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SPECIFICS OF TEACHING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT COURSE AT UNIVERSITY

Abstract. *The objective of the article is to introduce the content and specifics of teaching a course of conflict management in organizations. The work presents the theoretical material: the notion of conflict; macro, meso and micro factors, influencing the occurrence of conflicts in organizations and types of conflicts. The author's model of conflict management is described. It includes two blocks: "Diagnosis" of subjective (socio-psychological) and objective factors and "Strategic actions" at the subjective and objective levels for their correction. Subjective factors are considered in three aspects: cognitive, emotional and behavioural. Objective factors (organizational and managerial) imply material support (wages), working conditions, leadership style, etc. The paper also suggests the set of practical activities aimed to develop conflict management skills. The prospects for the further research are recommended.*

Introduction.

In modern world the need for conflict management skills is becoming increasingly important. Social, economic and psychological factors make conflict inevitable during the working process in organizations. The ability to manage conflict situations is one of the most important components of professional competence of the individual. Modern education should balance theory and practice to prepare students for real world challenges, to enable them to acquire necessary hard and soft skills for their future careers. The course on conflict management in organizations was created taking into consideration students' active participation in practical activities, assignments are often carried out in groups, which involves sharing, cooperation, communication and empathy. Practical work makes students independent and increases their confidence. At the same time practical work is an application of theory. Theory creates a strong base for practical work.

For successful management of conflicts in modern organizations it is necessary to analyze sources, reasons, types of conflicts arising, which is introduced in the theoretical part of the course. Students also get familiar with the conflict resolution model comprised of cognitive, emotional and behavioural components. The cognitive component – is the knowledge of theory, understanding and adequate perception of organizational conflicts. The emotional component refers to emotions that prevail in the company interaction (positive or negative), and the ability to control them. The behavioural component involves a high level of conflict resistance and collaboration as a style of behaviour in a conflict. Conflict management skills are developed by means of class discussions, debates, creating power point presentations, readings, case studies, games, role plays, projects and using techniques of art therapy (metaphorical cards, picture drawings, film reviews, and a collage).

1. Sources and types of conflicts in organizations

Theoretical material, which is introduced to students in the form of presentations, reading assignments from different scientific publications, online research and educational documentary videos, informs them about definition and brief historical outlook of notion of conflict, sources of conflict and specifics of conflict management in organizations.

Using the terms of Mudrik A. [14], *macro factors, meso factors and micro factors* influence the occurrence of conflicts in organizations. *Macro* factors (macro – large) – events in the state, society, which directly or indirectly affect the activities of the staff. Different views on political events in the country, the economic crisis, and government activities lead to discussions and conflicts. Budget cuts, unpopular resolutions and government innovations reflect the mood and working conditions in the organization. *Meso* (intermediate) factors are considered at the level of organizations. These are the following: socio-economic condition of the organizational activity in the country as a whole and the particular conditions in a definite city; unequal or unfair distribution of workload; insufficient equipment, outdated technological support; style of leadership/ management: authoritarian, democratic, liberal etc. Each style has its own advantages and disadvantages, which must be taken into account by managers in certain situations.

As for *micro* factors: an important feature of conflict is the nature of the need that a person seeks to satisfy. If any of the needs (physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization) are not satisfied this also can lead to conflicts within an organization. Conflicts can arise because of individual and psychological differences (abilities, temperament) [5]; differences of interests, values and approaches to solving problems; gender and age differences, generation gap are also factors of problems and conflicts [15; 16]; clash of egos and cultures; bullying and (sexual) harassment. The phenomenon of conformism can also cause conflicts within the organization. The group gives its members protection, approval and support. As soon as the person deviates from the norm by behaviour or statements, one can be excluded from the group.

Socio-psychological climate in the team is one of the decisive factors for successful organization. The socio-psychological climate of any institution is manifested in the form of a set of psychological conditions that contribute to or impede the productive activity of an individual in the group. Such climate can be favorable, unfavorable, and neutral. The most important features of a favorable socio-psychological climate of the team are divided into subjective and objective [10].

