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Conflict Management by Increasing its Functionality in Case of Lithuanian Organizations

The paper analyses how to manage conflict by increasing the level of conflict functionality. A quantitative survey of employees in Lithuanian organizations case revealed the functionality of different conflict types and conflict management strategies as well as the characteristics of the organizational environment that reduce it.

Keywords: conflict in organization, conflict management, conflict management strategies, conflict types, functional conflicts.

Straipsnyje pateikiama, kaip valdyti konfliktų lygį didinant jų funkcionalumą. Atlikus kiekybinę Lietuvos organizacijų darbuotojų apklausą, paaiškėjo skirtingų konfliktų tipų ir konfliktų valdymo strategijų funkcionalumas bei jį mažinančios organizacinės aplinkos charakteristikos.

Raktiniai žodžiai: konfliktai organizacijose, konfliktų valdymas, konfliktų valdymo strategijos, konfliktų tipai, funkciniai konfliktai.

Introduction

The ways in which conflicts are managed in organizations determine conflict resolution and outcome (Trudel, Reio, 2011). Conflicts are frequently escalated not by the root cause of the conflict but by the tension in the conflict situation that arises from differences in understanding how conflict should be managed (Ting-Toomey, Gau, Trubisky, Yang, Kim, Lin, and Nishida, 1991).

Numerous studies indicate that dysfunctional and poorly managed conflicts in organizations negatively affect productivity and job performance (Meyer, 2004), organizational commitment (Thomas, Bliese and Jex, 2005), workplace behaviours (Kisamore, Jawahar, Liguori, Mharapara, Stone, 2010), increases employee absenteeism (Giebels and Janssen, 2005), and workplace incivility (Bartlett, 2010) or even workplace violence (Morris-Conley and Kern, 2003).

If conflicts are mismanaged, this leads to even more conflicts in the organization in the future (Meyer, 2004), and conversely, at the individual level effective conflict management staff are seen

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as more competent communicators and more appropriate for leadership roles (Gross and Guerrero, 2000).

Thus, **the research problem** is how to manage conflict by increasing its functionality in case of Lithuanian organizations.

The research object is conflict management and its functionality in case of Lithuanian organizations and **the research aim** is to suggest how to manage conflict by increasing its functionality in case of Lithuanian organizations. **The research objectives**: (1) to analyse conflict management and its functionality in organizations, (2) to investigate conflict management and its functionality in Lithuanian organizations, and (3) to discuss the ways to raise the degree of functionality of conflict management in a case of Lithuanian organizations.

Research methods: scientific literature review and quantitative method of survey.

Literature

K. W. Thomas (1992) defines conflict as a process in which one individual perceives that the other person is influencing what is important to the former in a negative sense. L. R. Pondy (1967) has a broader understanding of conflict, also pointing to alternatives to disagreement, opposition, or even blocking behaviour by individuals in pursuit of individual or group goals.

It is distinguished that conflicting behaviour can be intentional or unintentional and can take the form of both discussion or debate and even highly hostile confrontation (Kerwin, Doherty, Harman, 2011).

Conflicts in organizations are always a complex group process (Kerwin, Doherty, Harman, 2011; Mooney, Holahan, Amason, 2007), during which due to lack of resources, poor communication, disagreed vision for employees' environmental challenges or events lead to different attitudes, attempts to justify or deny them, and thus various conflicts form in the internal environment of the organization and continue to escalate.

Conflicts are usually stressful for employees and therefore efforts are made to resolve or eliminate it (Slack, Parent, 2006).

Although a distinction is made between functional (constructive) performance, which can improve performance, and dysfunctional (destructive) conflict, which results in deteriorating performance, it is generally accepted that conflicts in organizations are inevitable and vary in functionality (Jehn, 1995). Still, leaders traditionally try to avoid conflict because of fear of its dysfunctional power, although after a while they often acknowledge that at some point in the course of their activities conflicts brought value and allowed the organization to continue to develop. M. Afzalur Rahim, D. Antonioni and C. Psenicka (2001) argue that effective managers today do not avoid conflicts but strive to manage them within an organization.

