

THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNICATION STYLES IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICTS

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Abstract: *Within many organizations, the issue of conflict prevention and management is both fundamental and sensitive at the same time. The daily interaction between the members of an organization has the potential for antagonisms and disagreements that can sometimes trigger wider conflicts. Between getting along and conflict stands communication, which has the vital role of maintaining professional relationships at a functional and, why not, synergistic level. The present work is based on quantitative research in which the perception of conflict at an organization level, the behaviour of individuals in conflicting situations, the causes of conflict, methods and strategies used to avoid and manage conflict, and also the typology of conflicts were highlighted in order to better understand the communication styles used by the members of an organization.*

Key words: *communication, conflict, types of communication styles, prevention, dialogue, causes of conflict, interpersonal relationships.*

JEL Classification: *M10.*

1 . Introduction

Conflict is rooted in the very existence of diversity in the human character and nature. People are different, so are their interests, their own way of relating to the world, to themselves and to others. Thus, conflict begins where an individual allows themselves to be deceived by the idea that others should see and judge things the way they see it. In any present or future organization, the diversity of character and temperament stands out very fast, from the ground floor to the top floor. Quantitatively, the causes or sources of conflict in an organization can be countless. However, we can identify certain sources as more significant, their frequency of occurrence being quite high.

Human life naturally involves having a perpetual relationship with those around us. It is through interaction with our fellow humans that we define and fulfil our purpose on earth. Meeting the "other" can enrich us spiritually, cognitively, affectively, but at the same time, it can just as well throw us into an abyss of depression, anger, envy, etc. Approaching someone else becomes the fundamental stake of any act of communication, both in our personal lives and at work, whether it is with strangers or those close to us.

A good knowledge of the typology of communication styles accompanied by a masterful application of them is desired by any organization.

Organization Y is a prestigious educational institution with a long and fruitful tradition of institutional culture. Being more than a century old, it has given society generation after generation of bright graduates.

Thanks to the impeccable training of its members and the well-built organizational culture, Y organization has managed to keep and increase its high standards, being among the top organizations of its kind in the county. It has a well-developed resource base with state-of-the-art laboratories and facilities. It stands out for its massive and fruitful participation in national competitions and Olympiads, while having a united and motivated team.

Organization Y promotes and ensures equal opportunities, innovation, and the high quality of its educational processes. Its objectives are:

- Development of interest in education, knowledge and training
- Promoting an inclusive organizational climate
- Ensuring a responsible and high-calibre management
- Ensuring the application and compliance with school provisions and labour legislation
- Active participation in the constructive transformation of society

2. Research methodology

The present research aims to highlight the perception of conflicts in organization Y, the typical reactions in conflict situations of its members, and the relationship between communication and conflict. To achieve this, a questionnaire was applied to 30 people (N=30) and was used as a data collection tool. The priorities of the questionnaire were to find out:

- How is conflict perceived within the organization?
- What is the behaviour of individuals in conflict situations?
- The methods and strategies used to manage and resolve a conflict
- Causes that can generate a conflict
- Communication styles of respondents (Passive, Aggressive, Passive-Aggressive and Assertive on the one hand and: Direct, Analytical, Sociable, Emotional on the other).
- How do conflicts affect the emotional and spiritual balance of an individual?

One of the highlights of this research consists in the fact that it manages to concretely capture the reactions of the respondents and their way of thinking and acting according to specific conflict situations. We practically have in front of us a small picture of the reactions and the ways people relate to conflicts, which reveal some behavioural patterns.

1) research objectives:

- general - determining how communication styles influence conflict in organization Y

2) specific

- determining how a conflict is perceived at a company level
- determining how to react to a conflict
- identifying conflict prevention strategies

3) research hypothesis

- We assume that in organization Y there is a balanced and mature approach to conflict situations from both its employees and its management
- We assume that in the analysed organization employees have a tendency to use the avoidance strategy as a way to resolve conflicts
- We assume that in organization Y there is different communication styles of respondents;

4) the purpose of the research

- achieving/creating a valid conflict management model by using appropriate communication techniques and styles

3. Data analysis and interpretation

The data analysis highlighted the following aspects:

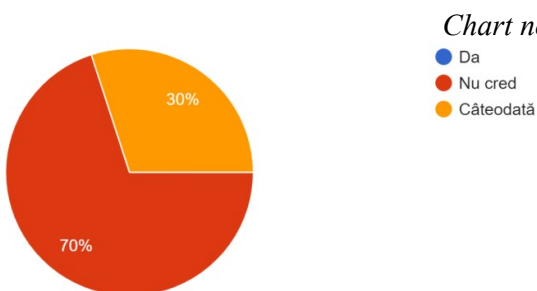


Table no. 1

Yes	No	Sometimes
0	21	9

1. Do you consider yourself an individual prone to arguing?
Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

70% of the respondents believe that they are not prone to arguing. But a percentage of 30% believe that in certain situations they may adopt an aggressive attitude and implicitly an aggressive communication style.

