

Conflict in Organizations: Its Connection to a Healthy and Productive Work Environment

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ABSTRACT

In this day and age, conflict is a topic that is still being discussed. Conflict cannot be completely avoided in an organization, but it can be managed by minimizing it. The study employed a qualitative approach using systematic literature review methods to analyze and synthesize existing research on organizational conflict and its implications for healthy and productive work environments. Data collection involved reviewing 30 articles from reputable national and international journals, focusing on conflict management, leadership styles, and the impact of external factors on organizational dynamics. Effective conflict management by organizational leaders is essential in fostering a cooperative environment for handling conflicts within teams. Constructive conflict management can lead to positive changes and learning experiences for all parties involved in organizational conflicts. Effective conflict resolution strategies can stimulate innovative problem-solving among employees and prevent a decline in motivation and creativity due to high levels of conflict.

Keywords: Conflict; Leadership; Conflict Management; Performance; Work Environment

I. INTRODUCTION

From the dawn of humanity, conflict has been recognized as an integral part of our existence. It is woven into the very fabric of life and human development, for every individual is unique, bringing their diverse characteristics to the ever-unfolding story of mankind (Jumawan et al., 2024). Conflicts arise from various factors such as differences in expertise and group composition, divergent goals among group members, overlapping or ambiguous responsibilities, and discrepancies in reward or compensation systems. While conflicts are an inevitable part of any organization, they can be managed and minimized. Conflicts can occur between individuals, whether leaders or members, between individuals and groups, or between different groups within the organization. These conflicts are particularly common within the organizational structure, especially among its members and human resources.

Human resources are the most valuable asset in any organization, as they are the key to effectively managing all other resources. (Riana & Yunda, 2016). The presence of human resources is the key factor that must be prioritized in an organization to face any emerging challenges. Therefore, maintaining the quality of human resources becomes the primary step that a company must take through human resource management. Professional human resource management can create a balance between the needs and abilities of employees and the demands of the organization. The crucial key to sustainable growth for an organization is achieving a good balance between employee interests and organizational needs. If this balance is not reached, conflicts may arise within the organization. On the other hand, when there is an imbalance, it can lead to unfairness or arbitrary actions by the organization's leaders towards its members. This will incite social movements among the members. According to Stompzka (1993), as cited in social movement can be understood as a loosely organized

group of individuals who take collective action to drive social change within an organization or a community. These actions are not meticulously coordinated but rather arise from a shared sense of purpose and urgency among the participants. The ultimate goal of these movements is to challenge and alter the existing structures and norms, inevitably leading to some level of conflict within the affected organization. This conflict arises as the established order is disrupted by the introduction of new ideas and the push for transformation, sparking resistance from those invested in maintaining the status quo.

Conflict management, often referred to as conflict resolution, serves as a key indicator of an organization's success. This is because overall performance encompasses financial aspects, human resources, work methods, and a conducive environment (Satria & Maryam, 2019). The differences in individual personalities within an organization can often lead to conflicts. To address this, both individuals and the organization must collaborate to create mutually supportive working relationships, aiming for the organization's goals. The Director, as the person in charge, and the Managers, as team leaders, must possess skills in conflict management strategies. Effective conflict management is crucial because it is inherently linked to leadership. When conflicts are well-managed and controlled, the work environment becomes more comfortable and supportive (Fatihaturahmi, M. Giatman, 2023). However, should a leader fail to navigate with finesse, it could sow the seeds of toxicity within the workspace, breeding stress among employees and ultimately hampering performance, thus detrimentally impacting the organization.

Every organization frequently encounters challenges related to employee performance, particularly when it comes to finding ways to boost productivity (Nur, Hidayati, & Maria, 2016). Every organizational leader strives to ensure that all activities are executed to achieve the best possible results most effectively and efficiently. A company with high-performing employees is likely to exhibit strong overall performance, highlighting the close connection between individual employee performance and the company's success. To enhance both the quality and quantity of employees' work, the company must foster a collaborative partnership with its workforce.

