

EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICTS ON THE MOTIVATION OF THE EMPLOYEES

Ruskova, SVILENA¹
Ruseva, IVALINA²

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Abstract

This study presents the essence of conflicts and motivation and their importance for the activities of organizations. A poll has been conducted the analysis of which presents the results of a concrete study on the impact of conflicts on the motivation of the employees from an organization involved in the implementation of security alarm activities. On the basis of the conducted research specific conclusions and recommendations have been formulated.

Keywords: *conflicts, motivation, employees, organization.*

JEL: *M1, M12*

1. INTRODUCTION

People are the most important resource in any organization regardless of its size or subject of activity. Personnel is the face of the organization and how much people are motivated to work, develop and do their best, depends on the success of the organization as a whole. Namely for this reason the problems of motivation of the staff are widely represented and the main goal of each manager and leader is their solution and overcoming. Of primary importance are the factors that have a negative impact on the motivation and how they can be avoided so that employees in the organization to behave in such a way that they can achieve the highest possible performance.

The aim of the present study is to investigate the impact of conflicts on the motivation of the employees of the organization engaged in security alarm activities which has branches all over the Republic of Bulgaria. For reasons of confidentiality the name of the organization cannot be quoted in this article.

The implementation of this goal will be achieved through the following tasks:

1. Analysis of the specialized literature on conflict situations and their impact on motivation from the point of view of individual authors.
2. Presentation of the results of the conducted empirical survey in the organization engaged in security alarm activity on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria on the impact of the conflicts on the employee work motivation.
3. Making the main conclusions on the grounds of the made analysis of the reactions of the executive and managing staff in conflict situations and their consequences on the motivation of the employees and formulating some specific recommendations.

¹ Associated Professor, PhD, “Angel Kanchev” University of Ruse, Bulgaria, e-mail: sruskova@uni-ruse.bg

² Master of Business Administration, “Angel Kanchev” University of Ruse, Bulgaria, e-mail: ivalinaruseva@gmail.com

1.1. Essence of conflicts and motivation

Usually in science studying conflicts the understanding of conflict is related to something where two or more people wish to achieve goals perceived as possible by one or the other, but not by both - (*Stagner, Ross, (1967)*).

Conflict management can be defined as conscious, purposeful activity of the subject of management which takes place at all stages - from its origin and development to its completion. This complex activity according to some authors proceeds through prognosis, prevention, diagnosis, warning, weakening, regulation and resolution of the conflict -(*Dimitrov, D. (1999)*).

Other authors divide the management of such situations into three stages:

- Soothing the conflict;
- Partial solution of the conflict;
- A mutually beneficial and compromise solution between the parties (*Dimitrov, D. (2004)*).

Each conflict is perceived as unique and possesses inherent specific features. This objective circumstance however was not an obstacle to the construction and existence of universal techniques and methodologies for solving it. Among them the most commonly applied in practice are:

- Conflict avoidance - It can be applied if the disputed question is unessential or adversely affects the individuals;
- Smoothing the conflict - It aims at eliminating open hostilities between the parties;
- Imposition of decisions - One of the groups wins at the expense of others;
- Applying a compromise - It supposes negotiations between the parties and mutual compromises;
- Change in the motivation of the members of the organization - It is aimed at motivating the participants in the conflict in order to focus their efforts on the main activity. As a rule the emergence of strong motivation to work leads to diverting employees' attention from participation in the conflict;
- Making a mutually beneficial solution (co-operation) - It is applied to satisfy both parties. With this strategy there are no losers and is perceived as the surest way to solve the conflict (*Andreeva, M., (1991)*).

Motivation on the other hand is considered as a set of mental processes related to the power and direction of behavior, the challenge, the directing and the maintenance of voluntary purposeful actions (*Evgeniev, G. et al. 1993*).

The scientific literature distinguishes between external and internal motivation. Internal motivation is understood as the intrinsic factors resulting mainly from the education, but also from attitude, genetic inheritance, intuition and others that influence people to behave in a certain way or to pursue a particular purpose. While external motivation includes a system of management actions, means and approaches to motivate collaborators to achieve the company's goals. This motivation includes factors that influence individual behavior.