For the first time, K. A. Jehn (1995) distinguished types of relationship and task conflicts, defining the former as disagreement on interpersonal issues, and the latter related to disagreement on the content or outcome of a group task between group members in an organization.

K. A. Jehn (1997) also singled out the type of process conflict in which disagreements arise within a group over the ways in which a task has been performed.

A number of studies suggest that relationship conflict is dysfunctional in nature. For example, relationship conflicts negatively affected the quality of decisions made in volunteer sports organizations in a study by S. Hamm-Kerwin and A. Doherty (2010), as well as on the satisfaction and commitment of board members (Mills, Schulz, 2009). According to C. K. W. De Dreu and van A. E. M. Vianen (2001), relationship conflicts appear to be even more dysfunctional when cooperative or competitive strategies are used to manage those conflicts because personal motives prevail in the process. It is emphasized that relationship conflicts arise when group members have incompatible personalities or power struggles (Mooney, Holahan, Amason, 2007), resulting in suspicion, mistrust, tension, alienation and hostility between group members, and decreased satisfaction and inability to accept and develop new ideas in the organization because members' energy is used for conflict resolution instead of strategy implementation actions (Parayitam, Dooley, 2009).

C. K. W. De Dreu and L. R. Weingart (2003) as well as F. R. C. De Wit, L. L. Greer and K. A. Jehn (2012) emphasize the ambiguity of the issue of task conflict functionality. On the one hand, S. Kerwin et al. (2011) found that both relationship and task conflicts were directly related to members' frustration, stress, and withdrawal, while I. McAllister and R. Rose (1983) found that task conflicts led to unhappiness, hostility, and avoidance; on the other hand, proper management of these conflicts can also improve performance through the alternatives and solutions found in disputes.

Process conflicts can be beneficial as well as it helps to clarify each member's role and the unique value they have to offer. In other cases, it can escalate into a power struggle centred on the global appreciation of individual colleagues.

According to P. J. Moberg (2001), different styles of conflict management are possible as patterns of behaviour that help individuals choose how to resolve conflicts in organizations in functional manner. K. W. Thomas (1992) proposed a model for conflict management strategies for group conflicts in organizations, depending on the degree of assertiveness and cooperation:

- Competition is to satisfy your interests at the expense of others. It's a win-lose approach where only one party wins. However, G. L. Starks (2006) finds that this strategy can also be functional when it initiates dialogue, questions the current situation, and leads to innovation. However, over time, the losing party may feel resentment, alienate, or lose initiative.
- Collaboration is working together to resolve disagreements and is a win-win situation where both sides win. Such conflict resolution is functional and increases the commitment of group members to the organization (Starks, 2006). However, collaboration is often very time consuming and can distract from other tasks.
- Compromise has a moderate level of both assertiveness and cooperation and requires each of the parties to give up something in a part. This is neither-win-nor-lose approach

(Starks, 2006). While it can build trust and encourage teamwork, if compromise is more important than open discussion, ideas are not confronted, and some may be abandoned as a result.

- Accommodation involves the surrender of one of the parties and allowing the opponent to defend their interests without fighting for their own. It is a lose-win situation that is justified by G. L. Starks (2006) only in case of urgency, otherwise it becomes a dysfunctional dictation.
- Avoidance applies when confrontation is avoided in an attempt to withdraw from the situation physically or by refraining from expressing an opinion. As a result, the conflict is unresolved and becomes latent, so dysfunctional, usually the situation only worsens over time as a result (Starks, 2006).

It is argued that individuals tend to choose collaboration or compromise strategies in conflict situations in organizations (Shih and Susanto, 2010), because it improves the quality of interpersonal relationships, yet cooperation strategies are considered the most functional, positively related to organizational performance (Rahim, 2017), and efficient group performance (Kuhn, Poole, 2000), while a competitive strategy reduces performance (Alper, Tjosvold, Law, 2000). No significant gender differences were found in the choice of conflict management strategies (Oftedal, Kang, Schneider, 2015).

Typically, individuals repeatedly choose the same conflict management styles in different conflict situations, and this may depend on their personality or temperament (Liu, Chi, Friedman, Tsai, 2009; Barsky, Wood, 2005), so choices in conflict management strategies can be predicted in organizations and changed by training (Brockman, Nunez, Basu, 2010).

