



## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND HARMONY IN WORK TEAMS: MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES, CAUSAL FACTORS, AND IMPACTS ON TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

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### Abstract

Workplace team conflict management requires understanding task, relationship, and process conflict types with distinct impacts on team effectiveness. Moderate task conflict improves decision quality and innovation, while relationship conflict consistently damages work climate and employee well being. Effective conflict management strategies include collaboration for complex issues, competition for urgent decisions, compromise under time constraints, accommodation for relationship preservation, and avoidance for trivial matters. Individual factors like emotional intelligence, team factors including trust and norms, and organizational factors such as reward systems and culture determine conflict management success. Third party intervention, skills training, and approach adjustment based on team development stage and task nature optimize conflict management. Healthy harmony represents capacity for constructive conflict resolution rather than conflict absence.

Keywords: team conflict, conflict management, task conflict, relationship conflict, team effectiveness

## Introduction

Conflicts within work teams represent an inevitable reality in any organization that relies on collaboration between individuals (Dale, 2019). Differences in backgrounds, values, personalities, and interests among team members naturally create potential friction in daily interactions. When a group of people with diverse perspectives is brought together to achieve a common goal, disagreements regarding the best approach to complete tasks, resource allocation, or the distribution of credit for success will periodically emerge. Modern organizations actively encourage team diversity because it has proven to enhance creativity and the quality of problem-solving; however, this diversity concurrently brings the consequence of increased conflict potential (Mishra, 2022). Not all conflicts are destructive; task conflicts, which focus on disagreements over how to execute work, can stimulate critical discussions and yield innovative solutions. Conversely, relationship conflicts, which are personal and emotional in nature, tend to damage the work climate and impede productivity. The management challenge lies in distinguishing between these two types of conflict and developing the capacity to manage each appropriately. Organizations that fail to manage conflict effectively will experience declines in team performance, increased absenteeism, and high employee turnover (Mei, 2012). Therefore, understanding conflict management strategies stands as a critical competence for team leaders and organizational members at all levels.

The causal factors of conflict within work teams can be classified into several primary categories based on their source. Structural conflicts emerge from the organizational design itself, such as task interdependencies between different units, ambiguity regarding authority and responsibilities, and competition over limited resources (Meadows & Ojikutu, 2023). When two departments must share the same budget or when one team depends on the output of another team to complete its work, the potential for structural conflict is high. During macro transition phases, this structural uncertainty frequently surfaces when organizational governance functions undergo comprehensive functional adjustments (Irfan et al., 2014). Communication conflicts occur due to errors in delivering or receiving messages, including ambiguous instructions, differing interpretations of identical information, and the use of

inappropriate communication channels. Therefore, adaptive and dynamic interactions within internal systems are highly required to bridge these message delivery barriers (Irfan et al., 2019). Value conflicts stem from fundamental differences regarding what is considered right or important, often related to work ethics, goal priorities, or how fellow team members are treated. In pluralistic societies, the dynamics of these clashing values are frequently mitigated by strengthening cohesion mechanisms and social norms applicable in public environments (Sulistyo & Hartanto, 2023). Personal conflicts arise from personality clashes, differing work styles, or historical negative interactions. Each type of cause demands a distinct management approach; structural conflicts might require process redesigns or the renegotiation of psychological contracts, whereas personal conflicts might necessitate facilitation interventions or even separating incompatible team members. Effective leaders must perform accurate diagnoses before deciding on an intervention strategy, as improper handling can exacerbate the situation.

The impact of conflict on team effectiveness is non-linear; there is an optimal level of conflict that actually drives high performance, while performance declines below or above that threshold (Meadows & Ojikutu, 2023). At very low levels of conflict, teams may experience groupthink, where members are reluctant to voice differing opinions out of fear of disrupting harmony. This condition causes the team to miss opportunities to critique flawed assumptions or explore superior alternatives. Conversely, at excessively high levels of conflict, the team's energy is depleted by debates and infighting, leaving few resources for productive work. This inverted U-shaped relationship between conflict and performance indicates that the goal of conflict management is not conflict elimination, but rather regulation at the appropriate level. Furthermore, the impact of conflict on team effectiveness depends on how the conflict is managed. The effectiveness of this management is simultaneously supported by strong organizational social capital and solid collaboration across all operational lines (Putra et al., 2021). Conflicts managed constructively where team members remain focused on the issue rather than the person, utilize data-driven arguments instead of emotion, and demonstrate respect despite disagreement can reinforce team cohesion over the long term. Conversely, conflicts managed

destructively where personal attacks, avoidance, or escalation become recurring patterns will destroy the foundational trust required for effective collaboration. The distinction between these two outcomes is heavily determined by the conflict management competencies possessed by team members and their leaders.

The work climate stands as one of the variables most heavily impacted by the presence and management of conflicts within teams (John-Eke & Akintokunbo, 2020). Work climate refers to the shared perceptions of team members regarding the policies, practices, and procedures that are valued and supported in their work environment. Conflicts that are poorly managed generate a climate of uncertainty, fear, and distrust. Team members become guarded in their interactions with certain colleagues, withhold information as a form of self-defense, and allocate mental energy to predicting and avoiding conflict rather than to productive work (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). Within such unsupportive atmospheres, managerial roles become vital to guide the work climate toward cultivating a culture of collective innovation and creativity (Özkaya et al., 2023). Conversely, teams that possess clear and consistently practiced conflict management norms develop a psychologically safe climate (Van Woerkom & Van Engen, 2009). Within this type of climate, team members feel secure to express differing opinions, critique ideas without fear of retaliation, and admit mistakes without losing face. This psychological safety serves as a powerful predictor of team performance, collective learning, and innovation. The establishment of a safe climate does not occur automatically; it must be intentionally constructed by setting clear expectations for acceptable behavior, leading by example regarding how to manage conflict constructively, and maintaining consistent consequences for destructive actions. An adaptive and situational leadership approach has proven crucial in navigating shifts in organizational direction and optimizing collective work performance (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022). Organizations that successfully cultivate a positive work climate will secure a competitive advantage, as their teams can adapt more rapidly to changes and optimally leverage diverse perspectives.

