

Original Paper

Conflict Management, a New Challenge in Workplace Case

Study Hospital in North Lebanon

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“Conflicts in workplace are inescapable in all organizations.”

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Abstract

Nevertheless, whether managing organizational conflicts improves or degrades employee performance is a point of contention. The purpose of this study was to see how managing organizational conflict approaches, such as negotiation, mediation, cooperation, and denial, affected performance of employees in a private hospital in Lebanon. Human capital, human relations, and contingency theories were used in the research. On a daily basis, every organization faces conflicts. Conflicts are inevitable but they can be managed and detected early. It is vital to keep track of the organizational signals that indicate their presence on a constant basis. There are many ways to manage conflicts, relying on the reasons of conflicts, this study concentrates on communications role in managing conflict because it is considered to be a key element in solving conflicts. Conflicts are regional in the whole society. The research followed a positivist quantitative methodology, which is “a methodological process” that aims to record the results and generalize conclusions from different studies employing statistical means. The research embraced the research of descriptive design. The employees of this research were chosen from hospitals in Lebanon. Stratified and random sampling technique procedures were used to choose an 80-person sample.

Keywords

conflicts, workplace, private hospital in Lebanon, Human capital, performance, organizations

1. Introduction

Conflict is among the most foreseeable results when individuals work together. Many managers spend a significant portion of their time managing conflicts or the consequences of people-related issues.

1.1 Understanding Conflict

Conflicts are a daily phenomenon in every organization. Conflicts are unavoidable, but they can be managed in such a way that we notice conflict symptoms early on. It is vital to keep track of the organizational signals that refer to their presence on a constant basis. If we do not act quickly enough, we may find ourselves in a circumstance where the conflict controls the organization.

Problems arise most frequently in organizations in which business success is completely dependent on team work, collaboration, and innovation, and when focused solely on the bottom line, we aim to overlook individuals and mutual connections Agusioma (2018).

Conflict management is a talent that every company needs, because no organization can function without conflict. The ending of conflict can be: losing for both parties, one of them win and the other lose or both parties win. Wrong management of conflicts guides to various distribution of wrong energy in the work environment, errors in the direction of connection which leads to missed chances if it is not corrected. It's hard to quantify the costs of organizational conflict Agusioma (2018). The goal of this research is to develop ways for effectively detecting and managing conflict. Conflict is complicated because it entails the combination of cognitive, psychological, and environmental variables at the very least. Many conflict theories focus solely on economic and/or psychological factors in order to comprehend and resolve conflicts. The aim of next theories is to manage conflict among groups and individuals Agwu (2013).

Due recognition and proper conflict management can guide to many positive influences such as encouraging creativity in the organization, encouraging changes towards improving the quality of work, reducing the resulting tensions etc.

Further, if conflicts cause positive changes, they must be stimulated to establish a good relationship between workers on the basis of mutual respect.

According to Austin (2013), Conflicts sometimes must be viewed as a resource that helps us to continuously learn new knowledge, and the potential growth and progress of an institution.

Personnel directly involved in the conflict mostly do not have the chance to deal with all situations or the management of employees comes to a compromise on the best techniques to utilize in order to achieve agreed-upon results, which is characterized by performance in the firm.

This is a constant and adaptable process. Any firm's performance is the outcome of a series of operations that are carried out in a predetermined order, starting with the collecting of resources and ending with the growth of competencies and skills fluency of all factors in the specific situation, mostly due to limited decision-making power and devising processes that will serve as a guide to guarantee that the firm's personnel accomplish the intended outcomes. As a result, company performance can be considered as the culmination or conclusion of activities of an organization and operating procedures. The connection between employee and customer satisfaction, productivity of employees, and stated margins for

companies is the foundation of a company's productivity Denscombe (2014). Communication has a vital role in initiating and maintaining relation among workers. The feedback highlights areas where individuals and the organization's overall performance might be improved. To influence employee behavior and boost performance and happiness, an underlying motivation method identifies connection, knowledge, and effective usage of many types of needs and motivations. Communication helps to develop a fair and effective system, common acceptance and understanding among managers and subordinates, assistants, individuals outside and inside the institution.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Performance of employees is an important aspect of every business, and the total performance of an organization is primarily determined by the performance of workers. According to Gary Johns, organizational communication direct boss, lines of power can theoretically be located along the principles of the establishment and also reporting relationships. It is a big mistake not to confess that connection among individuals wastes a lot of time in the regulatory framework, **our problem is what is the New Challenge of conflict management in Workplace?**