Research methodology

Quantitative research method was selected for data collection, which aims to acquire quantitative information about many research objects (in this case, employees of Lithuanian organizations). Respondents were provided with a closed-ended questionnaire to determine which conflicts are most prevalent in Lithuanian organizations and how they are managed.

The research questionnaire contains an introductory part, which defines who and for what purpose the research is carried out, emphasis on anonymity, a demographic block (nature of organizations, size, average age of employees, geographical location, and demographic composition) and a main part of six main questionnaire questions. The latter set of questions is based on main types of conflicts (Jehn, 1995; 1997) and model of conflict management strategies proposed by K. W. Thomas (1992).

Respondents were asked to rate the accuracy of the presented feature by choosing an answer on a Likert scale from 0 to 2, where employees chose one of three possible answers: "0 - No", 1 - "Partly", 2 - "Yes". Participants were sent an invitation e-mail with a link to fill the online questionnaire.

The research was conducted by surveying 84 employees of organizations of different sizes, sectors, and activities in Lithuania. Most of the respondents – 34%

Table 1. **Justification for the internal consistency of the questionnaire scale**

Cronbach's Alpha	Spearman-Brown	N of Items
.621	.633	6

were companies providing services, a significant part were trade companies – 26%, production organizations – 10%, the rest – 30%, companies engaged in mixed activities. Respondents range in size from 1-19 employees to 150 or more employees; companies with 150 and more employees were surveyed the most.

To assess the reliability of the questionnaire and the internal consistency of the scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.621) was calculated (Table 1), which is based on the correlation of the individual questions in the questionnaire and assesses whether all scale questions adequately reflect the scale. This criterion showed that the internal consistency of the questionnaire is acceptable. The value of the Spearman-Brown enhanced reliability coefficient is close to the value of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which means that the variances of the answers to the individual questions are similar.

The study data were processed and analysed using SPSS software. Mean values, medians, modes, standard deviation, asymmetry were calculated and analysed. Data are cross-checked and the prevalence of conflicts in Lithuanian organizations is analysed according to the prevailing gender, organization size, age groups and geographical location of the organization. The Spearmen correlation coefficient was used to check the correlation between the most prevalent conflicts, employee and organization characteristics.

Results

After analysing the data, the results show that task conflicts are most prevalent in Lithuanian organizations (35 out of 84 respondents answered positively), process conflicts remain in second place (32 out of 84 responding organizations), and relationship conflicts are in third place (out of 84 selected 26). When asked whether process and relationship conflicts were spread, most of respondents chose the answer "Partly", which is 45.2% and 41.7%, respectively, what shows that they are also prevalent among Lithuanian organizations (Table 2):

Analysing the obtained statistical data (Table 3), the average of the answers provided by the respondents about the prevalence of conflicts ranges from 1.21 (process conflicts) to 1.04 (relationship conflicts) on a scale from 0 to 2. Mode values show that most respondents chose "Yes" to the question about task conflicts and "Partly" about the prevalence of relationship and process conflicts, the median value shows that the answers "Partly" were at a midpoint given to all the questions about the types of conflicts. The standard deviation, in the range of 0.713 to 0.833, shows a variance in the data about the mean that is quite small, so the responses of different respondents are evaluated quite similarly. When the coefficient of asymmetry is measured, whether the data layout differs from the symmetric

Table 2. **Prevalence of conflicts in Lithuanian organizations**

		Frequency	Percent
Task conflicts	No	24	28.6%
	Partly	25	29.8%
	Yes	35	41.7%
	Total	84	100.0%
Process conflicts	No	14	16.7%
	Partly	38	45.2%
	Yes	32	38.1%
	Total	84	100.0%
Relationship conflicts	No	23	27.4%
	Partly	35	41.7%
	Yes	26	31.0%
	Total	84	100.0%

Table 3. **Main characteristics of conflict types**

		Task conflicts	Relationship conflicts	Process conflicts
No.	Valid	84	84	84
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		1.13	1.04	1.21
Median		1.00	1.00	1.00
Mode		2	1	1
Std. Deviation		.833	.768	.713
Skewness		-.252	-.061	-.338

layout, a negative (left) data asymmetry is seen.

