

**Approaches to conflict management and its impact on the psycho-emotional state of employees in the public sector, based on the example of Georgia**Nino Paresashvili\*, Eka Avsajanishvili <sup>2</sup><sup>1st</sup> [nino.paresashvili@tsu.ge](mailto:nino.paresashvili@tsu.ge); <sup>2nd</sup> [eka.avsajanishvili361@eabmu.edu.ge](mailto:eka.avsajanishvili361@eabmu.edu.ge)<sup>1</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6738-5409> <sup>2</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7110-825X>\*Corresponding Author: [nino.paresashvili@tsu.ge](mailto:nino.paresashvili@tsu.ge)

**Abstract**— As a part of the social structure, a person copes with various types of conflicts throughout their life, and the work environment is no exception. If it's not managed in a timely and appropriate manner, can have negative consequences for the employees, cause stress, give rise to various types of psychological problems, reduce the level of job satisfaction, for the organization its effects on success and efficiency. Meanwhile, constructive conflicts increase productivity and satisfaction, stimulate innovations. In developing countries, especially in non-profit organizations, such as the public sector, conflict management is often overlooked. The paper aims to determine the attitude employees and the organization towards conflict, methods of dealing with it, and the impact of it on the psycho-emotional state of employees. For this purpose, a quantitative study was conducted in the public sector, in which 332 participants with different positions and work experience participated. Statistical analysis of the results was carried out using SPSS software. Considering the results, it can be said that awareness of conflict management and the existing policy in the organization in this regard is quite low. The main method of conflict resolution is avoidance, which, of course, has negative consequences for the psychological aspects of employees. At the end of the paper, recommendations have been developed that will help public sector representatives to take steps towards the implementation of conflict management and the development of a strategy.

**Keywords**— communication, conflict management, job satisfaction, public sector, stress

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Georgian economy relies heavily on SMEs, which typically don't employ large numbers of people. The country mostly depends on imports and has a low level of domestic production. As a result, the state functions as the largest employer. According to 2023 data, 24% of employed individuals work in government organizations, with the majority being aged 34-47. We can reasonably assume that this figure may continue to rise, as in 2022, the government developed a program for the employment of socially vulnerable groups, which serves to include them in the workforce by employing in various budgetary organizations. Besides, a major challenge for the country is the high level of unemployment among people under 30 years of age [1], whose employment rate is also the lowest in the public sector. Georgia has a law on the Public sector employees, which ensures the development of a unified personnel management policy, and determines the rules for the selection, ranking, hiring, promotion, dismissal of employees, as well as general internal regulations. However, of course, each organization has its own internal rules and approaches, which are different and depend on the specifics of the field. In the last few years, interest in issues related to human resource management in the public service has increased significantly, especially in the process of rapprochement with the European Union. As a result of various activities of a number of European organizations, various types of strategic documents have been developed, more attention is paid to gender aspects, career planning, and professional development issues. However, there are quite a few challenges. Based on the 2022 report of the Civil Service Bureau, it is possible to identify many problems in human resources management, for example, in terms of staff selection, which according to the law is to be conducted through a competition, although in many cases there are no or clearly defined selection criteria, besides, there are no documents confirming the results of the competition, only one member of the commission is mainly actively involved in the interviews, mostly the head of the department or agency, and the involvement of HR managers in the selection process is quite low, often only in the administrative part. As a result of the analysis of labor contracts, it was determined that the obligations of employees and the roles related to the position are not clearly defined in the contracts [2], which may ultimately become the cause of role conflicts.

Despite the above, the staff turnover rate is increasing, but is still low. The main motive for leaving the job is to leave the country. According to the job satisfaction survey, the majority of civil servants, 78 %, are completely or partly satisfied with their jobs, and they cite stability as the main reason for satisfaction. This may be due to the high level of unemployment in the country, as well as the challenges associated with finding a new job. [3]

### II. METHODOLOGY

The presented work is based on the methodology of quantitative research. Given the objectives of the study, a cross-sectional and correlational design was used, which allows us to simultaneously study the relationships between independent and dependent variables, in particular, the impact of organizational conflict characteristics on the psycho-emotional state and behavioural strategies of employees. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, and 332 respondents of different ages, work experience and positions employed in the public sector of Georgia participated in the study.