Effective conflict management strategies must take into account the nature of the conflict, the relationship between the conflicting parties, and the urgency of resolution (Oh et al., 2019). The five conflict handling styles

widely recognized in literature encompass competition, accommodation, avoidance, collaboration, and compromise. Determining these management tactics also necessitates comprehensive communication channels, particularly when confronting the characteristics of multicultural teams (Marsal & Darmawan, 2022). The competitive style, wherein one party attempts to impose their solution on another, is appropriate for situations where rapid decisions are required or when the issue under debate is vital to organizational safety. The accommodating style, wherein one party sacrifices their own interests for the satisfaction of another, is suitable when the issue holds greater importance for the other party or when long-term harmony is valued over victory on a specific matter. The avoiding style, wherein conflict is ignored in hopes that it will resolve itself, may be fitting for trivial issues or when emotional tension remains too high for rational discussion. The collaborative style, wherein both parties work together to discover a solution that satisfies the interests of both sides, represents the most time-consuming approach yet yields the best outcomes for complex conflicts involving long-term interests (Howell, 2014). Within internal institutional structures, a comprehensive understanding of conflict management is absolutely required as a regulatory instrument within the dynamics of work groups (Jahroni et al., 2015). The compromising style, wherein both parties equally sacrifice a portion of their interests to reach an agreement, is appropriate when time is limited or when full collaboration is unfeasible (Van Woerkom & Van Engen, 2009). Team leaders must develop a rich repertoire of these five styles along with the ability to select the style most appropriate for the specific situation at hand, rather than remaining rigidly attached to a single favorite style applied universally to all conflicts.

The primary issue confronting organizations is the lack of conflict management competence among team leaders and members alike. Many organizations assume that conflict resolution skills will develop naturally with experience, whereas without systematic training and feedback, most individuals will simply replicate ineffective conflict handling patterns learned since childhood. Maladaptive patterns such as passive aggression, uncontrolled emotional outbursts, or total avoidance of conflict frequently transform into deeply ingrained habits that are difficult to alter. When individuals with these maladaptive patterns are brought together in a team,

occurring conflicts tend to escalate rapidly because no party possesses the skills to de-escalate the situation. This inability to achieve resolution is occasionally complicated by role ambiguity among operational managers when interpreting directives from superiors (Jahroni & Darmawan, 2013). Organizations also face difficulties in detecting conflicts at an early stage; many conflicts are left to simmer beneath the surface until they eventually explode into crises that significantly disrupt operations (John-Eke & Akintokunbo, 2020). The absence of early detection mechanisms, such as periodic climate surveys or structured feedback sessions, causes conflicts to be addressed only after they have reached a damaging threshold. Furthermore, organizational reward systems often inadvertently encourage competitive behaviors that fuel conflict, for instance, by awarding bonuses solely for individual achievements without considering contributions to team success. This gap between the need for effective conflict management and the actual capacity of the organization to provide it constitutes a serious issue requiring systematic attention.

Another issue is the difficulty in distinguishing between beneficial functional conflict and destructive dysfunctional conflict, especially within complex real-world situations. In theory, the distinction between task conflict and relationship conflict appears clear, but in practice, these two types of conflict frequently intertwine and influence one another. Disagreements regarding the approach to complete a task can rapidly transform into a personal conflict if one party feels disrespected or if the arguments utilized are judgmental in nature (Sabetova et al., 2022). Conversely, personal animosity can be expressed as professional disagreements to conceal the underlying true motives. Team leaders are required to untangle this knot and determine whether interventions should focus on the substantial aspects of the conflict or on the underlying interpersonal relationships (Frimpong, 2008). Diagnostic errors can lead to fatal consequences; an intervention focusing on substantial aspects when the actual problem is a personal relationship will fail to resolve the root cause, whereas an intervention focusing on personal relationships when the actual problem is a legitimate professional disagreement will be perceived as a diversion from the issue. Furthermore, the identical conflict can be perceived differently by various team members based on their positions, interests, and past

experiences. One team member may view a conflict as a productive discussion, while another member perceives it as a personal attack. This variance in perception makes conflict management increasingly complex because interventions must account for the subjective realities of all involved parties, rather than just the objective reality as viewed from the leader's perspective. On an external level, this complexity escalates further when organizations are obligated to align the resolution of conflicting interests with applicable regulations and legal compliance (Darmawan et al., 2024; Rahayu et al., 2024).

The urgency of this study lies in the need to provide an applicable framework for organizations to manage work team conflicts amid the increasing complexity of the business environment. Pressures to innovate rapidly, cross-border collaborations, and higher workforce diversity significantly elevate the potential for conflict within teams. This study is required to identify conflict management strategies that have proven effective across various situations, along with the factors influencing their success. The theoretical contribution of this study is the enrichment of the relationship model between conflict and team performance by considering moderating variables such as the psychological climate and conflict management competence. From a macro perspective, this analysis also expands resource dependence theory in formulating organizational resilience strategies amid environmental uncertainty. Its practical contribution is the availability of guidelines for organizations in designing conflict management training programs, developing early detection systems, and establishing team norms that support constructive conflict resolution.

The objective of this research is to analyze effective conflict management strategies within work teams as well as the impact of conflict on team effectiveness and the work climate. This study aims to identify the factors causing conflict, the typology of conflict, and the conditions that distinguish functional conflict from dysfunctional conflict. The results of the research are expected to contribute to the development of team dynamics theory and provide practical recommendations for organizations in building conflict management capacity at all levels.

