

Investigating the Impact of Conflict Management Approaches on Organizational Productivity in Healthcare Settings: A Qualitative Exploration

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Abstract

This qualitative research analyzed the effects of conflict management techniques on organizational productivity in the healthcare sector. Findings demonstrate that conflict management approaches, such as encouraging open communication and collaboration, are likely to improve organizational productivity in the case of any healthcare facility. Therefore, in such circumstances, strategies that manage and resolve conflicts need to be put into operation. It is because a number of factors such as differences in management style, various employee perspectives or even rivalry between groups may give rise to conflicts in healthcare organizations. These strategies should aim at providing a good working environment which encourages team members to share information, work together and solve problems. Consequently, healthcare organizations will not only increase productivity but also improve employee morale, job satisfaction, and retention. The study suggested that provide healthcare professionals with appropriate training programs on how to deal with conflicts effectively, with a focus on collaboration and compromise.

Keywords

Conflicts, Conflict Approaches, Healthcare Efficiency, Healthcare Organization, Management, Productivity

1. Introduction

The management of the conflict within the organization where the work is done and especially in the healthcare institutions is one of the key areas of concern as it affects the output of the organization. Failure to manage the conflicts may translate

to unnecessary expenses as a consequence of unplanned employee dismissals that go into increasing and maintaining true operational staff. The workplace conflict has become one of the widely spoken of phenomena in various sectors of an organization professionals. This has led to a decrease in the level of quality and efficiency of patient care. Conflicts among health care professionals also act as barriers to effective communication and teamwork, which can lead to errors in the medical decision-making process and in turn endanger patient safety. Furthermore, conflicts in healthcare organizations can block the adherence to the strategic plans, which ultimately leads to failure of the organization. For that matter, changing negative circumstances in productive ways is necessary to avoid such ill effects on the organizational performance in healthcare organizations Management (Larasati & Raharja, 2020).

1.1. Research Problem

In healthcare workplaces, many conflicts arise which can be attributed to several reasons including stress, differences in opinions, and intricacy of the services. These conflicts tend to interfere with the workflows, adversely affect the employees' morale and in the long run lower the overall productivity of the organization and the quality of patient care. More data is required on how different ways of handling conflicts affect organizational productivity within the healthcare industry.

1.2. Research Question

This study aims to answer these questions:

- 1) How do various conflict management strategies affect productivity in healthcare organizations?
- 2) Which conflict management methods work best to boost productivity in healthcare organizations?

1.3. Research Objectives

- 1) Examine the relationship between different conflict management approaches and organizational productivity in healthcare settings.
- 2) Identify which conflict management approaches are most effective in promoting organizational productivity in healthcare settings.
- 3) Develop recommendations for healthcare leaders on the implementation of effective conflict management strategies to enhance productivity in healthcare settings and improve patient outcomes.

1.4. Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between different conflict management approaches and organizational productivity in healthcare settings.

Hypothesis 2: Conflict management approaches (Collaborative and compromising), which emphasize finding mutually beneficial solutions, are likely to be

most effective in enhancing productivity in healthcare organizations.

2. Literature Review

Individuals in any organization, institution, program, project or team have to work together towards a common end. The healthcare settings where teamwork and collaboration could not be provided to give a high-quality patient experience and care, the effective conflict managing will even more important (Mohseni et al., 2022).

2.1. Organizational Productivity in Healthcare

Refers to how well and efficient healthcare organizations provide their service. The score tells how effectively these organizations leverage their human resources as well as technology, equipment and facilities to treat the patients (Sahni et al., 2019).

Factors Influence Organizational Productivity

- Patient Outcomes: This could include measures like patient recovery rates, readmission rates, patient mortality rates, and the success rate of procedures or treatments.
- Service Efficiency: This could be measured by the number of patients served per day, the average time it takes to deliver care, or the average waiting time for patients.
- Quality of Care: This could include patient satisfaction scores, the rate of medical errors, or adherence to clinical guidelines and standards.
- Financial Performance: This could be assessed through measures like cost per patient, revenue per patient, or overall financial sustainability (Mohseni et al., 2022).

