

## SELECTED ASPECTS OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS

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**Purpose:** The main purpose of the paper is to systematize and analyse conflict behaviour in organizations, indicate sources of conflicts, as well as determine possible responses to such situations with regard to their impact on the organization.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The approach applied in the paper is of a descriptive and empirical nature. The research methods involved in this paper are: induction, deduction, literature studies, as well as survey and data analysis. The method of critical and comparative analysis was used in relation to the views presented in the literature.

**Findings:** The paper ends with a brief presentation of research findings, which correspond to the formulated research questions on most common causes of conflicts in organizations, the conflict's impact on the organization and people, managers' and employees' behaviour and reactions.

**Research limitations/implications:** Additional work is needed to disseminate research findings among managers and employees and to implement them in appropriate conflict management trainings.

**Originality/value** The paper has a cognitive value for managers, as well as employees working in organizations. Results have theoretical, as well as practical implications in search of solutions to conflicts.

**Keywords:** conflicts in organizations, conflict managing styles, conflict attitudes.

**Category of the paper:** research paper.

### 1. Introduction

The paper constitutes a theoretical and empirical study relating to selected aspects of conflict management in organizations. The paper was divided into two main parts: theoretical and empirical. The first part completed the theoretical goal, which was the critical review of the literature on the management of conflicts. The second part of the paper is of an empirical nature. In this part, the author performed the empirical goal, which is the identification and analysis of people's knowledge and views on conflict management in organizations, sources of conflicts,

as well as responses to conflict and possible resolutions. For this goal, the survey method was used among respondents employed in various organizations.

Conflict is a common phenomenon, inevitably associated with social life. In the individual dimension, an incompetently managed and resolved conflict may negatively affect somebody's life or even destroy it. Regarding organizations, the lack of conflict resolution skills can cause stress and destabilization in the group, which can have a negative impact on the effects of work, as well as lead to employees leaving the organization. Therefore, it is crucial to know what steps should be taken in a conflict situation and which behaviours only make it worse. Furthermore, the ability to properly manage conflicts increases the companies' efficiency.

The following research questions were formulated in the paper:

- What are the main causes of conflicts in an organization?
- In what way can conflicts affect an organization?
- Can conflicts have a positive impact on an organization?
- How do managers and employees behave in conflict situations?
- What are the proper reactions to conflicts and how do we improve the employees' ability to resolve conflicts?

## **2. Defining conflict**

Conflict is a specific kind of relationship that is a natural part of life. A situation, during which it is impossible to maintain the interest of all participants over a long period of time (Rahim, 2002). In the past, conflicts had more pejorative connotations (Berlyne, 1960). However nowadays, disagreements are no longer considered negative – if they are constructively resolved – as they may contribute to the development and deepening of human relations (Argyle, 1983). Conflict requires the participation of at least two parties, who have the ability to exert and influence each other. This influence must also be seen as unfavourable by at least one of the parties (Bergiel-Matusiewicz, 2010).

Conflicts play an important role in shaping the social climate, motivation and vocational effectiveness of employees and managers. Positive solutions bring people closer, stimulate their curiosity, interests and creativity, which give mutual trust (Tjosvold, Wong, Yi-Feng, 2014). Pent-up or ousted conflicts cause a psychological burden, block commitment and initiative, disorganize the process of living and working in the organization, become a source of tension and anxiety, diseases and frustration (Penc, 2001).

Sociology describes conflict in various ways, emphasizing its distinct features. Conflict is presented as a process, in which an individual or group aims at achieving their own goals (meeting needs, pursuing interests) by eliminating, subordinating or destroying an individual or a group striving for similar or identical goals (Szczepański, 1970). Conflict can be defined as all signs of struggle between people, whose goal is not only to gain (or maintain) the means of production, but also acquisition, neutralization and even elimination of a real or alleged enemy (Penc, 2001). The concept of conflict involves every situation, in which sources situated in a person (and/) or in their surroundings, cause a strong tension and motivate them to a behaviour, which is aimed at ending this state through a change in the situation, adapting to it or becoming independent from it (Stoner, and Wankel, 1992). Conflict in an organization is a dispute between two or more members or groups, which results from the necessity to share limited resources of work or occupy a similar position, different goals, values or perceptions. During the argument, members or departments of the organization seek to ensure that their issue or viewpoint prevailed over the issue or viewpoint of others (Stoner, and Wanker, 1992).

Conflict varies from difference of opinion, because participants of a conflict (opponents) are implacable, unable to accept opinions different from their own, they argue incoherently, react emotionally and aggressively. Their arguments do not serve to unravel the problems nor lead to the enrichment of existing values and concepts. They are used to subordinate or destroy those, who represent different views or strive for similar or identical goals (Tjosvold, 2008).

In many organizations, a fairly common tendency exists to ignore, silence or suppress the conflict, instead of recognizing the underlying reasons and solving them in a rational and human way. The mere presence of conflicts is not bad, but lack of skill in identification and resolving them is. Effectiveness of the organization does not depend on the absence of a conflict, but on the ability to use the dispute as a source of creative thinking. Therefore, conflicts must be dealt with in a more modern way (Brett, and Mitchell, 2019)

### **3. Sources of conflict in organization**

Certainly, there are a lot of potential sources of conflict in every company, because the entirety of human values is very rich and complex, and so is the system of behaviours in the organization (Penc, 2001). Sources of conflict lie in people themselves, in the diversity of their points of view, needs, habits, priorities and goals, their awareness and ethics, skills, ability to coexist and cooperate in a team, their job satisfaction, position etc. Conflicts are an outcome of human nature, a manifestation of emotions. However, many conflicts are generated by environmental factors: a variety of contradictions situated in the structure of a particular organization, job situation (and general conditions of performing the work, which influences the performer), methods of managing people, introducing changes etc. It can be said,

that conflict in the workplace, as well as in private life, results from both the subjective, internal reasons and objective, external reasons. These causes are mutually permeating and prompting each other, this causes some kind of tension in human relationships. The main sources of conflicts lie in three areas: communication, organizational structures and human behaviour. In the first case, conflicts are caused by semantic difficulties, misunderstandings and information noise. In the second case, reasons for conflicts should be sought in social roles and in sharing and coordinating the activities of individuals and groups. In the third case, the base of conflicts are individual habits and different norms and values (Holstein-Beck, 1983).