## Method

This research uses a qualitative literature study approach to address the research questions regarding conflict management and harmony within work teams. As explained by Adler and Clark (2011), social research aiming to understand complex phenomena such as conflict dynamics requires a synthesis of knowledge from various sources to build a comprehensive understanding. The literature study method was chosen because the topic of conflict management has generated a significant accumulation of knowledge over several decades, allowing for the identification of consistent patterns as well as gaps that still need to be filled. The research procedure follows the principles outlined by Wellington and Szczerbinski (2007) regarding the implementation of systematic and transparent social science research. The first step is the formulation of clear research questions concerning conflict management strategies, causal factors, and their impact on team effectiveness and work climate. The second step involves a structured literature search using academic databases such as PsycINFO, Business Source Complete, and Google Scholar with keywords such as conflict management, team conflict, task conflict, relationship conflict, team effectiveness, work climate, and conflict resolution strategies. The third step is the selection of sources based on strict inclusion criteria, including relevance to the research questions, methodological quality, and a balance between theoretical and empirical studies. Sources published before 1990 were specifically evaluated for their theoretical contributions, which may remain relevant despite being more than three decades old.

Data analysis in this literature study follows the approach recommended by De Vaus and De Vaus (2013) regarding survey research, which is also relevant for literature synthesis. This approach emphasizes the importance of systematic coding of literature sources to identify major themes as well as the relationships between them. The researcher conducted repeated readings of the selected sources to identify how each study defines and operationalizes key constructs such as task conflict, relationship conflict, conflict management strategies, team effectiveness, and work climate. Differences in definitions and operationalizations were noted as they can explain the variation in findings across studies. Once an understanding of the definitions was achieved, the researcher extracted the

main findings from each study, including reported causal relationships, effect sizes, identified mediating and moderating variables, and the characteristics of the samples used. These findings were then grouped based on conflict typology, management strategies, and measured outcomes. For each group, the researcher identified cross-study consensus, namely findings consistently replicated by independent researchers using different methods. Contradictions between studies were also identified and analyzed to understand what factors might explain these differences, such as differences in team types, industrial sectors, or national cultures. The synthesis process was conducted by building a model that integrates consistent findings, as well as proposing a research agenda to resolve existing contradictions. The final result of this process is a comprehensive mapping of effective conflict management strategies and the conditions that influence their effectiveness.

## **Result and Discussion**

Conflicts within work teams can be classified into three primary types that possess distinct characteristics and consequences: task conflict, relationship conflict, and process conflict. Task conflict focuses on disagreements regarding the content of the work itself, including team goals, the methods utilized, or interpretations of relevant facts. This type of conflict occurs when team members hold differing convictions about the best approach to resolve a problem or achieve an objective. A profound understanding of the dynamics of these conflict types is fundamentally rooted in the basic principles of organizational behavior that govern human action patterns (Darmawan, 2013). Relationship conflicts are interpersonal and emotional in nature, encompassing tension, animosity, and personal friction between team members. Process conflict relates to disagreements regarding how the work should be divided and coordinated, including resource allocation issues, role distribution, and decision-making procedures. These three types of conflict exert vastly different impacts on team effectiveness. Task conflict in moderate amounts has proven to enhance the quality of team decisions because it compels members to examine assumptions, seek additional information, and consider alternatives that might otherwise be overlooked. Conversely, relationship conflict is almost always

dysfunctional, draining the emotional energy of team members, damaging trust, and diverting attention away from substantive tasks. Process conflict yields varying impacts depending on role clarity and team maturity; in newly formed teams, process conflict can help establish norms and expectations, whereas in established teams, process conflict tends to be disruptive. The ability to distinguish between these three conflict types and comprehend their interactive dynamics serves as a fundamental competence for effective team leaders.

The conflict management strategies applied by team members significantly influence whether a conflict will develop constructively or destructively. The five primary strategies identified in literature encompass collaboration, competition, compromise, accommodation, and avoidance. The collaborative strategy, which involves a joint effort to identify a solution that satisfies the interests of all parties, represents the most effective approach for complex task conflicts that require creative solutions. In collaboration, conflicting parties openly articulate their interests, seek information to understand the other side's perspective, and collectively generate options that might not have been conceived if each party worked independently. The competitive strategy, wherein one party attempts to impose their solution through power or authority, is appropriate for situations where rapid decisions are required and consensus is unachievable. However, the excessive use of competitive strategies damages long-term relationships and fosters a win-lose culture that is ultimately detrimental. The compromising strategy, wherein each party sacrifices a portion of their interests to reach an agreement, is useful when time is limited and the issue is not critical enough to warrant the investment of full collaboration. The accommodating strategy, wherein one party yields for the sake of the other, is appropriate when the issue holds greater importance for the other party or when relationship harmony is more valuable than winning a specific issue. The avoiding strategy, wherein conflict is ignored or postponed, is only suitable for trivial matters or when tension is too high for rational discussion. Selecting the appropriate strategy requires an accurate assessment of the nature of the conflict, the relative interests of the involved parties, and the urgency of resolution. In practice, the precision of selecting this

strategy becomes part of the group management function to achieve operational harmony (Jahroni et al., 2015).