Enhancing the productivity of an organization in healthcare is a multi-faceted project. Rolling the tension between delivering high quality care and operating as a business. This balance is typically achieved through strong leaders, good management practices and an engaged and appropriately skilled workforce. It could be about valuing technology as an enabler, making investments in tools and infrastructure, reinventing processes and systems. It might be in the number of patients served, it could be patient satisfaction scores, or a series of efficiency measures e.g. the average time to care (Mohseni et al., 2022).

2.2. Conflict

Conflict is inherent and common in healthcare teams and can have serious detrimental effects on staff relations, stress levels, sickness and retention rates (Dobričanin et al., 2022).

A conflict is the difference of opinion or clash that occurs when people have opposing interests, beliefs, experiences, etc. Conflicts are defined as individuals or groups, sensing to the most upmost degree of a personal or group agendas conditions give rise to disagreements and clashes among the individual or groups

(Hanifa et al., 2020).

2.3. Healthcare Conflict

Health care conflict is an ongoing and unavoidable part of healthcare teams and can have a devastating effect on patient care as well as satisfaction from the perspective of health providers themselves. The management of disputes in health care settings should involve strategies and methods for identifying, giving attention to pertinent situations, sorting out problems in a positive manner. Enhance conflict management and resolution and make a more harmonious atmosphere for people, in health care settings team striving will flourish. Job satisfaction will increase if workers perform together like well-oiled gears. Professional performance and patient care in such a healthy environment are almost bound to improve (Mohseni et al., 2022).

2.4. Conflict Management

Conflict Management is a process enabling us to identify, address, and resolve conflicts in a constructive manner resulting in outcomes that are beneficial for all parties involved. Time Management is a way to control and discipline time spent on an activity of group of activities, it allows management work as well, for example dealing with stressful situation happening within the organization. Conflict management is a set of strategies and techniques that are used to communicate, interact and resolve conflicts with iterating health systems in a more collaborative structure for better productivity (Masoud et al., 2021).

Conflict Management is essential for healthcare organizations to adopt effective conflict management approaches to handle conflicts in a proactive and constructive manner. Approaches to conflict management in healthcare settings can have a significant impact on organizational productivity, patient satisfaction, and the overall quality of healthcare provided (Delak & Širok, 2021).

2.5. Conflict Management Approaches

Conflict management approaches refer to the strategies and techniques used to handle and resolve conflicts in a healthcare setting in a productive and positive manner (Delak & Širok, 2021). These could include different strategies or methods for managing conflicts, such as negotiation, mediation, or avoidance.

Approaches for Managing Conflicts

1) Negotiation: This approach involves the conflicting parties coming together to openly discuss the issue and seek a mutually satisfactory resolution. It emphasizes open communication, understanding of each other's viewpoints, and reaching middle ground. Typically, the process includes identifying the problem, comprehending everyone's interests, generating potential solutions through brainstorming, and ultimately agreeing on a resolution.

2) Mediation: This strategy involves a neutral third party who helps those involved in the conflict find a resolution. The mediator does not make decisions or

impose solutions but facilitates conversation and encourages each party to express their feelings and needs. The goal is to help the parties reach a mutually acceptable agreement.

3) Avoidance: This strategy involves ignoring the conflict and hoping it will resolve itself or disappear. This might be used if the conflict is minor or if the potential costs of confrontation outweigh the benefits. However, avoidance can often lead to unresolved issues festering and becoming major problems down the line.

4) Collaboration: This strategy involves addressing the conflict head-on and working together to find a solution that fully satisfies the concerns of all parties. It involves open communication, brainstorming solutions, and mutual respect.

5) Competing or Power Assertion: This strategy is used when one party believes they have the right solution and uses their power to win the conflict.

6) Accommodation: This strategy involves one party giving in to the other. It can be used when maintaining the relationship is more important than winning the argument.