Subjective features: mutual assistance; trust; free expression of opinions; awareness of the members of the team about the tasks and status; creation conditions in the team for professional and creative activity, self-realization and self-development of each employee; job satisfaction (by its content, pay, organization of work).

Objective features: high performance indicators; low turnover; high level of work discipline; absence of tension and conflict in the team, etc. Negative psychological climate in teams is characterized by opposite signs. It leads to low results in work, tension in personal relationships, conflict, results in a desire to quit job. Neutral psychological climate is characterized by a certain balance of both subjective and objective features, but is unstable and can change towards one direction or another at any moment. Research has shown that work-family conflict (WFC) is the source of conflict in organizations as well. It has negative consequences: reducing the sense of satisfaction with life, creating unfavorable conditions for mental work, and increasing intentions to leave work. Work-family conflict is the result of incompatible pressures from work and family roles. There are two areas of this conflict: work interference with family (WIF) and family interference with work (FIW) [9]. According to Carlson D. [3] WIF and FIW each have three sub-dimensions: time, behavioural, and tension conflict. Time-based conflict occurs when the needs of time in one role are incompatible with the needs of another (extra hours at work force family plans to be canceled). Behavioural conflict occurs when behaviour in one area is inappropriate in another (emotional limitations in the workplace are incompatible with the openness that family members expect).

Tension conflict occurs when performing one role has implications for performing another role (caring for a sick child adversely affects one's ability to focus on work). Work and families have both positive and negative effects. Time, tasks, relationships, stress, emotions are shared between work and family. Studies have found a difference in the level of work-family conflict depending on marital status. The research results show that unmarried employees have a higher level of work-family conflict than married ones, which can be explained by the amount of work they receive [8]. There is a general notion that a single person has more free time. Hence the tendency to get more work compared to family colleagues. In the employer-employee relationship the parties need to understand importance of both work and family life. To reduce family interventions, organizations can take measures such as flexible schedules and childcare leave. This can help balance work and family needs.

Having analyzed the reasons of the conflict, we should consider its types and characteristics which are introduced in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of conflicts

№	Criteria	Types	Characteristics
1.	Spheres of conflict manifestation	Economic	Economic contradictions are at the core
		Ideological	At the core of this are contradictions of views
		Social-household	Contradictions of social sphere are at the core
		Family-household	At the core of this is the contradiction of family relationships
2.	Duration and intensity of conflict	Stormy fleeting conflicts	They arise on the basis of individual psychological characteristics of the person; differ by aggressiveness and extreme hostility of the conflicting sides
		Acute prolonged conflicts	They arise because of deep contradictions
		Weak and slow conflicts	They are connected with not very sharp contradictions or passiveness of one of the sides
		Weak and fleeting conflicts	They are related to superficial causes, are of episodic character
3.	Subjects of conflict interaction	Intrapersonal conflicts	They are associated with a clash of opposing motives of the individual
		Interpersonal conflicts	The subjects of the conflict are two (or more) individuals
		Intragroup conflicts	The subjects of the conflict are members of the group
		Intergroup conflicts	The subjects of the conflict are small social groups
		"Person-group" conflicts	Subjects of conflict: on the one side – the person and on the other – a group (micro group)
4.	Social consequences	Constructive conflicts	Such conflicts are based on objective contradictions; contribute to the development of an organization
		Destructive conflicts	Such conflicts are based on subjective causes; create social tension and lead to the destruction of the social system
5.	Duration	Short-term conflicts	Rapid conflicts
		Prolonged conflicts	Lasting for a long time
6.	Interaction between hierarchical levels	Vertical conflicts	Vertical direction in the organization hierarchy
		Horizontal conflicts	Horizontal direction in the organization hierarchy

The table presents the compilation of classification of conflicts by scholars: Emelianov S. [5], Orban-Lembryk L. [15] and M. Afzalur Rahim [17]. This is not a complete list of conflicts classification.

