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## COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT ISSUES IN PRODUCTION SYSTEMS – CONFLICT STYLES ANALYSIS

**Abstract:** *In a complex communication network which exists in business activities where the goals and interests of groups and individuals are different or opposite, while business is interdependent, it is clear that conflict is one of the most important elements of the organization. Production systems may employ conflicts in the scope of problem solving issues regarding research and development business processes. In that manner, conflicts may be perceived as positive events. This paper investigates the conflict styles in one production system which may be seen as one of the major activities in the conflict management process. The results suggests that the production systems should strive to direct conflicts into collaboration style so conflict resolution could provide benefits for the system.*

**Keywords:** *conflict management, production systems, communication management*

### 1. Introduction

Contemporary research treats conflicts in organizations through the interactions that are accepted and controlled with the moderate occurrence (Soliku and Schraml, 2018). Theorists have noted that constructive conflicts can develop in the organization the creativity, change and competitiveness of the company (Curcija et al., 2019). Based on this interpretation, the interest of managers has also increased to develop skills that can successfully manage the conflict in organizations in a positive way. Managers could best direct the conflict to the benefits or sources of diversity. If the conflict does not exist in the organization, it means that everyone tends towards the same, which is unrealistic, or there are no ambitions, or a motive that creates an action and leads to progress (Lu and Wang, 2018). Because of that, conflicts can be interpreted in a positive

way, but to go out from a conflict situation, it is necessary to create a common goal and create a path for realization. Otherwise, if managers do not rule conflict situations, it can go to a completely opposite side which would be least useful to the organization (McCarter et al., 2018).

The aim of this paper is to analyze analytically and practically the conflict processes in the company, all in order to improve the quality of company management.

The research method used in this paper is a survey research of employees in the company (Rahim, 1983).

The main motive for writing this paper is the fact that in this way a contribution can be made to the improvement of social relations, to reduce the conflict, in addition to the above, there may be a milestone in the business environment.

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## 2. Literature review

Management is a system that shapes and maintains a particular environment in order to achieve specific plans. The goal of each manager is to make the best possible balance between input and output over a certain period of time, while not neglecting the quality.

Communication involves the transmission of information from the one who sends the message to the one receiving the message, provided that the receiving person understands the message, which implies basis of the communication process. Communication is the main factor in modifying behaviors, realization of changes, achieving goals, and so on, and represent an inseparable connection in any area of application as well as in conflicts (Eisenkopf, 2018).

Some research show that managers spend 20% of work time working on conflict. Inadequate interpersonal relations can be the result of a conflict and may last for a certain period of time (months, even years) that can be negatively reflected on the whole organization, regardless of the fact that the conflict has fallen into oblivion. It is therefore very important for the leaders to consider the conflict among employees very seriously. The conflict can be reduced to the following crucial elements (Božac and Angeleski, 2008):

- Different group or individual interests
- Identifying this contradictions
- Probability from both angles of observation that the other party will hurt interests or has already condemned
- The action that really leads to this disorder

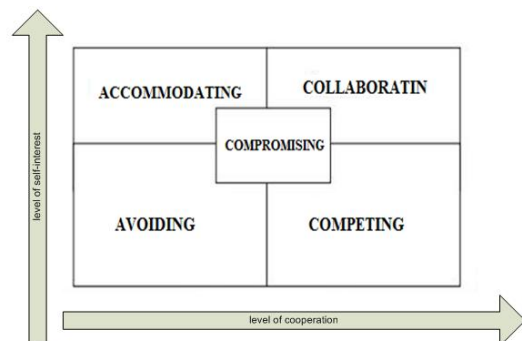
When conflict is discussed, the most often thoughts on dimensions of the conflict (Labrague and McEnroe–Petitte, 2017). An integrative review on conflict management styles among nursing students: Implications

for nurse education. Nurse education today, 59, 45-52.):

- Distribution
- Integration

Distribution refers to fear for its results, while integration implies taking care of others. These dimensions are very important and very independent. In some cases, it happens that action is taken on a high degree of integration and distribution, or a low degree of these two dimensions, or a low degree of one and the other high. There are various combinations of these dimensions and can be categorized into the following five styles for conflict resolution (Figure 1):

- Collaborating
- Accommodating
- Competing
- Avoiding
- Compromising



**Figure 1.** Styles for resolving conflict (Rahim, 1983).

### *Avoiding*

Interests: small care for themselves and little care for the other side. Behavior: avoidance  
Attitude: "Conflict? What kind of conflict?"  
Confessions: "Everything must eventually turn out well". "Things will be solved by themselves". Emotions: fear of conflict, learned helplessness.

### *Accommodating*

Interests: small care for themselves and great care for the other side. Objective: agreement at all costs. Behavior: passivity,

suggestiveness. Attitude: "Whatever you say".

Consequences: Facilitating conflicts in the future; others use it.

### *Competing*

Interests: big concern for yourself and little care for the other side. Behavior: domination, competition, aggression.

Attitude: "It will be in my place, or it will not be at all!".