The collected primary data were coded and transformed into the Microsoft Excel database. Statistical analysis of the data was performed using SPSS to test the hypotheses. Given the specificity of the research questions and variables, the following statistical tests were used:

**Pearson Chi-Square Test of Independence:** This test was used to determine the relationship between categorical variables. Specifically, to test the first (H1) and third (H3) hypotheses to assess whether organizational attitudes were statistically related to conflict resolution strategies and open expression of conflict.

**Spearman's Rank Correlation (rho):** Since psych emotional state characteristics and conflict frequency were measured on an ordinal scale, nonparametric correlation analysis was used to test the second hypothesis (H2). This test determined the direction and strength of the relationship between conflict intensity and employee stress, satisfaction, and general well-being.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict, as in life, is an inevitable phenomenon in an organization, without which the development of an organization or society is impossible. The attitude towards organizational conflict has gone a long way from negative to positive [4] In modern organizations, conflict and conflict management are important processes that receive special attention, since improperly managed conflict increases dissatisfaction, stress in the workplace [5], leading to a deterioration of the psycho-emotional state. It negatively affects stability and staff turnover. [6] On the contrary, constructive conflict enhance performance [7], the level of job satisfaction, and promotes innovation and development. This is equally important in both the private and public sectors. However, conflicts in the public sector differ from conflicts arising in private organizations and, accordingly, require finding appropriate ways to resolve them. [8] Chukwuemeka et al. suggest that the most effective conflict resolution strategies in public organizations are compromising and avoidance, and that managers' support is important to reduce staff turnover. [9] Madalina's study, which deals with public sector employees in Romania, identifies the main reasons that lead to conflicts. Among them are miscommunication, the distribution of working time on various issues, and the absence of feedback. [10] The role of managers in this direction is particularly important. Interest in conflict management is growing, and the skills that managers need to effectively manage the process are becoming more and more in demand. [11] Especially considering modern trends, that are associated with constant development and change, be it technological or innovative, accompanied by a change in culture, which is often associated with conflict. [12] Assaratgoon and Kantabutra emphasize the importance of collaboration in this process, accompanied by a healthy work environment and effective communication. [13]

A manager must be able to properly assess the environment and choose a way to resolve the conflict in a way to preserve relationships, which ultimately affects job satisfaction. [14] The same results are presented by Aditya and Setyawan's research, according to which the selected conflict resolution strategy can have a great impact on job satisfaction. [15] according to the results of a study by Samianta and Lamprakis, transactional and transformational leadership styles are the most effective in terms of maintaining constructive organizational conflicts and resolving conflicts on time in the public sector. [16]

Conflicts, especially destructive ones, have a negative impact on the psycho-emotional state of employees. They lead to an increase in stress levels, even avoiding conflict is actually quite stressful. [17] On the contrary, constructive conflict leads to improved relationships and stimulates innovation. [18] Awan and Saeed's study also demonstrates the negative impact of unresolved conflict on the health of employees, as well as on their communication, which ultimately leads to a decrease in efficiency and an turn into dissatisfaction. [19]

It should be noted that scientific research on human resource management, especially conflict management is quite scarce in Georgia, which emphasizes the lack of priority in this direction. Research related to organizational conflicts shows that role conflicts are mainly found in organizations, which are related to the

incorrect distribution of tasks and responsibilities. Besides, the general level of awareness and experience in working on constructive outcomes is low. [7] Most of the employees have to work in a stressful environment, where the criteria for evaluation and process management are not clearly defined, which leads to a feeling of injustice and unequal treatment. [20] Common, in his work, reviews why it is difficult to introduce modern human resources practices in Georgia and post-Soviet countries in general. Despite the willingness and desire, he cites the inadequacy of relevant methods and framework documents as the reason, as well as complicated communication between different bodies, and these changes require a unified, coordinated approach. [21]

**IV. DISCUSSION**

A Considering the literature review and research objectives, we formulated the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between the organization's attitude towards conflict and conflict resolution strategies.

H2: There is an inverse relationship between the frequency of conflict and the psycho-emotional state of employees; the more frequent the conflicts, the worse the psycho-emotional state of employees.

H3: The organization's attitude towards conflict is related to the open expression of conflict by employees; in organizations with a positive attitude, employees express conflict openly more often.