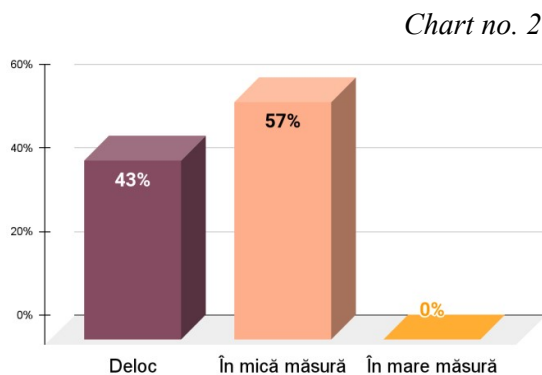


Table no. 2

Not at all	To a small extent	To a large extent
13	17	0

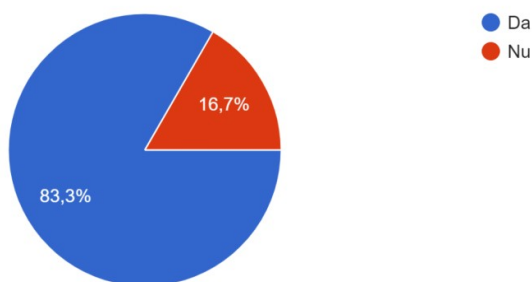
2. To what extent do you consider arguing a problem-solving solution?
Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

Most of the respondents, however, are of the opinion that to a small extent conflict can be a solution to solving problems. Only 43% agree that we cannot solve problems through conflict. This answer shows us that no matter how civilized or educated we are, a dose of aggression remains latent in each of us (we are referring, of course, to the instinct of self-defence.)

Chart no. 3

Table no. 3

Yes	No
24	6



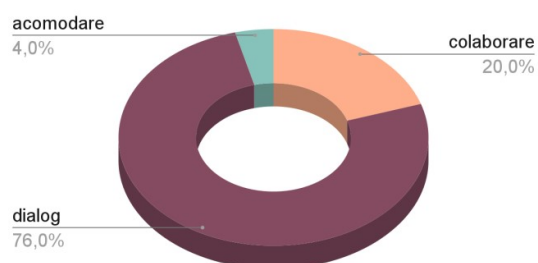
3. Do you think that there is a way to avoid conflict within an organization?

Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

Most respondents believe that within an organization conflict can be avoided.

Chart no. 3.a.

Table no. 3.a.



collaboration	dialogue	compromise	consideration
5	19	0	1

3.a. If "Yes", how?

Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

A high percentage of respondents (76%) believes that the main means of avoiding conflict is dialogue, while 20% would rather see collaboration as a viable solution. A low number of respondents (4%) adopts a passive attitude and accepts being considerate or accommodating as a means of compromise.

Chart no. 3.b.

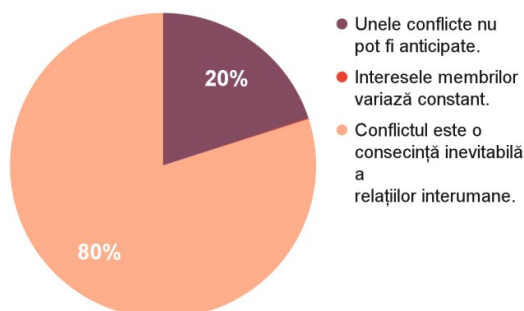


Table no. 3.b.

Some conflicts cannot be predicted	The goals of the members of the team are constantly changing	Being in conflict is an inevitable consequence of human nature
1	0	4

3.b. If "No", why?

Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

Among the respondents who see conflict as an inevitable situation, 80% believe that it is an inevitable consequence of human relations, while 20% believe that it's impossible to predict some conflicts, regardless of precautions taken.