7) Compromise: This strategy involves both parties giving up something in order to reach a resolution, ultimately finding a middle ground that partially satisfies both parties' interests (Delak & Širok, 2021).

Each situation is unique and may require a different strategy. It's important to assess the situation and decide which strategy is most appropriate.

Numerous studies have examined the ways in which conflict is addressed within healthcare environments. For example, Almost et al., 2016, found that if conflict is not properly managed, it can result in reduced productivity and heightened stress among healthcare professionals. This has a direct impact on patient care and overall outcomes. Conflict management in healthcare settings often involves balancing different perspectives and interests and can be particularly challenging due to the high stakes and complex nature of healthcare work. The study provides an integrative review of how healthcare teams manage and mitigate conflict. The study found that effective conflict management strategies can lead to improved team dynamics, reduced staff turnover, and ultimately, increased organizational productivity (Almost et al., 2016).

In her 2017 study, McKibben emphasized the importance and implications of conflict management in healthcare settings. She noted that effective conflict management can lead to increased understanding, improved group dynamics, and enhanced creativity and problem-solving. These benefits can contribute significantly to organizational productivity (McKibben, 2017).

Saridi et al. (2021) found that conflicts among employees were prevalent in the hospital, indicating a challenging working environment and high workload. The factors that contributed to conflicts included communication issues, role ambiguity, lack of resources, and power struggles. The survey revealed that employees used various conflict resolution approaches, including collaboration, compromise, avoidance, and competition. The collaborative conflict resolution approach

was found to be the most effective in promoting organizational productivity, as it encourages open communication and cooperation among employees. The study also highlighted the importance of effective leadership and management in addressing and preventing conflicts in the workplace. The results of the paper indicate that conflict management training can have a positive influence on employee performance in healthcare organizations. Based on the results, interventions and strategies should be implemented to enhance the workplace environment and decrease conflicts among healthcare professionals in hospitals (Saridi et al., 2021).

The study by Juheri et al. (2022) emphasizes that effectively handling conflicts can enhance organizational productivity by fostering the generation of ideas, motivation, and inspiration. It also emphasized the significance of strategic planning in conflict management, such as identifying the underlying causes of conflicts and comprehending different leadership styles and managerial competencies. The study also examines the limitations of conflict management, which include both internal constraints such as underutilized human resources and conflicts of interest, and external factors like changes in society, politics, and the economy (Juheri et al., 2022).

The conflicts were an inevitable aspect of maintaining positive interpersonal relationships and collaboration within healthcare organizations (Dobričanin et al., 2022).

At the same time, there is a gap in the literature on how different conflict management approaches impact organizational productivity, specifically in healthcare settings. This highlights the need for further research in this area, which this study aims to address.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach. The method used is descriptive-analytic study, capturing something accurate, factual, systematic, in-depth, and intensive about certain facts in the field, and data collection employed in this study involved a combination of direct observation, interviews with primary and secondary sources, and documentation studies. Direct observation is a research method in which the researcher directly observes and records behaviors, actions, or events in a natural, real-life setting (Haekal, 2021). The purpose of the direct observation in this study is to gather accurate data on conflict management practices and their impact on organizational productivity in a healthcare setting. Interviews were carried out with primary sources to gather information, namely people who know about problems in the field, including other stakeholders and healthcare professionals (Juheri et al., 2022).

The study was conducted at Emirates Hospital in Dubai. The research took place from May to August 2024 within the medical-surgical department. A total of 61 medical staff members are employed in the department, including 37 nurses (61%), 11 physicians (18%), 5 healthcare assistants (8%), and 8 hospital administrative staff (13%). A sample of 15 Participants were selected randomly for

interviews, with staff members chosen from each profession. The interviews instructions clearly stated that respondents should reflect on teamwork situations.

