

Integration of educational strategies and their impact on conflict resolution between company employees

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Abstract: This article addresses the pressing issue of training and mediation for conflict resolution among employees within a corporate setting. Employing a methodology that includes literature analysis, comparative studies, and surveys, we explore various strategies and their effectiveness in mitigating workplace conflicts. Through a comprehensive comparison with metrics and conclusions from other scholarly works, we provide a nuanced understanding of the current landscape of conflict resolution practices. As a result of our research, we implemented a tailored training program focused on conflict resolution for employees within a mobile company, alongside the development of a competency framework designed to enhance conflict resolution skills. This framework comprises five integral components: emotional, operational, motivational, behavioral, and regulatory. Our findings suggest that training in each of these competencies is essential for fostering a healthy workplace environment and must be integrated into organizational practices. The importance of this initiative cannot be overstated; effective conflict resolution skills are not only vital for individual employee wellbeing but also crucial for the overall efficiency and productivity of the organization. By investing in these competencies, companies can reduce turnover, enhance team cohesion, and create a more positive and collaborative workplace culture.

Keywords: communication; organizational culture; intern; conflict

1. Introduction

Improving conflict management competency of interns is crucial for creating a productive and harmonious work environment. In our study, we define “interns” as new employees of the company who are undergoing introductory training and are just beginning their professional roles within the organization. This perspective on interns differs from the common understanding in contexts such as the United States, where interns are often university students gaining temporary work experience (Rogers et al., 2021). Some managers and decision-makers in companies argue that interns can acquire these skills through practical experience or by following clear rules of subordination, making it unnecessary to personally solve this issue. However, researchers believe, and we agree, that different types of organizational culture and development of modern communication technologies significantly influence the occurrence of conflicts, elevating the problem to a new level of importance (Fiorino et al., 2022). Hierarchical structures, horizontal relationships, and management styles collectively play a crucial role in shaping nature and frequency of conflicts. At the beginning of the 21st century, when digital technologies and media services were not as advanced as in the 2020s, information about conflicts in large companies (which attract public interest) could remain private or spread less rapidly than today

(Eskerhanova, 2023; Kirillova et al., 2023; Trubitsyna et al., 2024). However, nowadays, even in such complex hierarchical structures with strict procedures governing employee interactions, situations arise that lead to serious conflicts, literally questioning the organization's ability to function under the circumstances (Riczu et al., 2023).

Given the complexity and multifaceted nature of the issue, our research focuses on the need to develop in their employee's communication competencies, which could be enhanced through structured communication training within the organization (Cherkesova et al., 2023; Tretyakova et al., 2024). Hierarchies can hinder open communication, leading to misunderstandings and unresolved grievances. Research shows that communication breakdowns are a primary source of conflicts in vertically structured organizations (Belous et al., 2024). Therefore, scientific literature emphasizes the significant benefits of conflict management training, demonstrating that logically structured conflict management training is important for new employees (Aggrawal and Magana, 2024).

By training new employees in conflict management, organizational leaders can be more confident that emerging conflicts can be resolved from the outset, rather than dealing with prolonged disputes and taking administrative measures, which can reduce the company's efficiency (Munduate et al., 2022). Enhancing skills in constructive dispute resolution reduces stress and creates a healthier work environment (Nurhayati et al., 2024). Training in communication skills for conflict management promotes a positive perception of corporate culture (Koswara et al., 2023), reduces staff turnover (Sharma et al., 2023), fosters long-term employee loyalty (Sinitsyna et al., 2024), and improves teamwork and internal cohesion within the organization (Julianswah and Bintarawan, 2023).

New employees often spend time adapting to the culture and norms of their new organization (Zhou and Zheng, 2022). Conflict management training can accelerate this adaptation process by providing clear guidelines on acceptable behavior and conflict resolution strategies. Effective adaptation processes help new employees smoothly integrate and efficiently perform their functional duties (Bagratuni et al., 2023). This approach is costly in terms of both finances and human resources dedicated to working with new employees. However, in the long run, it reduces the likelihood of legal disputes and situations that negatively impact on the organization's reputation (Kirillova et al., 2021). In modern conditions, an organization's reputation can be easily affected by publishing videos or audio recordings in open sources, which can instantly spread across the Internet.