The causal factors of conflict within work teams can be categorized into individual, interpersonal, and structural dimensions. Individual factors encompass differences in personality, values, attitudes, and communication styles among team members. Individuals with a high level of openness to experience may be more tolerant of ambiguity compared to those with a high need for closure, meaning that variations in structural preferences can easily trigger conflicts. Interpersonal factors include the history of past interactions, perceptions of fairness, and the level of trust that has been established. A single incident of injustice that is poorly managed can trigger a conflict spiral lasting for years, as each party continuously retaliates for past negative actions. Structural factors encompass organizational design, such as task interdependencies, ambiguity regarding authority, competition over limited resources, and reward systems that encourage competitive behaviors. Teams with high task interdependencies, where the output of one member becomes the input for another, possess a higher potential for conflict because the failure of a single member directly impairs the performance of others. Within a broader governance scope, minimizing these structural barriers goes hand in hand with the distribution of various managerial factors applied to boost overall organizational effectiveness (Darmawan, 2024). Understanding this multi-causality of conflict is crucial because interventions that target only one category of causes without considering the others tend to be ineffective. For instance, training individual communication skills without altering a problematic dependency structure will provide only a temporary solution. A systems approach that accounts for the interactions between individual, interpersonal, and structural factors is required for sustainable conflict management.

The impact of conflict on team effectiveness is mediated by the psychological climate and team norms that govern how conflict is expressed and handled. In teams with a psychologically safe climate, members feel they can express differing opinions, admit mistakes, or request assistance without fear of punishment or humiliation. This safe climate allows task conflict to be expressed openly without transforming into relationship conflict. This healthy psychological condition of a group

is fundamentally supported by optimizing communication functions to build and maintain the quality of relationships within the organization (Gardi et al., 2021). Conversely, in teams with an unsafe psychological climate, even minor differences of opinion can trigger defensive responses and conflict escalation. Therefore, implementing a targeted internal communication approach becomes an important instrument in strengthening teamwork while reducing the potential for a clash of interests (Handoko et al., 2024). Team norms regarding conflict management also play a vital role; teams that possess explicit norms about how conflict should be handled such as rules against interrupting, focusing on the issue rather than the person, and gathering facts before drawing conclusions will be more effective in managing conflict compared to teams that rely on improvisation. These norms do not form automatically; they must be initiated by the team leader and consistently reinforced through modeling and feedback. In socially mature teams, members may collectively develop norms that support constructive conflict management without explicit leader intervention. However, the process of forming these norms requires time and shared experience in confronting conflict. Newly formed teams or teams with high turnover rates will find it more difficult to develop strong norms due to the lack of continuity in interaction.

Relationship conflicts exert the most destructive impact on the work climate and the psychological well-being of team members. When relationship conflicts occur, team members experience prolonged emotional stress, anxiety regarding upcoming interactions, and a decline in job satisfaction. This stress not only affects the individuals directly involved in the conflict but also spreads throughout the entire team via a process of emotional contagion. Team members who are not directly involved witness the tension and animosity, which makes them feel uncomfortable and reduces their sense of psychological safety. Over the long term, chronic relationship conflicts can cause team fragmentation into mutually hostile subgroups, where information no longer flows between factions and collaboration becomes impossible. Team members begin allocating energy toward protecting themselves from personal attacks, building coalitions to strengthen their positions, and gathering evidence to justify their perceptions of injustice. All of these activities divert valuable resources away from productive work. When drawn into

a macro scope, polarization resulting from such clashes of personal interests necessitates the reinforcement of normative systems and structural regulations so that group solidarity remains preserved (Sulistyo & Hartanto, 2023). Recovering from severe relationship conflict is highly difficult and requires the intervention of a neutral third party, occasionally necessitating the replacement of team members who serve as the source of friction. At a corporate level, resolving disputes that involve shareholders or external governance interests must be aligned with officially applicable national regulatory mechanisms (Rahayu et al., 2024). Organizations that allow relationship conflicts to drag on will experience significant performance declines and lose talented employees who refuse to work in a toxic environment. Therefore, early detection and rapid intervention against relationship conflicts remain a priority in organizational conflict management.

Task conflicts that are managed constructively can enhance team effectiveness through several mechanisms. First, task conflict encourages team members to examine assumptions that may be flawed and seek additional information before making decisions. In teams that are overly harmonious, incorrect assumptions can persist unchallenged, leading to decisions based on inaccurate convictions. Second, task conflict facilitates the emergence of new ideas because team members are compelled to consider perspectives that differ from their own. Exposure to these alternative perspectives stimulates creative thinking and can yield innovative solutions that were previously unconsidered. Third, task conflict increases commitment to the resulting decisions, as team members involved in discussions and debates feel that their opinions have been heard and considered. Decisions generated through processes involving task conflict tend to be more respected and better executed compared to decisions produced through conflict-avoidant processes. However, the benefits of task conflict can only be realized if certain conditions are met. Team members must possess adequate communication skills to express disagreement without resorting to personal attacks. The team must maintain a sufficient level of trust so that members are confident that differences of opinion will not be weaponized against them in the future. The team leader must be capable of facilitating constructive discussions and preventing the escalation of task conflict into relationship conflict.

Without these conditions, task conflict can rapidly turn destructive. Therefore, the interaction management function within the dynamics of a work group serves as a primary determinant to ensure that conflict remains within functional boundaries (Jahroni et al., 2015).

The relationship between conflict and team innovation is complex and influenced by both the type of conflict and the organizational context. Task conflict in moderate amounts has been proven to drive innovation by triggering the exploration of alternatives and the rejection of the status quo. Teams that are accustomed to challenging assumptions and debating ideas tend to produce more original solutions compared to teams that constantly seek rapid consensus. However, relationship conflict consistently hampers innovation because feuding team members tend to withhold information, remain reluctant to share ideas out of fear that those ideas will be personally criticized, and allocate energy toward self-defense rather than creative problem-solving. Process conflict can also impede innovation if it results in confusion regarding roles and responsibilities, as team members become unsure of who holds the authority to make decisions regarding new experiments. The effect of conflict on innovation is further moderated by factors such as management support for risk-taking and the availability of resources for experimentation. In organizations that penalize failure, task conflict tends to be suppressed because team members fear that unpopular ideas will damage their careers. Conversely, in organizations that celebrate learning from failure, task conflict can thrive healthily. Leaders who wish to leverage conflict to drive innovation need to create an environment where differences of opinion are valued, where ideas are evaluated based on their substance rather than their source, and where reasonable failures are viewed as learning opportunities. Without a supportive environment, the innovative potential of task conflict will never be realized. This innovative climate fundamentally requires the alignment of open internal communication systems within the team structure (Handoko et al., 2024).