Chart no. 4

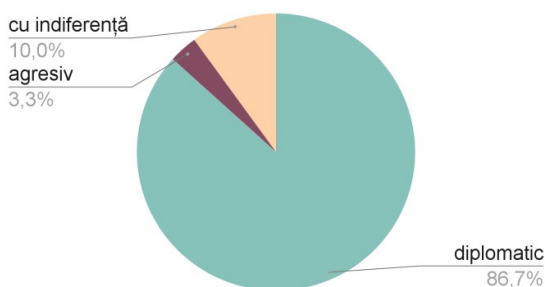


Table no. 4

diplomatically	aggressively	with indifference
26	1	3

4. What is the communication style in dealing with conflicts?

Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

On the matter of approaching conflicts, most of the respondents (86.7%) choose to approach a conflict diplomatically, 10% see indifference as a solution, and 3.3% prefer an aggressive style.

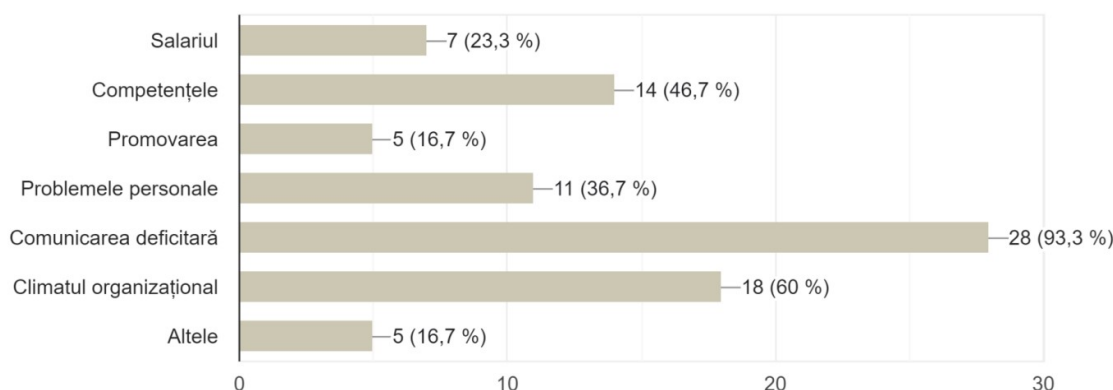
Table no. 5

Salary	Skills	Promotion opportunities	Personal problems	Poor communication	Company morale	Other
7	14	5	11	28	18	5

5. What do you see as the causes of conflict within the company?

Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

Chart no. 5



5. What do you see as the causes of conflict within the company?
Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

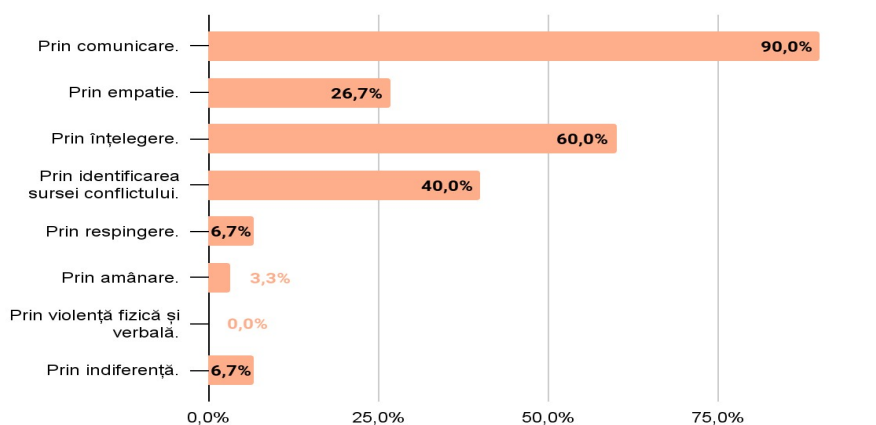
Overall, poor communication ranks first as a cause of conflict (93.3%), followed by morale (60%), skills (46.7%) and personal problems (36.7%).

Table no. 6

Through communication	Through empathy	Through understanding	Through noticing the source of the conflict	Through rejection	Through delay	Through verbal and physical violence	Through indifference
27	8	18	12	2	1	0	2

