers' assumptions and mind-sets had worked so well in the past that they shut off dissenting information in new situations that didn't fit their preconceptions. Particularly risky situations included new business ventures, innovation and change, mergers and acquisitions, and unexpected moves from competitors all of which introduced new uncertainties. Rather than welcoming new information in these situations, the top managers shut it out and seemed more focused on demonstrating their superior expertise.

Essentially, then, they adopted a competitive style that pushed their own positions. They tended to intimidate others, acted as though they knew it all, often got rid of people who weren't wholly supportive, and stubbornly clung to ideas that had worked in the past. Finkelstein's major recommendations, then, involve creating a culture of openness and open-mindedness where people can safely tell each other the truth, as well as creating multiple arenas for debate, feedback, and critical thinking [14].

### ***8.3 Using the Modes in Team Building and Intervention:***

As organizations become flatter, more decisions are being made by teams including cross-functional teams and committees. Members of these teams are often selected for their diversity of experience or as representatives of different functional areas, so conflicts are frequent. In addition, team conflicts come with their own unique sets of challenges. So even when top management is actively involved in setting an example and people throughout the organization have received training in the basics of constructive conflict management, teams will still need help transitioning to the new behaviors. Organizations need to have the capacity to help new teams set appropriate norms for themselves and to intervene in established teams that have trouble managing conflict effectively. Three kinds of lessons are especially important here.

#### ***8.3.1 Appreciating Different Styles:***

Team members often resent and misunderstand teammates with conflict styles different from their own. Each conflict style comes with an underlying set of values, and people with a given style tend to see other styles as neglecting or opposing their values. For example, accommodators, who tend to value support and generosity, may see competitors as insensitive, mean-spirited, or selfish.

Likewise, competitors, who tend to value tough-mindedness and having the courage of one's convictions, may see accommodators as soft or wishy-washy. Team members can benefit from learning that teammates with all five conflict styles have positive values and are trying to make a positive contribution to the team. Competitors are trying to champion courses of action that they believe to be sound and to move things along, accommodators are trying to maintain and build team goodwill and cohesiveness, and so on for the other conflict styles. Each tends to specialize in some aspects of group performance and to be especially good at dealing with certain kinds of situations. Understanding the positive intentions and contributions of each style reduces resentments over style differences and makes it easier for team members to listen to each other. They can then learn from one another's insights.



### 8.3.2 Reducing “Excessive” Behaviors:

Each conflict style can help a team be more effective when used in appropriate situations. Avoiding, for example, is appropriate with relatively unimportant issues, with dangerous issues (including personality issues), and when postponement would allow the team to collect more information to make a better decision. Each style also comes with “temptations” that should be guarded against. These temptations involve behaviors that are excessive in some way and create problems for the team. For example, avoiders may miss meetings, not return e-mails or phone calls, withhold information, procrastinate, or engage in foot-dragging. Competitors may monopolize a discussion, not listen to others, exaggerate, attack others, or actively block a decision that is going against them. Collaborators may overanalyze problems that don’t require it, take up too much group time with decisions they could make themselves, or continue to try to find consensus when it isn’t working or there isn’t enough time. Compromisers and accommodators have similar lists. It is important to help team members become aware of these temptations so that they can guard against them in their own behavior and give feedback to teammates when they slip into these patterns.

### 8.3.3 Overcoming the Challenges of Team Style:

Just as individuals have styles that emphasize different conflict modes, so do teams. A team’s conflict style depends on the styles of its members especially those of its formal leader and any other members who are particularly influential. Teams with different conflict styles tend to operate with very different behaviors and have quite different atmospheres. For example, competitor teams are likely to exhibit many asserting/defending interchanges and to have an intense and “edgy” feel. In collaborator teams, in contrast, people tend to listen to each other and to build on one another’s comments, with an atmosphere that is more exploratory and open-minded. Even though each conflict style is an attempt to make a positive contribution to the team, these styles often have unintended consequences at the team level [15].

## 9.0 The Relationship between the Level of Conflict and the Level of Organizational Performance:

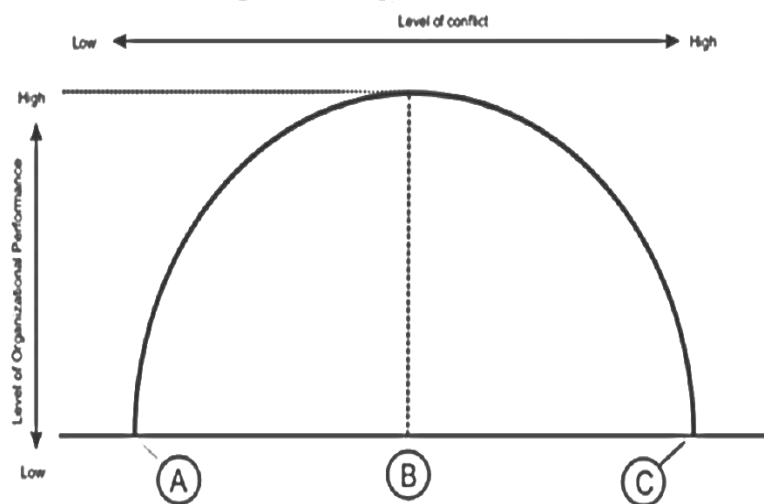


Figure 3 [17]