All this underscores the need for managers to actively address and resolve conflicts within their teams. Effective conflict resolution requires managers to acquire specific skills and develop specialized techniques, which can then be taught to mediator specialists within the organization. According to Smolyaninova et al. (2020), conflict management skills should be part of early career training (for example, during initial company onboarding), allowing employees to cultivate these competencies from the start of their professional journey (Malika et al., 2022; Tretyakova et al., 2024). Our study focuses on developing these conflict resolution competencies among interns, enabling them to engage constructively with conflicts under managerial guidance and within a structured support framework.

The study of conflict resolution competency is one of the current directions in psychological science and conflictology. An ideal young specialist should be proficient in active listening, clearly articulating thoughts, writing effectively, using non-verbal communication skills, avoiding the acute phase of conflicts, being empathetic, and not getting flustered during public speaking. These skills contribute positively to their organization. This ideal requires detailed analysis to identify and systematize all important skills into specific components that describe the personality profile of a young specialist (James and Serandevi, 2024).

Research shows that it is necessary to develop skills that we classify under the emotional and volitional component, particularly effective communication skills. This leads to improved collaboration and successful project outcomes (Chen et al., 2019). When team members communicate effectively, they are more likely to have a shared understanding of tasks and goals, reducing misunderstandings and errors, and allowing them to resolve issues before they escalate into conflicts. Therefore, developing empathy helps better understand the perspectives and emotions of other employees, facilitating peaceful conflict resolution (Goyushova and Kapustina, 2022; Shurygin et al., 2024; Shkëmbi and Treska, 2024).

The component tentatively named “Motivational and Value”. Conflicts in large organizations often arise due to fundamental differences in personalities, values, and relationships between employees. Young employees need to understand the organization’s values and their role and importance within the organization. When employees are unclear about their job responsibilities, it can lead to conflicts. Role ambiguity is a significant predictor of workplace conflicts. Conflicts can also arise when employees face incompatible demands, leading to stress, decreased job satisfaction, and loss of motivation.

Developing the behavioral component enhances communication skills essential for building professional relationships, crucial for career growth. This component also includes leadership development (Dinesh and Bijay, 2024). Young specialists with strong communication skills are often seen as potential leaders, as they can articulate a vision, actively participate in new processes, and inspire others. On the other hand, active listening is inherent to young specialists, involving complete concentration, understanding, responding, and remembering what the other person says. This skill helps avoid conflicts by understanding colleagues’ viewpoints and issues, facilitating discussions between conflicting parties to reach a mutually acceptable solution.

Developing the operational component helps identify the root cause of conflicts. Adhering to organizational behavior rules and subordination helps young specialists maintain neutrality and develop leadership skills to achieve compromises in conflict situations (Akhmetshin et al., 2023).

The regulatory component contributes to effective information management, enhancing public speaking and presentation preparation skills. In today’s world, the ability to effectively communicate information to an audience is essential for presenting ideas, conducting meetings, and influencing other employees, important for both preventing conflicts and enhancing the employee’s authority and career development (Mishra and Biswal, 2024).

Based on these studies, we developed a structure for conflict resolution competency, which we decided to use as the basis for our research. **Table 1** presents

the five key components of conflict resolution competency—operational, emotional and volitional, motivational and value, behavioral, and regulatory—each encompassing specific competencies essential for managing workplace conflicts. For example, within the operational component, “legal and regulatory” knowledge ensures interns understand organizational policies and compliance standards, while “cognitive” skills equip them with the analytical abilities necessary to apply these frameworks effectively in real situations. These competencies provide a foundational structure for developing a holistic conflict resolution skill set in interns.

Table 1. Components of conflict resolution competency.