It was found that task conflicts are the most prevalent in organizations with the highest number of women – 43.9%, and in companies with the highest number of men 42.3%, which is 43.3% of total number of responses (Table 4). Relationship conflicts in Lithuanian organizations are also most prevalent in organizations where women are the predominant gender, as confirmed by 31.7% of respondents. Among men, these conflicts are prevalent at 23.1%, for a total of 28.4%. In terms of process conflicts, they are most prevalent among organizations with most of men employees, with 61.5% and only 29.3% of these conflicts prevalent in women's teams. Based on these assessments, we can conclude that most Lithuanian organizations have task conflicts in the women

Table 4. **Prevalence of conflicts by gender of employees**

			No	Partly	Yes	Total
Task conflicts	Women	Count	9	14	18	41
		%	22.0%	34.1%	43.9%	100.0%
	Men	Count	8	7	11	26
			30.8%	26.9%	42.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	17	21	29	67
		%	25.4%	31.3%	43.3%	100.0%
Relationship conflicts	Women	Count	12	16	13	41
		%	29.3%	39.0%	31.7%	100.0%
	Men	Count	8	12	6	26
			30.8%	46.2%	23.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	20	28	19	67
		%	29.9%	41.8%	28.4%	100.0%
Process conflicts	Women	Count	6	23	12	41
		%	14.6%	56.1%	29.3%	100.0%
	Men	Count	5	5	16	26
			19.2%	19.2%	61.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	11	28	28	67
		%	16.4%	41.8%	41.8%	100.0%

collectives (43.9%) and process conflicts among men (61.5%).

Assessing the prevalence of conflicts according to the geographical location of the companies participating in the study, it can be stated that organizations with their branches both in Lithuania and abroad also face most of the task conflicts. As we can see in Table 5, 40.8% (Lithuanian organizations), 41.9% (with branches in Lithuania and abroad) and 66.7% (abroad) of the respondents, respectively, state that task conflicts predominate in their organizations. Meanwhile, relationship and process conflicts between companies with their branches in Lithuania and abroad were named as "Partly".

Analysing the prevalence of conflicts between organizations of different sizes (Table 6), they are distributed differently. In small companies with 1-19 employees, process conflicts, which are the most functional in nature, are most prevalent (33.3%), in organizations with 20-19 and 50-149 employees, task conflicts are the most prevalent (37.5% and 56.3%, respectively), and large companies with more than 150 employees face various types of conflict: task and process conflicts account for 46.9% of all conflicts and relationships for 43.8%.

Crossing the survey data by organization size and predominant gender of staff, task conflicts were found to be most

Table 5. **Prevalence of conflicts in organizations by geographical location**

			No	Partly	Yes	Total
Task conflicts	Lithuania	**Count**	17	12	20	49
		%	34.7%	24.5%	40.8%	100.0%
	Lithuania and abroad	Count	7	11	13	31
		%	22.6%	35.5%	41.9%	100.0%
	Abroad	Count	0	1	2	3
		%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	24	25	35	84
		%	28.6%	29.8%	41.7%	100.0%
Relationship conflicts	Lithuania	Count	16	18	15	49
		%	32.7%	36.7%	30.6%	100.0%
	Lithuania and abroad	Count	6	16	9	31
		%	19.4%	51.6%	29.0%	100.0%
	Abroad	Count	0	1	2	3
		%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	23	35	26	84
		%	27.4%	41.7%	31.0%	100.0%
Process conflicts	Lithuania	Count	10	20	19	49
		%	20.4%	40.8%	38.8%	100.0%
	Lithuania and abroad	Count	4	16	11	31
		%	12.9%	51.6%	35.5%	100.0%
	Abroad	Count	0	1	2	3
		%	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	14	38	32	84
		%	16.7%	45.2%	38.1%	100.0%

prevalent among men in organizations with 20-49 employees. In organizations with 50 or more employees, task conflicts are more or less evenly distributed between male and female teams, and in small companies with 1-19 employees, task conflicts are more prevalent among female-dominated teams.