The role of the team leader in conflict management is highly crucial, particularly in distinguishing between functional and dysfunctional conflict and selecting appropriate interventions. Transformational leaders who inspire team members to focus on shared goals can redirect energy from relationship conflict toward task conflict by reminding the team of

their collective mission. Alongside this, implementing a servant leadership model is also viewed as strategic to nurture group members while boosting work team effectiveness (Hariani & Mardikaningsih, 2014). Leaders who practice ethical leadership by enforcing clear behavioral standards can prevent relationship conflicts from surfacing by establishing boundaries regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Leaders employing a situational leadership approach will adjust their level of involvement in conflict management based on the maturity of the team. For newly formed teams, the leader may need to be more directive in establishing conflict management norms and directly facilitating resolutions. For mature teams, the leader can act as a catalyst that encourages team members to resolve their own disputes, intervening only when conflicts begin to turn destructive. Leaders must also guard against the natural tendency to avoid conflict, which frequently exacerbates the situation over the long term. Avoided conflict does not disappear; it remains buried and re-emerges in a more destructive form. Leaders who possess the courage to acknowledge conflict and facilitate open discussions, despite initial discomfort, build the team's capacity to manage conflict more effectively in the future. A leader's conflict management skills must be continuously developed through training, feedback, and reflection on practical experiences.

Third-party intervention becomes necessary when conflicting parties are unable to resolve their differences independently. The forms of intervention vary from mediation, where a neutral third party facilitates communication and negotiation without imposing a solution, to arbitration, where the third party possesses the authority to decree a binding resolution. Mediation is more appropriate for relationship conflicts where restoring interpersonal bonds is an important goal, whereas arbitration is more suitable for substantive task conflicts where rapid decisions are required. The effectiveness of a third-party intervention depends heavily on the credibility, neutrality, and competence of the facilitator. A third party perceived as biased toward one side will lose trust, and their intervention will be rejected. Third parties who lack adequate communication skills can inadvertently worsen conflicts by allowing disputants to interrupt one another or by ignoring underlying emotional issues. Within organizations, third-party interventions are frequently conducted by line managers or human resource professionals. Line

managers have the advantage of understanding the operational context and possessing formal authority, but they may be perceived as biased due to their existing working relationships with the conflicting parties. Human resource professionals may offer greater neutrality but might lack an understanding of the technical nuances of the conflict. Selecting the appropriate third party requires careful consideration of the nature of the conflict, the relationship between the parties, and the available resources. Organizations need to develop internal capacities for third-party intervention through mediation training and the establishment of clear protocols regarding when and how interventions should be executed. This third-party mechanism fundamentally functions to reinforce cross-sectoral communication so that the quality of working relationships can be maintained (Gardi et al., 2021).

The influence of organizational culture on conflict management is highly significant, as culture shapes assumptions regarding whether conflict is natural and determines which methods are acceptable for resolving it. In cultures that prize harmony and avoid direct confrontation, as commonly observed in collectivistic societies, conflicts tend to be handled indirectly through intermediaries or by changing the topic of discussion. Avoidance and accommodation strategies are utilized more frequently, while competitive strategies are deemed inappropriate. Conversely, in individualistic cultures that value straightforwardness, conflicts are addressed more directly and explicitly. Competitive and collaborative strategies are more common, whereas avoidance is perceived as a weakness. These cultural differences hold vital implications for multinational organizations that utilize teams comprised of members from varied cultural backgrounds. This varying condition demands a broader collective awareness regarding how social and psychological phenomena operate in the modern era (Darmawan et al., 2021). Team members from confrontation-avoidant cultures may feel uncomfortable with colleagues from more direct cultures, perceiving them as aggressive and disrespectful. Conversely, team members from direct cultures may view conflict-avoidant colleagues as insincere or lacking conviction. Organizations must recognize these differences and provide cultural awareness training to help team members understand that variations in conflict management styles do not reflect malice, but rather differences in learned norms. Furthermore,

organizations need to develop conflict management protocols that accommodate diverse styles, such as by providing multiple channels to voice grievances, both directly and through intermediaries. Flexibility in conflict management approaches is becoming increasingly important alongside the rising diversity of the workforce in the era of globalization.

The impact of conflict on team performance is not universal but depends heavily on the tasks performed by the team. For teams executing routine and structured tasks, such as production teams or administrative service units, conflict tends to be dysfunctional more frequently because procedural standardization is the key to success. Differences of opinion regarding how to perform a task instead disrupt the coordination required for efficiency. Conversely, for teams engaged in unstructured and complex tasks, such as research and development teams or strategic consulting groups, task conflict is necessary to explore alternatives and avoid groupthink. A product design team that is overly harmonious might produce a safe but uninspiring product, whereas a team accustomed to debating design assumptions tends to generate more original solutions. The practical implication of these findings is that conflict management strategies must be tailored to the nature of the team's task. For routine-task teams, the focus of conflict management should be on prevention and the rapid resolution of emerging conflicts, with an emphasis on procedural clarity and standardization. For complex-task teams, the focus should be on creating a safe environment for task conflict, emphasizing communication skills and constructive discussion facilitation. Team leaders need to accurately diagnose the nature of the task before determining the appropriate conflict management approach. Applying the same approach across all types of teams will yield suboptimal effectiveness. Organizations also need to consider team composition during assignments; teams performing complex tasks benefit from higher diversity of perspectives, while routine-task teams benefit more from homogeneity in terms of work approaches. This differentiation of approaches aligns with the principles of macro-organizational behavior that prioritize structural efficiency within work governance systems (Darmawan, 2013).