Figure 3 above shows the relationship between the level of conflict and the level of organizational performance. Depiction shows the division on levels A, B, and C, each showing the effects conflicts can have on organization. Level A shows the low level of conflict in organization which results in low level of organizational performance. By encouraging conflicts in level A we land at the optimum level of conflict, where there is a high level of organizational performance and the medium level of conflict. This level of conflict is marked as B in the figure. If conflicts continue to escalate, we arrive at the third level, in which the level of performance decreases, and is marked by C in the figure. The organization should always strive towards the optimal level of conflict, because only reasonable conflicts have positive effects on organization. On the contrary conflicts will result in negative consequences for the organization, as well as for an individual as the party in the conflict.

### **9.1 The case of showing the conflicts in Slavonija – Baranja organizations:**

For the purpose of conforming the above mentioned about the impact of conflicts on organization, concept of conflict from employees' point of view and most frequently used styles of managing conflict, used besides secondary data, also primary data for making of this paper by making a research.

### **9.2 Purpose of Research:**

The purpose of research is to find out

- How often do the employees enter into conflicts with their colleagues and superiors.
- Whether they think that conflicts have an impact on their economic operator's business results.
- Which conflict management styles they most frequently use when directly involved in the conflict.

The research involved employees of four organizations from Slavonija and Baranja area, which were ready to cooperate.

### **9.3 Research Questionnaires:**

Questionnaires were used for the needs of the research, and the questionnaires were handed in to the employees in person. There were 146 examinees (the employees from four organizations from Slavonija and Baranja area).

The questionnaire comprised 6 units which comprised the elements of organizational behavior, and one unit concerned the issues of conflicts and conflict managing systems in organizations. The questions in the questionnaire were scaled by "closed" answers with offered modality characteristics. Pursuant to the theme of the paper researcher point out results of importance for the presentation of this work. They used a PC based program SPSS (*Statistical Package for Social Sciences*) for the statistic analysis of the collected data.

From the questioning of the examinees about the influence of conflicts on business performance of their organization from Table 1. They obtained the visible data which are categorized into several segments: demography (sex, age group, the level of education, workplace, years of service and realized income, and a kind of ownership structure in the organization), and they presented the results according to the contentment by the communication in the organization, as well as to the influence the employees have on decision making in the organization [18].

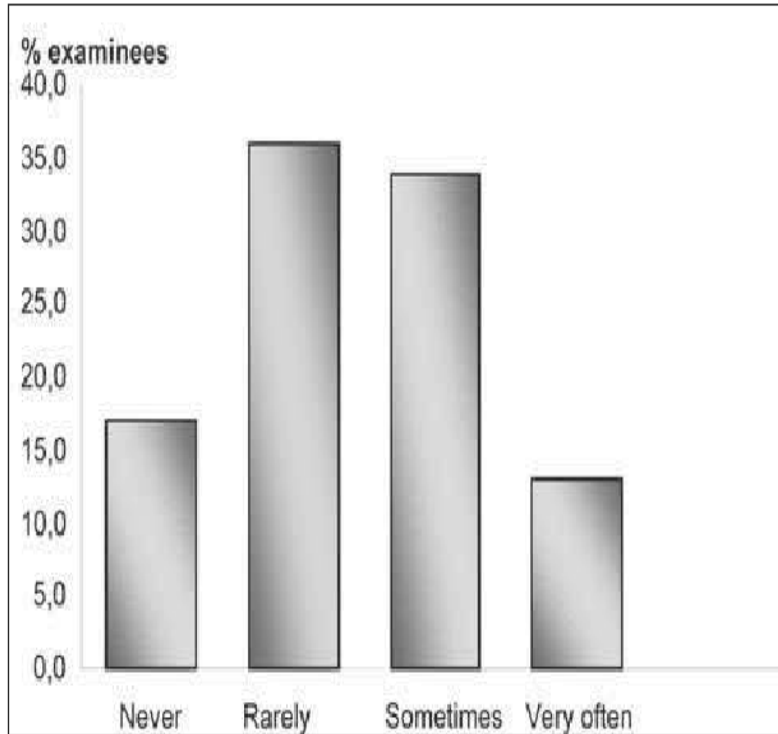
Table 1. *The impact of conflicts on business performance of the organization*

