

## Experience of a Personnel Manager Resolving Conflict in the Organization

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### Abstract

This paper examines the experiences of personnel managers in Lithuania in solving conflict in the organization. The data were collected by means of a semi-structured interview. A thematic analysis was employed to achieve the goal. The results revealed three common themes: “conflicts caused by changes”, “conflict prevention”, “going through the conflict”. It was established that even though personnel managers use various strategies for avoiding conflict, they became involved, they experience strong negative emotional reactions.

**Keywords:** a personnel manager, experience, conflicts in organizations, thematic analysis.

### Introduction

Personnel professionals employ many tactics to achieve their goals including the use of well-developed social skills and networking to increase their influence as well as to solve issues of human resource management and to create strategic personnel management systems that help to increase company effectiveness and competitiveness (Daudigeos, 2013; Martin-Alcazar, Romero-Fernandez and Sanchez-Gardey, 2012). Further, in the course of changes in organizations and in mergers and acquisitions personnel professionals have to demonstrate their technical, managerial, communication, and negotiation skills to reduce resistance to changes. Today, this also involves a deep understanding of the intercultural differences of staff operating in a global context as well as the ability to solve and prevent conflict (Adomako, Gasor and Danso, 2013; Mayer and Louw, 2012).

Global business relationships, cultural differences, the search of work-family balance, and

constant change cause increasingly more tension and conflicts. Analysis of research in this area reveals that power-based, rights-based, and interest-based conflict management systems have been created and tested (Roche and Teague, 2012). However, the use of conflict management, especially interest based conflict management is not wide-spread, the shortage of a constant approach means that many conflicts go unchecked resulting in strikes, stoppages, and undesirable consequences for employees and companies (Blazejewski, 2009; Llorente, Luchi and Sioli, 2013; Sondaitė and Norvilė, 2009; Sondaitė and Stunženaitė 2010). Irrespective of the fact of the use of a conflict management system, a personnel manager is held responsible for employee and employee-manager relations (Armstrong, 2014; SHRM Body of Competency and Knowledge, 2016). It is a paradox that for more than 100 years personnel managers, starting with their predecessors who were welfare officers taking care of peoples' welfare in the workplace, have not investigated employees' relations and tried to manage conflict. On the one hand, research reveals how conflicts may be better managed, however, there is a little knowledge how best to manage conflict, who are the best people to do this and how to deal with resulting negative consequences resulting from the experience of conflict. It is timely to explore a psychological approach and examine how personnel professionals can assist managers to resolve conflicts, demonstrating the value of such an approach (Amalou-Döpke and Süß, 2014; Stankevičienė and Šarupičiūtė, 2014).

Research into this problem is now relevant as never before, with many major structural and

technological developments forecast for companies that will result in many employees being dismissed and being replaced by information and innovation systems. Employees will be more focused on team work, with relationship and conflict management being essential competences (Global Human Capital Trends 2016). Negative emotions and conflicts have already become an inevitable part of the working environments. In the past, the researchers failed to recognize the role of emotions in the organizational life but the recent researchers have realized the importance of emotions (Qadir and Khan, 2016).

*The aim of this research* is to find out the experience a personnel manager undergoes in resolving conflicts in the organization.

### **Theoretical framework of the research**

A personnel, human resource manager (in the framework of this research both the concepts of personnel and human resource managers are used as synonymous) takes a vital role in the operation of the organization. To foresee what kind of personnel and the number of employees that will be needed for the organization in 3, 5 or 10 years, a personnel manager has to show active interest in the social, political, economic, and technological developments also behind the borders of the organization. Therefore, we state that the position of a personnel manager within a company is a strategist rather than a tactician or administrator taking care of recruitment or firing. However, to reveal the status of Human Resource (HR) divisions in Lithuanian companies Česnyienė and Stankevičienė (2012) carried out an opinion poll of HR managers and specialists in 92 companies of Lithuania. The study revealed that “insufficient participation of the personnel/ human resource management division in the processes of company work strategy preparation and decision making shows that the role of the division has not experienced any significant transformations, it remained more serving than strategic as compared to other divisions creating value added” (Česnyienė and Stankevičienė, 2012, p. 449). This finding was surprising as lately it is common to declare that staff are of major value to the company; however, the employees that select, train, and take care of employees are not appreciated so highly.