Each conflict occurs for a reason. Due to the subject of a conflict, disagreements are generally divided into those that occur due to economic reasons (money, land, material goods) or those which concern symbolic goods (beliefs, power, prestige). More difficult to solve and more antagonistic are conflicts relevant to symbolic goods (Yin, Jia, Ma, and Liao, 2020). This is due to greater difficulties in sharing these goods than is the case with tangible goods. Differences of views and religious standpoints are frequently caused by different experiences of an individual. They can also be determined by culture. It intensifies the problem of precise specification of the object (Chępa, Witkowski, 1999).

A conflict between employees means unacceptability (negation) of the existing reality (the existing state of social relations, job position, received remuneration etc.), which prevents them from realizing or satisfying the needs, or violates their value system. The employee is trying to change unfavourable (in their opinion) reality and consciously aims to enforce their goals, but the activity of other individuals or groups prevents them from doing this. It ends in a clash of opposing forces, which may finish with victory of one of the parties, a compromise, or an agreement between the parties and conflict resolution. However, an open conflict may also transform into a hidden conflict, which will reveal itself when the employee spots a good opportunity for doing so, or when they are no longer able to endure this situation (Więcek-Janka, 2006).

In practice of managing human resources, a conflict is often considered as differences of opinions and views, as well as small tensions between the employees. Conflicts are assessed unambiguously as negative. It results from the consolidation of an authoritarian management style, in which information and thinking, as well as initiative and searching for optimal decisions are entirely reserved for managers, while employees are treated instrumentally and their duty is to listen and to perform their tasks. Owing to a strict division between the roles of managers and employees, as well as preference of subordination and passivity, speaking about views other than managers' may be regarded as conflict behaviour and the person who proclaims it may be deemed as one who initiates conflict (Penc, 2001).

According to Stoner and Wankel, the main sources of conflict include (Table 1):

**Table 1.**

*Main sources of conflict*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Sharing of resources</b>	If every section of an organization had access to an unlimited number of employees, amount of money, materials, equipment and space, there would be no problem with sharing these resources. The possibility of conflict arises when basic resources are limited. They have to be rationed, therefore, it is inevitable that some groups will receive less than they want and need.
<b>Different goals</b>	Particular departments within the organization specialize and differentiate due to adapting different objectives, tasks and employees. Such diversity often leads to a conflict of interest, even if the departments respect the overall goals of the organization. For example, the sales department may strive to lower prices to attract more customers, while the production department intend to increase the prices to cover production costs. Members of various departments have different objectives and points of view, thus acceptance of the common plan of action is difficult.
<b>Interdependence of work</b>	Interdependence of work exists when two or more departments depend on each other during realization of their tasks. In such cases, conflict sometimes arises when all groups are burdened with too many tasks. There will be growing tension between members of different groups, who may accuse each other about avoiding the performance of their duties. Conflict may also come into being when the work is equally distributed, but remuneration for it is different.
<b>Differences in values or points of view</b>	Different goals of members in various departments cause a difference in attitudes, values and beliefs, which may also lead to conflicts. For example, members of the technical department may pay attention to high quality of products, complex construction and durability, while members of the production department – to simplicity and low costs of production.
<b>Other sources of conflict</b>	Some people like conflict, difference of opinion and polemic; if these situations are under control, reasonable disagreement may stimulate the activity of members of the organization and increase their efficiency. However, some people intensify their conflicts, polemic and a difference of opinion to the level of a full-scale battle. For example, very authoritative people or those with low self-esteem often make their colleagues angry because of an aggressive reaction to small misunderstandings. In general, the highest probability of conflicts between groups occur when there are significant differences in members' features, such as attitude to work, age and education. Conflict also arises as a result of unclearly defined areas of responsibility and when members of different groups have little knowledge about the work of others and unconsciously put forward unreasonable demands.

Adapted from: J.A.F. Stoner, Ch. Wankel, *Kierowanie*. PWE, Warszawa 1992, p. 332-333; J. Penc, *Kreowanie zachowań w organizacji, konflikty i stresy pracownicze, zmiany i rozwój organizacji*, Agencja Wydawnicza Placet, Warszawa 2001.

#### 4. Conflict management styles

People deal with conflict in different ways. Some of them, in the initial phase, tend to escape from the conflict situation, others are willing to engage in it (Kotulska, 2003). When drawn into a dispute, they also react differently (Aritzeta, Ayestaran, and Swailes, 2005). Each style of response to a conflict has a certain characteristic and is used in various types of conflicts. The styles are described below (Table 2).

**Table 2.**

*Style of response to a conflict*

Style	Description
<b>Avoidance</b>	is a style typical for those, to whom the emotional tension and frustration caused by the conflict are so strong that they prefer to withdraw from the conflict than to solve it in a constructive way.
<b>Healing</b>	is a behaviour consistent with the interest of the opposing party. This style is used especially by people who are focused on maintaining good relations with others, without taking into consideration their own interests.
<b>Competition</b>	is a way of looking at conflict as a game to win. Winning means success and a good result, while withdrawing means failure, weakness and loss of prestige.
<b>Compromise</b>	is a style based on the belief that people cannot always do everything as they wish, but sometimes they have to find a common ground on which they could coexist.
<b>Cooperation</b>	is always connected with the will to accept the objectives of another party without quitting one's own goals. This style of response is based on the assumption that it is always possible to find a solution that will satisfy both sides.

Adapted from: H.L. Tosi, J.R. Rizzo, S.J. Carroll, *Managing Organizational Behaviour*, Harper and Row Publishers, New York 1990.

#### 5. Positive and negative consequences of a conflict

To distinguish a functional conflict from a dysfunctional one, the kind of conflict should be taken into consideration. There are three types of conflict, namely: concerning the task, the relationship and the process. The conflict relevant to the task concerns the scope and goals of work. The conflict relevant to relationships concerns relations between people. The conflict relevant to the process concerns the way of performing work (Tyler, 2005). Research indicates, that conflicts concerning the relationship between people are almost always dysfunctional. Friction and a personality clash, which are an integral part of relations between people, intensify personal hostility and hinder mutual understanding, interfering in the performance of tasks in the organization. At the same time, a low level of conflict related to a process and a low (up to moderate) level of conflict concerning the task is functional. The conflict concerning the process must remain at a low level to be positive. Fierce disputes about who should do what become dysfunctional, as uncertainty as to the roles prolongs the time necessary to perform the tasks and lead to conflictive actions between members of the group. A low (up to moderate) level of conflict relevant to tasks usually has a positive effect on the results of the group, because

it encourages a discussion about ideas, which enables the group to increase its effectiveness (Robbins, 2004).