1.3 Study Hypotheses

This research examined the following hypothesis:

- 1st hypothesis: there is no important influence of negotiation on the performance of employees in the chosen private institution in Lebanon.
- 2nd hypothesis: there is an important influence of negotiation on the performance of employees in the chosen private institution in Lebanon.

1.4 Study Objective

This paper concentrate on:

- Study the influence of conflict management methods in institutional performance.
- Determine the interference of managing conflict on institutional performance.
- Discover the best techniques to employ at various levels of managing conflict.
- Propose successful ways of conflict management technique which will improve organizational performance.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Theoretical Review

In an experiential study managed among Lebanese institutions on conflict management styles, it was found that interpersonal and intergroup types of organizational conflicts are common. The research noted that various conflict management methods had a positive influence on organizational performance and guided to increased workers' productivity. Iravo (2011).

In a research managed in Lebanon coincided with the outlook that negotiation as a means of conflict management set a precedent for workers in the institution to have useful conversations and raise their readiness to remain in the organization. Iravo (2011) made a similar note about conflict management and

its influence on performance in hospitals in Lebanon and concluded that there was a strong relation between successful management of conflicts and companies' performance Iravo (2011). Nevertheless, while these research shed light on the discussion on conflict management in the context of organizations, they could not demonstrate the relation between different conflict management strategies and performance of employees, a gap that the recent study addresses.

2.2 Conflict Definition

Conflict is defined as disagreement, controversy, or discord that occurs between people or in a group when one or more members of the group's opinions or behaviors are either opposed by or unacceptable to one or maybe more individuals of other group Islam, et al. (2012). Conflict occurs when distinct entities have conflicting beliefs and activities, resulting in an adversarial situation.

2.3 Types of Conflict

Conflicts have many definitions so it has also a different attitudes and images. Conflict in companies have different kinds for example, employee look hesitant to obey managers, they do not obey rules or accept additional work, and do not get along easily with their administrators. Also Principals embrace a credible method, for example they force employee to work without stopping during job activities Kagucia (2014). So, it becomes common to have conflict frequently between workers and managers. Conflicts happen in organization between many people since they are connecting frequently together.