Having in mind the requirements for the role of a strategist and the evaluation that is not in line with them, it may be supposed that a personnel manager experiences a huge pressure. It is interesting that the evaluation of the effectiveness of personnel managers provided by lower levels of management is lower than that they provided about themselves (Chen, Hsu and Yip, 2011) but there are varying

views of managers about the value of HR. Some see HR as being successful at implementing company strategy, with front-line managers to help them do this. However, other front-line managers feel HR is less effective and HR activities are less good use of company funds.

If we look at the requirements for Personnel Managers of the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM, <https://www.shrm.org>), we will see that they are not only high but require accreditation to ensure a candidate meets these requirements. The HR Certification Institute (hereinafter the HCRI, <https://www.hrci.org>) also verifies the suitability of its members for accreditation and so does the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, [www.cipd.co.uk](http://www.cipd.co.uk)).

Therefore, there is a paradox that all three membership organizations set high interpersonal communication and business communication requirements for their accredited members. The paradox here is why the role of a personnel manager is not seen as strategic by company managers? The second study of 160 personnel managers, two years later looking at the status of HR departments, did not provide an answer to this question, showing that “personnel units perform a supporting role in the activities of an organization, there is no emphasis on them, as those that create value added and initiate changes within an organization, and the rights granted are narrower than the responsibility required” (Stankevičienė and Šarupičiūtė, 2014, 99 p). The study revealed HR departments largely perform administrative rather than strategic functions; therefore, the quantitative analysis carried out did not show us anything about the more in-depth work personnel managers do in communication and relationship building. It has been revealed that a lower status of HR departments is determined by the predominating approach towards them. How successful is a personnel manager that is not sufficiently appreciated in controlling employee relationships? Those of employees, managers, and heads? Unfortunately, no such research has been found.

Guest and Woodrow (2012) examined two challenges personnel managers constantly face: how can they represent both the interests of managers and employees and gain the power to do this? The authors note that even when personnel managers became business partners they were unable to influence at a strategic level. Next when the personnel department worked constructively with employees to improve their effectiveness, senior managers were unlikely to acknowledge performance improvements resulted from personnel managers’ activities. Finally, the

development of legislation to constrain in-fighting and bullying of workers were also unsuccessful. The authors conclude that the lack of power vested in personnel management does not allow equal treatment of both employees and managers. However, another qualitative study revealed a lot of subtle information and proved that personnel managers find opportunities to increase their influence and power. According to resource dependence theory (Amalou-Dõpke and Sũß, 2014), the ability to measure human resource effectiveness through gathering quantitative information and its qualitative interpretation is becoming a useful source of power personnel managers can use to influence senior management. By placing emphasis on certain findings and forecasts personnel managers are able to influence future organizational decisions. For example, by attributing a budget to a particular human resource activity can be a way of showing the benefits that personnel activity can bring to an organization. By factoring in measurable costs of HR, there is a need for exchange and mutual dependence between senior management and personnel managers. Such examples will reinforce the value of HR decisions, while other opportunities will reinforce HR within organizational structure allowing involvement in strategic decision-making. Thus, expert knowledge has become a source of power for personnel managers.

*The relation between organizational changes and conflicts.* Adomako et al. (2013) who researched the phenomenon of the process of involvement of human resource managers into company mergers and acquisition state that these processes are carried out due to strategic, financial or human resource objectives. Usually personnel managers and employees of their units are agents of changes who help the companies to smoothly implement these processes. However, the greatest problem related to the type of these kinds of changes is a huge number of failures, which is determined by human resistance to changes. Therefore, personnel managers have to be well aware of all the reasons of resistance. The three greatest challenges during mergers of companies are: communication and different cultures and structures of the organizations. Personnel managers and specialists have to be very well prepared for these changes. HR managers are required to enable effective communication and relationship management since there is constant need to negotiate, communicate extensively, and work with the likely resistance of people.

