

# Organizational Conflict Management Challenges

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*DOI: 10.2478/ejme-2023-0016*

## Abstract

There is no organization without conflict situations. It is known that 80% of conflict situations occur independently of human will. Its causes are people's individual characteristics, as well as structure of the organization, conditioned by the culture established in the organization. How correctly organizational management analyzes the causes of conflicts, managing stress, diagnostic of the conflict and its management are reflected on the psychological climate of the organization. The psychological climate is directly related to the labor productivity of each member of the organization and the whole organization itself. On the background of strenuous labor relations, the potential of the organization members is spent on the settlement of the conflict environment and it takes a large part of their time budget. Proper use of time resources affects labor productivity. The Human Resources Management Laboratory which is functioning at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University has already conducted a research in this regard. Due to the actuality of the issue, the laboratory aimed to conduct a further research about conflict situations in the organization. The research was focused on the Faculty of Economics and Business of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. 458 respondents were interviewed including Bachelor's and Master's Degree Students, Professors and Administration Representatives. The questionnaire included 36 questions and 133 options of response. As a result of the research, frequency of conflict situations in the organization was established, the active link of conflict situations. The reasons for the involvement of the collective team members into the conflict have been identified. The attitude of respondents of different categories was interesting in terms of resolving conflict situations. Conflict situations combined with the rest of the stages include the analysis of the causes. Different categories of respondents differently understand the importance of analyzing the causes of conflicts. The study finally made many interesting problems clear. The results obtained were processed by the SPSS program. We have formulated the hypothesis, studied the influence of the status and the gender of a respondent (bachelor, master, professor, and representative of the administration) on up to 15 variables. Trends were revealed through the tables developed on

dispersion analysis. The conclusions made on the basis of the analysis of the survey results gave us the opportunity to make recommendations for the recovering and systemic improvement of the established values in the organization. The planned events will help the collective to undergo 3 stages of self-organization, meet the needs of the members, which will improve the psychological situation in the collective. It will facilitate each member's involvement in order to protect the organization's prestige and traditions. It is interesting to note that the majority of respondents are loyal to the university, which confirms the true fact that Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University is number one university in the country as well as in the region, is being developed and is constantly maintaining the championship and is trying to improve the conditions of the collective members.

**Keywords:** Conflict Management, University, Human Resources Management, Management of Higher Education Institutions

## Introduction

There is no organization without conflict situations. It is known that 80% of conflict situations occur independently of human will. Its causes are people's individual characteristics, as well as structure of the organization, conditioned by the culture established in the organization. How correctly organizational management analyzes the causes of conflicts, managing stress, diagnostic of the conflict and its management are reflected on the psychological climate of the organization. The psychological climate is directly related to the labor productivity of each member of the organization and the whole organization itself. Conflicts often lead to reduction of productivity and outflow of the best staff. (Engert, Gandhi, Schaninger, & So, 2010) On the background of strenuous labor relations, the potential of the organization members is spent on the settlement of the conflict environment and it takes a large part of their time budget. Proper use of time resources affects labor productivity. The Human Resources Management Laboratory which is functioning at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University has already conducted a research in this regard. Studies were related to time management, professors' assessment criteria, and articles were published as well. (Kharadze N. Gulua E., 2016); (Kharadze, Natalia; Gulua, Ekaterine; Duglaze, Davit, 2017); (Gulua, Ekaterine; Kharadze, Natalia, 2017); (Kharadze & Gulua, 2017).

Due to the actuality of the issue, the laboratory aimed to conduct a further research about conflict situations in the organization. The research was focused on the Faculty of Economics and Business of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. 458 respondents were interviewed including Bachelor's and Master's Degree Students, Professors and Administration Representatives. The questionnaire included 36 questions and 133 options of response.

As a result of the research, frequency of conflict situations in the organization was established, the active link of conflict situations. The reasons for the involvement of the collective team members into the conflict have been identified. The attitude of respondents of different categories was interesting in terms of resolving conflict situations. Conflict situations combined with the rest of the stages include the analysis of the causes. Different categories of respondents differently understand the importance of analyzing the causes of conflicts. The study finally made many interesting problems clear. The results obtained were processed by the SPSS program. We have formulated the hypothesis, studied the influence of the status and the gender of a respondent (bachelor, master, professor, and representative of the administration) on up to 15 variables. Trends were revealed through the tables developed on dispersion analysis. The conclusions made on the basis of the analysis of the survey results gave us the opportunity to make recommendations for the recovering and systemic improvement of the established values in the organization. The planned events will help the collective to undergo 3 stages of self-organization (Armstrong, 2000), meet the needs of the members, which will improve the psychological situation in the collective. It will facilitate each member's involvement in order to protect the organization's prestige and traditions. It is interesting to note that the majority of respondents are loyal to the university, which confirms the true fact that Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University is number one university in the country as well as in the region, is being developed and is constantly maintaining the championship and is trying to improve the conditions of the collective members.