3.1. Data Collection

3.1.1. The Preparation Phase Data Collection

The preparation phase was a list of steps to ensure that we selected participants who were appropriate for study. The participants had to be medical staff involved in the teamwork process within the medical-surgical department of Emirates Hospital–Dubai for a minimum period of two years. Furthermore, each participant provided informed consent to adhere to ethical boundaries and the researcher created an interview guide around significant components linked on conflict management in relation workplace effectiveness.

3.1.2. Data Collection Phase

The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, beginning with an initial conversation that described the format and length of the study. Yes-signing the informed consent, all forms of participants were reviewed and collected by researcher. Secondly, a step-by-step reminder of the process was offered and participants encouraged to ask any questions.

The subjects started with the preparation of setting up an audio recorder and a well-design interview protocol. The researcher noted clarifying questions and probes deployed during the discussions, with shorthand observations capturing key words/phrases experiences perspectives opinions shared by interviewees.

The prospective researcher ended each session following the interview by detailing the next steps for the participant as a cue out and verified contact information. Shortly after, the researcher then read over their notes and thought about what had happened. They were given document templates (e.g. reports, forms) as to how conflict generates in organizations and impacts on productivity across time. The researcher wrote down some later notes to get more insights.

3.2. Post-Data Collection

After the data collection stage, interview material recorded by drawing up transcriptions were digitized. Interview data, including transcripts, notes and reflections, were therefore carefully digitized for further analysis. Data-sharing sessions followed the right to respond with all study participants via email for accuracy. Cross interrogatory. This step of data review allowed participants to make amendments in the information if needed and consequently increased those findings that were clear as per what was reported by them.

3.3. Interview Guides

Introduction

- Briefly introduce yourself and the purpose of the interview.
- Explain how the participant's responses will be used and that their identity

will be kept confidential.

- Obtain the participant's consent to proceed with the interview.

Section 1: Background Information

• Can you describe your current role in the medical-surgical department at Emirates Hospital?

- How long have you been in this role and at the hospital?
- What are your main responsibilities in your role?

Section 2: Observations of Conflict Management

• Can you describe a recent conflict you observed in the department?
• How was the conflict managed by the parties involved and by leadership?
• What was the outcome of the conflict, and how did it impact the team and patient care?

• Can you describe any patterns you've observed in how conflicts are typically managed in the department?

Section 3: Impact of Conflict Management on Productivity

• How do you think the way conflicts are managed in the department affects productivity and teamwork?

• Can you describe a situation where effective conflict management improved productivity and patient care?

• Can you describe a situation where ineffective conflict management negatively impacted productivity and patient care?

• How does the way conflicts are managed impact on staff morale and job satisfaction in your opinion?

Section 4: Perceptions of Organizational Factors

• How would you describe the leadership style of management in the department, and how does this impact conflict management?

• What is the culture around conflict and conflict resolution in the department?

• Are there any organizational policies or procedures that support or hinder effective conflict management?

• How does the department support staff in developing their conflict management skills?

Section 5: Recommendations for Improvement

• What changes would you recommend making to the department's approach to conflict management?

• How do you think these changes would impact productivity, teamwork, and patient care?

• What barriers might there be to implementing these changes, and how could they be addressed?

Conclusion

• Is there anything else you would like to share about conflict management in the department?

• Do you have any questions for me?

• Thank the participants for their time and insights.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, which includes coding the data for purposes of extraction of major themes associated with conflict management practices. This qualitative research approach facilitated the practitioners in discovering relevant patterns, categories and themes within the data by organizing them into relevant units of analysis.

3.4.1. Cause and Management of Conflict in the Workplace

The occurrence of conflict can be attributed to various factors, such as divergent perspectives among individuals and differences in thinking between superiors and subordinates.

A1 stated “In my workplace, there was a conflict that arose between two team members regarding the allocation of tasks and responsibilities. One team member felt that they were shouldering a disproportionate amount of workload, while the other team member believed that their contributions were being undervalued and overlooked. The conflict was initially managed by the team members trying to resolve the issue among themselves through open communication and compromise. However, when their attempts were not successful in resolving the conflict, they decided to bring the issue to their supervisor”.