Emotions: defeat causes a sense of inferiority, inadequacy, weakness.

### *Accommodating*

Interests: great care for yourself and great care for the other side.

Goal: "Smarter does not give up - he negotiates and insists on his rights and interests.". Behavior: an attack is a problem, not a person; assertiveness.

Emotions: relations above argumentation; conflict as a stage in mutual relations. Attitude: "It suits me and that. What is your choice? ".

### *Compromising*

Interests: moderate care for yourself and moderate care for the other side. Outcome: win / lose (win or lose)

Objective: Agreement

Behavior: We do not deal too well with solving the problem, but the middle solution is accepted. Attitude: "Let's meet halfway."

Emotions: Setting the limits to which it is possible to negotiate; determine in advance how much we are willing to give up.

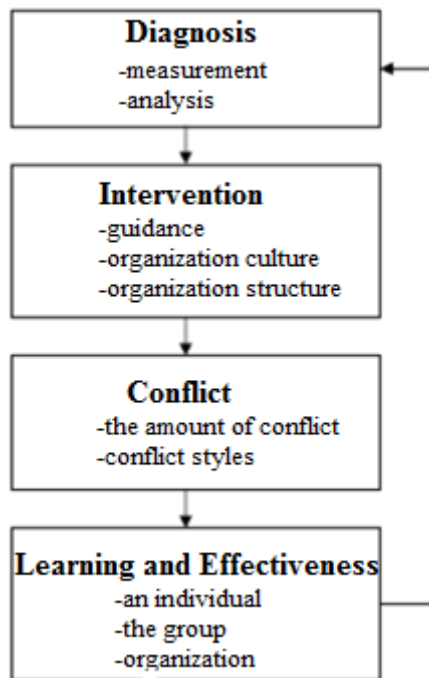
Louis. P. Pondy has discovered models that make it easier to understand and treat an organizational conflict (Pondy, 1967).

Conflict management in organizations is focused on individual conflicts, usually interpersonal or intergroup conflicts in the company, and such management in today's companies is not so functional.

## 2.1. Conflict management models

A good solution to conflict management in contemporary organizations is the holistic macro-perspective (Rahim, 1983) (Figure 2). The macro-organizational strategy implies the following facts (Božac and Angeleski, 2008):

- Minimizes the affective conflicts in the organization
- Encourages and maintains a moderate amount of cognitive conflicts
- Provides the choice and use of appropriate conflict management approach



**Figure 2.** Conflict Management Process (Rahim 1983)

Diagnosis - Certainly the first step in the conflict management process, is the diagnosis of all causes and the emergence of conflict in organizations. An example of a diagnosis can be: Measurement of strategy data to address interpersonal and intergroup

conflicts is thought of the already mentioned possible styles (collaborating, accommodating, competing, avoiding and compromising).

Intervention - If an organization is diagnosed with an acute conflict in a serious amount, a certain intervention is needed.

Learning and Effectiveness - Conflict management is as successful as the organization is willing to result in learning, because learning implies the long-term effectiveness of an organization.

### 3. Communication management issues in production systems

In the Republic of Serbia, conflicts have been examined rarely in companies. In the same time, conflict management is very important for the overall success of the production systems. This problem is of strategic type and it should be solved by upper management since each production system has its own corporate culture and climate (Apipalakula and Kummoon, 2017). If managers were to practice or diagnose conflict and manage it whenever necessary, it would greatly improve the quality of business. The next section provides insight on how conflicts are diagnosed in an organization.

#### 3.1. The survey for conflict management analysis

Rahim survey is based on 28 questions. Each member of the organization needs to answer all 28 questions. Questions are ranked with a score of 1 - 5, 1 - the lowest score, 5 - the highest score. After each member answers all questions, a selection of questions is made and the average grade is calculated. This poll is a secret.

Below is a list of Rahim's survey for conflict testing:

1. I try to investigate an issue with my

colleagues to find a solution acceptable to us.

2. I generally try to satisfy the needs of my colleagues.

3. I attempt to avoid being "put on the spot" and try to keep my conflict with my colleagues to myself.

4. I try to integrate my ideas with those of my colleagues to come up with a decision jointly.

5. I try to work with my colleagues to find solution to a problem that satisfies our expectations.

6. I usually avoid open discussion of my differences with my colleagues.

7. I try to find a middle course to resolve an impasse.

8. I use my influence to get my ideas accepted.

9. I use my authority to make a decision in my favor.

10. I usually accommodate the wishes of my colleagues.

11. I give in to the wishes of my colleagues.

12. I exchange accurate information with my colleagues to solve a problem together.

13. I usually allow concessions to my colleagues.

14. I usually propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.

15. I negotiate with my colleagues so that a compromise can be reached.

16. I try to stay away from disagreement with my colleagues.

17. I avoid an encounter with my colleagues.

18. I use my expertise to make a decision in my favor.

19. I often go along with the suggestions of my colleagues.

20. I use "give and take" so that a compromise can be made.

21. I am generally firm in pursuing my side of the issue.

22. I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way.

23. I collaborate with my colleagues to come up with decisions acceptable to us.

- 24. I try to satisfy the expectations of my colleagues.
- 25. I sometimes use my power to win a competitive situation.
- 26. I try to keep my disagreement with my colleagues to myself in order to avoid hard feelings.
- 27. I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my colleagues.
- 28. I try to work with my colleagues for a proper understanding of a problem.