The variety of forms of manifestation, features of the course, the consequences of conflicts do not make it possible to create a single classification. Versatility and psychological complexity make it possible to choose different analysis criteria. Dynamics of a conflict should be considered in conflict management as well. According to Shevchuk D. [19, p.75] general scheme of dynamics is the following:
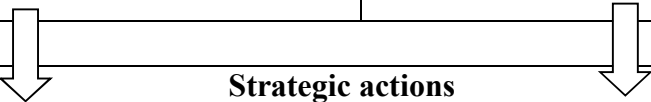
1) pre-conflict situation (latent period);

2) open conflict: incident (beginning of conflict); escalation (development) of the conflict; ending the conflict;

3) post-conflict period.

2. Conflict management models

According to M. Afzalur Rahim [17, p. 86-89] the process of managing organizational conflict consists of such stages as: Diagnosis (measurement and analysis) and Intervention.

Bernard Mayer [13] suggests diagnosis of conflicts with the three dimensions model. The Dimensions of Conflict (cognitive, emotional, behavioural) model is directed at understanding the dynamics of how conflict unfolds, and how it interacts on different levels. It allows the practitioner or manager of the organization, while diagnosing a conflict, to assess the depth of three important "dimensions". Cognitive dimension considers what the disputants think about and how they perceive a conflict. In addition to their thoughts and perceptions, people also react emotionally to conflict and express wide range of feelings. In addition to our perceptions about a conflict and our feelings, we also make choices about what actions we will take, how we will behave in response to the conflict. These three dimensions must be seen as being both interrelated with the other two dimensions and at the same time quite independent, requiring their own assessment [7].

Conflict management model

Diagnosis	
Subjective (socio-psychological) factors	***Objective (organizational and managerial) factors***
cognitive aspect: the level of knowledge about conflict and its prevention; *emotional* aspect: emotional intelligence, assessment of the psychological atmosphere in the team; *behavioural* aspect: diagnosis of styles of behaviour.	material support (wages); technical support; working conditions; satisfaction of basic needs; work load; leadership style.

Strategic actions	
Subjective *level*	*Objective level*
Complex approach to conflict management in organizations taking into account cognitive, emotional, behavioural aspects (analyzing the results of diagnosis and taking measures to correct them).	Application of monetary and non-monetary motivation systems. Creating favorable working conditions. Use leadership styles that are relevant to the interests of employees.

Developed by the author of this paper as a result of the research Conflict management model, includes two blocks: "Diagnosis" of subjective (socio-psychological) and objective (organizational and managerial) factors and "Strategic actions" at the subjective and objective levels for their correction.

Diagnosis can be carried out by interviewing, testing and observing. During diagnosis stage of subjective factors, it is important to gather information about all three aspects.

1. *Cognitive*:

How does staff (conflicting sides) perceive conflict? What do they know about conflict prevention measures? What facts do they focus on? What will change with the parties' perception of the conflict?

At the cognitive level, members of the staff have certain beliefs and perceptions of conflict. For example, the needs, desires, values of one side may be incompatible with the other. Such a belief makes it impossible to evaluate the situation objectively, and is an obstacle to a joint resolution of potential problems. There is an objective and subjective perception of the conflict. The objective includes facts, events and other data. Subjective perception includes conscious or subconscious assumptions about how a colleague interprets facts or data, and assumptions about the other party's motives and intentions.

2. *Emotional*:   What feelings does the conflict evoke? What are the individual and psychological characteristics of a particular individual? How would changing feelings affect conflict prevention? How effectively can team members control their negative emotions? In addition to understanding and perceiving conflict, employees respond to it emotionally. It is very important to evaluate the conflict within the emotional realm: what are the feelings of colleagues in the team and how those feelings can affect the process of conflict.

3. Behavioural: How does behaviour affect an opponent's actions, feelings, perceptions? What behaviour influences the conflict between colleagues? At what level is conflict resilience developed? What type of behaviour is used by team members in a conflict situation? How will the change of behaviour affect conflict prevention?

Together with the perception of the conflict and the feelings it generates, the employees' behaviour in response to the conflict is important. All three aspects are interconnected and, at the same time, independent and require separate evaluation. Diagnosis for each of these components will allow to understand which of them has the greatest impact on the occurrence of conflict in the organization and to begin the search for the strategic actions that will be the most effective for managing it. Equally important is the diagnosis of objective organizational and managerial factors, which can influence dissatisfaction with work and subsequently occurrence of conflicts. Using the method of observation, surveys, questionnaires, it is necessary to collect data on working conditions, workload, degree of satisfaction of basic needs (physiological, security), leadership style, adequate remuneration, etc.