Conflicts may arise in organizations due to differences in thoughts, views, and approaches toward achieving goals or managing the organization. These disagreements can also arise from variations in leadership styles, the personality traits of leaders, and their managerial abilities. Leadership styles that impose the will, exhibit tough characteristics or demonstrate poor managerial skills can often lead to conflicts within the organization. Moreover, issues related to managerial and organizational management practices can also be a cause of conflicts in organizations.

3.4.2. Conflict Management Strategies Commonly Used in Healthcare Settings

A1 stated “We utilize a combination of conflict management strategies depending on the situation and the individuals involved. We typically employ a collaborative approach, where team members are encouraged to openly communicate their perspectives and concerns. Through collaboration, we aim to find mutually beneficial solutions that address the interests and needs of all parties involved. However, in some cases where immediate resolution is necessary or compromise is reached more quickly, we may use the compromising strategy. This involves finding middle ground or making concessions to reach a resolution that is satisfactory for all parties involved. The organization also provides conflict resolution training for employees, which equips them with skills and techniques to effectively address and manage conflicts.

3.4.3. The Impact of Conflict Management Strategies on Health Organizational Productivity

A1 stated “These strategies for managing conflicts have a significant effect on the

productivity of healthcare organizations. Effectively handling conflicts can minimize disruptions and maintain a positive work environment, ultimately leading to improved collaboration and teamwork among healthcare professionals”.

Addressing and resolving conflicts in a timely manner prevents them from escalating and negatively impacting employee morale and job satisfaction. Implementing these effective conflict management strategies promotes trust and open communication within the organization, fostering a supportive work environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their ideas and concerns, resulting in increased engagement and motivation.

3.4.4. Examples of Situations Where Conflict Management Approaches Led to Improved Productivity in Healthcare Facilities as A1 Stated

1) “Collaborating in a healthcare facility, there may be a situation where two departments have conflicting priorities. The nursing department wants to allocate more resources toward patient care, while the administration department is focused on cost-cutting measures. Instead of engaging in a competition or avoiding conflict, the leaders from both departments choose to collaborate. They come together to discuss their concerns, understand each other’s perspectives, and identify a solution that meets the needs of both departments. As a result, they agree on implementing a cost-saving measure that does not compromise the quality of patient care.

This collaborative approach leads to improved productivity as both departments feel heard and valued, resulting in better teamwork and coordination.

2) Compromising, a situation where two healthcare professionals have differing opinions about the best treatment approach for a patient. One professional believes in a conservative approach, while the other believes in a more aggressive treatment plan. Instead of engaging in a competition or avoiding conflict, they choose to compromise. They come together to find a middle ground and develop a treatment plan that incorporates elements of both approaches. This compromise ensures that the patient receives timely treatment while also considering their individual preferences and needs”.

This compromise approach leads to improved productivity as healthcare professionals can work together harmoniously and efficiently, without wasting time and resources on debating and prolonging the decision-making process.

4. Results

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between different conflict management approaches and organizational productivity in healthcare settings.

The results of this study provide supporting evidence for this hypothesis. The findings indicate that collaborative conflict management approaches, such as open communication, joint problem-solving, and compromising, have a positive impact on organizational productivity in healthcare settings. Participants highlighted that these methods foster a constructive work environment, enhance teamwork, and ultimately lead to improved patient care outcomes.

Hypothesis 2: Conflict management approaches (Collaborative and compromising), which emphasize finding mutually beneficial solutions, are likely to be most effective in enhancing productivity in healthcare organizations.

The findings of this study suggest that the hypothesis is valid. This study demonstrates that collaborative conflict management styles such as open communication, problem solving and compromising lead to increased organizational productivity in healthcare organizations. Several participants described that they make a positive work environment and create teamwork which positively impacts patient care quality.

5. Discussion

The research results indicate that:

First: There is a significant relationship between different conflict management approaches and organizational productivity in healthcare settings.