Effective work and psychological climate of the organization are often influenced by the current conflict analysis and management. There is no organization without conflict situations. A man is in conflict when he cannot see possibilities of changing the situation that is unacceptable to him. Although some forms of conflict are not only permissible but also desirable (Ebong, November 16, 2017) I do not support such an opinion and based on the practice we believe that in spite of the positive results of the conflict, it causes enormous energy expenditure and health disorder, I think the timely management of conflictogene is expedient in order not to be raised it in a conflict. The study showed that about 10% of respondents are often and always involved in conflict situations.

The largest number of conflict situations was reported with the administration, it constitutes 41% of respondents and the lowest 10% - with the staff.

Any conflict situation requires management. You cannot ignore the regularity of escalating conflicts. People try to respond to the conflictogenes that were addressed towards them with a stronger conflictogene. This regularity can be explained thus: when receiving a conflictogene the victim wants to compensate for psychological failure and tries to respond to the offence with an offence, what's more it should not be weak, which causes increasing of the strength of the conflict. Unfortunately, people are so created, they painfully react to abusing and insulting and show anti-reaction. Of course, people with high morals have to be self-restrained, religion and ethical

teachings tell us this too. The law of conflict escalation is often compared to the law of mechanics, where there is a similarity and also a major difference. The first is that people have a stronger anti-action and the second is that the law of mechanics is independent of our will, but we can stop escalation of conflicts, because it depends on human will.

Conflict management begins with its prediction. In order to predict a conflict, we must know the reasons that often lead to a conflict.

These are the reasons: amount of wages, undesirable labor conditions, mismanagement of labor, irrelevance of workers' rights and duties, nonrhythmicity of labor, inconvenient working schedule, low level of discipline and others. A positive resolution of conflicts, first of all, implies eliminating the reasons that cause a conflict.

The main thing is to ask four questions: Where? What? When? How? Where is the real cause of the conflict? What should we do? When can we start acting? How should we act? Leave a conflict without attention is the same as to leave a gas stove, iron or candle in a flat where there is nobody. There may be no fire, but if it starts, one may extinguish it or not.

It is interesting to see what the study has shown, how the respondents have been involved in a conflict management or prevention. Do they have to involve a third person in solving their problem? Only 4% manage it always and often, which means there is no involvement of the supervisors in the management of conflict situations.

It is interesting to know the reason for the conflicts in which respondents have to be? If we consider that a large number of respondents have identified the conflict situation with the administration, it is no surprise that 25% of respondents name the wrong management system mostly as the reason for the conflict, followed by the character of a person (23%) and 20% - unprofessionalism. There is a serious problem with the establishment of the collective in the organization, so it is not surprising that the respondents indicate the grave nature of people. It is difficult to keep calm when the collective is experiencing a crisis, there are defects in the management process and there is not a proper motivation of the actors.

According to the survey, 80% of respondents settle most of the conflict situations by themselves, the court's involvement is rare - only 2% indicated this position, 4% settle it with the help of friends and only 7% - with the involvement of the head.

The survey found that most respondents (77.7%) believe that stating their opinions causes aggression in human beings. Naturally, such a form of communication can neither help establish psychological climate in the organization nor avoid conflicts. The conflict may not be formed, but the appeared conflictogene has a negative influence on consequences.

Almost 90% of respondents indicate that the success of the organization is influenced by the manager's role. Consequently, we should assume that they mean a supervisor also to be the reason for failure and tension in the organization.

It is known that from the 6 stages of the conflict resolution (analytical problem, prediction of conflict resolution options, determination of criteria, implementation of a conflict resolution plan, control of implementation, analysis of results) the sixth is an analysis of results. The study has shown that approximately 70% of respondents analyze the conflict situation, which can be considered as a good indicator.

Approximately 32% of respondents frequently or always receive information about current conflict situations through informal communication, which indicates an unhealthy organizational culture.

Approximately 46% of respondents are using their own channels to get the information they need. Hiding information due to different reasons often causes alarms, because hiding information makes a vacuum, this vacuum is filled with thousands of rumors that are not related to reality, there is a mistrust towards people.

Approximately 61% of respondents sometimes or almost never solve a problem with stating his/her opinion. This may be due to many reasons. One of them can be thought as a strategy to avoid a conflict. They do not consider themselves as important members of the team.

The fact that an attempt to evade conflict situations is high and also that the respondents are dissatisfied with the organization's psychological climate and the dominant organizational culture is proved by that only about 12% of respondents often or always state their positions.

Obviously, the behavior of respondents are often conditioned by the fear of losing a job or of being excluded from the collective. To the question - whether the selection criteria are acceptable and transparent or not, a positive position was indicated by 30%. Since the organization believes that selection of personnel is largely subjective, we can conclude that the passivity and involvement of respondents in the management process are caused by fear of losing jobs.

From the theory two forms of collective are known: primary and secondary collectives. In the first case, the relationship is based on emotional and friendly feelings and includes 2-5 persons, and in the second case the formation of the collective is according to functions and purposes. The survey has shown that 21% are only members of the primary collective.

The survey has revealed that 41% try to prove their truth during the conflict, 1.3% agree with the opponent's position; 16% do not contradict the opponent and remain in his/her position, 31% look for a compromise option, 5.4% do not pay attention to the conflict.