Having realized the diagnosis and analyzed the results, it is necessary to start strategic actions. If the results of the diagnosis detect problematic issues, steps should be taken to improve this state of affairs. Cognitive dimension can be improved with the help of lectures, presentations, seminars, master classes. During the lectures and practical activities, employees will gain sufficient knowledge, change negative attitudes towards the phenomenon of "conflict". Emotional state can be improved through autogenic training, individual psychological counseling, definite activities and games.

Dealing with behavioural dimension efforts should be made to create the conditions for constructive interaction and cooperation as a style of behaviour. It is necessary to develop the rules of conduct in the organization. Promote a culture of communication, develop effective listening skills. All the corrective actions for the three aspects discussed above can be combined into a system of corporate training for staff of the organization.

Creating favorable working conditions (pleasant interior, technical support, flexible working hours, etc.); the use of monetary and non-monetary motivation systems; creation of a favorable psychological climate; personnel policy (a set of provisions, principles, methods of work with personnel in order to create a team that meets the necessary requirements) – all these actions are effective for conflict management in organizations.

3. Set of practical activities for Conflict management course

"Conflict management in organizations" is a 3 credit elective course which is taught in Jindal Institute of Behavioural Sciences, JGU, Sonipat, Haryana, India. As mentioned above the course consists of theoretical as well as practical parts. Interactive activities are grouped and introduced in three sections: cognitive, emotional and behavioural according to Conflict management model described earlier.

Cognitive section. The course starts with a warming-up activity.

1. A professor gives the following instructions: "I am conflict. Think how you typically react when you experience a personal conflict. Find your position in this room in relation to me which will express your reaction to a conflict. Don't say anything. Pay attention to your body language, facial expression as well as your distance from the conflict". After the activity is done, students explain (comment) their position, reaction, posture and gestures. This simple activity shows people's perception of conflicts.

2. Next step is to define conflict.

Students work individually, writing the definition of conflict (without using any sources).

Conflict is…/ Conflict means…

Then they read some of them to the whole group. There are some definitions of conflict on the slide. The students choose the definition closest to theirs.

1) Conflict is a competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons) [12].

2) Kenneth Boulding defined conflict as, "a situation of competition in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility with the wishes of the other" [2].

3. Afterwards the new activity, called "Two walls" is introduced. Students stand up and come forward to the board. On the wall on the right the statement AGREE is fixed, on the opposite wall there is a sign DISAGREE. The professor reads the statements one by one. If students agree with the statement, they move to the wall with the sign "agree"; if they disagree with the statement, they go to the opposite wall. Also the comments on the opinions are encouraged.

"An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind." (Mahatma Gandhi)

"I have a self-made quote: Celebrate diversity, practice acceptance and may we all choose peaceful options to conflict." (Donzella Michele Malone)

"Conflict is drama, and how people deal with conflict shows you the kind of people they are." (Stephen Moyer)

"It takes two to resolve conflict." (Tabitha M.)

"The harder the conflict, the more glorious is the triumph." (Thomas Paine)

"The greatest conflicts are not between two people but between one person and himself." (Garth Brooks)

"Conflict is inevitable, but combat is optional." (Max Lucade) [4].

4. The professor makes a statement that we usually perceive conflict as something negative and asks students if they have ever thought that conflicts can have positive sides or lead to constructive outcome.

The participants work in groups of 3-4 and fill in the columns in the table with the ideas below.

Table 2. Tipe of conflict

Constructive conflict	*Destructive conflict*

1. It polarizes or divides teams or groups of people.
2. It builds cohesiveness among the members of a team.
3. It destroys the morale of teams or individual team-members.
4. People change and grow personally from the conflict.
5. The conflict results in a solution to a problem.
6. No decision is reached and the problem still exists.

Then working in pairs, students add at least 2 ideas of their own to the list of constructive functions of a conflict and present ideas to the whole group.