To test hypothesis H1, which aimed to determine the relationship between the attitude towards organizational conflict and the conflict resolution strategies chosen by employees, the Pearson Chi-Square Test was used.

Table 1. Chi-Square Test of Independence between Organizational Attitude and Conflict Resolution Strategies

	$\chi^2$	(df)	(p-value)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	9.424	10	0.492
<b>N of Valid Cases</b>	332		

Source: Authors' research result

The analysis revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between the variables ( $\chi^2(10) = 9.42, p = 0.492$ ). The significance level ( $p > 0.05$ ) indicates that the organization's attitude towards conflict does not have a significant impact on the strategies employees use in the conflict resolution process. Based on the results, it can be said that the first hypothesis posed within the framework of the study was not confirmed, which indicates that the general attitude of management/organization towards conflict (whether it is positive, negative or neutral) does not dictate to employees which specific strategy (for example, avoidance, compromise or collaboration) to use to resolve the conflict. Employees likely choose conflict resolution strategies based more on individual personality characteristics, the severity of a particular situation, or personal relationships with the opponent than directly on the influence of organizational climate. To test hypothesis H2, which assumed an inverse relationship between conflict intensity and employees' psycho-emotional state, Spearman's rank correlation analysis was used. Based on the research objectives, psycho-emotional background was assessed by three independent components: job satisfaction, stress level, and general psychosocial state.

Table 2. Spearman Correlation Analysis between Conflict Frequency and Psycho-Emotional Indicators

Variables (in relation to Conflict Frequency)	Spearman's rho (r)	Significance (p-value)
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	-0.281	< 0.001
<b>Stress Level</b>	-0.268	< 0.001
<b>General Psychosocial State</b>	-0.400	< 0.001

Source: Authors' research result

As a result, an inverse relationship was revealed between the frequency of conflict and job satisfaction ( $r_s = -0.31, p < 0.001$ ), as well as between psychosocial status and the frequency of conflict ( $r_s = -0.28, p = 0.001$ ). This indicates that the increase in the frequency of conflict is accompanied by a deterioration in the well-being of employees. At the same time, a positive relationship was observed with stress ( $r_s = 0.44, p < 0.001$ ), the level of stress increases as the intensity of conflict rises. Based on the above statistical evidence, hypothesis H2 was fully confirmed. The significant negative impact that conflict frequency has on employee well-being highlights the essential need for a conflict management system within the organization. Allowing conflicts to escalate or develop destructively can directly harm employees' psychosocial health. To reduce this negative impact, an organization should implement effective and constructive conflict management strategies. Proper conflict management has a dual effect: it not only neutralizes stressors and reduces tension, but can also transform conflict into a positive process. When employees see that differences of opinion are being resolved fairly and openly, this increases organizational trust, improves job satisfaction, and ultimately ensures a healthy and stable psycho-emotional environment.

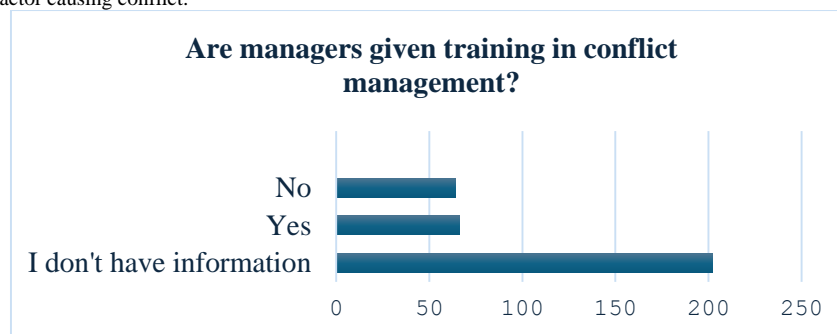


Source: Authors' research result

Figure 1: Conflict management strategy

However, according to the survey results (Figure1), most employees (65%) do not have information about whether their organization has a predetermined conflict management strategy, and they also do not know the qualifications of managers in this field (Figure 2).

A lack of information is also an indicator of a communication deficit, apparently due to the strictly defined bureaucratic system characteristic of the public sector, or to problems in this regard, the vertical movement of information is limited. This is also evidenced by the fact that the majority of respondents cite a lack of communication as the main factor causing conflict.