Each constructively solved problem fulfils several functions (Penc, 2001):

- a motivational function – conflict forces some activity, aiming for the improvement of surrounding reality and critical assessment of oneself and the organizational behaviours,
- an innovative function – conflict generates the need for change and search for new, creative solutions,
- an identification function – thanks to conflicts people can get to know more about themselves, their advantages and disadvantages, allowing them to integrate in pursuit of their goals.

Each organization naturally enforces a certain way of behaviour, but these behaviours do not necessarily lead to cooperation (O'Neill, & McLarnon, 2017). This may be caused by both the improper management, which generates pathological attitudes, and the character of people, because of which they cannot communicate or may even be “toxic” to each other (Penc, 2001).

Improper management and disregard for workers cause (Penc, 2001):

- attitude of passivity, resignation and apathy, expressed in reluctance to almost everything that happens in the company, minimizing the occupational activity,
- defensive attitudes expressed as avoidance of contact, caution, dissimulating hopelessness, simulation of involvement, suppression of information and protest,
- disrespectful attitudes manifested in being ironic, teasing, tolerating frauds and disorganization,
- attitude of aggression, expressed in irritability, searching for objects of attack and virulence, accusing managers of incompetence, bias and dishonesty,
- disorders of mental and physical health, which can be observed in neuroses and various kinds of physical ailments.

## 6. Selected survey results

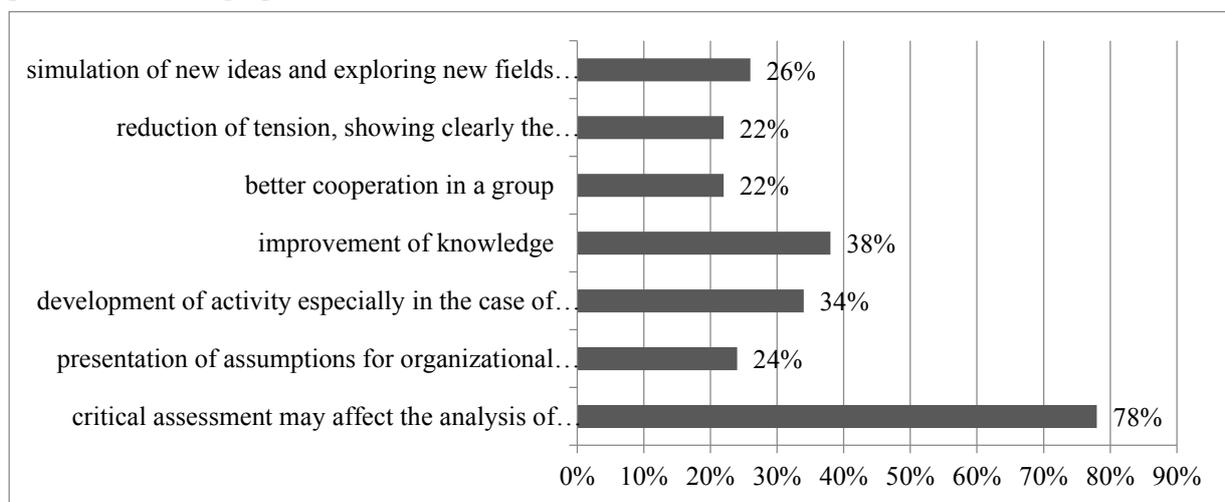
A survey was conducted for the purposes of this work, which was an objective of the research. Its topic was to analyse the behaviour of members of organizations in a conflict situation. Its goals were:

1. getting to know the general perception of positive and negative consequences of a conflict,
2. obtaining information about conflict in the respondents' workplace,
3. obtaining information about the overall situation in the respondents' workplace,
4. assessment of respondents' behaviour in a conflict situation.

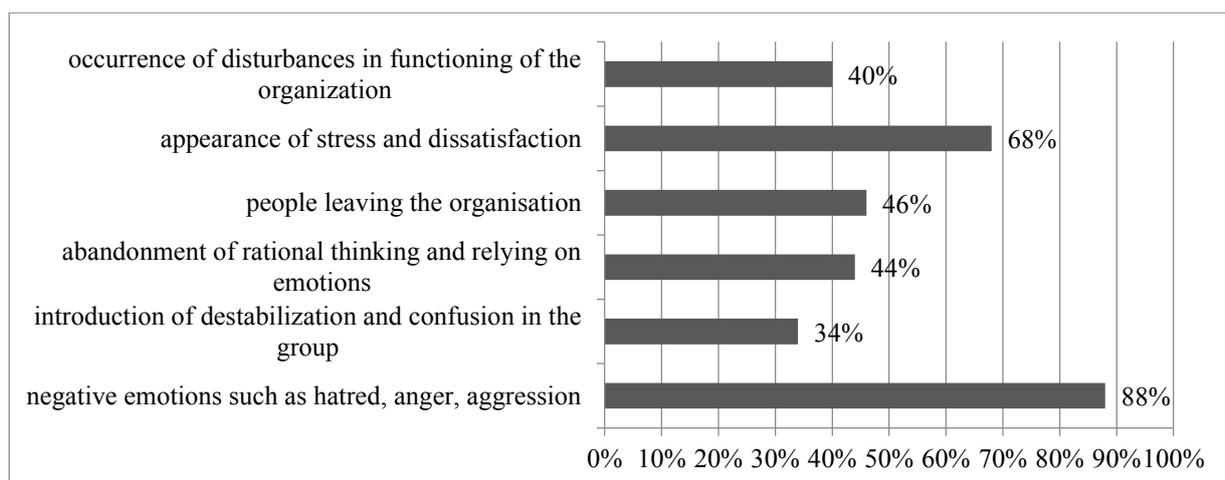
The survey was conducted between May and June 2019. The respondents provided their answers on the Internet. There were 50 respondents employed, at the time, in various organizations participating in the research. They were chosen at random in small- and medium-sized enterprises, as well as large corporations.