6. How do you think conflict can be avoided?
Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

Chart no. 6



6. How do you think conflicts can be avoided?

Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

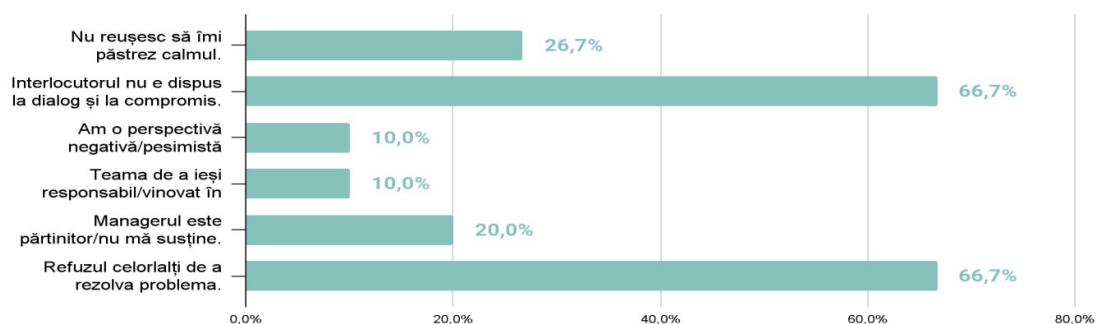
90% of the respondents thought that communication is the most effective tool for avoiding conflict. Being understanding and identifying the source of the conflict were also chosen as alternative solutions.

Table no. 7

I can't keep my cool	The other party is not willing to talk and compromise	I have a negative outlook on the situation	Fear of being blamed or being guilty	The manager is biased/unsupportive	The others refuse to cooperate and solve the problem
8	20	3	3	6	20

7. What difficulties do you encounter when trying to manage a conflict?
Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

Chart no. 7



7. What difficulties do you encounter when trying to manage a conflict?
Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

When it comes to managing a conflict, 66.7% of the respondents are of the opinion that it is difficult to resolve a conflict because either "The other party is not willing to have an open dialogue and compromise" or "The other party refuses to solve the problem." 26.7% of the respondents fail to keep their cool, 20% believe that "The manager is biased/doesn't support me." For some, i.e. 10%, they have a "Fear of appearing responsible/guilty in front of others.", and the other 10% have a "negative/pessimistic perspective on the situation."

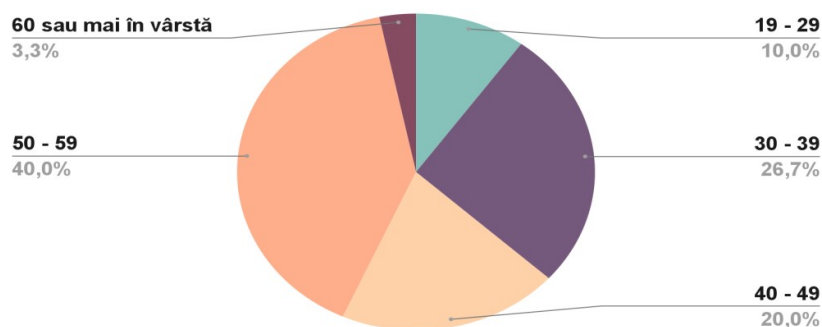
Table no. 8

18 or younger	19 – 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60 or older
0	3	8	6	12	1

8. What age category do you fall into?

Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

Chart no. 8



8. What age category do you fall into?

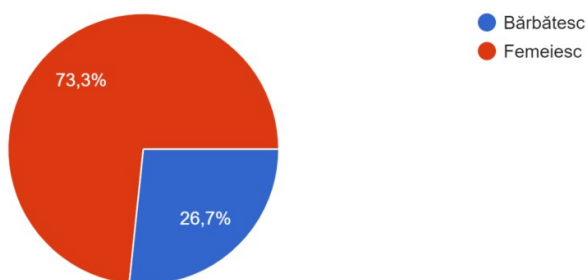
Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

The highest number of respondents for this question were those in the 50-59 age range (40%), then those in the 30-39 age range (26.7%), then those in the 40-49 age range (20%), then 19-29 years olds (10%) then 60 or above (3.3%). Young people under 18 did not participate, because the sample was made in a limited space, i.e. in an organization, and there are no staff employed in this category.

Chart no. 9

Table no. 9

Male	Female
8	22



9. Your gender:

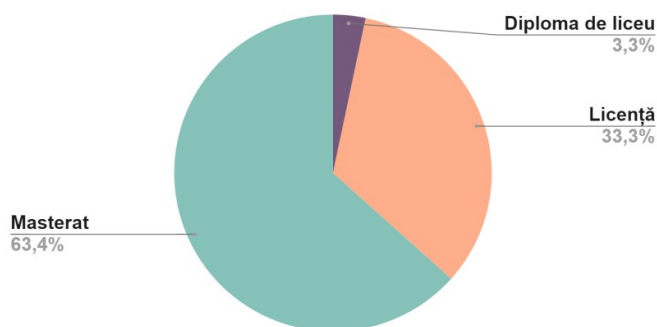
Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

73.3% of respondents are female and 26.7% are male. The resulting percentages are based on the rate of disclosure of this information by the respondents.