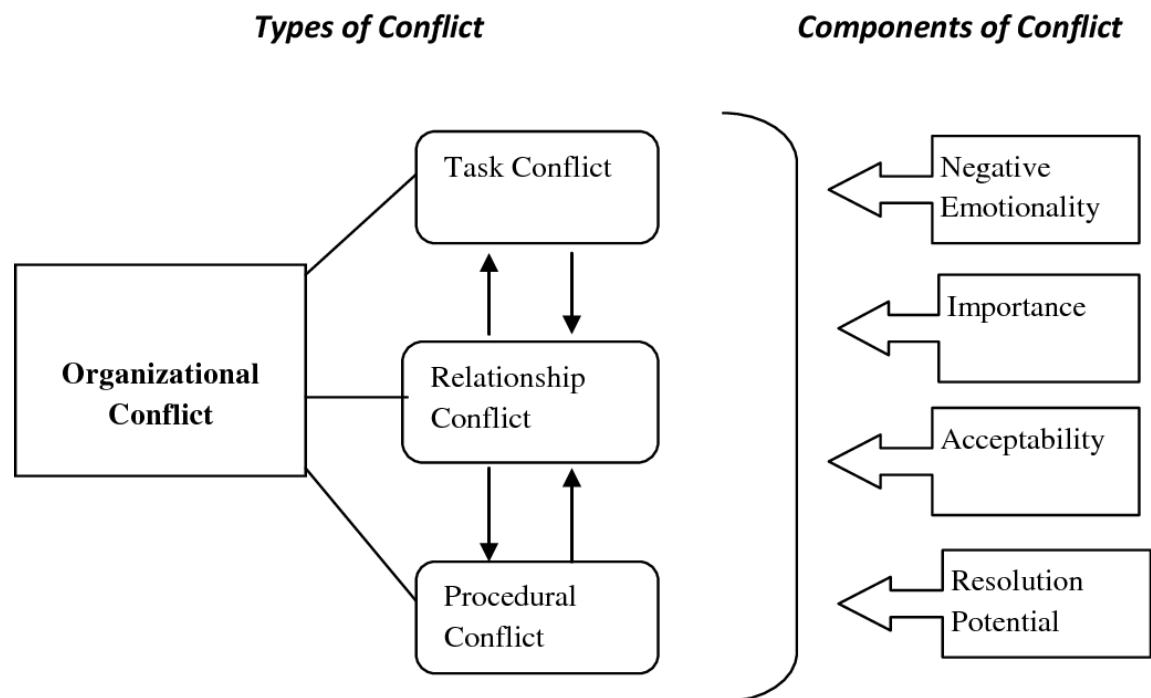


Table 1. Types of Conflict

Antagonism, hostility and understanding between members of staff are all examples of conflict. Keeping this in mind, conflict is divided into four categories:

- Interpersonal conflict is a disagreement between two people.
- Intrapersonal conflict happens within a relationship because individuals differ from each other.
- Interpersonal conflict happens within people. The experience occurs in individual's mind. It is a kind of conflict which is psychological including thoughts, principles, emotions and values.
- Intra-group conflict is a kind of conflict which occurs between individuals in a team. Misunderstanding and disagreement between individuals cause this kind of conflict.

Intra-group conflict occurs when there is a misunderstanding between many groups in the organization. Also challenge helps in raising intergroup conflict Kothari (2014). Other elements cause this conflict as: antagonism on resources or the limits that a group develops with others in order to form their own character as a team. Also there are three types of conflicts have been proposed: relation, task, and process conflicts. Relationship conflict is caused by interpersonal conflicts; task conflict is caused by differences in attitudes and opinions about a certain mission and process conflict is caused by differences in the way things are done. Although the relationship and process conflict are bad but task conflict is considered beneficial because it stimulates differences of opinions unless it does not change into relationship or process conflict.

Amason and Sapienza (2013) make a distinction between affective conflict and cognitive conflict. Cognitive conflict is job oriented and emerges from differences in judgment or point of view where affective conflict relates to emotion and emerges from individual varieties and conflicts.

A. Science and "Art"—diagnosing conflict

Every day, everyone engages in conflict; nevertheless, diagnosing conflict is more than a science; it is a skill. The presumption is to realize the causes of conflict and, as a result, to resolve it. Many conflicts, on the other hand, may be incomprehensible and so unresolvable.

There are no magic techniques that will solve all conflicts. The purpose of all practices about conflict management is to recognize the reason of conflict and after that manage the resulted problems Lazarus, U. K. (2014). Conflict theories let people make analyses which help us come up with solutions. Theories, on the other hand, are insufficient for a proper diagnosis. Theoretical knowledge serves as a framework in general, but applying such theories necessitates specialized information, experience with that knowledge, and too few that are tailored to find solutions to problems. All problems cannot be solved with one way because this misunderstanding emerges since everyone has an outlook.

Theoretically, everyone is right, honest and truthful in his outlook, however, everyone is imperfect and hard to understand. Strong emotions mostly interfere with the human mind and objectivity, put in your mind that eighty five percent of conflict disregard people included in the conflict. The majority of conflict is caused by the system; nonetheless, depersonalizing conflict is a difficult task that must be properly managed Longe (2015).

To comprehend how communication and conflict are intertwined Rober et al. (2013), based their work on the concept that managing organizational disputes entails diagnosing and intervening in conflict are

at an emotional level between individuals, within a group or between groups, addressing methods differing from their administrations.

Diagnosis must realize when intervention is required and which intervention is the best one. Aims of intervention mostly to:

- Keep a productive case of conflicts
- Decrease emotional disputes with all its kinds and levels.
- Organization permits for individuals to choose and employ the suitable techniques for solving conflicts of specific enabling circumstances.