### 6.1. Results and conclusions in the field: respondents' general perception of positive and negative consequences of a conflict

The first and second questions were related to consequences of the conflict. The first question involved positive consequences of the conflict, while the second one – negative consequences. Participants had the opportunity to select more than one answer. The results are presented in the graphs below:



**Figure 1.** In your opinion, what are the most common positive effects of a conflict? Source: own study.

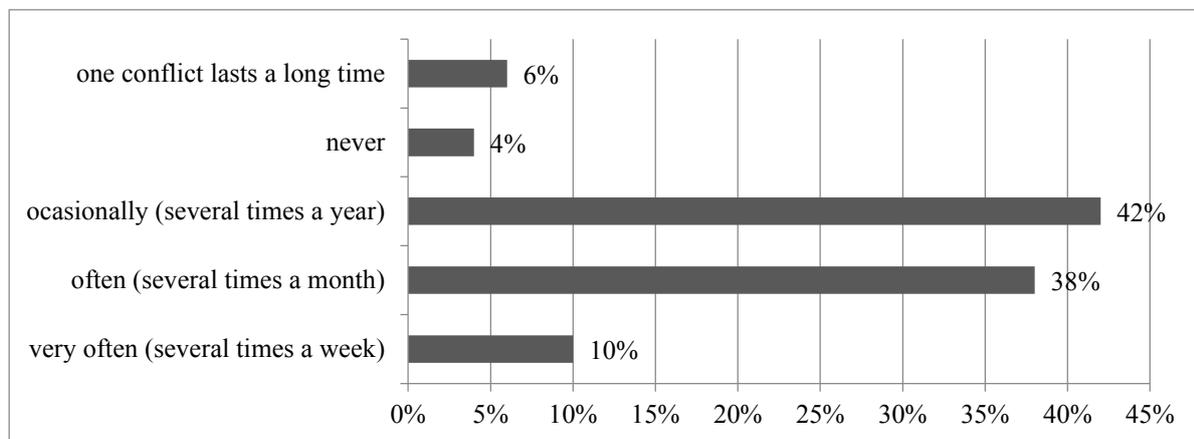


**Figure 2.** In your opinion, what are the most common negative effects of a conflict? Source: own study.

According to the respondents, the most common positive effect is the analysis of one's own behaviour caused by critical assessment – 39 (78%) participants indicated this answer. The next two answers, most accurate according to the respondents, each chosen by more than 30% of the participants, were related to effects such as “improvement of knowledge” (38%) and “development of activity, especially in the case of competition” (34%). Each of the remaining answers was chosen by less than 30% of the respondents: “simulation of new ideas and exploring new fields of activity” (26%), “presentation of assumptions for organizational changes” (24%), better cooperation in a group (22%) and “reduction of tension, clearly showing the applicable relations” (22%).

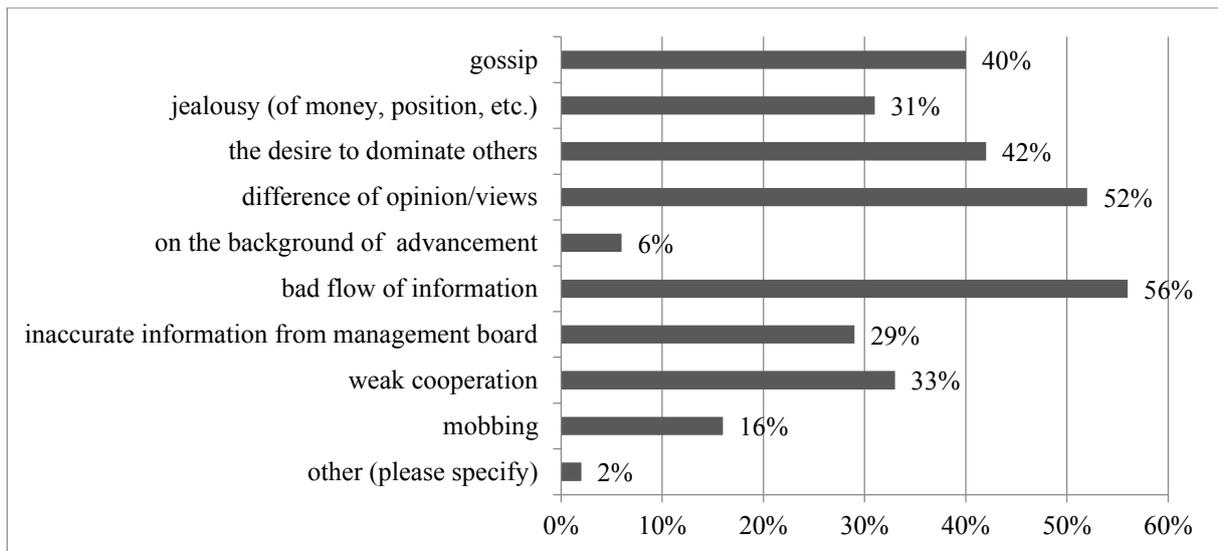
On the other hand, the most common negative effect, according to the respondents, were negative emotions, such as hatred, anger and aggression – 44 (88%) respondents indicated this answer. The next effect was “appearance of stress and dissatisfaction” – 34 (68%) respondents chose this answer. The further most accurate answers, each chosen by more than 40% of the participants, were related to effects, such as “people leaving the organisation” (46%) and “abandonment of rational thinking and relying on emotions” (44%). The answer “occurrence of disturbances in the functioning of the organization” was chosen by 20 (40%) respondents. The least votes (34%) were given to the answer “introduction of destabilization and confusion in the group”.

## 6.2. Results and conclusions in the field: characteristics of the conflict in the respondents' workplace



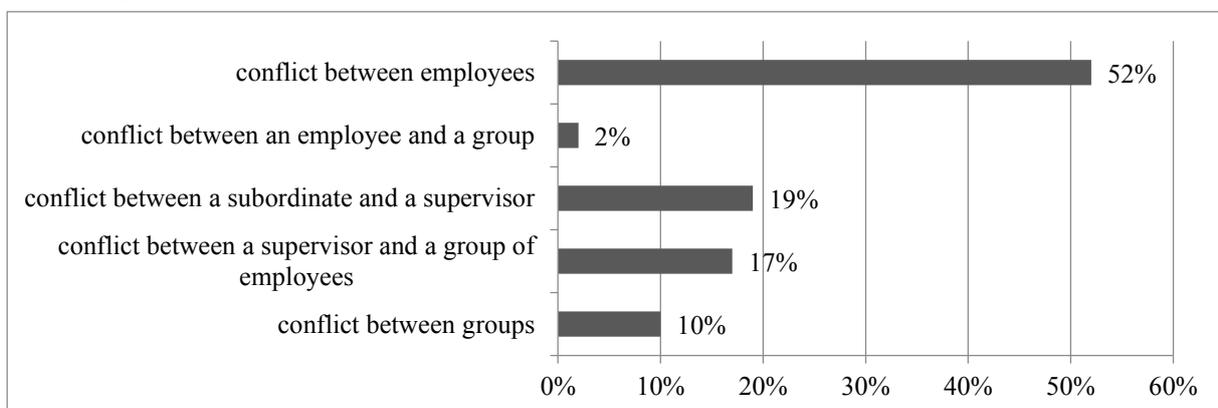
**Figure 3.** How often do conflicts occur in your work? Source: own work.