As a result of filtration, we have chosen different types of respondents to identify such factors as Q1 .... Q15, with the use of statistics we had an opportunity to analyze the connection of respondents with different status to specific variables:

We have formulated the following hypothesis:

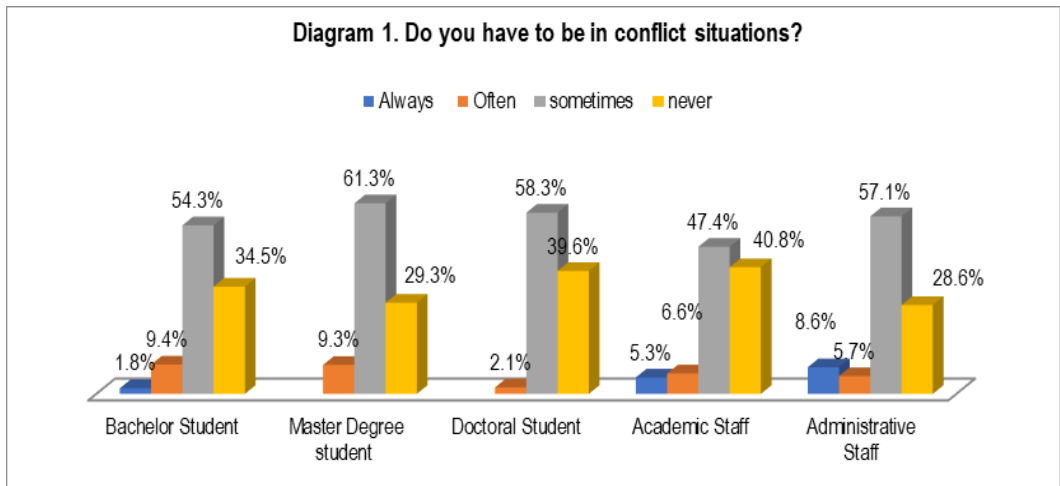
**H1: The status (Q1) - (undergraduates, master students, PhD students, academic personnel and administrative personnel) affects the variable. Q2- (conflict situations are often observed),**

**H2: The status affects the variable Q3 -** What is the cause of the conflict in which you are involved (personal character, unprofessionalism, nepotism and equalization, mismanagement and other answers)?

**H3: The status affects the variable Q6-Does your opinion often invoke aggression?**

**H4: The status affects the variable Q12.** Do you hold your own position in an official writing form?

It turned out that the rate of presence of conflict situations is much lower in students and the higher rate was observed in the administration. In particular, there are always 1,2% of bachelors in the conflict, 0,2% of master students, 0,2% of doctoral students, 5,3% of academic staff and 8,6% of administration. As we see the administration have to work in the most tense and stressful situation, which can be evaluated as the deficiency in management. See the Diagram 1.



It is interesting to find out with whom the conflict situations the respondents mostly have. See the Diagram 2. From bachelors the lowest indicator (16,2%) is observed in their category. Most of them (36,8%) are in a conflict with the administration.

Master students have the least conflict in their category and with the staff and it constitutes 4,9% and they most frequently have conflicts with the administration (65,4%).

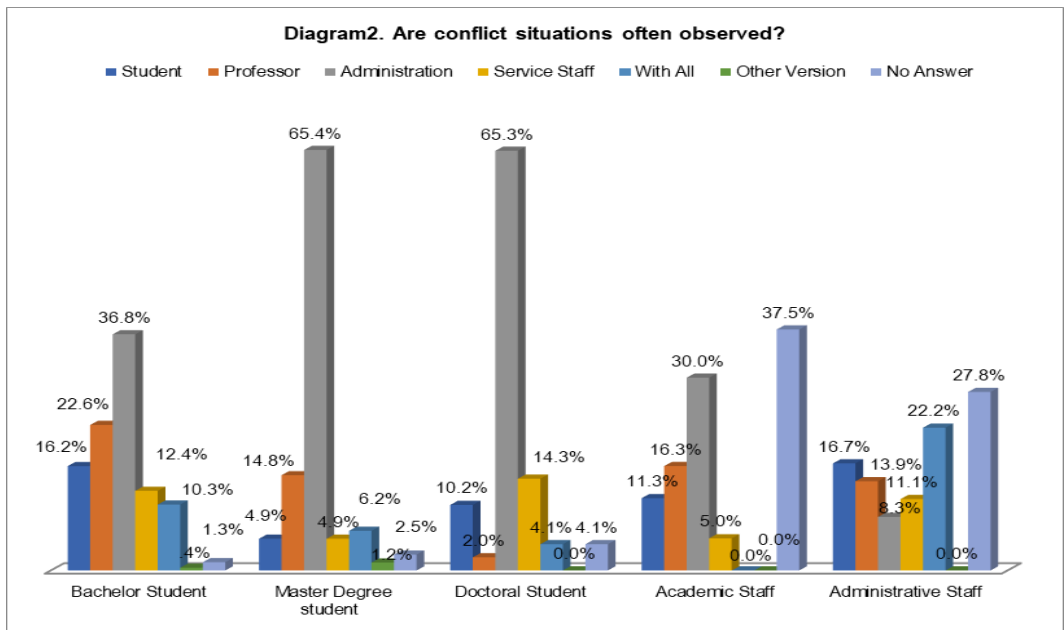
PhD students have the least (2%) conflict with academic personnel and most frequently are in conflict situations with the administration and this figure is 65,3%.