Suitable diagnosis and intervention of dispute lead to development of knowledge, efficiency and organization. Despite most people think that conflicts are useful to organizations but they still trying to decrease or manage them Mwanza (2012).

B. Conflict Process resolution premise of evolution

The conflict process is divided into four stages or levels, each of which depicts the evolution of relations between the parties involved in the conflict.

The 1st stage, also known as the latent stage, is characterized by certain features that can causes conflict, such as interaction, structure, and personal variables. It’s worth noting that having the occurrence of every 3 elements at the same time isn’t required, but happening of just one. In organization, communication is vital and its absence cause conflict Mwangi et al. (2013). However, excessive communication, as well as communication difficulties such as a misunderstanding or disturbance in the channel of communication, can result in conflict.

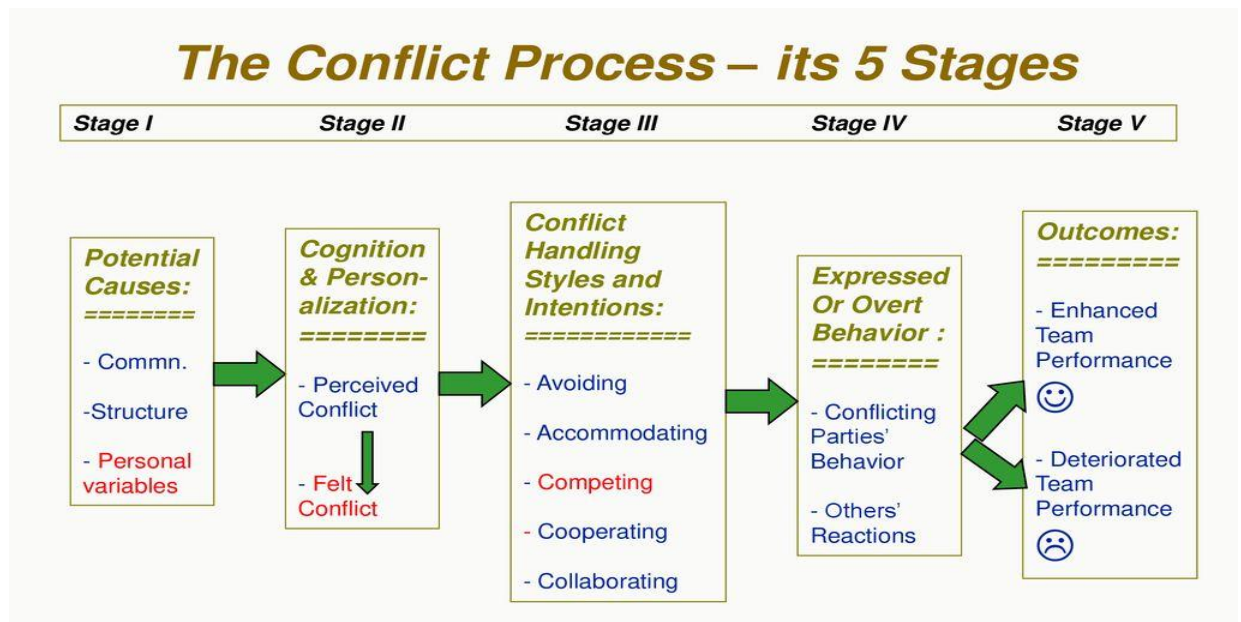


Table 2. The Conflict Process _ its 5 Stages

The effect of the first phase variables is reflected in the second stage “cognition and personalization”. In this phase, we differentiate 2 sub-stages:

- Participants’ perceptions of the conflict –that does not show occurring of conflict.
- We cannot state that a conflict has occurred until sentiments and awareness of the conflict have been articulated and expressed.

The manifestation of conflict occurs in the 3rd stage. When participants in a conflict engage in hostile behavior, we refer to this as “open disagreement”.

If you don’t grasp the root causes of the conflict, you won’t be able to resolve it. You won’t be able to provide alternative solutions unless a diagnosis has been developed into concrete language. The approaches and abilities listed below can help you better to understand how to deal with conflict Mwikali (2016).