Only 2 (4%) out of 50 respondents declared that conflicts do not occur in their company. 5 (10%) respondents claimed that conflicts in their company occur very often (several times a week), 19 (38%) affirmed that conflicts in their company occur often (several times a month) and 21 (42%) declared that conflicts in their company occur occasionally (several times a year). 3 (6%) respondents work in a company where one conflict lasts a long time. 2 people never had to deal with a conflict in their company, and therefore did not answer the next 8 questions concerning conflicts within the organization. Thus, the number of respondents who answered these questions equals 48.



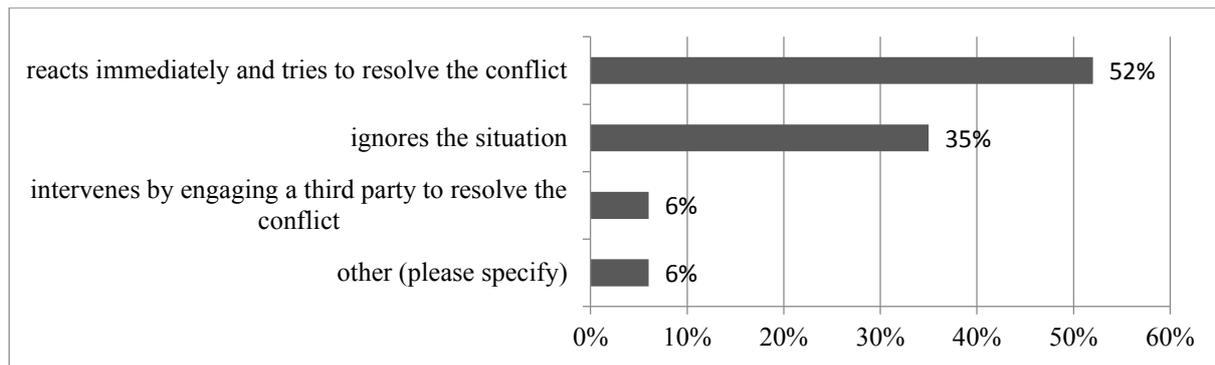
**Figure 4.** What causes a conflict in your work most often? Source: own work.

Participants had the opportunity to select more than one answer in this question, the results of which are visible in the above graph. According to the respondents, conflict in a company occurs most often, in sequence, due to: bad flow of information (56%), difference of opinions/views (52%), the desire to dominate others (42%), gossip (40%), weak cooperation (33%), jealousy (31%), inaccurate information from management board (29%), mobbing (16%), because of advancement (6%), other (2%). Respondents who indicated the answer “other” specified that, in their organization, conflict because of religious intolerance was occurring.

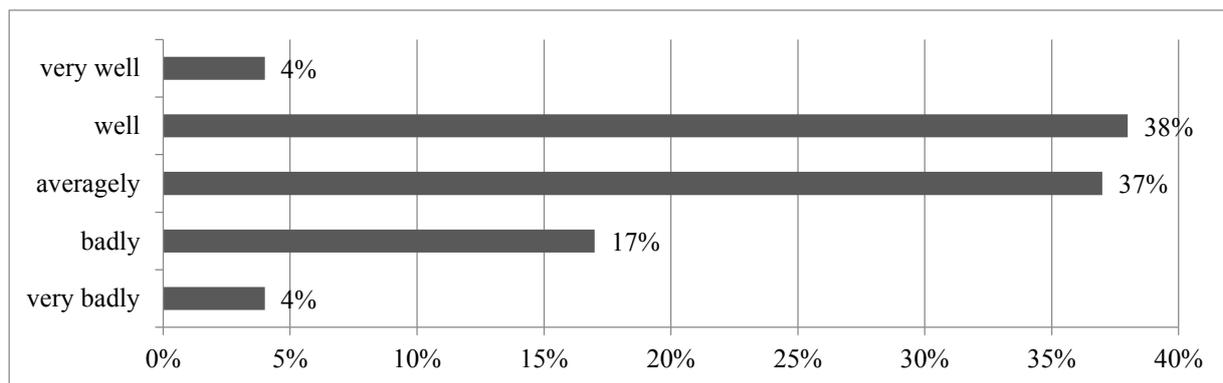


**Figure 5.** What type of conflict occurs in your work most often? Source: own work.

The results of the survey indicate that the type of conflict occurring in companies most often is the conflict between employees. 52% of respondents chose this answer. The next two answers, most frequently chosen by the respondents, were “conflict between a subordinate and a supervisor” (19%) and “conflict between a supervisor and a group of employees” (17%). According to 10% of the respondents, a conflict between groups occurs most often in their organizations. The least votes (2%) were given to the answer “conflict between an employee and a group”.



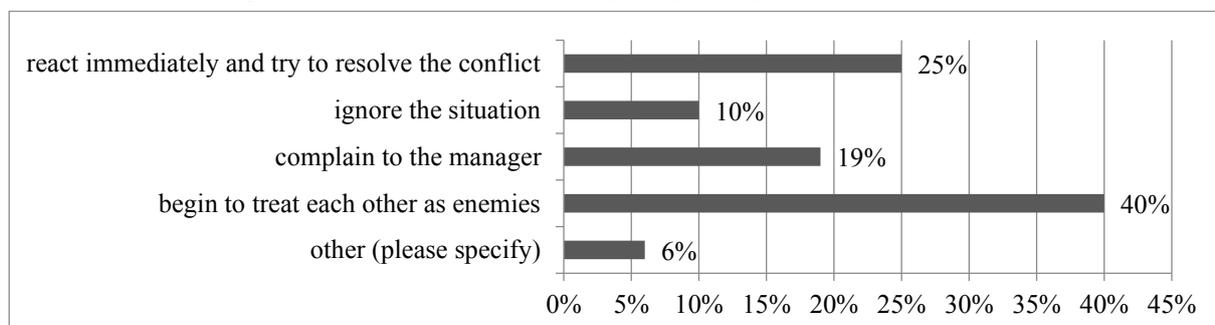
**Figure 6.** What actions does your supervisor take when conflicts occur in the company? Source: own work.