It is important to note that often external stimuli can have a rapid and powerful effect, but rarely prolonged, unlike the internal ones which have a deep and lasting effect because they are inherent to the individual rather than imposed from outside. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the two forms of motivation - both internal and external - are interrelated and affect one another (*Armstring, M. (1993)*).

From a psychological point of view motivation is presented as an internal process. It starts with the frustration that you need something. This frustration later directs the individual to certain actions. The logical sequence of the motivation process according to some authors is as follows:

1. Unsatisfied need;
2. Pressure;
3. Incitements (motives);
4. Attitudes, decisions, actions;
5. Satisfied need;
6. Pressure decrease.

Of the six steps of the process we understand that the state of lack and shortness called ‘unsatisfied need’ is not comfortable for the individual's condition. It puts the individual under pressure, the incitements arise, the individual undertakes certain actions. The satisfied need on the other hand causes a decrease of the pressure (*Sirashki, H. (2015)*).

Hence the conclusion that the degree of employees satisfaction is among the main indicators of the level of their motivation which in turn is considered as a major factor for the favourable development of the individual personality and the organization as an institution.

1.2. Review of the theoretical aspects of the impact of conflicts on the labor motivation

In the scientific literature the impact of conflicts on motivation is presented in two directions.

In the book *‘The Perfect Team Working as a Clock Mechanism’* the constructive function of the conflict on motivation is examined and analyzed. This point of view is supported by the fact that if there are no conflicts, there are also no different opinions that are in the base of development and creativity. If the participants do not dare to express their opinion openly, the group begins to mark time and good ideas die. And striving for conflicts to be avoided at all costs can seriously reduce the effectiveness of the team.

The fear for confrontation often causes team members to avoid expressing disagreement with others in order not to hamper the work of the group. In such cases the discrepancy swells and the team loses a valuable opportunity to exchange or discuss important ideas. Gradually mistrust and fear accumulate and the ability to make decisions suffers from it.

For this reason the authors say that the approach of avoiding conflicts is absolutely wrong. In their opinion the disagreement and the pressure provide the energy for the emergence of new ideas and new alternatives as long as the conflict is directed in a productive direction (*Harvard Business School Press (2005)*).

Contrary to the above, other authors support the thesis of the destructive impact of conflicts on motivation.

They say that conflicts are one of the main causes of stress which in turn affects employees' productivity. When the problem arises, it cannot be solved on its

own, but on the contrary, it will rather be deepened because people will try to avoid those with whom they do not get along well just to save them extra stress (<https://www.itce.com/bg/управление-конфликти-работно-място/>).

The article *‘Motivation and Stress in The Organizational Environment’* emphasizes that the workplace stress can be considered as an adaptive response to external situations that causes psychological, physical or behavioral changes in the employee. This undoubtedly leads to a change in his/her working capacity and the level of motivation for work and achievement, which negatively affects the organization and its productivity (Cvetanova, I., (2010)).

The evolved dual feature of conflicts has prompted the authors of the present study to conduct an empirical survey to find out whether workplace conflicts should be avoided or could be used as a tool for successful management of employees in the particular organization subject of the study below.

2. EMPIRICAL SURVEY ON THE IMPACT OF CONFLICTS ON LABOR MOTIVATION

2.1. Methodology of The Conducted Study

In order to track the impact of conflicts on employees' motivation a survey has been carried out in the organization that is engaged in the implementation of physical and centralized security through the help of security alarm equipment. The organization has 35 divisions on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. As stated at the beginning of the study the name of the organization cannot be quoted because of the subject of activity of the organization. The total number of employees is 5073. Of these, 34.2% have participated in the survey. The survey has been conducted through the help of a poll and a questionnaire has been worked out, structured to respond to the main points of the survey:

- What is the frequency of conflicts in the organization, as the idea is to determine whether such events are everyday or rarity;
- Which groups of employees most often encounter conflicts; in which of them (interpersonal, intergroup or between individual and group) usually are the affected subjects and which departments are the most conflicting;
- What are the main reasons for conflicts according to employees – poor work conditions and organization, the qualities of managers and colleagues, insufficient remuneration, the nature and emotionality of the members of the organization or the mistrust on the part of the manager toward the executive staff and vice versa. The aim is to establish what according to the respondents is the strongest provocation to occur misunderstandings;
- What is the impact of the conflicts on the motivation and the performance of the employees - whether they improve the team's work by enabling ideas to be generated and finding new ways to solve occurred problems, and whether they do not influence or heighten the work environment, shifting the center out of important issues and leading to losses;
- Which are the most appropriate means according to the employees for conflict solution and how it would affect the application of the chosen method to their work motivation.