Academic personnel have the least conflict with the staff, and it constitutes 5% and most often with the administrative staff and this rate is 3%.

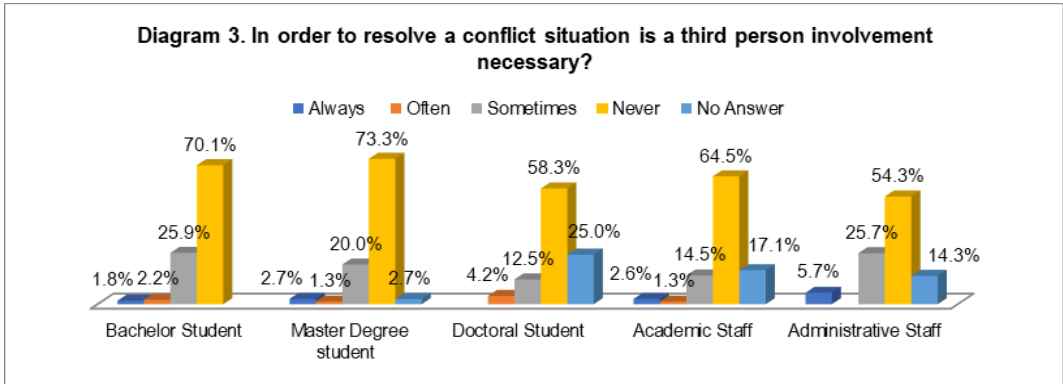
As for the administration they have the least conflict with the members of administration itself and this figure is 8,3% and most frequently they are confronted with the students and professors and these rates are 16,7% and 13,9% respectively.

It is also interesting that only academic personnel do not indicate having conflicts with everyone and 22% of administrative personnel confirm having conflicts with everyone and are on a leading position.

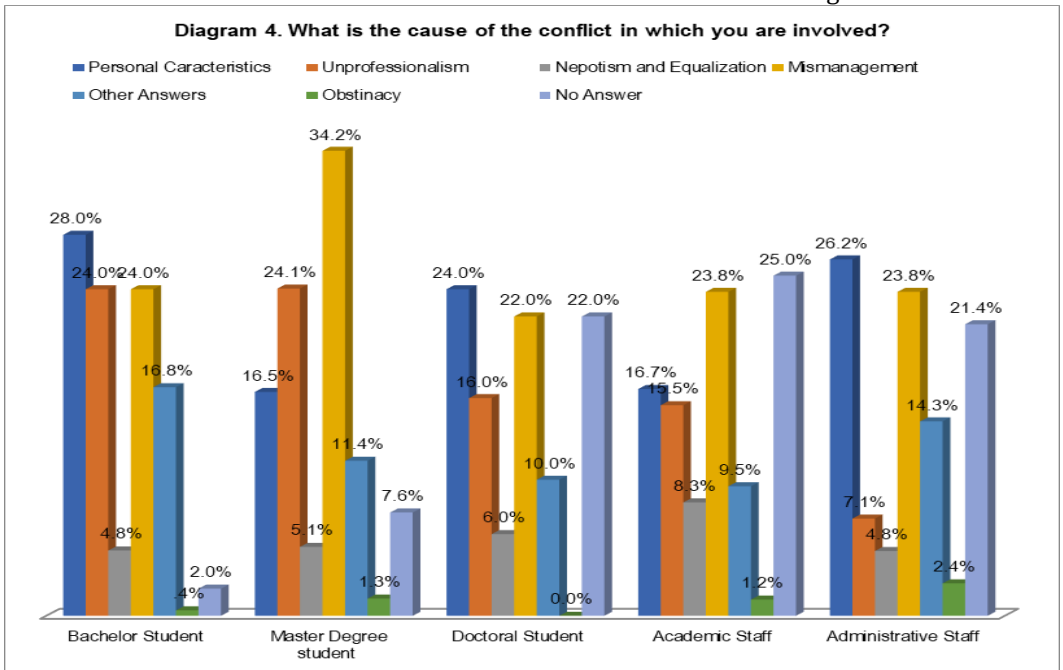
It is also noteworthy that 37% of the academic staff and 27% of administrative staff did not answer this question. See the Diagram 2.



In order to resolve a conflict situation, the third person is most often involved by the administration – 5,7% are always in a conflict while the same indicator is 1,3% in academic personnel and in doctoral students it is 0,2%. Apparently, doctoral students try as much as possible not to get into a conflict and settle it by themselves because their positions are weak, they have a thesis defense ahead and try to avoid problems. See the Diagram 3