**Figure 7.** How do you assess your supervisor's ability to resolve conflicts? Source: own work.

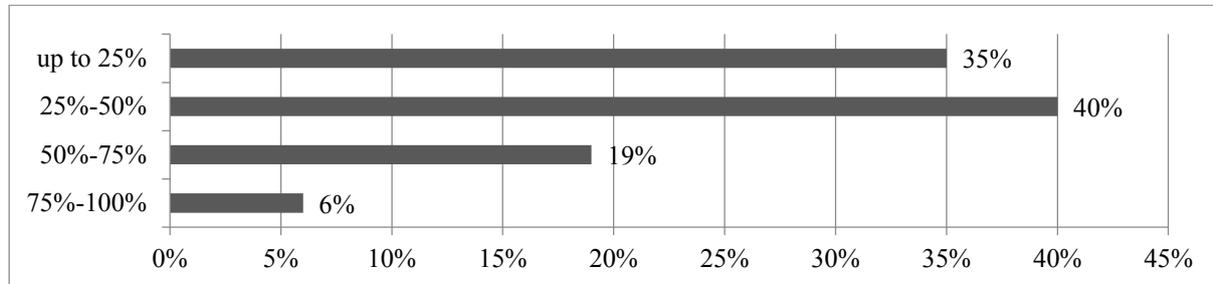
The next two questions concerned a supervisor’s reaction in a conflict situation and the respondents’ assessment of this reaction. According to the respondents, when conflicts occur in a company, 52% of supervisors react immediately and try to resolve the situation, 35% of supervisors ignore the situation and 6% intervene by engaging a third party to resolve the conflict. 6% of the respondents chose the answer “other”. They specified that their supervisors became suspicious, began to niggle, tease, listen to both sides and fail to deal with consequences or conduct disciplinary conversation.

Most respondents assessed their supervisor’s ability to resolve conflicts as good (38%) or average (37%). 17% of participants found that their supervisors resolve the conflicts in a bad way. 4% of respondents admitted that their supervisor’s ability to resolve conflict is very good and also 4% of respondents assessed this ability very badly.



**Figure 8.** How do your colleagues usually behave in a conflict situation? Source: own work.

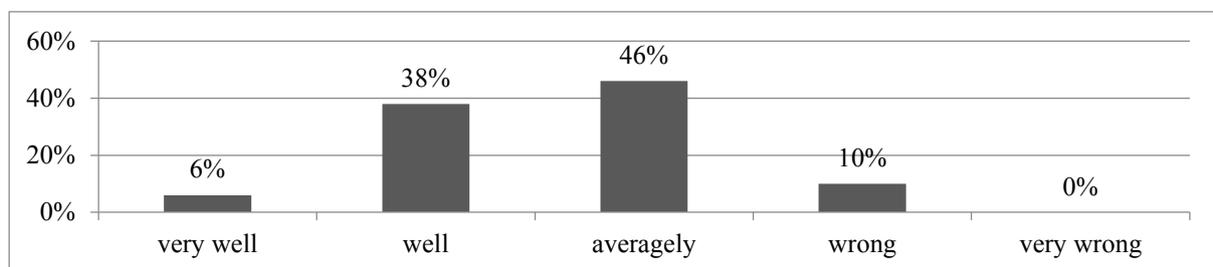
Results of the survey indicate that, in a conflict situation, the respondents' colleagues mainly (40%) begin to treat each other as enemies. 25% of the respondents chose the answer "react immediately and try to resolve the conflict". 19% of participants' workmates complain to the manager and 10% ignore the situation. 6% of respondents provided their own answers, such as: colleagues observe curiously or support the co-worker in a conflict with a supervisor, keeping in mind their diligent work.



**Figure 9.** To what extent does the atmosphere of conflict negatively affect the results of work in your company? Source: own work.

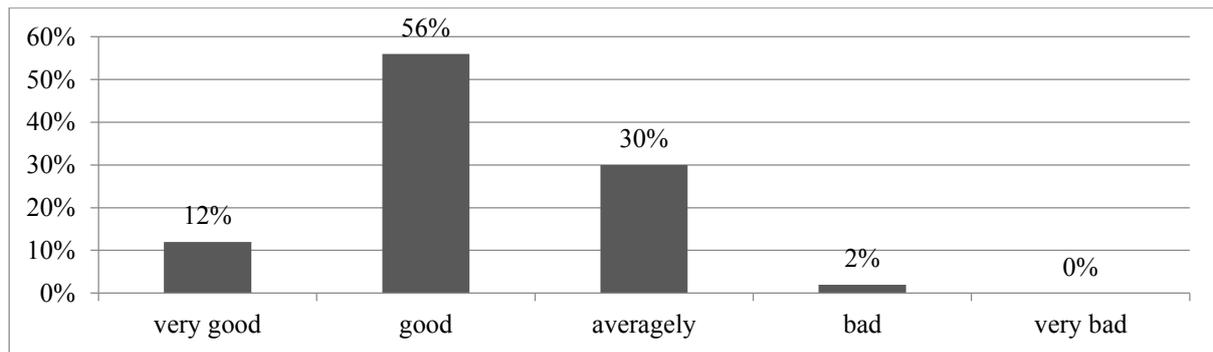
According to 40% of respondents, the conflict negatively affects results of work in 25-50%. 35% of respondents claims that the conflict affects the results of work in less than 25%. 19% of respondents chose the answer 50-75%. Only 6% of participants selected the answer 75-100%.