Building on the discussion above, it's clear that conflicts, employee performance, and leaders as organizational controllers are deeply interconnected. Therefore, this article will explore the factors that influence conflicts, how these conflicts can impact performance, and the conflict management strategies

employed by leaders to foster a healthy work environment.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theory of social movements serves as a conceptual framework for comprehending how collective groups or organizations are formed, evolve, and operate to drive social or political change. It delves into the dynamics that spur people to unite, the strategies they employ, and the transformative impact they strive to achieve in society or within political systems (Shiferaw & Debela, 2024). This theory centers on examining the myriad factors that drive individuals to join social movements, mobilize resources, and employ various strategies and tactics to achieve their objectives (Diani, 2017). The theory of social movements is intricately linked to the concept of conflict, as most cases of social movements often emerge in response to injustice, inequality, or oppression, which are forms of structural conflict within society. In this regard, conflict can mobilize individuals and groups to join social movements in pursuit of change. The theory of social movements suggests that conflict can either escalate or ameliorate. The actions taken by these individuals or groups can provoke authorities to respond harshly, exacerbating the conflict, or conversely, it can lead to negotiation and improvement, ultimately resolving the conflict (Moss & Snow, 2016). In this regard, the theory of social movements can be wielded as an analytical tool to fathom how conflicts within society can spark the genesis and evolution of social movements, and how these movements contribute to the dynamics of conflict and social change (Hanna, 2022).

Drawing from the insights of research conducted by Sunyoto (2012), painted a picture where conflict within an organization is like a clash of colors on a canvas, where two or more members or groups intertwine in a dance of disagreement. This conflict may arise because members of the organization must share limited resources, engage in activities together, or have differences in status, goals, values, and perceptions. According to Mangkunegara, as cited in Mamahit (2016), The causes of conflict within an organization can vary widely, ranging from a lack of coordination in work, dependency in task execution, task ambiguity (absence of job descriptions), differences in work orientation, disparities in understanding organizational goals, varying

perceptions, inadequate incentive systems, and misaligned motivational strategies. All these factors contributing to the emergence of conflict can influence the motivation of organizational members and impact overall organizational performance. Therefore, it is crucial for organizational management to minimize conflicts and maintain a healthy work environment.

Organizational activities thrive when individuals and other members support each other and steer clear of conflicts. Kaushal R (2006) crafted a vivid portrait of strategy as the heartbeat of a company's ambition, a carefully orchestrated symphony designed to forge ahead in the competitive arena, all while orchestrating the delicate dance of human resources. In this grand performance, adept conflict management takes center stage, weaving harmony into the fabric of workplace relationships. According to et al. (2008), in the realm of conflict management, there exist five strategic pathways: compelling, integrating, evading, dominating, and sacrificing, each weaving a positive impact on both individual and group performance. In implementing this strategy, a company can foster harmonious work relationships and enhance performance. Performance is the outcome of work that aligns with one's role within the organization (De Dreu CKW, 2003) and can be in the form of products or service (Sudarma K, 2012). The team's performance is gauged by its harmony, openness, effectiveness, efficiency, and embrace of novel methods (Tjosvold D, Chun Hui, 2002). A well-implemented conflict management strategy will yield a symphony of teamwork, where efficiency, effectiveness, and the attainment of shared goals align with the organization's purpose (West, 2002).

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The research approach employed in this study is qualitative, utilizing the systematic literature review method. Systematic review stands as a beacon within the vast ocean of methodologies, drawing upon a symphony of review, analysis, structured evaluation, classification, and categorization of previously generated evidence-based knowledge (Kitchenham et al, 2009). The steps and strategies involved in conducting a systematic review are meticulously orchestrated and meticulously structured, setting this method apart significantly from mere literature review endeavors. The systematic review process encompasses a series of carefully orchestrated steps, as follows. (ELS Unair, 2024):

- a. *Assembling Background and Purpose*
- b. *Research Question*
- c. *Searching for the literature*
- d. *Selection Criteria*
- e. *Practical Screen*
- f. *Quality Checklist and Procedures*
- g. *Data Extraction Strategy*
- h. *Data Synthesis Strategy*

This study embodies a meticulous exploration utilizing the Preferred Reporting Items for *Systematic Reviews* and *Meta-analyses* method, commonly known as PRISMA.

Drawing from the intricacies laid out in the backdrop of this study, the fundamental inquiry we embark upon delves into:

1. How can the conflicts within a managerial team ripple through and sway the performance of the entire ensemble?
2. What strategies can managers devise to cultivate a workspace conducive to fostering healthy conflict resolution?