Component	Competency	Description
Operational	Legal and Regulatory; Cognitive	Combines knowledge of legal frameworks with cognitive skills to understand and apply conflict resolution standards in a structured manner
Emotional and volitional	Psychological and Communicative	Develop psychological resilience and effective communication skills to manage interpersonal conflicts constructively
Motivational and value	Diagnostic and Prognostic; Educational	Enhances the ability to assess conflict situations (diagnostic and prognostic skills) and instill values through educational competencies aligned with organizational culture
Behavioral	Organizational; Peacekeeping	Builds practical conflict resolution behaviors for sustaining positive professional relationships and effective peacekeeping in workplace interactions
Regulatory	Projective and analytical; Regulatory	Encourages reflective skills (projective and analytical) along with regulatory awareness to evaluate and adapt conflict management strategies

Since the conflict resolution competency of interns at the company does not have a generally accepted definition in scientific literature, we will focus on five proposed components. Diagnosing each component will allow us to form a general idea of the conflict resolution competency of the interns and select exercises and practices that contribute to the development of each component separately.

From our perspective, mediation technologies are used as a tool to enhance conflict resolution competency. Mediation can be successfully used to manage workplace conflicts by reducing the level of anxiety in unfamiliar situations.

Turning to the analysis of scientific literature, we find different approaches (Fierke et al., 2023) to the definition of the concept of “conflict competence”. We have generalized them in the list below:

- 1) An integral characteristic of the subjective side of professional work, the quality of a person as a subject of labor, a combination of mental properties, a mental state that allows acting independently and responsibly, the ability to perform certain labor functions in situations of interpersonal conflict with subjects of professional activity;
- 2) The level of awareness of the range of possible strategies for behavior in a conflict and the ability to implement these strategies in a specific life or work situation;
- 3) An integrative personality trait, characterizing his conflictological readiness resolve workplace conflicts, ensuring the effective implementation of the corresponding basic conflictological competencies in real job performance. Following Sgonnikova by conflictological competence, it means the integrative quality of a person, including motivational-value, cognitive, emotional-volitional, reflexive and organizational-activity components, reflecting the desire to acquire conflictological knowledge, awareness of professional responsibility for

decisions and the use of skills necessary for the constructive resolution of workplace conflicts in appropriate situations.

So, the research question was the following: How effective is a structured training program in enhancing conflict resolution competency across various dimensions for interns within a corporate environment?

H: Interns who was involved in the training program of conflict resolution will demonstrate significantly higher improvements in key areas of competences compared to those who didn't participate in the training.

2. Methodology

2.1. Design of research

Considering the purpose of the research, authors used a mixed method approach to comprehensively investigate and develop features of conflict resolution competency of interns. The study was conducted in 2023 on the basis of the mobile operator company of Kazakhstan "A".

The main research method was an experiment, supplemented by psychodiagnostics tools to assess different components of conflict resolution competency.

2.2. Participants of the experiment

The purpose of the research is a theoretical and empirical study of conflict resolution competency of interns and particularities of its development. To achieve this purpose, a complex psychological experiment was carried out with 130 interns from company "A". Interns were selected based on the criterion that they had been working for less than three months, ensuring that participants were new employees in the early stages of their career.

To determine an appropriate sample size, a power analysis was conducted to estimate the number of participants required to detect significant changes in conflict resolution competency levels between the experimental and control groups. The power analysis indicates that, with an effect size of 0.5 (moderate), an alpha level of 0.05, and a desired power of 0.8, the required sample size per group would be approximately 64 participants. Therefore, a total sample size total of 128 participants is appropriate to achieve sufficient results.

2.3. Research procedure

The first step involved conducting comprehensive diagnostics for both the experimental and control groups to establish a baseline for their conflict resolution competencies. This assessment aimed to identify the current levels of competency across five key components. The study was carried out on the basis of psychodiagnostics tools presented in **Table 2**. All interns in the study completed the full versions of each questionnaire.

Table 2. Components of conflict resolution competency.