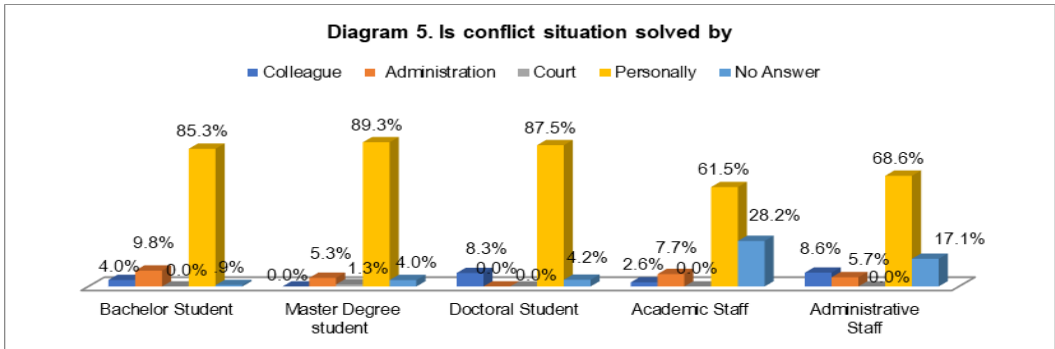


To the question “What is the reason of the conflict in which the respondents have to be?” (See the Diagram 4.) the results were interestingly distributed. Most of the bachelors indicate the personal characters (28%) and unprofessionalism and mismanagement (24%) as the reason for a conflict. As for the masters, 34.2% indicate mismanagement. Doctoral students also indicate unprofessionalism and mismanagement as the main causes of the conflict and these indicators are 16% and 22% respectively. The uprofessionalism and mismanagement were indicated by academic personnel as the reasons for a conflict and these indicators are 15.5 and 23.3% respectively. The administrative staff (26%) most frequently indicate human characteristics as the main cause. Unprofessionalism is indicated by 7,1% and mismanagement - by 23.8%. In the same question it is interesting to note that this question was not answered mostly by 22% of doctoral students, 25% of the academic staff and 21.4% of the administration. Students are the most honest here too. See the Diagram 4.

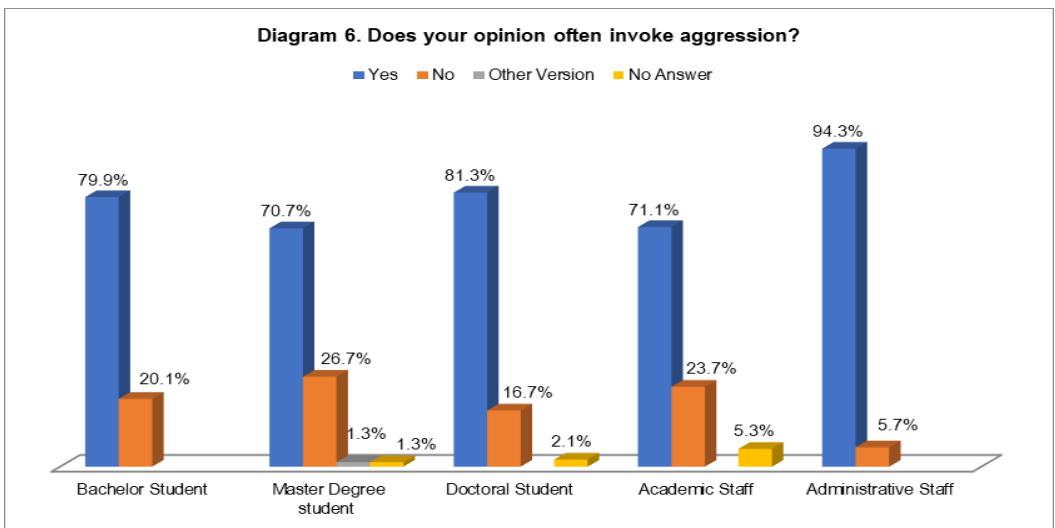




Most of the respondents manage to resolve a conflict situation by themselves. See the Diagram 5. The administrative staff most often solve problems for bachelors (9,8%), for academic personnel (7,7%), 8,6% of administrative personnel turn to a colleague to solve a problem, 5,7%- to the administration. 28.2% of the academic staff and 17.1% of the administration avoided answering this question. The degree of independence of the academic personnel seems to be much more difficult comparing to the administration representatives'. See the Diagram 5.