At the end of the cognitive section of the practical part of the course, students are asked to give the feedback:

- What did you like/ dislike the most?
- Have you changed your perception/ your point of view about conflicts?

Emotional section.

1. In warming-up activity in this section students are supposed to get a card with the emotion (angry, annoyed, disgusted, bored, despaired, satisfied, disappointed, embarrassed, worried, shocked, happy, sad, surprised, excited, frustrated, guilty, proud) and using gestures, facial expression they have to demonstrate it. The rest of the group tries to guess. Follow-up discussion: Which emotions were the easiest and the most difficult to show? Why?

2. Mini lecture.

An American scientist Paul Ekman did some research and found out that 80-90% of emotions are universally recognized. He studied emotions in different parts of the world, in tribes, and even people who were blind from their birth expressed emotions in the same way. Paul Ekman classified 7 basic emotions: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, surprise and contempt. The professor shows slides with people demonstrating different emotions, students have to guess them.

3. Discussion. Students work in groups of 3-4 to discuss the following questions:
a) Are you an emotional person?
b) How often and in which situations do you hide your emotions?
c) What emotions are not easy to interpret? Why?
d) How aware are we of our facial expressions?
e) How do facial expressions consciously or unconsciously impact our ability to manage conflict?

f) Is it possible to manage our nonverbal communication? How?

4. Exercise "Mirror"

Think of a person you are in conflict with or you have recently had a disagreement with.

Write: what I like about N. is….   What I dislike about N. is……

Cross out the name of that person and write your own name. Reread what you wrote and think how much this description reflects your personality. Discuss your ideas in pairs. Report to the whole group.

5. Game "You've got a message".

Write your name on the line *from*, the name of a person from your group on the line *to* and the *task* what he/she should do. Don't show these cards to each other.

From_____

To   _____

Task_____

The teacher collects the cards and one by one reads the tasks, calling the names of the students in line "From" in order to perform them.

Follow up discussion:

1) What was your first reaction when you realized you would have to perform your own tasks?

2) Do we ever expect others to do things that we ourselves are unwilling to do?

3) For this activity, we literally had to put ourselves in someone else's intended shoes. How did that feel?

4) How can the sense of this exercise help to prevent conflicts?

These games are adapted versions from Mary Scannell's book [18].

Home assignments:

- Research on the topic of Emotional intelligence. Organize the findings in a power point presentation.
- Emotional Quotient Test [20].

Behavioural section.

1. Warming-up. Group drawing "What is it?"

Students are divided in teams. One person in each team starts by drawing a shape or outline. The drawing is then passed to the next team member who must add to the drawing and so on. Time spent by each person on the drawing is limited to 10 seconds. (The facilitator/ teacher can shout: "change" when the time is up).

No discussion is permitted during the drawing, or any agreement before the drawing of what the team will draw. The last person in team finishes the drawing beyond the time limit.

Questions for discussion:

1) Did your team draw anything recognizable?

2) How easy was the understanding between team members?

3) What was the effect of time pressure?

4) Was there a natural tendency to draw supportively and harmoniously or were there more conflicting ideas?

5) What was your expectation of the completed drawing? Did it change? Why?

6) How does stress and pressure affect our willingness to collaborate?

7) What conclusion can we make after this activity?

2. Communication can both cause and remedy conflict. As other skills, effective communication must be learned. Effective communication includes active listening. Students play a game which is called "I'm listening" by Mary Scannell [18].

Instructions: Please take a minute to read your script silently. Do not share your script with your partner. When each round begins, you will have 45 seconds to act out your script.

Roles:

Talker

Great news! You have just won the lottery! You are so excited that when you get to work you approach the first team member you see to tell him/ her all about your good news.

Your role: Tell your partner how this money will change your life, what you plan to do with your winnings, and how happy you are. Be sure to use voice and nonverbal communication to convey your excitement.

Listener

One of your colleagues comes to you with good news. You are very busy and preoccupied. Because you have so much going on, you are multitasking – checking your e-mail, texting, looking through the papers on your desk, organizing your workspace, getting up to go make copies, and so on. You don't even have time to look up and make eye contact – after all, if you do, your coworker may keep talking! And you have much more important things to do.