Components of conflict resolution competency	Psychodiagnostic tools
Operational	“Conflictological competence”, The questionnaire includes 60 questions to assess conflict management competence (Monseni et al., 2022).
Emotional and volitional	Test to determine the level of stress resistance of the personality (Usatov’s test) includes 38 questions. The methodology allows to determine the level of stress resistance of an individual, considers the resources (factors) of stress resistance, which ensure the ability to effectively cope with stress (Poltorak et al., 2019).
Motivational and value	Measurement of achievement motivation. This test- questionnaire includes 30 questions. Modification of Mehrabian’s test-questionnaire for measuring achievement motivation, proposed by Magomed- Eminov (Ortiz-Ramirez, 2021). The test questionnaire for measuring achievement motivation is designed to diagnose two generalized stable personality motives, the motivation for striving for success and the motive for avoiding failure. At the same time, it is assessed which of these two motives is more dominant in each intern’s approach to conflict situations.
Behavioral	Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, TKI (Murisa et al., 2024). Psychodiagnostic techniques. The questionnaire includes 30 questions to identify typical ways employees respond to conflict situations.
Reflexive	Test questionnaire of subjective control based on Rotter’s Internal-External Locus of Control Scale. This questionnaire includes 44 questions. The questionnaire is the most common method for determining the internality/externality of a person. The questionnaire is based on Rotter’s locus of control concept (Nießen et al., 2022).

Comprehensive diagnostics of the five main components of conflict resolution competency of interns, in our opinion, will allow not only to determine its initial level, but also to identify the weaknesses of the program participants that need correction. Due to the diagnostics, we can adjust the program of training sessions, taking into account the individual characteristics of participants in the program.

In the second stage of the experiment, the interns were divided into two groups of 64 (control) and 64 (experiment) to ensure the unbiased distribution of participants across both groups. The program participants passed the selection based on the multidimensional personality questionnaire “Adaptability”, which allowed us to filter out some applicants with low adaptability and lack of motivation to participate in the program.

For 5 months the experimental group took part in the training program focused on enhancing conflict resolution competencies through mediation techniques, which included role-playing scenarios, group discussions, and simulations of conflict situations, allowing them to practice mediation techniques and improve their conflict resolution skills. The training specifically emphasized the use of mediation as a tool to resolve disputes, reduce anxiety, and enhance communication. The program aimed to develop five key components of conflict resolution competency: understanding the fundamentals of conflict resolution and relevant legal frameworks (operational), building emotional intelligence and stress resistance (emotional and volitional), increasing motivation for successful conflict resolution and understanding value systems (motivational and value), practicing effective conflict resolution behaviors and communication strategies (behavioral), and developing self-reflection skills and fostering an internal locus of control (reflexive).

The control group continued their usual internship activities without any additional training or interventions related to conflict resolution.

After the completion of the five-month training program, on the third stage of the experiment, both groups underwent a follow-up assessment using the same

psychodiagnostic tools as in the initial diagnostics. The follow-up assessment aimed to measure any changes in conflict resolution competencies and evaluate the effectiveness of the training program for the experimental group.

2.4. Data analysis

The results from the initial and follow-up assessments were analyzed and compared using the Mann-Whitney test, which is considered to be effective in sociological studies (Zhang et al., 2020), to determine significant differences and the impact of the training program on the conflict resolution competencies of the interns:

$$U_1 = n_1 \times n_2 + \frac{n_1 \times (n_1 + 1)}{2} - R^1$$

The analysis aimed to confirm the effectiveness of the training program in enhancing the conflict resolution competencies of the interns in the experimental group compared to the control group

3. Results and discussion

The analysis of diagnostic results for each criterion allowed us to draw a general conclusion about the level of conflict resolution competency among the program participants. The indicators “positive” were taken as participants who scored above average or high. The indicators “negative” represented participants who scored below average or low. The “intermediate” indicators accounted for those participants with average scores on the respective scales.

For each component, the maximum possible competency level across 10 participants was considered 100%. Based on this framework, the initial diagnostics revealed the following distribution (**Figure 1**).