The poll has been conducted anonymously within the period: April 10 – May 15, 2018, as questionnaire sheets have been given to the employees, which the employees have filled out by their own after having clarified the purpose of the survey itself.

2.2. Analysis of The Survey Results

Based on the analysis of the answers of the respondents, 34.2% of the employees working in the surveyed organization have formulated two profiles: profile of the executive staff (26.2%) and the profile of the managers (8%).

The analysis shows that the managing body of the organization is represented by men aged between 40 and 50 years with more than four years of service. The profile of the executive staff is composed again mostly by middle-aged men but most of them have less than 4 years of experience. According to the activity with which the organization is concerned, the observed tendency of the predominant gender structure is normal.

Concerning the frequency of conflicts (Figure 1), the profile of the managing body identifies it as a phenomenon that occurs occasionally, whereas the executive staff believes that such situations are rare, but both groups indicate that they are primarily interpersonal and concern the executive staff.

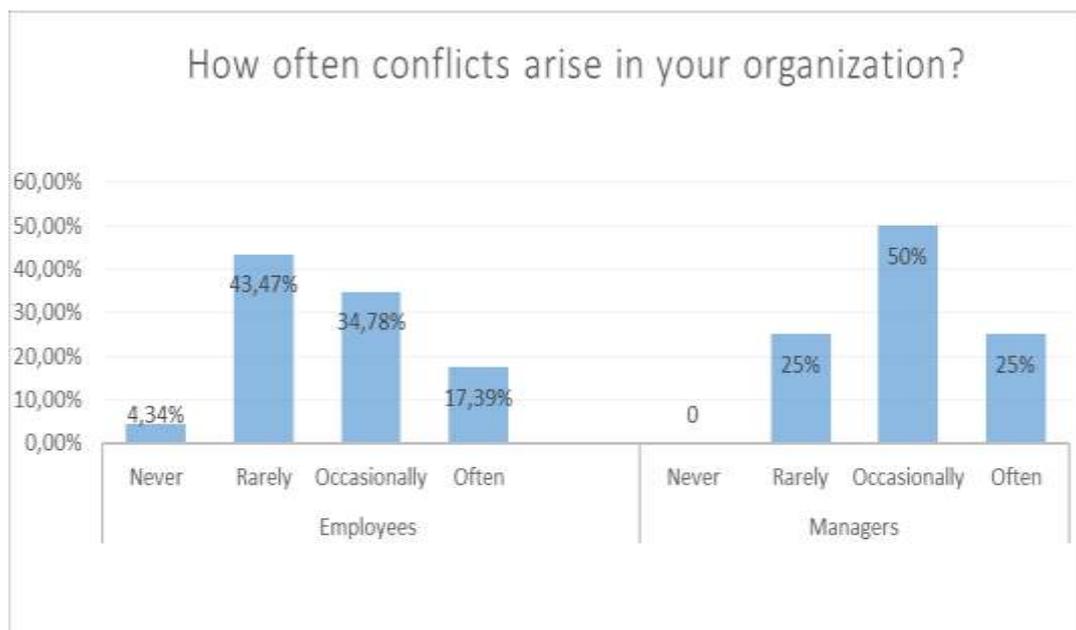


Figure 1 – Frequency of conflicts in the organization

The difference in the points of view between both parties is probably due to the fact that unlike the executive staff the managers have observations on all the employees in the subdivisions of their organization.

There are also different points of view on the sources of conflict. The operative staff have indicated the low wages as the main problem, while according to the staff on high positions the reason of conflict are the skills and the abilities of subordinates. Hence it can be concluded that the well-done job is of paramount importance for the managers, while the persons of the executive staff have specific

expectations for their remuneration and do not bind it so much to the quality of their work.