In companies located in Lithuania, task conflicts are most prevalent among organizations with 50-149 employees. In companies that have their branches not only in Lithuania, but also abroad, most task conflicts occur in organizations with 20-49 employees, while organizations located abroad face these conflicts in companies with more than 150 employees.

Examining Spearmen correlation coefficient (Table 7), a relationship was observed between task and process conflicts ($r = 0.358$ for $p < 0.001$) and relationship conflicts and organization size ($r = 0.337$ for $p < 0.002$).

Table 6. **Prevalence of conflicts in organizations of various sizes**

			No	Partly	Yes	Total
Task conflicts	1-19 employees	**Count**	7	6	5	18
		%	38.9%	33.3%	27.8%	100.0%
	20-49 employees	Count	7	3	6	16
		%	43.8%	18.8%	37.5%	100.0%
	50-149 employees	Count	2	5	9	16
		%	12.5%	31.3%	56.3%	100.0%
	150 and more employees	Count	8	9	15	32
		%	25.0%	28.1%	46.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	24	23	35	82
		%	29.3%	28.0%	42.7%	100.0%
Relationship conflicts	1-19 employees	Count	4	8	6	18
		%	22.2%	44.4%	33.3%	100.0%
	20-49 employees	Count	5	7	4	16
		%	31.3%	43.8%	25.0%	100.0%
	50-149 employees	Count	1	8	7	16
		%	6.3%	50.0%	43.8%	100.0%
	150 and more employees	Count	3	14	15	32
		%	9.4%	43.8%	46.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	13	37	32	82
		%	15.9%	45.1%	39.0%	100.0%
Process conflicts	1-19 employees	Count	8	7	3	18
		%	44.4%	38.9%	16.7%	100.0%
	20-49 employees	Count	7	5	4	16
		%	43.8%	31.3%	25.0%	100.0%
	50-149 employees	Count	4	7	5	16
		%	25.0%	43.8%	31.3%	100.0%
	150 and more employees	Count	3	15	14	32
		%	9.4%	46.9%	43.8%	100.0%

A weak correlation was found between task and relationship conflicts ($r = 0.294$, when $p < 0.07$), no significant correlation was found with other conflict types, geographical location, size, and demographic composition of organizations.

Conflicts can be resolved in a variety of ways, depending on relationships and conditions.

Most conflicts in organizations are resolved through collaboration means, with as many as 78.8% of respondents choosing this strategy of resolving conflicts, finding compromise (67.5%) and accommodation (34.2%) are less prevalent. The least likely respondents are to act in conflicts through avoidance or competition, at 17.9% and 20% respectively. We can also see that accommodation is quite widely used in a part (51.9), combining with other strategies, as shown in Table 8:

As already revealed in the study, task, process, and relationships conflicts are

Table 7. **Pearson correlation between different conflict types and organizational characteristics**

		Task conflicts	Relationship conflicts	Process conflicts	Gender	Size of organization
Task conflicts	Spearmen Correlation	1	,294**	,358**	-,063	,180
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,007	,001	,614	,105
	N	84	84	84	67	82
Relationship conflicts	Spearmen Correlation	,294**	1	,096	-,065	,337**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,007		,385	,603	,002
	N	84	84	84	67	82
Process conflicts	Spearmen Correlation	,358**	,096	1	,187	,199
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	,385		,129	,072
	N	84	84	84	67	82
Gender	Spearmen Correlation	-,063	-,065	,187	1	-,130
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,614	,603	,129		,295
	N	67	67	67	67	67
Size of organization	Spearmen Correlation	,180	,337**	,199	-,130	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,105	,002	,072	,295	
	N	82	82	82	67	82

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

Table 8. **Distribution of respondents' responses on conflict management strategies, %**

Competition		Collaboration	Avoidance	Accommoda-tion	Compromise
No	56.3%	6.3%	51.3%	13.9%	8.8%
Partly	23.8%	15%	30.8%	51.9%	23.8%
Yes	20%	78.8%	17.9%	34.2%	67.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

common in Lithuanian organizations. From the analysis data we can state (Table 9) that collaboration strategy prevails in task conflicts (84.8%) rather than in relationship and process conflicts (73.9% and 68.8% respectively).