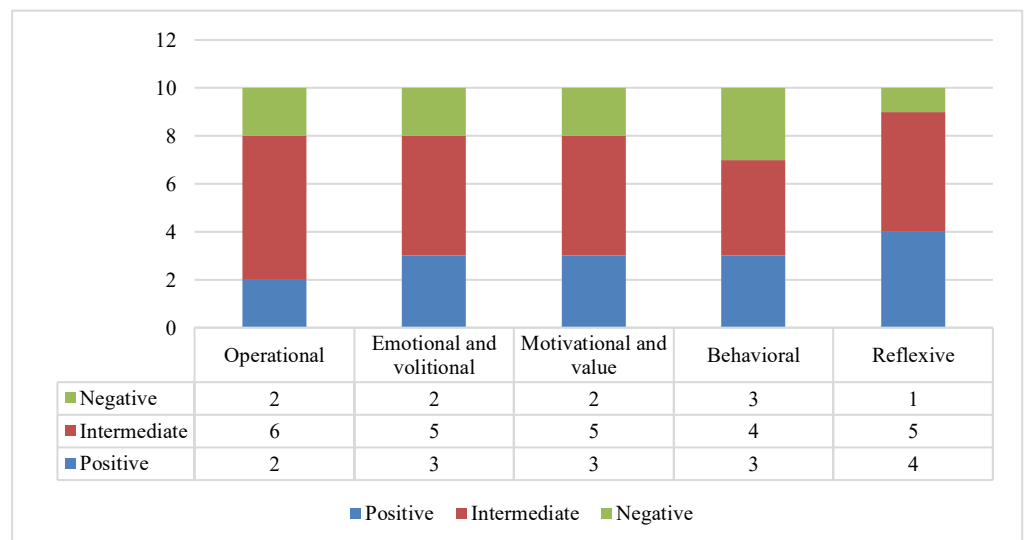


Figure 1. The levels of the conflict resolution competency of company interns.

Given these distributions, the overall competency levels were characterized by 15 positive (30%), 25 intermediate (50%), and 10 (20%) negative scores across all components. This indicates that most participants were around the average

competency level, with a notable presence of both strengths and areas needing improvement.

Thus, the goal of the training was to increase conflict resolution competency by reducing intermediate and negative values. The implementation of this task was approached by strengthening the theoretical and practical base, enhancing stress resistance, and fostering readiness to search for solutions that partially or fully satisfy the interests of all parties involved in a conflict. In our opinion, improvements in these areas will contribute to increased motivation for success and, consequently, a rise in the number of company interns with a high internal locus of control, which will enhance the overall conflict resolution competency of the interns participating in our experimental training.

Conflict resolution competency was measured by psychodiagnostic tools, selected in accordance with five components of its structure: operational, emotional and volitional, motivational and value, behavioral and reflexive, as can be seen in studies of Tholen (2024). Comprehensive diagnostics allowed for the examination of each component individually, identifying vulnerabilities in the interns' conflict resolution competency. The general assessment revealed that the competency level was not high enough, indicating areas for improvement.

At the stage of training program, interns independently handled arising workplace conflicts and engaged in self-reflection, keeping track of their conflict resolution successes and failures while also monitoring their well-being and mood. An interdependence was identified between success in resolving conflicts and the overall well-being of the interns. High levels of motivation and independence in managing conflicts were noted (Rosler et al., 2022).

Following the completion of the five-month training program, the results show a significant increase in the number of participants who scored positively, particularly in the operational and emotional-volitional components. Below is the **Figure 2** representing the final screening results.