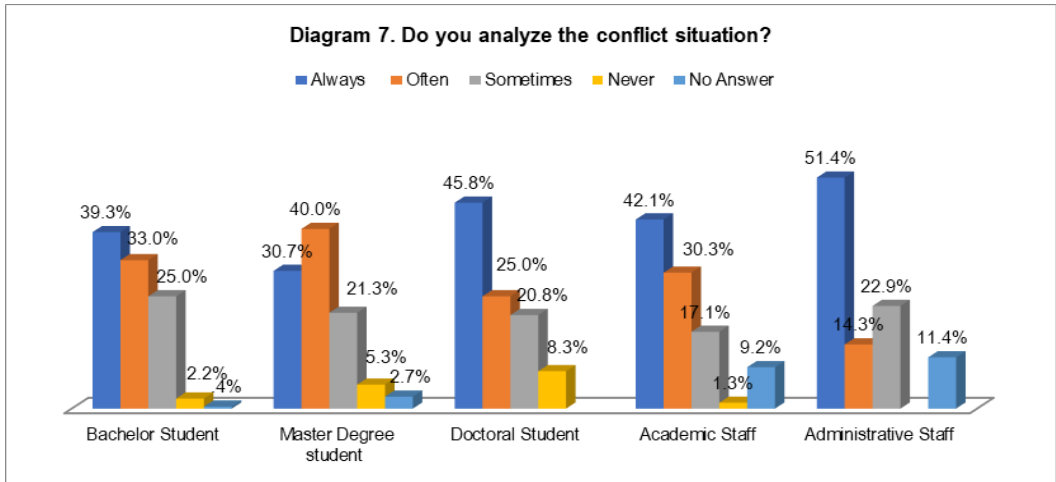


When asked whether stating their opinions causes aggression or not, 79% of bachelors answered 'yes' to this question. (see the Diagram 6). This indicator is high also in doctoral students - 81% and the highest percentage was recorded by the administration representatives - 94.3%. If we recall that the most frequently the respondents were in a conflict situation with the administration representatives, it is not surprising that exactly they indicate that stating their opinions causes aggression. All respondents answered the question. This shows the answers to those questions that they avoided answering. See the Diagram 6.

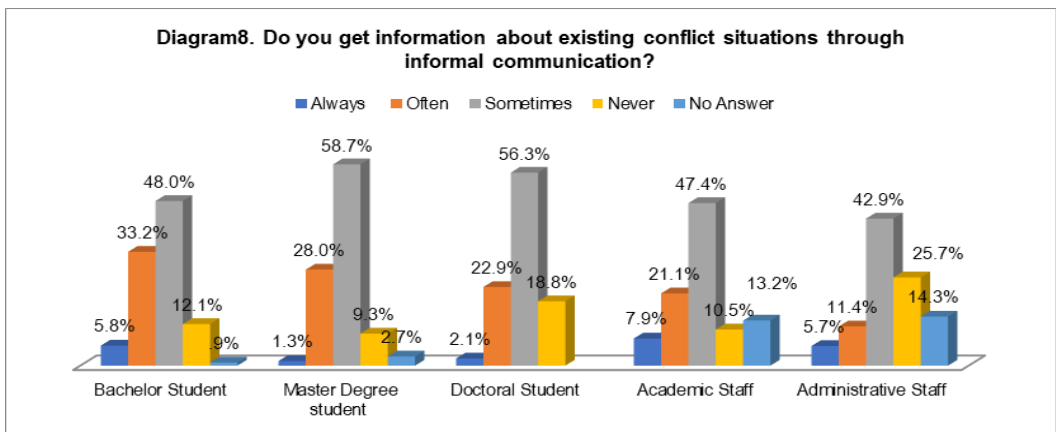


More than 50% of all categories of respondents indicated that the organization's success is influenced by the manager's style.

The analysis of conflict situations is most frequently made by the administration and 51.4% indicated such a response. However, despite the conflict situation analysis, they are still most frequently in this situation. The conflicts are least analyzed by master students - 30.7%. See the Diagram 7.

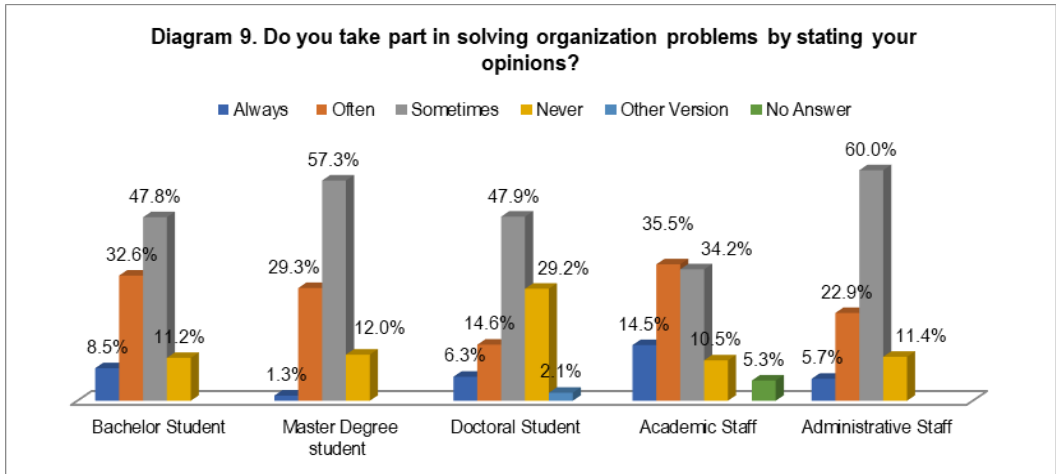


Informal communication on the existing conflict and receiving information and obtaining the desired information is most often done by the academic personnel. The answers "always" and "often" are indicated by 29% of the academic personnel, while the same indicator is 17.2% in the administration and 29.3% and 25% in the Master and Doctoral students. See the Diagram 8.