Table no. 10

Less than High-school	High-school diploma	Post-secondary studies	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree
0	1	0	10	19

Chart no. 10



10. What is the highest level of education completed?

Source: Created by the author based on gathered data

The majority of respondents have completed higher education due to the conditions of employment in their organization: 63.4% have a Master's degree, 33.3% a Bachelor's degree and 3.3% a High-school diploma.

4. Conclusions

Taken as a whole, the results of this paper show that, although most people prefer cooperation at work, in special situations - and especially conflict-related ones - people give priority to asserting their own individuality, even at the cost of showcasing an aggressive

attitude to others. Another interesting aspect that has been revealed after research, are the well-defined aspects of human nature regarding their interactions with fellow human beings.

Conflict, before being categorized as a bad thing or to be avoided, must be seen as a natural, necessary and inevitable phenomenon that occurs wherever there are inter-human relations. We can see it manifesting itself in various forms such as: dissatisfaction, frustrations, envy, irony and sarcasm, arguments, verbal or physical bullying, mobbing, physical aggression, etc. Our daily experiences show us that Mother Nature has arranged things in such a way that people attack and support each other according to circumstances and interests. A person who is your friend today can be your enemy tomorrow and vice versa.

In terms of things that cause them, conflicts can be fuelled by: a lack of communication or poor communication, a lack of organizational culture, competition between employees or competitiveness imposed by the organization, envy, faulty management and disproportionate distribution of work tasks, unjustified use of stereotypes (which are actually social prejudices), lack of feedback, gossip, intrigues and conspiracies, narcissistic/egoistic traits, interference of family matters in work issues, etc.

In each of these situations, the manifestation of the conflict surely reveals an inability on our part to make ourselves understood, to peacefully win the agreement with the other, to find the optimal method of communicating what we have to communicate. Or, to put it more briefly, the presence of conflict or its prolonged manifestation shows us that mature people do not master and do not know how to fully use the communication resources at their disposal. It is especially interesting to note that only a small percentage of those who advance in age manage to educate themselves about how they should relate to others. All of these things start from the way we understand communication.

All harmony between humans ultimately resides in how we understand communication between each other—and why not—how we understand communication itself as a fundamental act specific to living beings. In this sense, some theoretical resources related to what we call communication styles were mobilized in the second part of the paper. Styles that relate to our personality and to that of others, for when two people communicate, there is a meeting of two distinct kinds of communication styles. The way in which we manage to "fit in" with other humans shows our degree of maturity and mastery of language, good manners, and emotions.

In order to verify and confirm the theories discussed in the first two parts of the paper, I have carried out a practical research to see how the ideas, advice and conclusions put together in this paper are verified in real life and in direct relationships between people.

The results were satisfactory, but also surprising. I found that:

- a) People naturally seek (at least at the level of intention or aspiration) to avoid conflicts and end them as quickly as possible.
- b) Each respondent knows that dialogue and communication are the solution to conflicts, but when faced with a conflictual situation, the fight we have to fight is with ourselves, with our emotions, with our prejudices, with our shortcomings and not with carefully crafted words or phrases.
- c) A conflict situation is - no matter how hard it may be to accept - a way of seeing ourselves; we have the chance to see where we stand in terms of self-control and openness to others.
- d) Every conflict situation presents us with our weaknesses but also the opportunity to work with them, to improve them, to perfect ourselves on the path of interpersonal relations.

- e) As a final word, we can say that the big stake in interpersonal relationships is not that of avoiding or resolving conflicts. On the contrary, true wisdom is to approach any conflict with elegance, to lead with diplomacy and look attentively at the claims of both parties, and to transform the conflict into an effective tool for knowing oneself and others. But, of course, this was and will remain the privileged path of the few, of those who choose to devote their lives to the ideal of self-improvement.

The results obtained through the questionnaire can serve as a support (a base) for further research on conflict avoidance and amelioration. Regarding how conflicts influence communication styles, we can say that in a conflict situation the parties always have difficulties in:

- Keeping calm
- Finding the right words
- Quelling one's negative emotions
- Admitting fault or incompetence (where appropriate)
- Owning a fault where it exists

A constructive attitude was also found regarding:

- The intention to avoid conflicts
- Using dialogue and cooperation as a means of prevention
- Willingness to approach tense situations with calmness and maturity

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