3.1 Search Strategies

The literature search strategy employed in this research unfolds as a deliberate voyage through the vast expanse of national and international scholarly publications, including but not limited to SINTA, Google Scholar, Emerald, Science Direct, and Elsevier. The curation of articles adheres to meticulously crafted criteria of inclusion and exclusion, delicately balanced to ensure the relevance of topics, the accreditation of journals to prevent redundancy, the merits and contributions of each article, and the prevalence of citations. Keywords guiding this expedition into the realm of knowledge include "conflict," "organization," "management behavior," and "performance."

3.2 Criteria of Inclusion and Exclusion

Inclusion and exclusion criteria serve as the gatekeepers of scrutiny. A constellation of search variables, publication years, and search limits form the criteria for inclusion. The social sciences, management, and esteemed peer-reviewed management journals delineate the boundaries. The search methodology is honed to unearth scholarly articles published between 2014 and 2024.

Relevance, superiority, and duplication stand as the pillars of exclusion criteria. This is achieved through a meticulous analysis of abstracts and conclusions from downloaded article databases utilized in this investigation. To circumvent bias and enhance the findings of the review, unpublished articles and books are excluded from this research. The relevance of articles is determined by assessing

whether they align with the keywords used in the search. Following a comprehensive screening process by the researchers, 30 articles have been identified and deemed to meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

3.3 Data Collection

The type of data employed here is secondary data, comprising articles, books, and other publications encapsulating the research topic. The method of data collection in this literary investigation entails delving into and dissecting books, journals, or articles adhering to the principles pertinent to organizational conflicts.

3.4 Data Analysis

The narrative synthesis method is employed to scrutinize and amalgamate discoveries from all reviewed studies. This narrative synthesis typically unfolds through three distinct phases: extraction and encoding, tabulation of codes (findings), and the analysis of codes within and/or across all included studies (Petticrew, M., & Roberts, 2006). The outcomes of data extraction are thereafter laid out in a matrix. This matrix serves as a facilitator for researchers to scrutinize findings and ponder whether they will converge on similar conclusions. The primary function of the matrix is to present findings in a well-organized manner to aid in the synthesis process (Ahmad Sulaiman, 2020). In this study, researchers inspect and analyze the matrix twice to enhance the quality and validity of their synthesis.

IV. RESULTS

The author has meticulously traversed through a tapestry of literature, delving into 30 articles sourced from esteemed Indonesian journals indexed within the prestigious SINTA 1,2 classification, as well as internationally acclaimed journals ranked within the upper echelons of Quartile 1,2 indexing. Each selection was judiciously assessed for its relevance and alignment with the exigencies of the research endeavor. Consequently, what follows is an elucidation of the findings derived from this comprehensive literature review, by the aforementioned dataset.

Conflict within an organization is the clash or disagreement that arises among individuals or groups within an organization. This conflict may emerge due to differences in goals, values, needs, or perceptions among members or divisions of the organization. Types of conflict can include task conflict, relationship conflict, and process conflict. Conflict can have positive impacts if managed well, such as fostering

innovation, but it can also have negative impacts if it persists and is not addressed, such as lowering morale and productivity, thus adversely affecting both individuals and the company's performance. This underscores the importance of conflict management in every organization, and such ability should be possessed by organizational leaders.

A leader within an organization who possesses adept conflict management skills can serve as a mediator for the perceived effectiveness of employees. Through a servant leadership style centered on empowerment, persuasion, attentive listening, and humility, they tend to foster an environment where conflicts can be cooperatively handled within the team. Leaders who embody servant leadership behaviors can influence team dynamics and garner positive perceptions regarding their leadership effectiveness in conflict resolution (Lin Xiu et al, 2023). In line with the findings (Mario et al., 2023), where a crucial indicator in resolving task management conflict is knowledge management, the implementation of knowledge-oriented leadership emerges. This entails leaders facilitating task assignments based on experience and expertise, and identifying those with specialized skills (specialization) derived from the development of a *transactional memory system*. Consequently, team members discover information and task allocation more seamlessly, fostering an environment where employees are encouraged to share knowledge, and creating a positive atmosphere where they can trust their team members. This, in turn, facilitates coordination for both team and individual organizational levels, promoting innovation and effectiveness, thereby reducing *task management conflicts*.