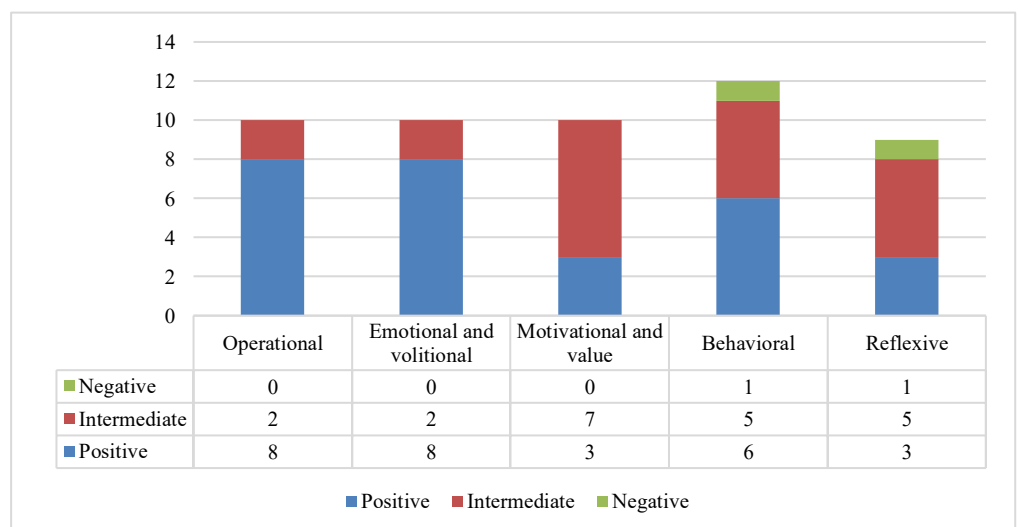


Figure 2. Final screening results of conflict resolution competency levels.

Control diagnostics of the behavioral component of conflictological competence, including organizational and peacekeeping competence, indicating an effective

response to conflict situations, showed that the number of positive values doubled (from 30 to 60%). The number of average values decreased by 40%. Thus, the number of subjects with low values of the behavioral component increased by 10%. Control diagnostics of the reflexive component of conflictological competence, including projective-analytical and regulatory competence, showed that the number of positive values increased by 30%. Accordingly, the number of low values of the reflective component decreased by 30%. Similar values significance has been investigated in the study of Tholen et al. (2024).

As can be seen from the grouping of data across the five psychodiagnostic methods, we observed varying levels of improvement across the different components of conflict resolution competency. In the operational component, 20% of participants achieved a positive level of competency, 60% remained at an intermediate level, and 20% were at a negative level. For the emotional and volitional component, 30% of participants reached a positive level, while 50% were at an intermediate level, and 20% remained at a negative level. The motivational and value component showed similar results, with 30% of participants at a positive level, 50% at an intermediate level, and 20% at a negative level. In the behavioral component, 30% of participants achieved positive results, 40% were at an intermediate level, and 30% were at a negative level. Lastly, the reflexive component had the highest percentage of positive results, with 40% of participants reaching a positive level, 50% remaining at an intermediate level, and 10% at a negative level. The research papers we have cited above have analyzed only different components of conflict management competence—we in our turn concentrated on the overall comparison of different strategies and components.

Control diagnostics of the emotional-volitional component of conflictological competence, including psychological, pedagogical, and communicative competence, testifying to the stress resistance of the personality of the subjects, showed that the number of positive values increased from 10 to 80%. The number of average values decreased by 40%. The number of subjects with low values of the emotional-volitional component also was not diagnosed.

Our study supports the notion that developing emotional and volitional skills is crucial. We found that 80% of participants in our study showed marked improvements in their ability to manage stress and regulate emotions, which are critical factors in effective conflict resolution. This is consistent with Ye and Don's (2024) and Merlin and Prakabar's (2024) emphasis on emotional regulation as a predictor of successful conflict management outcomes. The researchers have shown that the ability to negotiate respectively has contributed to the better interaction of students' educational institutions located in Zhejiang Province.

Control diagnostics of the motivational-value component of conflictological competence, including diagnostic-prognostic and educational competence, testifying to the stable motivation of the personality of the subjects, showed that the number of positive values increased by 30%. Accordingly, the number of low values of the motivational-value component decreased by 30%.

Although the positive values increased, the negative values did not disappear entirely but were reduced to varying degrees across the different components. Overall, 80% of the program participants showed some improvement in their conflict resolution competency, while 20% exhibited only minor or no changes. These results suggest

that individual personality traits of the interns may significantly influence their ability to develop these competencies through training, highlighting the importance of a tailored and proactive approach in conflict resolution training programs. This idea has been supported in the study of Harlanova et al. (2020) who has shown that reactive approach to conflicts shows little efficiency in comparison with solving conflicts in advance and understanding the source of the conflict.

Overall, the results of this study demonstrate a significant improvement in conflict resolution competency among the interns following the implementation of a structured training program. Proactive educational programmes aimed at avoiding and coping with conflicts within the group of colleagues has shown its effectiveness. Our suggested division of solid conflict management competency into smaller competencies as well in our point of view contributed to more elaborated interpersonal conflicts solving (Harlanova et al., 2020; Joseph and Augustine, 2024). This study's findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the importance of targeted training in enhancing key professional skills within organizational settings.