The dynamics of conflict within virtual teams possess distinct characteristics compared to face-to-face teams due to the limitations of social cues and non-verbal communication. In virtual communication,

team members cannot see facial expressions, hear vocal inflections, or read the body language of their colleagues, which typically provide vital information regarding intent and emotion. The lack of these cues causes misunderstandings to occur more frequently, as a message intended as constructive criticism can be interpreted as a personal attack. Furthermore, conflicts within virtual teams tend to escalate more rapidly and are more difficult to defuse due to the absence of informal interactions outside of working hours, which help build relationships and ease tension. Feuding virtual team members can easily avoid one another by not replying to messages or failing to attend video calls, which instead exacerbates the situation. Conflict management strategies for virtual teams require specific adjustments. First, virtual teams must establish explicit communication norms, including rules regarding response times, the appropriate use of channels for different types of messages, and procedures for raising conflicts before they escalate. Second, virtual team leaders must be more proactive in monitoring signs of conflict, as disputes may remain invisible until they become severe. Monitoring can be conducted through regular brief surveys, participatory observation in virtual discussions, or private conversations with team members. Third, virtual teams need to create opportunities for non-task-related social interactions, such as virtual spaces for casual chats or virtual coffee sessions, to build relationships that serve as a cushion when conflict arises. Fourth, when conflict does occur, resolution efforts should be conducted through rich communication channels like video calls rather than text or email, which are highly prone to misinterpretation. Conditioning these digital interaction patterns is crucial to reinforce functional commitment and long-term team cohesion (Handoko et al., 2024).

The emotional intelligence of team members is an individual factor that profoundly influences the success of conflict management within work teams. Emotional intelligence encompasses four core competencies: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management. Team members with high self-awareness are able to recognize their own emotions when conflict occurs, enabling them to prevent uncontrolled emotional outbursts. They realize when they are angry or frustrated and choose to delay their response until their

emotions subside, rather than reacting impulsively and worsening the conflict. Team members with good self-regulation are capable of managing their negative emotions, utilizing techniques such as breathing exercises or cognitive reframing to view a situation from a more balanced perspective. This internal condition is closely linked to possessing resilient psychological capital within each individual to boost optimal work achievements (Hariani & Putra, 2024). Social awareness enables team members to read the emotions of their colleagues, even when those colleagues do not explicitly voice them. This capability is invaluable for detecting conflicts at an early stage before they become overt and destructive. Relationship management, the highest competency of emotional intelligence, allows team members to navigate complex social interactions, including negotiation, persuasion, and conflict resolution. Collectively, the combination of these various internal personal qualities serves as an absolute prerequisite for building workforce stability and long-term loyalty toward institutions (Darmawan et al., 2020). Teams comprised of members with high emotional intelligence tend to experience less relationship conflict and are more effective at managing task conflict. Organizations can develop emotional intelligence through training, coaching, and 360-degree feedback. However, developing emotional intelligence requires time and consistent practice rather than merely attending a single-day workshop. Organizations serious about building conflict management capacity must integrate emotional intelligence development into leadership development programs and continuous team training.

Conflict within cross-functional teams possesses an added layer of complexity due to differences in professional languages, priorities, and success metrics across functions. Team members from a marketing function might use different terms for the exact same concept as members from an engineering function, causing confusion and mistaken assumptions about one another's intentions. Differing priorities also serve as a source of conflict; the finance function prioritizes cost control, whereas the research and development function prioritizes innovation despite higher costs. Different success metrics mean that team members from various functions have distinct definitions of what it means to be successful, so that when a team achieves the target of one function,

another function may feel they have failed. Conflict management in cross-functional teams requires several specific strategies. First, the team needs to invest time at the early stages of formation to build a shared language, including defining key terms and creating an agreed-upon glossary. Second, the team needs to make assumptions regarding priorities and success metrics explicit, and then negotiate compromises acceptable to all parties. Third, cross-functional team leaders must possess an adequate understanding of the logic of each function so they can translate and mediate when conflicts occur. This integrative step aligns with the corporate urgency of managing talented personnel through structured retention schemes to preserve the organization's existence (Irfan et al., 2013). Fourth, the team needs to regularly celebrate successes that are cross-functional in nature, rather than just functional achievements, to build a team identity that transcends functional affiliations. Conflict in cross-functional teams, if managed well, can actually become a valuable source of learning because team members are exposed to different ways of thinking. Many breakthrough innovations emerge precisely from intersections between disciplines, where initial conflicts generate creative syntheses. Organizations that successfully manage cross-functional conflict will possess an advantage in integrating capabilities scattered throughout the enterprise.

The stages of team development influence how conflict emerges and how it should ideally be managed. In the forming stage, the team is still in the process of introduction and norm-setting; conflict at this stage is usually trivial and related to logistics or scheduling. Leaders can use a directive approach to establish conflict management norms from the outset, such as by discussing how the team will handle disagreements before they occur. In the storming stage, conflict reaches its peak as team members begin asserting their differing opinions and work preferences. This stage is critical; teams that successfully navigate storming will develop stronger relationships, whereas teams that fail can dissolve. Leaders need to be more active in facilitating during the storming stage, ensuring that conflict remains at the task level and does not turn personal. In the norming stage, the team begins to develop shared norms and conflict decreases; leaders can start delegating conflict management to the team members. In the performing stage, the team functions with high efficiency

and the conflicts that emerge are usually substantive and productive; the leader can act as a catalyst that encourages the team to independently manage their conflicts. Understanding these developmental phases is crucial because interventions appropriate for one phase may be inappropriate for another. For example, a hands-off approach that fits a performing team would become maladaptive for a team still in the storming stage. Conversely, a directive approach necessary during the storming stage would be perceived as disrupting team autonomy in the performing stage. Therefore, flexibility in adopting situational leadership strategies is vital to guide these phase transitions while enhancing overall team performance (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022).