Conflicts in the workplace can be triggered by certain conditions, as discussed in the reviewed journal, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on work dynamics and employees' daily lives. With social restrictions forcing a shift to online or work-from-home setups, resolving these issues can ignite conflicts between job demands and family responsibilities, thus affecting individuals' psychological well-being and productivity. This aligns with the theory of social movements as a primary foundation for conflict existence.

Employees experiencing conflicts between the time and attention required for work and family responsibilities often feel pressured and stressed. This compels them to physically be at the workplace despite

health concerns, fearing the repercussions of absenteeism on their job or career. Here, work engagement and organizational support moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and presenteeism. Work engagement, characterized by enthusiasm and dedication towards tasks, motivates individuals, while positive organizational support and perception can mitigate presenteeism by fostering a supportive work environment that prioritizes employee well-being (Tantri et al., 2022). However, this can be influenced by organizational politics.

In the intricate dance of workplace dynamics, organizational politics wield a profound influence, shaping conflicts and performance alike. Personal agendas in pursuit of organizational goals stand as one of the crafty maneuvers within this political arena, capable of fostering rifts between employees and igniting friction or discord within the organization. Unresolved conflicts, left to fester, have the unsettling power to disrupt productivity and the well-being of employees, ultimately echoing in their performance. Transparent, fair, and supportive organizational political practices hold the promise of enhancing employee performance, whereas controversial or inconsistent organizational politics can cast a shadow of negativity upon performance outcomes (Hartono, 2022).

There are two potential conflicts of interest within a company, namely principal-agent conflicts and principal-principal conflicts. The quality of corporate governance is negatively associated with principal-agent conflict, indicating that good corporate governance will reduce the level of principal-agent conflict. With effective monitoring of management, the quality of corporate governance can ensure that the policies implemented by agents (management) align with the interests of shareholders, thus reducing conflicts of interest and agency costs. By practicing better corporate governance such as higher dividend payments and reducing the gap between control and cash flow, companies can mitigate principal-principal conflict activities such as minority takeover by majority shareholders (Salim et al, 2020). Dividend policy plays a crucial role in moderating the relationship between investment decisions, financing, and firm value in manufacturing companies in Indonesia. This policy serves as an effective tool to reduce takeover risks and agency conflicts while positively influencing firm value (Andi & Wijaya, 2018).

Conflict in workplace relationships arises due to differences in interests, violations of laws, emotional discord, and other complex factors. It is crucial to pay attention to ethical values in managing conflicts between employers and employees, as well as to achieve fair and sustainable agreements through a cooperative approach. Integrating ethical values into conflict resolution strategies can strengthen cooperation between employers and workers. Principles of brotherhood, justice, and goodness in the interaction between employers and workers can minimize conflicts, while communication and negotiation strategies based on game theory and ethical values can yield more effective conflict resolution solutions (Najma et al., 2020).

V. CONCLUSION

This research delves into the literature on organizational conflict and its relationship with a healthy and productive work environment, using data from selected literature that aligns with the research criteria. A well-handled organizational conflict is faced and resolved constructively, aiming to improve relationships or situations without causing harm to the parties involved. Such conflicts can bring about positive change and learning for all parties involved. Through conflict management, moderate conflicts can drive employees to seek innovative solutions, while high levels of conflict can decrease work motivation and hinder the possibility of developing creative solutions, leading to decreased individual performance, increased turnover, and a decline in employee morale within the organization.

Leaders who possess good conflict management and knowledge-oriented leadership can influence how teams handle conflicts, which in turn affects leadership effectiveness and enhances innovation by improving the transactional memory system. Workplace engagement and organizational perception support, transparent, fair, and supportive organizational political practices, ethical sensitivity, emotional intelligence, flexible work arrangements, the application of game theory, and the integration of Islamic values such as brotherhood, justice, and goodness, along with communication and negotiation strategies, can yield more effective conflict resolutions. A profound understanding of conflict dynamics is a strategy for addressing organizational conflicts by adopting appropriate approaches, crucial for ensuring smooth and sustainable operational continuity within organizations.

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