In a chronological order, the initial approaches to conflict resolution were relied on the assumption that all disagreements are potentially damaging and counterproductive to the organization’s goals. Subsequently, conflict resolving was synonymous with struggle evasion. This specific way of treating individuals included in strife clears out us with one situation: beat the victor.

In this circumstance, whoever was vanquished got to be disappointed and want to make new dispute. In this manner, most supervisors saw the struggle as an issue to be evacuated from their organization. This method of shirking was transcendent within the 2nd half of the 19th century.

Conflict management is putting plan to avoid dispute if possible, and having prompt and successful measures when this is done Olang, B. (2017).

2.4 Conflict Management Styles

Specialist suggested many ways for dealing with conflict management process. Grid of Blake and Mouton used to explain the ways involved in conflict. The authors identify typical reactions of persons in reacting with conflicts of organization. Figure 1 explains the behaviors presented by the 2 authors, and the behaviors that, in effect, shape managers’ decision about how to handle and manage conflicts, i.e., conflict avoidance, adaptation, cooperation Parmenter (2015).

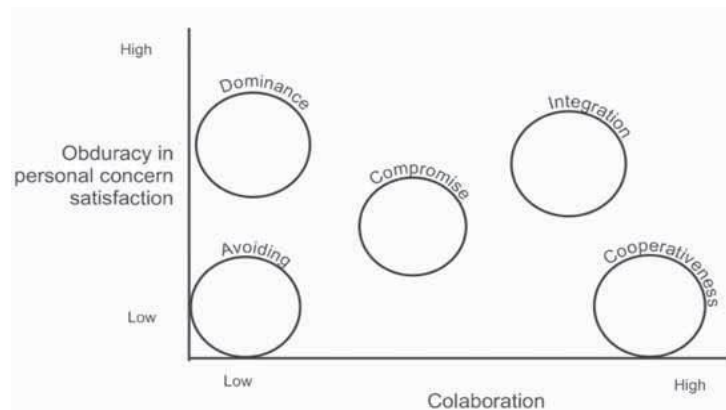


Figure 1. Conflict Management Methods

Organization success relies on the capacity of recognizing conflict and selecting the appropriate way of managing it. Managing conflict means integration of all elements that lead to solving conflicts or preventing it. These elements are development of connection and practicing discipline within institution and the involved parties' phases. Many authors realized the different methods of managing conflict. We will talk about five methods and techniques of managing conflict, also put in mind that there is a 3rd party play role in conflict which is organization itself Pradhan et al. (2017). The organization is the mediator among adversaries. This 3rd party is administrators who employ their experiences to enhance new techniques to solve conflicts. Nevertheless, it is generally known that dispute is an important test for interpersonal skills of manager. Every modes is characterized in 2 axes: assertiveness & cooperation. Specialist commend that using any one of these methods is incorrect, it depends on selecting the appropriate time. To sum up, it is significant that manager realize the suitable kind for managing conflicts relying on its entities, values and status.

- There is a model of conflict management called "the fight" depended on a lot of assertiveness and a little of collaboration. It is noticed that fighting was needed in urgent action if it is significant to adopt unpopular measures. In embracing these methods in managing conflicts the manager must has techniques as: debate and discussion, exploitation of position, suitable evaluation of choices or emotions, stay calm and expressing the position obviously Rahim (2017). High and low level of cooperation characterize the way of avoiding assertiveness in conflict. In some cases, individuals try to avoid conflict because they are afraid of involving in this situation or they do not have enough confidence that they can solve conflicts.

We can employ this method if: 1-we are acting with minor conflict circumstances to decrease tensions or to gain time. 2-If the person in charge of resolving the disagreement is in a lower-ranking position in the hierarchy. To avoid disputes, you'll need the ability to disengage, the ability to avoid stress, and the sense of gaining time Prause et al. (2015).

Adaptation: includes a low level of aggressiveness and a high level of cooperative available. Establishing arrangements for conflicts management by modifying the expression of reasonable views, performance development, and sustaining a condition of strong understanding and peacefulness is advocated. In their own best interests, adaptation with entails selflessness, loyalty to orders, and occasionally bliss.