	Do the conflicts have an impact on business performance of Your organization?					
	n	%	Yes	Partially	No	sig.hk
Sex	146	100	24,6	43,1	32,1	0,18
Male	50	34.2	20,0	38,0	42,0	
Female	96	65.7	27,0	45,8	27,0	
Age group	146	100	24,6	43,1	32,1	0,22
to 30 years of age	36	24.6	36,1	33,3	30,5	
aged between 31 and 40	31	21.2	16,1	38,7	45,1	
aged between 41 and 50	52	35.6	19,2	53,8	26,9	
aged between 51 and 60	27	18.4	29,6	40,7	29,6	
The level of education	146	100	24,6	43,1	32,1	0,07
Without high education	65	44.5	15,3	47,6	36,9	
With high education and more	81	55.4	22	39,5	28,3	
Employment	146	100	24,6	43,1	32,1	0,06
First employment	68	46.5	23,5	38,2	38,2	
Second employment	43	29.4	37,2	41,8	20,9	
Third employment and upwards	35	23.9	11,4	54,2	34,2	
Years of service	144	100	24,6	43,1	32,1	0,00
to 5 years of service	42	29.1	45,2	30,9	23,8	
5 and more years of service	102	70.8	16,6	47	36,2	
Income	142	100	24,6	43,1	32,1	0,30
to the average salary in RH	58	40.8	17,2	46,5	36,2	
more than the average salary in RH	84	59.1	28,5	40,4	30,9	
Kind of ownership	146	100	24,6	43,1	32,1	0,03
Private sector	78	53.4	16,6	43,5	39,7	
Government sector	68	46.5	33,8	42,6	23,5	
Communication	146	100	24,6	43,1	32,1	0,00
Dissatisfied by the communication	24	16.4	0	37,5	62,5	
Satisfied by the communication	122	83.5	29,5	44,2	26,2	
Influence on decision-making	144	100	24,6	43,1	32,1	0,00
With influence	43	29.8	32,5	44,1	23,2	
Without influence	67	46.5	17,9	32,8	49,2	
Cannot estimate the influence	34	23.6	29,4	58,8	11,7	

It is interesting that the male examinees mostly agree that conflicts do not have influence on business performance of the organization, whereas female examinees consider that they partially do have an influence on business

performance of the organization. According to the years of service in the organization the employees to the five years of service consider that conflicts have a considerable influence on business performance of the organization, whereas employees with five and more years of service consider that conflicts have only partial influence or generally do not have influence on business performance of the organization [19].

### *. Conflict with colleagues and superiors rate*



**Figure 4** [20]

Figure 4 shows the obtained results of the total sample on the question: How often do the examinees enter into conflicts with colleagues and superiors in the organization?

The obtained answer is that almost 17% of the examinees almost never enter a conflict, while 36% of the examinees enter a conflict rarely. This sometimes happens by the 34% of the examinees, while 13% of the examinees often enter the conflicts with their colleagues and superiors in their organization.

## Conflict management styles

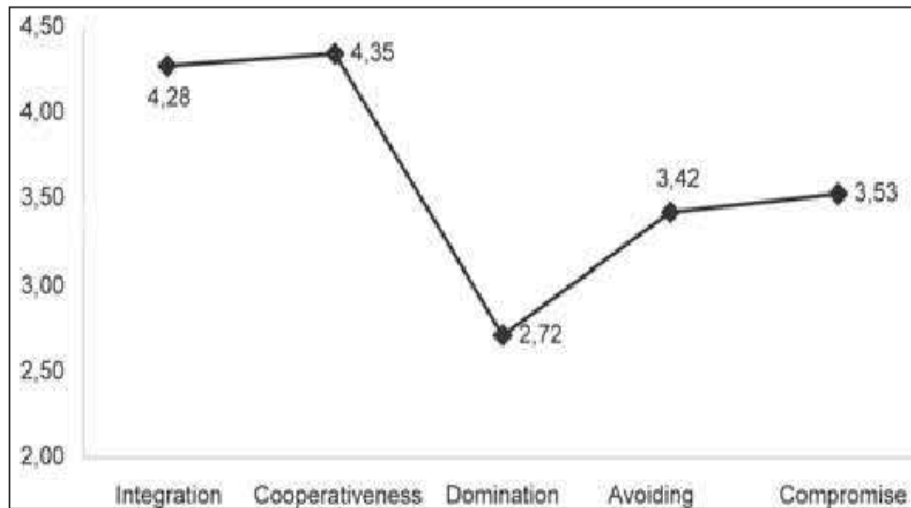


Figure 5 [21]

The examinees were posed statements which characterized individual conflict management styles according to which the examinees expressed their compliance with the statements according to given modality characteristics (1 – never; 2 – rarely; 3 – sometimes; 4 – often; 5 – always). According to figure 7 it can be seen that the employees by resolving conflicts mostly use cooperation as a conflict management style, which is characterized by high cooperation, and the conflict is resolved by putting the other party's interests before its own [21].

### 10.0 Conclusion:

Conflict is the part of human life it is impossible to avoid it in business life. No matter if the organization appears as an economic operator of the economy of a certain country or practices some other services, its employees will more or less enter conflicts. Modern organizations have recognized the necessity of conflicts and do not run away from the conflicts among its employees. Moreover, organizations frequently decide to encourage the conflicts within the organization. The key roles have the managers on different levels of organization that should be educated on the basics of organizational behavior, with the emphasis on conflict management. Only if the managers properly estimate the level of conflict within the organization, then they will be able to decide on the reduction or encouragement of conflicts. The aim of conflict management is to accomplish the optimal level of conflicts on which the level of organizational performance is the highest. This paper also explored the key elements of a strategy for making conflict management a core competency in organization. Conflict management has a strategic advantage for an organization with resulting improvements in productivity, retention and decision making.

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