Nevertheless both groups believe that the conflicts in the organization are rather positive, as 56.52% of the operative staff and 75% of the managing body state that conflicts provide opportunities for generating ideas and help to find new ways to solve the problems, which means that employees see rather the constructive characteristics of the conflict than the destructive ones (Figure 2). It is generally ascertained that the conflicts in the organization are everyday, which is confirmed by the introductory questions. When eventually conflict situations arise they tend to support the work process by reflecting its effectiveness rather than adversely affecting it.

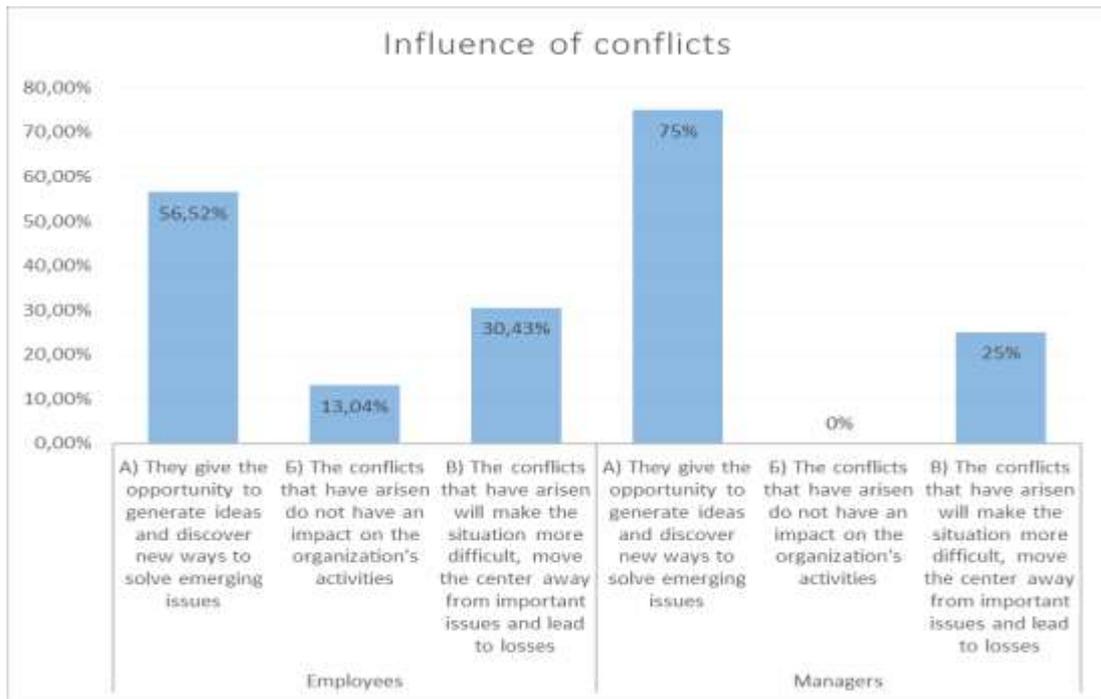


Figure 2 – Effects of conflicts on employee motivation

Interesting is the analysis of the matter when employees are asked to indicate their probable reaction in a situation where they have felt themselves unjustly assessed (Figure 3).

In such circumstances the superiors would be motivated to prove their abilities which means they would not allow this condition to worsen their relations with other employees and to demotivate them.

The persons from the operative staff indicate two possible alternatives as probable - in one case, the situation would motivate them to prove themselves to the others, but in the other it would worsen the relationship with their colleagues.