Compromising is more used in task and process conflicts (69.7% and 68.8% respectively) but is less helpful in the most dysfunctional type of conflicts – relationship conflicts (52.2%). In latter 34.8% tend to involve in competition, 39.1% – in accommodation and only

Table 9. **Distribution of conflict management strategies by type of conflict**

		Competition	Collaboration	Avoidance	Accommodation	Compromise
Task conflicts	No	39.4%	6.1%	63.6%	21.2%	6.1%
	Partly	30.3%	9.1%	24.2%	54.5%	24.2%
	Yes	30.3%	84.8%	12.1%	24.2%	69.7%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Process conflicts	No	28.1%	12.5%	56.3%	21.9%	9.4%
	Partly	21.9%	18.8%	28.1%	50%	21.9%
	Yes	50%	68.8%	15.6%	28.1%	68.8%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Relationship conflicts	No	34.8%	13%	45.5%	17.4%	13%
	Partly	30.4%	13%	27.3%	43.5%	34.8%
	Yes	34.8%	73.9%	27.3%	39.1%	52.2%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

27.3% uses Avoidance strategy, which is one of the most dysfunctional ones as well. Even less of Avoidance we can in process (15.6%) and task (12.1%) conflicts, what can be even more greeted in organizations. Still accommodation level, using this strategy jointly with others, varies from 54.5% in task conflicts to 43.5% in relationship conflicts, is worrying, that employees are not enough active pursuing some functional type of conflict management strategy in Lithuanian organizations.

Similarly, as it was discovered in literature analysis, dysfunctional conflicts in Lithuanian organizations relate mostly to relationship type of conflict (Spearman coefficient $r = 0.407$, when $p < 0.000$), less to task conflicts ($r = 0.388$, when $p < 0.000$), and least to process conflicts ($r = 0.301$, when $p < 0.006$).

Negotiation was used more in process conflicts – 43.8%, and less in relationship and task conflicts – 37.5% and 37.1% of conflict cases respectively. Spearman coefficient ($r = 0.321$, when $p < 0.08$) shows relation between using negotiation and solved conflicts in organizations, as well as with using strategy of Compromise ($r = 0.349$, when $p < 0.002$).

Conclusions

After scientific literature analysis in conflict management field, it was found out that the factors of functionality of conflicts are organized mostly around types of conflicts, were process types are the most functional, task conflicts are dysfunctional in a part and relationship conflict are always dysfunctional. Moreover, in conflict management strategies, collaboration and compromise strategies appeared the most functional, accommodation – as mostly dysfunctional, and avoidance – as the most dysfunctional strategy of conflict management.

After the research of conflict management in Lithuanian organizations, it could be stated that conflict management is a relevant topic for the majority of organizations and the task type of conflict is the most important, taking to account that this type is at least in part dysfunctional by its nature. Process conflicts are existing in most organizations in a part, while relationship conflicts make the smallest part in the whole picture.

Looking forward to sorting out the ways to strengthen functionality of the conflicts in organizations, attention should be paid to the following research result: as the organization grow, the proportion of dysfunctional types of conflicts, such as relationship and partly task conflicts, rises. It leads to the suggestion for organizations to look for modern options of growth in outsourcing or other forms of networking instead of nurturing departments with growing employment rate.

In terms of gender disposition in organizations, improvement of balance of men and women in organization could be suggested in multicultural management approach (yet avoiding escalation of discrimination), as the dominance of women in conflict management leads to more dysfunctional relationship by its nature, whereas tasks conflicts prevail in men collectives where dominate more functional process type of conflicts.

It can be offered to use more explicitly the collaboration strategy instead of compromise in case of the most dysfunctional type of relationship conflicts, and the research showed that it works best for the most of surveyed Lithuanian organizations settings.

Also, it can be suggested to negotiate using compromise strategy of conflict management in order to solve conflicts, because it appears the successful way of conflict management in organizations as well.