### 6.3. Results and conclusions in the field: characteristics of situations in the respondents' workplace



**Figure 10.** How do you assess communication and flow of information in the company? Source: own work.

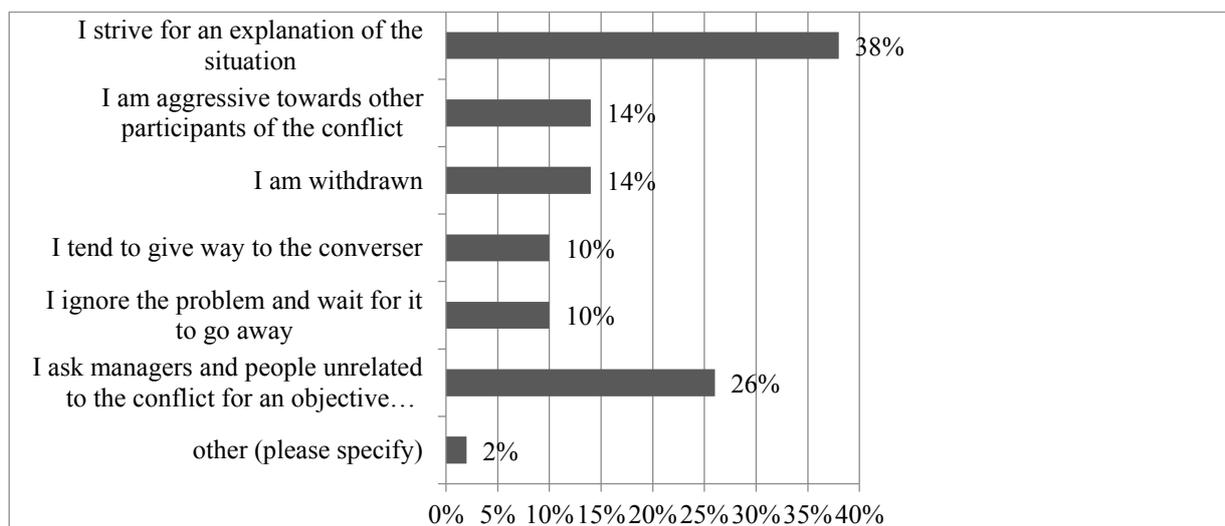
This part of the survey describes situations in the respondents' workplace. From this point, up to the last question, the number of respondents answering the questions equals 50 again. The purpose of this question was to assess the flow of information in companies. 46% of respondents answered that the flow of information is average, 38% assessed it as good, 10% of participants estimated it as bad, and 6% graded it as very good.



**Figure 11.** How do you assess the atmosphere among employees in the company? Source: own work.

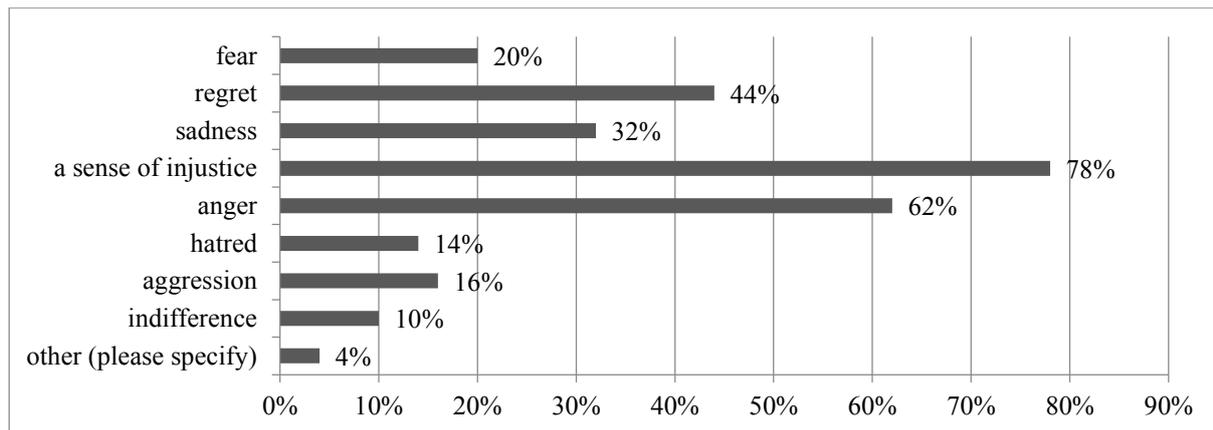
According to 56% of the respondents, the atmosphere in the company is good. 30% of participants assessed it as average. The next most popular response was the answer “very good”, chosen by 12% of respondents. 2% of the participants chose the answer “bad” and nobody indicated the response “very bad”.

#### 6.4. Results and conclusions in the field: description of a particular respondents’ behaviour in a conflict situation



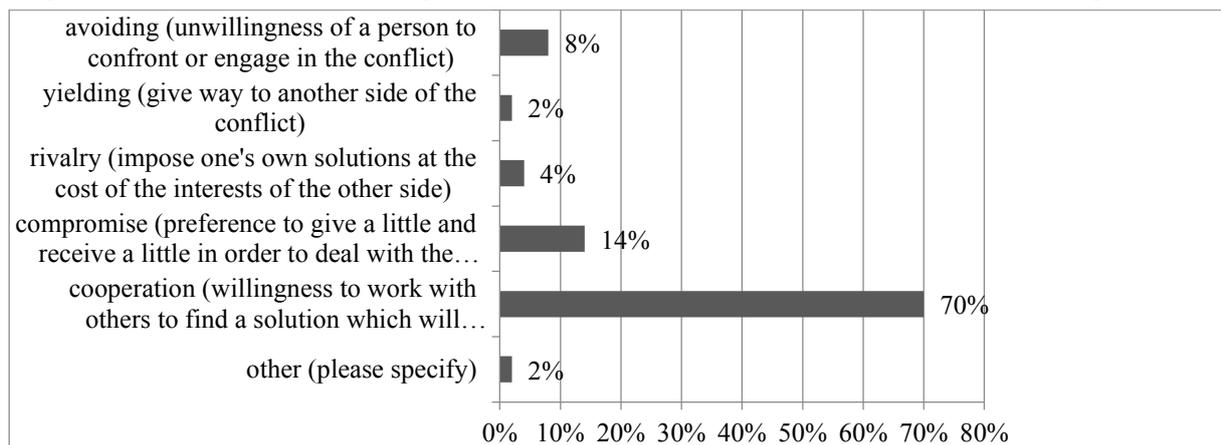
**Figure 12.** Which of the following behaviours describe your attitude during a conflict? Source: own work.

Answering this question, participants had the possibility to give more than one answer. In the question concerning the respondents’ behaviour during a conflict situation, most votes were given to the answer “I strive for an explanation of the situation” (38%). 26% of the respondents ask managers and people unrelated to the conflict for an objective assessment of the situation and help with its resolving. 14% of respondents is aggressive towards other participants of the conflict. The same percentage of participants describe themselves as withdrawn. The next two most frequently chosen answers were “I tend to give way to the converser” (10%) and “I ignore the problem and wait for it to go away” (10%). 1 respondent (2%) wrote their own answer: I try to distance myself, avoid conflicts, not pry into other people’s business.