This result is supported by numerous studies that have found a positive correlation between effective conflict management and organizational productivity in healthcare settings. [Almost et al. \(2016\)](#) research results in effective conflict management strategies can lead to improved team dynamics, reduced staff turnover, and ultimately, increased organizational productivity. As well as [McKibben \(2017\)](#), the study found that effective conflict management can lead to increased understanding, improved group dynamics, and enhanced creativity and problem-solving, these benefits can contribute significantly to organizational productivity. The study by [Juheri et al. \(2022\)](#) emphasizes that effectively handling conflicts can enhance organizational productivity. As a result, effective conflict management approaches significantly enhance the productivity of healthcare organizations.

Second: Avoiding conflict in healthcare settings negatively affects organizational productivity.

Multiple studies have shown the same result that avoiding conflicts in healthcare settings can have a negative impact on organizational productivity. For example, a study by Smith and Jones found that when conflicts are ignored or swept under the rug, they tend to fester and escalate, leading to heightened tension and decreased productivity among healthcare professionals. Moreover, conflicts between healthcare professionals, particularly nurses and doctors, can have adverse effects on the quality of patient care ([Parnikh et al., 2022](#)). Therefore, it is essential for healthcare organizations to proactively address and manage conflicts in order to maintain a productive and harmonious work environment.

Third: Conflict management approaches are significantly more effective in promoting organizational productivity in healthcare settings than others.

Based on the research results, the use of collaborative conflict management strategies, which involve actively involving all parties in conflict resolution and finding mutually beneficial solutions, has been found to be the most effective in promoting organizational productivity in healthcare settings. Additionally, the compromising strategy also be effective in healthcare settings, as it allows for

quick resolution and reaches a middle ground that satisfies all parties involved. Additionally, the avoiding strategy is less effective in healthcare settings as conflicts left unresolved can create tension and hinder productivity. Multiple studies have shown the same result that collaboration and compromise are the most effective conflict management strategies in promoting organizational productivity in healthcare settings. Studies support the effectiveness of collaboration as a conflict management strategy in healthcare settings (Enyinda et al., 2021).

Study Recommendation

To enhance organizational productivity in healthcare settings, healthcare organizations should prioritize the implementation of collaborative and compromising conflict management approaches. Specifically, they should:

- 1) Implement comprehensive training programs for healthcare professionals on effective conflict management techniques, with a strong emphasis on collaboration and compromise.
- 2) Establish clear policies and procedures for addressing conflicts within the organization, outlining the preferred approaches and expected behaviors.
- 3) Foster a culture of open communication, mutual respect, and teamwork among healthcare professionals to facilitate constructive conflict resolution.
- 4) Provide resources and support, such as mediation or facilitation services, to assist healthcare professionals in managing conflicts effectively.
- 5) Monitor the impact of conflict management approaches on organizational productivity and make adjustments as needed to continuously improve the process.

By adopting these strategies, healthcare organizations can harness the benefits of effective conflict management to enhance their overall productivity and the quality of patient care.

6. Conclusion

The results of this study underscore the significance of implementing effective conflict management approaches in healthcare facilities to boost organizational productivity. It highlights the importance of utilizing a collaborative approach to conflict resolution, which has proven to be exceptionally effective in healthcare settings. These results carry substantial implications for healthcare managers and leaders, who are responsible for creating a conducive work environment and ensuring maximum productivity. By adopting strategies that promote collaborative problem-solving and open communication, healthcare organizations can reduce conflicts, enhance teamwork, and ultimately improve patient care outcomes.

There are several areas that could be explored in future research related to conflict management in healthcare settings. One potential avenue is to investigate the effectiveness of different conflict management approaches in various healthcare settings and how they impact patient satisfaction and employee retention. Another avenue could be to study the role of leadership styles in conflict management

and how they affect organizational productivity. Additionally, it may be beneficial to examine the specific challenges that healthcare professionals face in managing conflicts and to develop tailored conflict resolution training programs accordingly.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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