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KONFLIKTŲ VALDYMO GERINIMAS DIDINANT JŲ FUNKCIONALUMĄ LIETUVOS ORGANIZACIJOSE

S a n t r a u k a

Konfliktų valdymo būdai organizacijose lemia konfliktų sprendimą ir baigtį. Daugybė tyrimų rodo, kad disfunkciniai ir prastai valdomi konfliktai organizacijose neigiamai veikia produktyvumą ir darbo rezultatus, o jei konfliktai yra netinkamai valdomi, ateityje organizacijoje kils dar daugiau disfunkcinių konfliktų. Straipsnyje sprendžiama tyrimo problema – kaip pagerinti konfliktų valdymą didinant jo funkcionalumą Lietuvos organizacijose.

Konfliktas apibrėžiamas kaip procesas, kurio metu vienas individas suvokia, kad kitas asmuo daro įtaką tam, kas pirmajam svarbu neigiama prasme, kas sąlygoja nesutarimą, opoziciją ar net blokuoja individų elgesį siekiant individualių ar grupės tikslų.

Visuotinai pripažįstama, kad konfliktai organizacijose yra neišvengiami ir skiriasi jų funkcionalumas: funkcinis (konstruktyvus) konfliktas, galintis pagerinti našumą, ir disfunkcinis (destruktyvus) konfliktas, dėl kurio prastėja veiklos rezultatai. Visgi konfliktai dažniausiai sukelia stresą darbuotojams, o lyderiai tradiciškai stengiasi išvengti konfliktų. Paveikūs vadovai šiandien nevengia konfliktų, bet stengiasi juos valdyti organizacijoje.

Išskiriami santykių, užduočių ir proceso konfliktų tipai. Daugybė tyrimų rodo, kad santykių konfliktas yra disfunkcinio pobūdžio. Pabrėžiamas užduočių konflikto funkcionalumo klausimo dviprasmiškumas, o proceso konfliktai gali būti naudingi.

Galimi įvairūs konfliktų valdymo stiliai – tai elgesio modeliai, padedantys individams pasirinkti, kaip funkcionaliai spręsti konfliktus organizacijose. Pasiūlytas konfliktų valdymo strategijų modelis, skirtas grupiniams konfliktams organizacijose, atsižvelgiant į atkaklumo ir bendradarbiavimo laipsnį: konkurencija, bendradarbiavimas, kompromisas, prisitaikymas ir vengimas. Teigiama, kad organizacijose bendradarbiavimo strategijos vertinamos kaip funkcionaliausios, o konkurencinės strategijos mažina našumą.

Atlikus konfliktų valdymo Lietuvos organizacijose tyrimą, galima teigti, kad konfliktų valdymas yra aktuali tema daugumai organizacijų, o užduočių konflikto tipas yra dažniausias, kadangi jis bent iš dalies yra disfunkcinės prigimties. Proceso konfliktai daugumoje organizacijų egzistuoja iš dalies, pastebima mažiau santykių konfliktų.

Ieškant būdų, kaip stiprinti konfliktų organizacijose funkcionalumą, reikėtų atkreipti dėmesį į tyrimo rezultatą, kad didėjant organizacijai disfunkcinių konfliktų tipų, santykių ir iš dalies užduočių konfliktų dalis didėja. Dėl to organizacijoms siūloma ieškoti modernių galimybių plėtoti užsakomųjų paslaugų teikimą ar kitas tinklų

kūrimo formas, o ne skatinti organizacijos augimą, didinant darbuotojų skaičių.

Kalbant apie lyčių pasiskirstymą organizacijose, galima būtų pasiūlyti gerinti vyrų ir moterų balansą organizacijoje taikant multikultūrinio valdymo metodus, nes moterų dominavimas valdant konfliktus lemia disfunkcinius santykių ir užduočių konfliktus, o vyrų kolektyve vyrauja iš prigimties funkcionalesni proceso tipo konfliktai.

Esant disfunkciniam iš prigimties santykių konfliktų tipui, galima pasiūlyti naudoti bendradarbiavimo strategiją vietoj kompromiso strategijos, nes tyrimai parodė, kad ji geriausiai tinka daugumoje apklaustų Lietuvos organizacijų konfliktinių aplinkų. Siekiant išspręsti konfliktus, siūloma naudoti derybas kartu su kompromiso konfliktų valdymo strategija, nes tai pasirodė esąs rezultatyvus konfliktų valdymo būdas organizacijose.