Compromise: requires a level of assertiveness and collaboration that is moderate. Some characterize negotiation as "giving up more than they're willing to give up", whereas others think that both parties profit. Adopting a compromise is a good way to manage conflict when vital topics are at risk, moderate where participants in the conflict are on the same hierarchical level, or when there was a deep desire to solve the problem Saranya (2016). A creative settlement of the problem, one that is not developed by a single person, is defined as the best option. Given this favorable outcome, one might conclude that the best method for resolving problems is cooperation.

When deciding the best conflict resolution technique, keep the following points in mind.

- The gravity of the conflict;
- Considered a suitable outcome;
- Personal preferences;
- The power of the manager.

3. The Research Methodology—Vertical Conflicts in a Private Institution and the Role of Communication

The research embraced a positive quantitative approach “a methodological approach” which aims to quantify information’s and using statistical means, objectively generalize data from a sample of a target population. This method was chosen for the study because it is methodical, analytical, and objective, and it promotes the formation of a hypothesis as well as the gathering of numerical data to evaluate it Siljanen (2012). As a result, positivism increases quantitative methodology, which entails the use of data that is ‘scientific’ in the sense that it is exact and relied on measurement, and that is frequently examined utilizing statistics with the goal of making the conclusions generalizable.

Competition, comparisons and confrontations between departments and personnel are likely to occur within a private organization, and also within any sort of organization. Problems of Communication mostly lead to multiple primary conflicts, with regard to internal communication, actually are somewhat decayed in private hospitals in Lebanon Stannack (2016).

Moreover, managers spent less time communicating with their employees, which added to the tensions. Considering the nature of this study and the participants, I will attempt to emphasize on the primary vertical tensions and potential solutions to these conflicts through addressing communication issues Violetta (2012). One of the key aims of the new private management should be to improve organizational communication.

3.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

- Explaining and analyzing of the basic kinds of conflicts regarding lack of internal communication presented vertically in a private company.
- Focus on communication’s role in solving these disputes.

3.2 The Used Method

I employed participatory observation, which is “to participate deliberately and work systematically regarding the interests and sentiments of the people investigated as the situation allowed.” It entails the study of man by man, which differs from natural science observation since it is a conscious activity between two persons.

The following characteristics define the observation method: the subject included in the act of noticing depended on approach is an eclectic and interpretive approach and is highly analytic and emphasizing on present time, everyday life, and finally the explanatory theories of the issues.

3.3 Instruments: Observation Sheet

Description of the organization analyzed: the subject of this research is the private hospital and it involves 80 workers, 20 among them were analyzed and work at the same private institution.

Analysis Department: department of human resources.

Participants: supervisors and department officials. Head and director of the department.

The duration of observation: working fifteen days.

This study focus basically on the communication between officers and directors.

4. Analysis and Interpretation of Results

We examined the kinds of conflicts vertically and noticed that they are mostly showed in the institution presented before. Observing the behaviors on notes recorded shown that the most shared kind of conflict is difference of perception, specifically about spending time by workers in professional competencies and the needed time by the worker to perform a mission or to learn a modern activity.

This kind of conflict is maintained by decreasing the number of workers of the studied department. In such situations, the missions of employees had significantly multiplied, whereas chances for positive stimulation of the workers have been decreased.

Then how workers utilize their time, and they must utilize it, is the 1st aspect discovered in the conflict caused by the difference in perspective between leader and subordinate (20 percent of those observed).

Another form of vertical friction noted between senior executives and department heads is managerial style (fifteen percent of those noticed). One of the most common barriers between workers and employers is a difference in perception of efficiency as a result of the manager's management style.

We moved away from disputes emerging from variations in perception and instead focused on the constraints set by the one sending/receiving communications (10 percent of those observed).

Another element is the conflict's distorting resulted by the conflict messages (observed 5% of people).

The wording of the defective message intentionally or not by the person transmitting the information is another factor supporting the conflict between the head of the department and his assistants (10% of those observed).