Conflicts that are poorly managed can lead to a destructive spiral that is difficult to stop once initiated. A conflict spiral begins with a single minor incident, such as a comment perceived as insulting, which triggers a negative response from the offended party. This negative response is then countered with an even stronger negative response by the first party, who views the initial reaction as confirmation that the other side's intentions are indeed malicious. Each cycle escalates emotional intensity and solidifies the negative perceptions of each party. Within a conflict spiral, the initial substantive issue becomes blurred and is replaced by a battle to save face or prove who is right. Conflicting parties begin categorizing one another as enemies, ignoring information that does not fit that category, and searching for evidence that confirms their negative stereotypes. Halting a conflict spiral requires a deliberate intervention, frequently from a neutral third party. Interventions can take the form of temporarily separating the conflicting parties to allow emotions to cool down, or facilitating structured dialogues where each side is asked to articulate their interests without accusations. In severe cases, intervention may require structural changes, such as separating the conflicting parties into different teams or restructuring tasks so they do not need to interact intensively. Preventing conflict spirals is superior to stopping them after they occur; organizations need to build early detection mechanisms and rapid intervention procedures so that conflicts can be addressed before they escalate. Training all employees on the early warning signs of conflict spirals and de-escalation skills is also a valuable investment. Teams that possess members with good de-

escalation skills will be better equipped to halt a conflict spiral before it becomes destructive. This preventive mechanism aligns with the fundamental function of conflict management in maintaining stability and dynamic order within work groups (Jahroni et al., 2015).

The influence of team diversity on conflict and team effectiveness is complex and non-linear. Demographic diversity, such as differences in age, gender, and ethnicity, can increase the potential for relationship conflict due to varied backgrounds in life experiences. However, demographic diversity also brings diverse perspectives that can enrich problem-solving if managed effectively. Functional diversity the difference in expertise and areas of specialization tends to increase task conflict because team members approach the same problem with different methodologies. Value diversity, which involves differences in beliefs regarding what is important or right, represents the type of diversity with the highest potential to trigger destructive conflict because values are typically deeply tied to self-identity. Conflict management in a diverse team requires a distinct approach compared to a homogeneous team. First, diverse teams need to invest more time initially to build a shared understanding and trust, as assumptions regarding similarity cannot be relied upon. Second, diverse teams must establish explicit norms on how differences will be valued and managed, including procedures for raising conflicts when they occur. Third, leaders of diverse teams must possess high cultural competence the ability to understand and value different backgrounds without judgment. Within this multi-sociocultural context, the accuracy of communication strategies plays a vital role in bridging differing perceptions and reducing interpersonal tensions (Marsal & Darmawan, 2022). Fourth, diverse teams need to deliberately create opportunities for cross-group social interactions to build relationships that serve as a cushion when conflict arises. Organizations that successfully manage diversity will reap rewards in the form of enhanced creativity and decision quality, whereas organizations that fail will experience destructive conflicts that damage performance. Success in managing diversity depends heavily on the quality of the conflict management applied.

The organizational reward system exerts a powerful influence on how conflict is expressed and managed within teams. Reward systems

based on individual competition, such as forced-curve performance ratings or bonuses for the highest individual achievement, tend to trigger relationship conflict because team members view one another as competitors for limited resources. In such systems, assisting a struggling colleague can be self-detrimental, as the time spent helping reduces individual productivity. Conversely, reward systems based on team performance, such as equally distributed bonuses or recognition for collective achievements, tend to encourage collaboration and reduce conflict. Team members have incentives to help one another and to resolve conflicts constructively because team success is shared success. However, team-based systems also possess potential drawbacks; team members who do not contribute can become free riders supported by the hard work of other members. Conflict can arise if team members feel that their contributions are not proportionally rewarded. Therefore, structuring a fair work climate through the reinforcement of organizational social capital serves as an essential foundation to support successful team collaboration as a whole (Putra et al., 2021). A hybrid reward system that combines individual and team components may represent the best solution, where a portion of the bonus is based on team performance and a portion on individual contributions evaluated by teammates. Such a system drives collaboration while preventing free riding. The design of the reward system also needs to consider the nature of the team's task; for highly interdependent tasks, the team component should be larger, whereas for more individualized tasks, the individual component can be greater. Organizations need to periodically evaluate whether their reward systems encourage or inhibit constructive conflict management, making adjustments as necessary. Changes to reward systems are sensitive and require careful communication, but their impact on team dynamics can be highly significant.

Conflict management training for team members has proven effective in enhancing a team's ability to manage conflicts constructively. Effective training does not merely teach theoretical concepts regarding types of conflict and handling strategies, but also provides opportunities to practice skills through simulations and role-playing. A key component of conflict management training involves active listening skills the ability to understand the perspective of the other party without judging or

interrupting. This skill allows conflicting parties to feel heard, which is often sufficient to defuse tension. The second component is assertive communication skills the ability to express opinions and feelings clearly and directly without attacking the other party. Assertive communication utilizes "I" statements rather than "you" statements, for example, "I feel frustrated when deadlines are not met" versus "You always miss deadlines." Implementing this structured internal communication approach has proven capable of cementing cooperation while minimizing clashes of interest within the organization (Handoko et al., 2024). The third component is interest-based negotiation skills the ability to identify the underlying interests behind stated positions and seek solutions that satisfy the interests of all parties. The fourth component involves de-escalation skills the ability to calm a situation when emotions begin to flare up, such as by proposing a timeout or shifting the discussion to facts. The most effective training is that delivered to the entire team together rather than to individuals separately, as team members can practice skills with one another in a safe environment. Training also needs to be followed by periodic reinforcement sessions, such as coaching or case reviews, to ensure that the learned skills are applied in daily work. Organizations that invest resources into conflict management training will see a positive impact on the work climate, employee retention, and team performance.