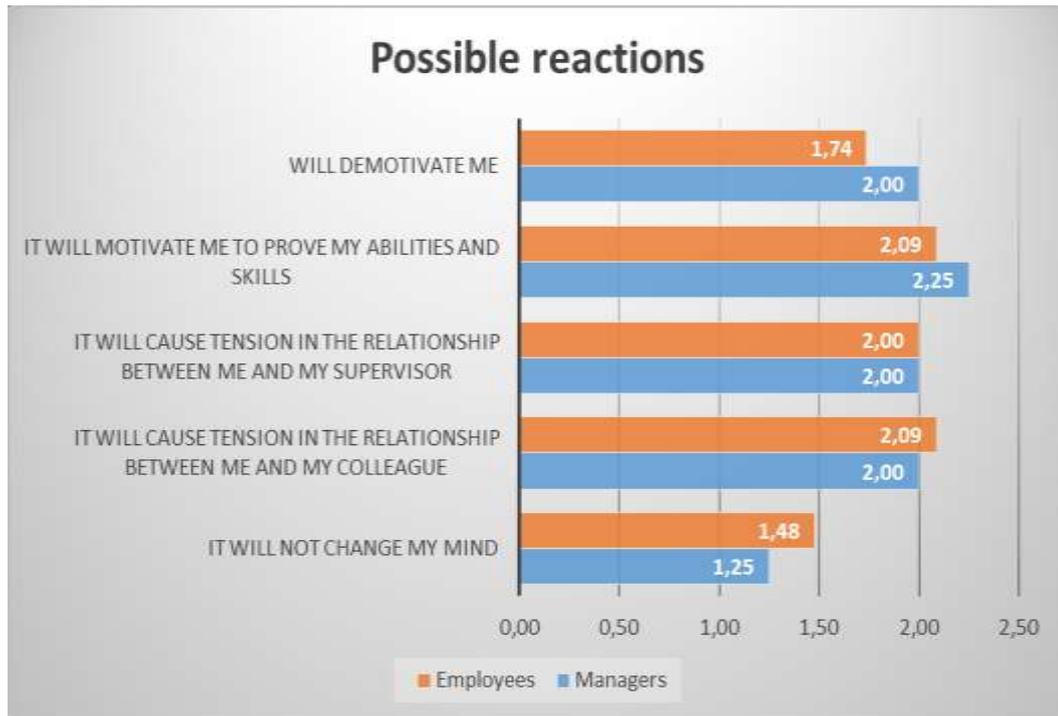


Figure 3 – Employee Reactions in Unfair Evaluation

Differences in the points of view of the both categories of surveyed respondents (managers and executive staff) may be linked to the fact that managers have a longer work experience, a stronger sense of belonging to the surveyed organization and a higher level of education, and these personality characteristics provoke the generation of internal motivation that has a strong and long-lasting effect. Based on the results so obtained, it can be inferred that as far as the managers are concerned, the conflict in the surveyed organization can be considered as a positive phenomenon, positively influencing the motivation.

As for the persons from the executive staff, the fact that half of them accept the situation as an opportunity to prove themselves and others perceive it demotivating says that those who think that the situation has a negative impact may develop some form of conflict that may eventually cause problems leading to subsequent demotivation.

The last part of the questionnaire includes questions where respondents are asked to indicate what they think are the most appropriate ways to solve conflicts (Figure 4) and how their application would affect the direction, strength and dynamics of their motivation.