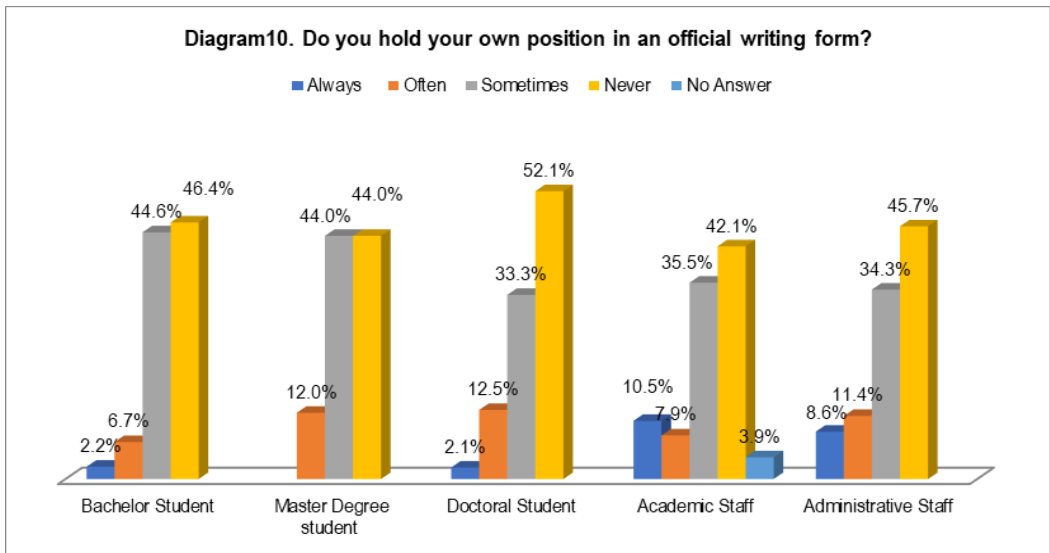


In terms of participation in the problem solving by means of stating their opinions, master students are the most passive - "always" was indicated by 1,3%, 5,7% - of administration, 6,3% of doctoral students, 8,5% of bachelors and 14,5% of the

academic staff. The existing passivity indicates not positive, but more negative signals. It would be interesting to obtain information about their passivity, but I think that the answers would not have been provided in case of such a question. See the Diagram 9.

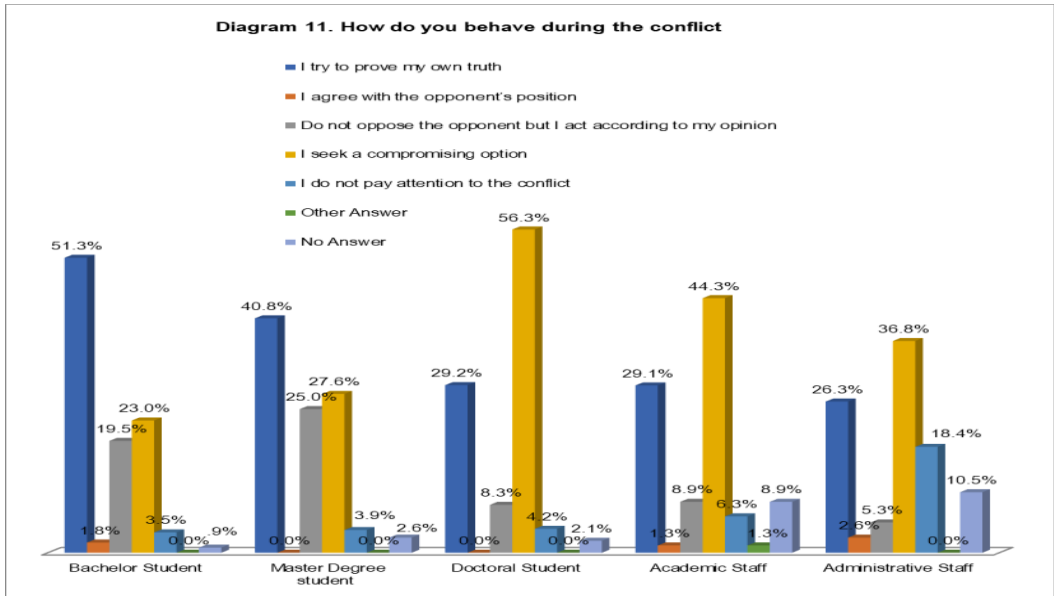


Respondents are less likely to report their position in an official form. The lowest rate was observed by the students, who answered "always", 2,2% of bachelors, 0,22% of master students, 2,1% of doctoral students, 10,5% of academic staff and 8,6% of administration. See the Diagram 10.



"How do you behave during a conflict?" – The respondents indicated the following answers: they try to prove their truth, agree with the opponent's position, do not

oppose the opponents but remain in their positions, seek a compromise option and do not pay attention to the conflict. See the Diagram 11



Bachelors most frequently try to prove their own truth and this indicator is 51%. Representatives of the administration apply this method the least frequently (26,3%). The respondents share their opponents' position the least frequently, in this case the maximum figure was observed by administrative staff and amounted to 2,6%; In respondents the priority is to find a compromise option and most of the doctoral students have to use this way.

To study the influence of the status on the variables we have used different statistical procedures, a dispersion analysis, similar (Kruskal-Wallis Test) – One-Way ANOVA, as the analysis deals with nonparametric variables and consumer tables. (Kruskal-Wallis Test)

Following the Kruskal-Wallis Test we've got the following types of tables: Table 1 and Table 2. Table 1 presents differences between mean variables (Q2, Q4, Q6, Q15), according to each status.