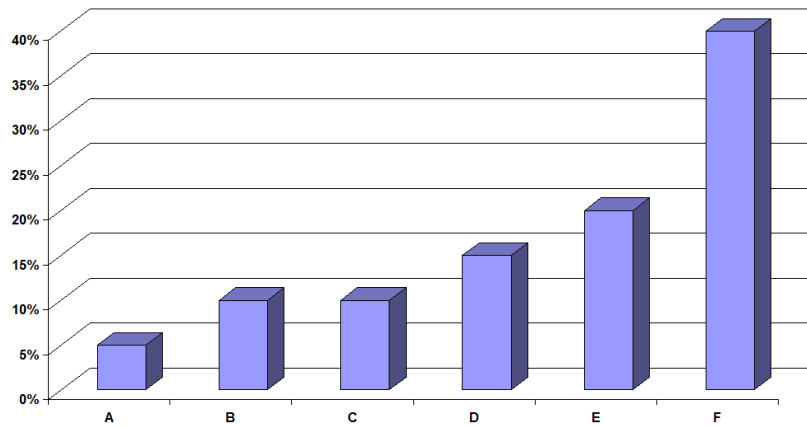


Figure 2. Kinds of Conflicts Vertically

Figure 2: Kinds of conflicts vertically: A- conflict messages/semantic problems; B- use of time/learning period necessary; C- individual transmitting/receiving messages; D- the managerial style; E- employees use their time than it should do, and the time required to; F- difference of perception

The research aimed to prove the influence of negotiation as a conflict management method. The research determined the level of respondents' agreement with various sides of negotiation as a conflict management technique in their organization using a scale of 1-5 where 1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neutral, 4: agree and 5: strongly agree. Table 1 contains the results.

Table 3. Respondents' Level of Agreement with Statements on Negotiation as a Conflict Management Technique

Statements	Mean	STD. Dev.
Negotiations give an inexpensive, quick and flexible method of managing conflict.	4.1	0.65
Negotiations aid in developing communication between conflicting that maintains their relation parties	4.29	0.595
Negotiations are mostly risk-free because communication are open minded and if the parties can't take a decision, they have the choice to seek another one.	4.05	0.854
Negotiations can aid in clarifying and narrowing issues and stimulate an environment of collaboration ,cooperation and openness yet no agreement is reached on the best decision	4.21	0.628
Negotiations may enhance satisfaction and commitment to settlements when the parties are part of the decision-making process and reaching agreements	4.36	0.589

Source: Survey Data, 2020

Negotiations may guide to increased satisfaction and ability to adhere settlements when parties are included in decision-making and agreement-making according to the results presented in Table 1; negotiations help in enhancing communication among conflicting parties, which preserves their relationships (mean = 4.36); and negotiations actually improve communication between disputing parties, which maintains their relations (mean = 4.29). Negotiation aid in explaining and limited topics and stimulate an environment of cooperation and openness even if no agreement is reached on the best decision (mean = 4.21). Negotiations give a fast, flexible and inexpensive method to conflict management (mean = 4.13), also, negotiations are mostly safe because communication is free from bias and when both parties cannot reach an agreement they can seek another choice (mean = 4.05). This means that workers of the chosen private hospital in Lebanon realized the importance of negotiation as a technique of conflict management in their institutions.

5. Proposal of Conflict Management through Effective Communication

According to the kinds of conflicts pointed out in conducted research, weakness of communication is possible and inevitable and may be attained by the following methods:

5.1 The Feedback

While enhancing the performance of communication the most significant skill is feedback concerning their messages' effect on people.

When a communication is sent but not received, it is thought that feedback information is obtained but not actually shared. For example, when managers want to motivate (workers) to express their reactions while also ensuring that the message was received accurately, asking questions, and hearing to demands.

5.2 Organizational Communication Must Cover both Formal and Informal Communication

Informal communication, if demonstrated to a degree that is not beyond the bounds of common sense, can be a useful supplement to formal communication, particularly during organizational reorganization. Flows provide informal feedback to themselves. A supervisor who intends to be effective should focus on the importance of communication, both informal and formal communication, and maintain constant contact with workers by determining the methods that are most effective, although it is better to employ methods including expressing workers to their complaints and suggestions

5.3 Ensuring Clear and Concise Communication

Utilizing a simple language that is suitable to experience and communicating without a lot of details and seeing facts as they are. The submitted data must be meaningful to the communication context.