Source: Authors' research result

Figure 2: Qualifications of managers

To test hypothesis H3, which aimed to determine the relationship between organizational attitude and open expression of conflict, a crosstab analysis and a Pearson Chi-Square Test were conducted.

Table 3. Cross-Tabulation of Organizational Attitude and Open Expression of Conflict

Organizational Attitude toward Conflict	Expresses Conflict Openly (Yes)	Does Not Express Conflict Openly (No)	Total
Negative	69.6%	30.4%	100%
Neutral	73.0%	27.0%	100%
Positive	75.8%	24.2%	100%

Source: Authors' research result

Crosstab analysis showed that the percentage of openly expressing conflict slightly increases with a positive attitude towards the organization (69.6% under negative attitude, 73.0% under neutral attitude, and 75.8% under positive attitude). However, according to the results of the chi-square test, this difference is not statistically significant ( $\chi^2(2) = 0.730, p=0.694$ ). We can conclude that hypothesis H3 was not confirmed.

Table 4. Chi-Square Test of Independence between Organizational Attitude and Open Expression of Conflict

	Value ( $\chi^2$ )	(df)	Significance (p-value)
Pearson Chi-Square	0.731	2	0.694
N of Valid Cases	332		

Source: Authors' research result

Although the H3 hypothesis was not statistically confirmed, the data itself shows a very interesting picture. The results of the study show that the absolute majority of employees (approximately 70-75%) openly express conflict in any case, regardless of whether management has a negative, neutral or positive approach to the conflict. This indicates that the expression of conflict by employees is more determined by their personal characteristics or the severity of the problem itself, rather than by the organizational climate and encouragement from management.

V. CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study was to study the relationship between the characteristics of organizational conflict and the psycho-emotional state of employees. The quantitative analysis revealed that conflict in the workplace is a complex phenomenon, the impact of which on the well-being of employees is clearly critical, and the dynamics of its management are largely individualized. The most important finding of the study is the proven strong inverse relationship between the frequency of conflict and the psychological health of employees. The data prove that frequent and unregulated conflicts in the organization are a significant stressor that directly and destructively affects the general psychosocial background of employees and sharply reduces the level of job satisfaction.

At the same time, the study revealed a very interesting trend in the intersection of organizational climate and employee behavioural strategies. It was found that the management's declared attitude towards conflict (whether it is positive, negative, or neutral) is not a determining factor for employee behaviour. The vast majority of employees openly express their disagreement in any case, regardless of whether the management encourages it or not. In addition, the choice of the strategy for resolving the conflict itself is individual and is formed independently of the organizational approach. These results show the organization's management and human resource management (HR) specialists that simply declaring a "positive work environment" or ignoring the conflict is ineffective. Since employees still openly talk about problems and this process (in the case of high intensity) drains their psycho-emotional resources, the main task of management should not be to artificially suppress the conflict, but to moderate it correctly and constructively. The organization should implement effective conflict management mechanisms so that the confrontation turns into a joint problem-solving format, which will reduce the level of stress and provide a healthy, stable psycho-emotional environment. In order for the organization to be able to do all of the above, it must have a predetermined action strategy and have managers with the appropriate skills and qualifications who will be able to implement it in practice. However, despite the fact that public organizations are largely bureaucratic systems, employees must be informed about the approaches and methodologies that the organization uses to manage conflict, while also having confidence that their manager can make a real contribution to conflict resolution. It is important to increase vertical communication. Since most respondents did not possess such important information as whether the organization has a conflict management strategy or not, or whether managers undergo training, knowledge of which will help employees build trust, while their involvement will contribute to the development of more employee-oriented strategies and boost their motivation. Moreover, increasing communication between various state bodies, which is one of the challenges in terms of developing common approaches to human resources management, will facilitate the timely implementation of changes in this direction, since, as mentioned above, public institutions in Georgia operate under one law and strategic decisions are made jointly. Enhancing employee involvement in strategic planning and organizational processes in general contributes to increased motivation and productivity. In addition, it improves communication. Employees better understand the ongoing processes, which helps to avoid conflicts that arise due to different views and various uncertainties. Of course, the above-mentioned approaches require an appropriate leadership style in public organizations. Within which responsibilities and resources will be properly distributed. Otherwise, this may become a cause of conflict, especially considering that, based on the studies discussed, there are already problems in defining roles in the Georgian public sector.

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