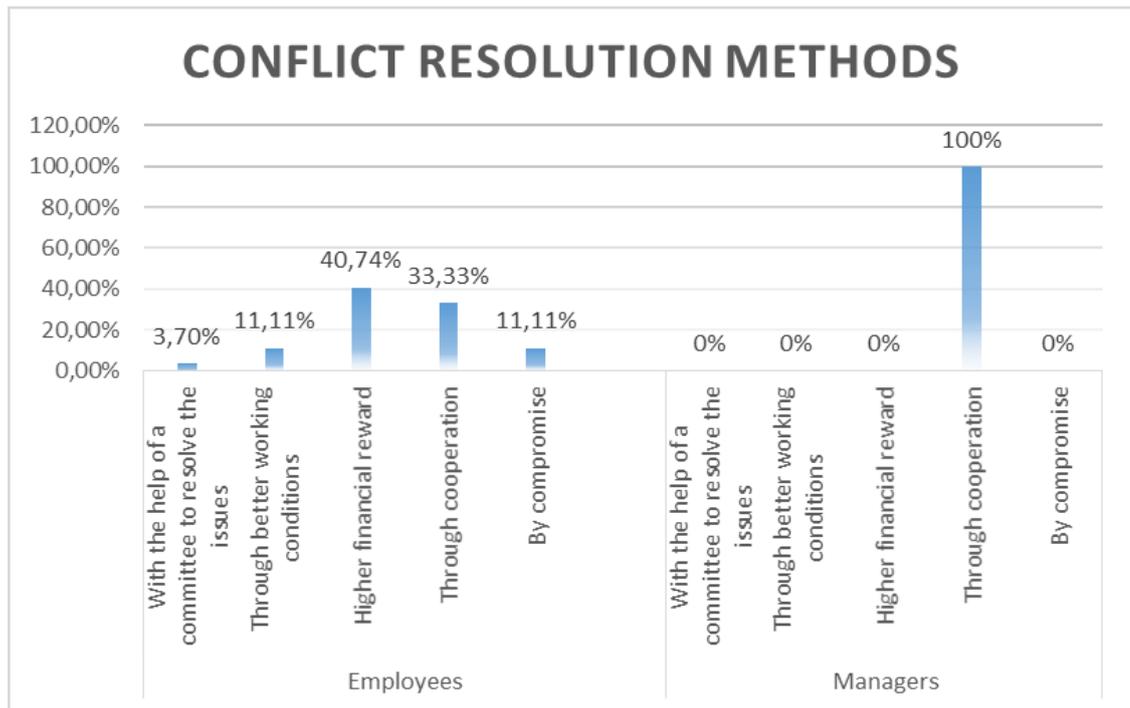


Figure 4 – Conflict management techniques

In the responses of the managing body the cooperation stands out as the most effective way to manage conflicts, which means aiming at solving the contradictions that are at the root of the conflict, as the pursuit is the satisfaction of mutual interests as a way out of the situation. Here the conflict is perceived as ‘problem solving’, as both parties are consciously committed to work together to overcome it.

The position of the executive staff regarding the appropriate means of effective conflict management is directed to the use of additional motivation. This group of interviewed respondents believe that using tools such as: higher wages, better work conditions, etc. will lead to their efforts to perform effectively their work and distract their attention from generating conflicts and participating in such. The main problem that emerges from these answers is that the motivation generated by the executive staff is from an external source. It would therefore have a short-lived effect. A fact that should be taken into account by the managing body in the development of a staff motivation system in the surveyed organization.

In summary, according to all survey participants, the application of both categories of indicated methods of conflict management would have a positive impact not only on the work but also on establishing better relations between colleagues.

3. CONCLUSIONS

This study explores the impact of conflicts on the motivation of employees from an organization involved in the implementation of security alarm activities. These two factors interfere and influence not only labor motivation but also the activities of organization. On the basis of the survey conducted, two profiles have been formulated - a profile of the executive staff and a profile of the managing staff. Summarizing the analysis of the results of both profiles the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Conflicts are a mandatory element in the functioning of each organization and can be considered in both their positive and negative aspects of influence;
- In the examined branch of the organization, according to managers and to a part of the executive staff, the constructive characteristics of the conflict predominate, as due to such situations the problems come to the fore and can be eliminated;
- On the other hand, according to the other half of the executive staff, conflicts have a destructive effect on their motivation, as they create pressure in their relationship with other colleagues;
- On this basis we can summarize that in fact the impact of conflicts on work motivation is never unambiguous and while for some it contributes to increasing motivation by stimulating their competitive start, for others it has a demotivating effect. Consequently, the management of such situations should be done in accordance with the individual characteristics of the subordinates, so that the adverse effects of conflicts to be neutralized and the positive ones to be used to improve the efficiency of the organization.

On the basis of these conclusions the following recommendations can also be made:

- As a result of the survey it is clear that both groups have some discrepancies relating to the frequency of the conflicts and probably some of the situations remain unnoticed, so it would be better to improve the communication between both groups which would be a prerequisite for improving the relationship in the collective;
- It is appropriate to categorize the individual groups of employees according to the way in which they react with respect to certain factors and their management to take into account namely these personal characteristics;
- Different ways to solve conflicts can be used to manage conflicts that have already arisen. It's necessary to stack the conflict management approaches between managing and executive staff. Since subordinates want mostly stimulus, and superiors - negotiations, it is good to find a balance approach or use both approaches on equal terms.

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