Your role: Use nonverbal feedback to indicate that you don't have time to listen. Everything you do indicates that you are very busy and that your tasks are far more important than taking the time to listen to your coworker.

Discussion

- When you were the talker, what feedback did you receive from your listener?

- How did you feel about that feedback?

- What strategies of effective listening do you know?

- What did you learn in this activity that you could use in similar situations at work?

3. Work individually, think about the last conflict you had. Describe it on the sheet of paper. Exchange the cards with another group(s). People, who take the cards with the problem, should write the solution in turns. Get back the cards and read the possible solutions. Are they helpful? Can you use any of these ideas in your real life? Report your views to the whole group.

4. Video documentaries. Presentation of the material can be done through watching the videos on the topic of the class. Talking about the specifics of intragroup/ intergroup conflicts the following videos can be used:

- Asch Conformity Experiment [1].

- The Bystander Effect:The Death of Kitty Genovese [21].

The follow-up discussion can include such questions as:

- How can this group behaviour cause conflicts in organizations?

- How does the knowledge about conformity and defusing responsibility help to manage (prevent) conflicts?

5. Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Questionnaire [22].

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) was originally developed as a research tool by Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann in the early 1970s. The TKI test is a self-report questionnaire designed to measure how one deals with interpersonal conflict. According to the Thomas-Kilmann model, there are five conflict handling modes: Competing, Accommodating, Avoiding, Collaborating and Compromising. Five conflict modes are placed on two dimensions: Assertiveness – the degree to which a person tries to satisfy their own concerns; Cooperativeness – the degree to which a person tries to satisfy other people's concerns. Students are required to take the test to identify their type of behaviour in a conflict.

6. Topics for presentation.

The following topics can be proposed to students as home assignment or group project with the presentation in the class.

1. Work-family conflicts.
2. Stress as the source of conflicts.
3. Creating positive psychological climate in organizations as the way to prevent conflicts.
4. Satisfying people's needs in an organization as the means of preventing conflicts.
5. Burnout as the source of conflicts.
6. Leadership styles and conflicts in organizations.

Revision

To revise the material, the following activities and techniques can be used:

1) Case study. Using "Conflict management model" students are required to work on a case study proposed by the teacher. They need to study the case, diagnose it, analyze the results, and suggest strategic actions.

2) Metaphorical cards can be used to find the resources for managing conflict situations. Students can choose the card which they associate with their problem. Describe what they see, what the conflict is and so on. Then from another pile of cards without looking they choose one which can be the solution to their conflict or some resource (a person, a thing, an event). The card is described and afterwards the action plan is designed to help them manage the conflict.

3) A group collage can be used as the revision of the learnt material. Students are equipped with paper, colour pencils, highlighters, magazines, a pair of scissors and glue. Working as a group they have to prepare a poster (collage) as a visual aid for their presentation on the topic "Conflict management in organizations".

After taking the course "Conflict management in organizations" students are asked to write a feedback. They should note what they found useful and interesting in the course, if their perception of conflicts has changed and what needs more consideration and practice.

Conclusions.

One of the most important components of professional competence is the ability to manage conflicts. Social, economic and psychological factors make conflict inevitable in organizations therefore developing conflict management skills is a vital task of modern education.

The course introduced in this paper, combines the theoretical part with the practical activities. The conflicts in organizations are studied under the prism of macro, meso and micro factors. The types of conflicts in organizations are classified depending on various criteria, such as spheres of conflict manifestation, duration and intensity, social consequences, etc.

The author's Conflict management model is presented and explained in the article. It consists of two blocks: "Diagnosis" of subjective (socio-psychological) and objective (organizational and managerial) factors and "Strategic actions" at the subjective and objective levels for their correction.

The practical activities for developing conflict management skills such as debates, creating power point presentations, readings, case studies, games, role plays, projects, techniques of art therapy (metaphorical cards, picture drawings, film reviews, and collage) are introduced in this work. This material can be used both during a practical conflict management course at educational institutions and as a part of a training programme in organizations.

Future work should focus on problematic issues and specifics of implementing the conflict management training in organizations. Our research also provides the framework for future studies of managing conflicts in multinational organizations.

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