We agree with the study of Vershinin and Zhukova (2024) who have shown that through developing communication skills within the group of students one may affect the rate of aggressiveness during communication. The authors think that this eventually may lead to a more effective educational process and more achievements. The observed increase in conflict resolution competency aligns with the findings of Smolyaninova et al. (2020) and Ogharen et al. (2022) who emphasized the importance mediation procedures in improving interpersonal skills among colleagues. Though the researchers assessed the student's community, their results may be applied to our investigation. They have shown that conflictology specialists may teach the members of professional community what will affect the atmosphere within it and lead to better results during studying process.

In comparison with the study of Vapivala (2024) our study similarly shows that participants who underwent the training program exhibited enhanced competency, particularly in operational and emotional-volitional components. This improvement was not only statistically significant but also practically relevant, with a majority of participants transitioning from intermediate to positive competency levels. Overall, statistically significant improvements were observed in the components of conflict resolution competency within the group of participants. Further analysis of the control stage of the experimental study is warranted.

As can be seen in Ahmad et al. (2023), team conflict is one of the most influential stress igniters at work. Above we have discussed how important behavioral component in conflict management competence is. This conclusion resembles those from the study of Ahmad et al. (2023) who claim that leadership competence has positive effect on the productivity.

The conflictological competence contains informational (knowledge of the theory and practice of conflict), axiological (a set of professionally important qualities and properties in the leading spheres of the personality's individuality), and operational (conflictological skills, ethical behavior, the ability to assess the correctness of their actions) components (Rosler et al., 2022). Thus, conflictological competence is formed not only from knowledge, skills, and abilities but also from personal qualities. The presence of conflictological competence is an important

component of the personality of an employee as a subject of conflict both during work and future professional activities.

The components which could contribute to better conflict management within any community are not only those which we have discussed above. To better understand the nature of conflict one should mind not only conflicts on the basis of poor communication but also on the basis of ethnic aspects (Pllana, 2021; Petrovskaya, 2023) or religious beliefs (Zein et al., 2022). Ethnic disagreements may affect the emotional component of conflict management competence. Not only ethnic aspect but the aspect of mental disorders and disability needs consideration in the context of conflict management. (Togaibayeva et al., 2023) To add more, modern digital technologies as well can lead to fewer conflict cases as well as to better understanding the work demands one has. (Al-Soufi and Mohammed, 2023; Joseph and Ravikumar, 2024; Pang, 2024; Rochana et al., 2024). These are prospects for further investigations which we could provide using the same methods and group of interviewees.

The findings of this study have important implications for organizational training programs. The significant gains in conflict resolution competency observed among the participants underscore the value of integrating structured conflict management training into employee development initiatives. Organizations should consider adopting similar training programs, with an emphasis on operational, emotional, and reflexive components, to cultivate a more harmonious and productive workplace environment.

The study has certain limitations, which concern, firstly, the limited research time (5 months). Secondly, the purposive sampling technique used in this study may introduce selection bias, as participants were chosen based on specific criteria (interns with less than three months of employment at the company). This focus on newly hired interns, while relevant to the study's goals, could limit the generalizability of the findings. Since these participants were selected from a single company and specific timeframe, the results may not fully represent the broader population of interns in other organizations or those with different levels of initial training and workplace exposure.

4. Conclusions

Authors can conclude that an integrated approach in increasing conflict resolution competency proved to be effective, since the development of one component contributed to the improvement of performance in another component. We assume that expanding the range of conflictological knowledge increased interns' self-confidence, resistance to stress and motivation to achieve success. This contributed to the preference for the constructive strategies of behavior in conflict situations among the interns. Also, the positive experience of managing conflict situations favorably affected the general well-being and the level of satisfaction with the performance results. If any of the components were not well developed, then the average or negative value can be traced according to other criteria.

The experimental results indicate that the proposed program can be used in mediation technologies of interns who already have experience in an organization.

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