*Calculation procedure*

In order to calculate the style of competing, it is necessary to calculate the average grade of the questions shown in Table 1 of the total number of respondents, and then the average of the assessments of the interrelated questions from Table 1 should be calculated.

**Table 1.** Rating style cooperation

1	4	5	12	22	23	28	Average rating

In order to calculate the accommodating style, it is necessary to calculate the average grade of the questions shown in Table 2 of the total number of respondents, and then the average of the assessments of the interrelated questions from Table 2 should be calculated.

**Table 2.** Rating style accommodating

2	10	11	13	19	24	Average rating

In order to calculate the style of competing, it is necessary to calculate the average grade of the questions shown in Table 3 of the total number of respondents, and then the average of the assessments of the interrelated questions from Table 3 should be calculated.

**Table 3** Rating style competing

8	9	18	21	25	Average rating

In order to calculate the avoiding style, it is necessary to calculate the average estimate

of the questions shown in Table 4 of the total number of respondents, then calculate the average of the assessments of the interrelated questions from Table 4.

**Table 4.** Rating style avoiding

3	6	16	17	26	27	Average rating

In order to calculate the compromising style, it is necessary to calculate the average grade of the questions shown in Table 5 of the total number of respondents, and then the average of the assessments of the interrelated questions from Table 5 should be calculated.

**Table 5.** Rating style compromising

7	14	15	20	Average rating

After calculating the conflict styles, the ranking may be carried out from the highest to the lowest grade and concluded that the conflicting style prevails.

## 4. The case study of FAS company in Serbia

This section analyzes the survey of 30 workers (subordinates) operating at Fiat Automobili Srbija, and examined what conflicts prevail in their interaction with each other. The survey that was used is the Rahim survey for testing styles of conflict resolution. As is well known, the survey included 28 questions, ie each question was rated by the respondent with a score of 1 – 5. The survey was realized through internet connection, oral interview and telephone conversation. The average estimates of each question answered by the respondents should be calculated:

Average grade = The sum of the total assessments of the respondents on a specific question / total number of respondents.

After the average estimates of each question are sorted, the average of the corresponding

questions that the survey requires should be calculated.

**Style of collaborating:**

Cooperation = A collection of average grade questions: 1, 4, 5, 12, 22, 23, 28 / Total number of questions collaborating = 3.93

**Style accommodating:**

Adjusting = The sum of the average grade for questions: 2, 10, 11, 13, 19, 24 / Total number of questions accommodating = 3.42

**Style competing:**

Competition = A collection of average grade questions: 8, 9, 18, 21, 25 / Total number of questions competing = 3.32

**Style avoiding:**

Avoiding = A collection of average grade questions: 3, 6, 16, 17, 26, 27 / Total number of questions avoiding = 2.97

**Style compromising:**

Compromise = The sum of the average grade for questions: 3, 6, 16, 17, 26, 27 / Total number of questions compromising = 3.99

Sorted results of the research are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Container conflict styles in the analyzed production system

CONFLICT STYLE	GRADE
Compromising	3.99
Collaborating	3.93
Accommodating	3.42
Competing	3.32
Avoiding	2.97

**4.1. The discussion**

Based on the results in Table 10 it can be said that the prevailing conflict in Fiat is compromising and collaborating.

When managers have a clear fact of a conflict situation, they can also have an insight into how their organization works in terms of interaction between employees and how it can be improved.

If the Rahim's conflict management process is analysed, it can be concluded that, in this paper, the first phase of a more precise diagnosis is performed. The diagnosis is certainly the first step in the conflict management process. On the basis of the obtained results it can be concluded that there is no affective conflict in the examined organization, but cooperation and compromise between the employees are predominant. Certainly learning and effectiveness in every organization should exist.

**5. Conclusion**

Production systems may vary in many features such as industry branch, organization, resource use, etc. Management of production system includes the planning, management, control and improvement of all processes within the system's entities. Production system management should ensure good communication, timely response and proper coordination of cooperative firms.

In the scope of all activities including business as usual of project activities in production system, the conflict may occur. The practice in many companies in Serbia still interprets conflict as an extraordinary event that takes place on the surface in the form of negative emotions and various manifestations. When the conflict occurs, there are styles and strategies for manipulating conflict resolution, and if the

optimal solution is not reached, the conflict is threatened in a latent form to a new conflict episode. From the perspective of many researchers, this interpretation of conflict is inadequate.

In the scope of the research presented in this paper, the case study of FAS company in Serbia is presented. The main contribution of the research is practical investigation of conflict management styles applied in

behavior of employees. The output of the research is an analysis of dominant conflict styles with the proposed measures for improvement. The future research should include analysis how conflict impacts on the productivity of this production system.

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