5.4 Delivering Messages as Facts

The manager's trying to have the trust of workers is influenced by the contradiction among deeds and words. Communication plays a very important role in all kinds of organizational conflict because it clears the contradictory requirements.

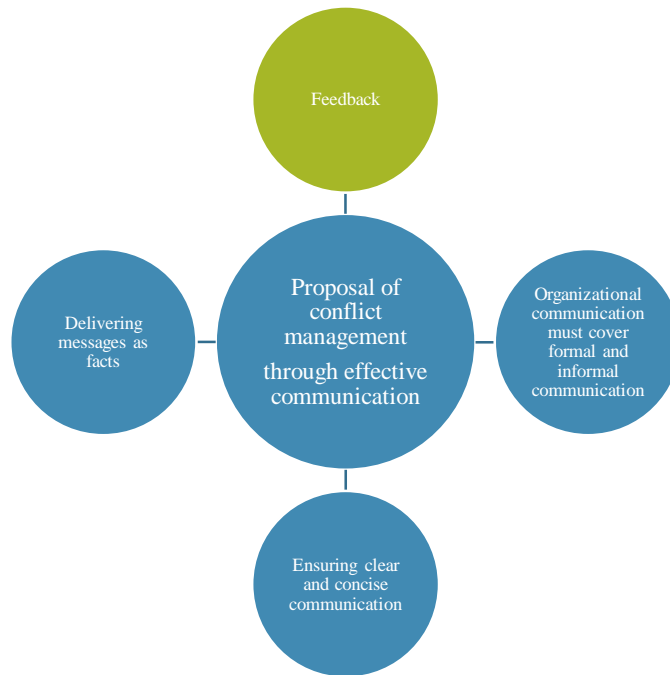


Figure 3. Communication Shortcomings

6. Conclusions & Recommendation

Individuals are characterized by omnipresent conflicts that manifest within this hierarchy. Organizations as social systems are divided hierarchically into departments, and persons are typified by omnipresent conflicts which emerge in this hierarchy. Given the potential for both good and devastating outcomes from disputes, it is critical that managers define their management structures. Organizational disagreement must be managed effectively if the mission is to succeed Williams (2012).

Conflict states that have been “smoldering” for years are judged unimportant by science administrators who may not commit time and effort to dealing with them and do not develop strategies for dealing with various forms of conflicts. This situation appears to have gotten worse as a result of the economic downturn and the restructuring actions taken by private entities.

The research resulted that applying negotiation, mediation and collaboration in managing conflict was effective in improving employees’ performance in private hospitals in Lebanon. These three skills of solving conflicts had a positive and an important influence on employees’ performance in the chosen private hospitals in Lebanon. Nevertheless, applying avoidance techniques in managing conflicts had a negative effect on employees’ performance in the chosen private hospital in Lebanon. So, avoidance must not be employed as a technique for solving conflicts in the private hospitals in Lebanon except when the conflict is trivial. Therefore, the research accepted that the techniques of: 1-negotiation, 2-mediation, 3-collaboration, 4- avoidance had an important influence on the performance of employees in the private hospitals in Lebanon.

When examining the findings regarding the presence of conflict and its impact on the performance of the hospitals through different sectors, we can notice that there is awareness of the employees of the importance of conflicts in the hospital. Most employees (up to 83%) get into conflicts in the organization, as it is important that long-time workers refuse conflict as an element in the organization's hospitals performance. Thereby, this type of view lies in part in the precedent, larger negative experience of conflicts with long-term workers.

The distinction in conflict recognition and influence on the commerce execution of the organization shows up amid the investigation of the reply related to that kind of proprietorship. To be specific, there's a significant measurable association (on the level of significance 0,03) between the private and government segment, where the government sector nearly contains a twofold greater rate related to the issue of how the conflicts influence the commerce execution of the organization.

The outlook of a long anticipated change of administration, needs an altar of bearings and enhancement in arrange to professionalize this zone.

Raising the mindfulness of supervisors almost the significance of inner communication, upward and descending, and the require of "tuning in and deciphering the pulse" of the organization.

As it were by making a collaborative environment and by rising organization mindfulness and producing group soul that offers common objectives can guarantee a viable performance.

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