The mediating role of trust in the relationship between conflict and team effectiveness is vital to understand. Trust the belief that the other party will act in a beneficial or at least non-harmful manner functions as a cushion that absorbs the negative impacts of conflict. In teams with high levels of trust, task conflict can occur without developing into relationship conflict because team members are confident that their colleagues possess good intentions despite disagreeing with their opinions. They interpret criticism as an effort to improve the quality of work rather than as a personal attack. Conversely, in teams with low levels of trust, even minor differences of opinion can be interpreted as signs that the other party intends harm or is incompetent. Trust is built through a series of interactions where each party fulfills promises, demonstrates competence, and acts with integrity. Breaches of trust, such as ignored promises or withheld information, can destroy the foundation required for constructive conflict management. Rebuilding trust after a

violation requires time and concrete actions, not merely an apology. On a macro level, restoring group stability post-interpersonal tension requires the support of normative social mechanisms to ensure that group integration is preserved (Sulistyo & Hartanto, 2023). Team leaders can build trust by modeling trustworthy behavior, creating transparency in decision-making, and consistently following through on commitments. Organizations can also build trust through system designs that reduce uncertainty, such as clear procedures for resolving grievances or appeals mechanisms for decisions perceived as unfair. Without trust, even the most sophisticated conflict management strategies will fail because the conflicting parties will be unwilling to engage in a vulnerable resolution process. Therefore, investing in trust-building remains a prerequisite for effective conflict management efforts.

The impact of conflict on the psychological well-being of employees extends far beyond its effects on team performance. Employees involved in chronic relationship conflicts experience heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. This stress not only affects their work life but also carries over into their homes, disrupting family relationships and overall quality of life. Unresolved conflict can lead to insomnia, weakened immune systems, and various other physical health problems. The healthcare costs borne by an organization due to unmanaged conflict can be highly significant, not to mention the loss of productivity resulting from absenteeism and presenteeism (working while unwell). Conflict can also lead to decisions to leave the organization, even among high-performing employees, because they feel the work environment is no longer healthy. The replacement cost for an employee leaving due to conflict can reach up to 150% of the annual salary for professional positions, factoring in recruitment, training, and lost productivity during the transition period. Organizations serious about maintaining employee well-being must view conflict management as an integral part of occupational health and safety programs rather than merely an employee relations issue. This means providing adequate resources for conflict resolution, such as access to internal mediators or counseling, and fostering a culture where seeking help for a conflict is not perceived as a weakness. Furthermore, if the escalation of an internal dispute leads to formal legal aspects, the organization is obligated to refer to applicable

national regulations to achieve a resolution with binding legal force (Rahayu et al., 2024). Investing in conflict management will pay off through reductions in healthcare claims, absenteeism, and turnover. Moreover, organizations that care about employee well-being will find it easier to attract and retain top talent in a competitive labor market.

Harmony within a work team does not mean the complete absence of conflict, but rather the capacity to manage conflict constructively so that wasted energy is minimized and learning is maximized. Teams that are overly harmonious, where members are reluctant to voice differing opinions out of fear of disrupting relationships, are actually fragile. When conflict eventually surfaces which it inevitably will because differences are unavoidable such a team lacks the experience and skills to manage it. Conversely, teams with experience in managing conflict constructively are much more resilient. They have developed norms and skills that enable them to confront disagreements openly and productively. Healthy harmony is not a superficial one based on conflict avoidance, but rather a deep harmony grounded in mutual respect and trust that has been proven through the test of conflict. Teams that have successfully navigated conflict and emerged with stronger relationships possess a higher level of cohesion compared to teams that have never experienced conflict. Team leaders need to communicate this perspective to team members: that conflict is not a sign of failure but a normal part of teamwork that can become a source of strength if managed well. By normalizing conflict, team members become more courageous in expressing differing opinions and more open to feedback. Management's active role in facilitating this dynamic will ultimately shape a robust culture of team innovation and creativity (Özkaya et al., 2023). A healthy team culture is one that does not fear conflict but also does not allow conflict to develop destructively. Achieving this balance requires awareness, skills, and commitment from all team members, facilitated by supportive leadership. Organizations that successfully build a culture of constructive conflict management will secure a significant competitive advantage in terms of adaptability speed, innovation, and talent retention.

## Conclusion

Conflict management within work teams requires an understanding of three types of conflict task, relationship, and process which have different characteristics and impacts on team effectiveness. Task conflict in moderate levels improves decision quality and innovation, while relationship conflict is almost always destructive to the work climate and employee well-being. Effective conflict management strategies include collaboration for complex issues, competition for quick decisions, compromise when time is limited, accommodation to maintain relationships, and avoidance for trivial issues. Individual factors such as emotional intelligence, team factors such as trust and norms, and organizational factors such as reward systems and culture influence the success of conflict management. Third-party interventions, skills training, and adjusting approaches based on the team's developmental phase and the nature of the task are necessary to optimize conflict management. Healthy harmony is not the absence of conflict but the capacity to manage conflict constructively.

The practical implications of this research are that organizations need to develop conflict management capacity at all levels through skills training in assertive communication, interest-based negotiation, and conflict de-escalation. Reward systems need to be evaluated to ensure they do not inadvertently encourage destructive conflict, by considering the balance between individual and team incentives. Team leaders need to be trained to distinguish functional from dysfunctional conflict and to adjust interventions based on the team's developmental phase and the nature of the task. Further research is suggested to test the comparative effectiveness of various intervention strategies within the context of virtual and cross-cultural teams. Longitudinal studies are required to understand how a team's conflict management capacity develops over time. Organizations are advised to implement early conflict detection systems through periodic climate surveys and to provide access to internal mediation as part of employee well-being programs.

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