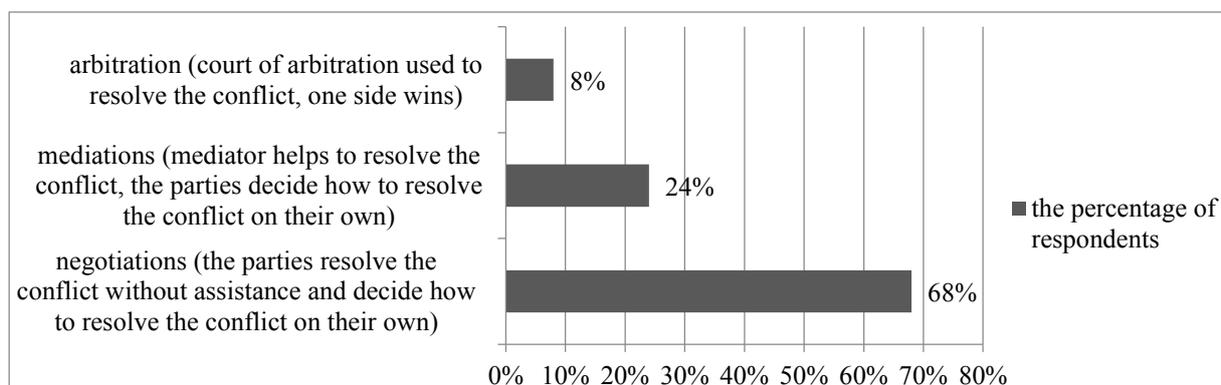


**Figure 13.** What feelings accompany you during the conflict? Source: own work.

The most common emotion associated with conflict is a sense of injustice (78% of the respondents indicated this answer). Another frequently encountered emotion is anger (62%). Regret was chosen by 44% of the participants. 32% admitted that they feel sadness, 20% indicated fear, 16% marked the answer “aggression”, 14% feel hatred, 10% of the respondents is indifferent and 1 person (2%) wrote their own answer: sometimes helplessness.



**Figure 14.** Which way of resolving conflicts is the most universal and effective in your opinion? Source: own work.



**Figure 15.** Which of the techniques listed below is the most effective in resolving the conflicts in your opinion? Source: own work.

The next two questions concerned the way and the technique of resolving conflicts. The significant majority of respondents (70%) chose cooperation as the best way of resolving conflicts. The next most frequent response was “compromise” (14%). “Avoiding” was chosen by 8% of participants. 4% indicated “rivalry” as the most universal and effective way of resolving conflicts. “Yielding” was chosen by 2% of the participants and 1 (2%) person answered that, in their opinion, people should react when they forefeel conflict, before it happens. The best reaction in such a situation is an honest conversation.

The majority of respondents (68%) indicated negotiations as the most effective technique of resolving conflicts. Mediations were chosen by 24% of participants. The least votes were given to the answer “arbitration” – 8% of the respondents selected it.

## 7. Conclusion

Summarizing the above deliberations, the following observations were made, based on the survey, in an attempt to provide the answer to the research question:

- What are the main causes of conflicts in an organization?

According to the respondents, conflict in a company occurs most often, in sequence, due to: a bad flow of information (56%), a difference of opinions/views (52%), the desire to dominate others (42%), gossip (40%), weak cooperation (33%), jealousy (31%), inaccurate information from the management board (29%), mobbing (16%), because of advancement (6%), other (2%). A respondent who indicated the answer “other” specified that, in their organization, conflict occurs because of religious intolerance.

- In what way can conflicts affect an organization?

The most common negative effect, indicated by the respondents, were negative emotions, such as hatred, anger and aggression – 44 (88%) of the participants indicated this answer. The next negative effect was “appearance of stress and dissatisfaction” – 34 (68%) respondents chose this answer. The further most accurate answers, each chosen by more than 40% of participants, were related to effects, such as “people leaving the organisation” (46%) and “abandonment of rational thinking and relying on emotions” (44%). The answer “occurrence of disturbances in the functioning of the organization” was chosen by 20 (40%) respondents. The least votes (34%) were given to the answer “introduction of destabilization and confusion in the group”.

- Can conflicts have a positive impact on an organization?

According to the respondents, the most common positive effect is the analysis of one’s own behaviour, caused by critical assessment – 39 (78%) participants indicated this answer. The next two answers, most accurate according to the respondents, each chosen by more than 30% of the participants, were related to effects, such as “improvement of knowledge” (38%)

and “development of activity, especially in the case of competition” (34%). Each of the remaining answers was chosen by less than 30% of respondents: “simulation of new ideas and exploring new fields of activity” (26%), “presentation of assumptions for organizational changes” (24%), better cooperation in a group (22%) and “reduction of tension, clearly showing the applicable relations” (22%).

- How do managers and employees behave in conflict situations?

According to the respondents, when a conflict occurs in a company, 52% of supervisors react immediately and try to resolve the situation, 35% of supervisors ignore the situation and 6% intervene by engaging a third party to resolve the conflict. 6% of the respondents chose the answer “other”. They specified that their supervisors became suspicious, began to niggle, tease, listen to both sides, failed to deal with the consequences or conducted disciplinary conversation.

Results of the survey indicate that, in a conflict situation, the respondents’ colleagues mainly (40%) begin to treat each other as enemies. 25% of the respondents chose the answer “react immediately and try to resolve the conflict”, 19% of participants’ workmates complain to the manager and 10% ignore the situation. 6% of the respondents provided their own answers, such as: colleagues observe curiously or support the co-worker in a conflict with a supervisor, keeping in mind their diligent work.

- What are the proper reactions to conflicts and how do we improve the employees’ ability to resolve conflicts?

The significant majority of respondents (70%) chose cooperation as the best way of resolving conflicts. The next most frequent response was “compromise” (14%). “Avoiding” was chosen by 8% of participants, 4% indicated “rivalry” as the most universal and effective way of resolving conflicts. “Yielding” was chosen by 2% of participants and 1 (2%) person answered that, in their opinion, people should react when they forefeel conflict, before it happens. The best reaction in such a situation is an honest conversation.

The majority of respondents (68%) indicated negotiations as the most effective technique of resolving conflicts. Mediations were chosen by 24% of participants. The least votes were given to the answer “arbitration” – 8% of the respondents marked it.

According to 85% of the respondents, employees should take part in training, which concerns the ways of dealing with a conflict. According to 15% of the participants, it is not necessary.

It should be stated, that some additional work is needed to disseminate research findings among managers and employees. Appropriate training on conflict management could play a significant role in order to develop specific strategies for constructive conflict-resolution solutions. Training concerning the ways of dealing with a conflict is rather new and rare, but the results of the survey show a potential interest and demand in this regard. Information retrieved from the research may help to improve conflict management in contemporary organizations.

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