**Kruskal-Wallis Test**

Table 1		Ranks	
Q1 Status	N		Mean Rank
Q2	1 Bachelor Student	220	199.54
	2 Master Degree student	72	219.47
	3 Doctoral Student	46	232.38
	4 Academic Staff	46	165.80
	5 Administrative Staff	25	233.08

	Total	409	
Q4	1 Bachelor Student	217	195.07
	2 Master Degree student	68	216.15
	3 Doctoral Student	37	198.19
	4 Academic Staff	54	206.07
	5 Administrative Staff	25	204.48
	Total	401	
Q6	1 Bachelor Student	224	224.80
	2 Master Degree student	73	241.28
	3 Doctoral Student	47	217.88
	4 Academic Staff	72	235.88
	5 Administrative Staff	35	192.39
	Total	451	
Q15	1 Bachelor Student	222	195.32
	2 Master Degree student	73	216.09
	3 Doctoral Student	47	266.94
	4 Academic Staff	68	255.29
	5 Administrative Staff	31	271.56
	Total	441	

Table 2 Chi-square test results shows whether a status connection exists with these variables.

	Q2	Q4	Q6	Q15
<b>Chi-Square</b>	11.723	1.995	8.036	28.579
<b>df</b>	4	4	4	4
<b>Asymp. Sig.</b>	0.020	0.737	0.090	0.000

As shown in Table 2, Q1-status is statistically in a significant connection with Q2, on 0.05 levels and it has a tight statistical connection with Q15 ( $P < 0.001$ )

As a result of constructing a crosstab tables, we have received tables that show a connection of status with each variable (Q 2, Q4, Q6 and Q15). In the Tables 3; 4; 5; 6 show the statistical connection between a status and these questions is shown according to a Chi-square test.

With respect to Q 2 (Conflict situations are mostly observed \* status)

<b>Table 3. Chi-square test results</b>	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	63.204 <sup>a</sup>	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	69.792	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.068	1	.795
N of Valid Cases	409		

a. 8 cells (32.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.38.

As it seems from the Chi-square test a status has a statistically significant, close relationship with Q2 ( $P < 0.001$ ).

**With respect to Q 4 ( What is the cause of the conflict in which you are involved?  
\* Status)**

Table 4. Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.759 <sup>a</sup>	16	0.151
Likelihood Ratio	23.614	16	0.098
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.752	1	0.386
N of Valid Cases	401		
a. 5 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.31.			

As it seems from the Chi-square test, there is no statistically significant connection between a status and Q4, in any case  $P > 0.05$ .

**With respect to Q 6**

Table 5. Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.053 <sup>a</sup>	4	0.090
Likelihood Ratio	9.364	4	0.053
Linear-by-Linear Association	.685	1	0.408
N of Valid Cases	451		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.22.			

As it seems from the Chi-square test a status has a statistically significant, close relationship with Q6 ( $P < 0.001$ ).

**With respect to Q 15**

Table 6. Chi-Square Tests	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	54.174 <sup>a</sup>	16	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	53.779	16	0.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	22.801	1	0.000
N of Valid Cases	441		
a. 9 cells (36.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .42.			

As it seems from the Chi-square test a status has a statistically significant, close relationship with Q15 ( $P < 0.001$ ).

Graphic representation of Q15 frequency distribution according to the individual status:

To verify the strength of the Q1 status with Q2, Q4, Q6, Q15 variables, we used the correlation, which resulted in the Table 7. As the variables that should be analyzed are nonparametric, we have used Kendall's (Kendall's tau<sub>b</sub>) and Spearman's (Spearman's rho) tests to get correlation coefficients.

Table 7			Q2	Q4	Q6	Q15
Kendall's tau_b	Q1	Correlation Coefficient	0.105*	0.039	-0.019	0.312**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.049	0.351	0.666	0.000
		N	409	401	451	441
Spearman's rho	Q1	Correlation Coefficient	0.101*	0.046	-0.020	0.242**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.048	0.363	0.666	0.000
		N	409	401	451	441

As shown in Table 7, a status has a correlative relationship according to both tests with Q2 (Conflict situations are most frequently observed), statistically significant relationship (at 0.05 level) and with Q15 (How do you behave during a conflict?) Statistically close connection at 0.01 level ( $P < 0.001$ ), however, we should note that it has a weak positive correlative relationship with Q2 and an average positive correlative connection with Q15 .

Thus, from the listed hypotheses Hypotheses H1 and H4 have been proved.

The best way to resolve conflicts is the continuous improvement of the processes and not the best solution for them even by the best methods (Eichfeld, Golding, & Hamilton, 2017) .

A proper system of compensation, normal labor conditions, correct organization of labor, correct distribution and clarity of the rights and duties leave no place for a conflict. (Gulua, 2017); (Gulua, 2015) .

Based on the conclusions revealed by the survey, we have prepared recommendations that will have a considerable positive impact on a conflict management. It is important:

To improve organizational processes and support transparency based on clearly defined goals;

Proper formulation of functions, duties and rights among organization members

Informing about expected changes timely;

Improvement of formal and informal communication means;

Support for development and improvement of qualifications;

To support understanding and realizing the democratic principles.

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