Modern technologies, global competition, demanding consumers, and other factors make people change their habits, lifestyle, attitude towards

work, their workplace, and even work. To resist this kind of pressure, it is not enough to simply work more, the organizations have to be more innovative, responsive, more effective, faster and more flexible, more responsible and accountable, more effective (Clardy, 2013). Constant changes, aiming at higher results often cause tension to employees, therefore, conflicts are inevitable. Nearly 60 years ago, Coser, when writing about a social conflict and the theory of social changes, stated that a conflict may be both a result of changes and a source of them (Coser, 1957), hence negation of the existing interests or minimizing them may remove the stimulus for the importance of technological innovations. It is namely employees who usually influence technological changes. According to Coser, the inventions in the Western society and technological development, the creation of the world and recreation of it are only possible in pluralist structure of human relations, which is full of tension and conflicts. Van de Ven and Poole (1995), having read 200 articles, found 20 different theories of process, after analyzing which they introduced the structure of changes and singled out four components forming the process of changes of the organization: lifecycle, teleological, dialectics, and evolution. In all four components there is an interaction of units (humans or their groups), which is made of competition, cooperation, conflict, and other ways, whereas the essential engines of Dialectics and Evolution theories are conflict and fight for scarce resources (=a conflict, in the framework of this research). Actually, not only units may be conflicting (humans or their groups) within an organization and/or outside it, but also the theories themselves. For example, according to the Theory of Teleology, organizations may need certain actions, and according to the Life Cycle Theory the time for these actions may not have come, the engines of theories are acting in different ways in different process stages (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). Hence, even though no conflict has been foreseen in the theories of Life Cycle and Teleology, according to both theories, an organization is a single unit, but their interaction may cause such a conflict. Besides, both theories contain conflicts or engines loaded with fight. Hence we may deduce that in the process of organizational changes a conflict either performs one of the essential functions and is a drive for changes or one or another form becomes their consequence due to the necessary changes.

Horton, Bayerl and Jakobs (2014) state that the primary reason and consequence of changes are identity related conflicts. They may arise between an employee's perception of who he is and who he is for the group or organization, their norms,

values, attitudes, and expectations, for example, “a dutiful worker”, “a supporting colleague”, and “a loyal employee” as well as the opportunities of the activity distribution. The aforementioned internal conflicts of balance between the time spent at work and with family (identity of a responsible employee and a caring parent) have made influence on the organizations so that they change their attitude towards work, workplace, and time spent in it (Webber, Sarris and Bessell, 2010). Hence changes in personal or professional life (for example, becoming a parent, a manager) influence an identity conflict which (or the solution of which), in its turn, may influence changes at work, for example, rooms for children are equipped in an organization and nannies are ensured, employees may do part of the work at home, etc.

In analyzing a conflict, one may foresee a commitment to changes. Bouckennooghe, De Clercq and Deprez (2014) established that a conflict of a manager-employee relationship is a mediator between interpersonal justice (fair behaviour) and an employee’s commitment to change. However, Lawrence, Ruppel and Tworoger’s (2014) a 12-year longitudinal research found that managers, while managing or installing changes, are also not always rational, they have emotional experiences. Hence, not only employees experience feelings, which should be revealed rather than suppressed, but also the highest level managers. According to researchers, emotions should be acknowledged, accepted and respected, since understanding their influence may not only improve management, but also reduce resistance and conflicts, increase commitment and engagement into the processes of changes, since positive emotions demonstrated by a manager serve for the reinforcement of employees, encourage them to get more actively involved into the generation of new ideas, install systems and processes during changes. However, a qualitative research carried out showed that there were many negative emotions: anxiety, anger, withdrawal, depression, hostility, sadness, the feeling of losing, nervousness among managers, resembling paranoia, fear (of responsibility, mistakes), refusing responsibility, frustration, and shock. Yet there were positive emotions as well, when managers felt support of their colleagues. On the other hand, the emotions became a stimulus for the managers better to know the culture, vision or values of the organization or to understand their importance. This helped to rethink the processes that happen during the changes, a different rate of employees in accepting changes, instigated ideas how to create an atmosphere so that employees are not afraid to make mistakes, take risks, express

their real opinion, and constantly provide feedback (Lawrence et al. 2014). Hence a qualitative research revealed experience during the changes and showed a wider image of the relationship conflict between a manager and employees. This kind of perception may help improve conflict management, so that they do not turn into the general strikes as it happened at Opel and Kraft Food factories (Llorente et al., 2013; Blazejewski, 2009).

An important personnel task is to create positive employee-manager relationship that encourages the development of climate of mutual trust. The key to the success of this relationship is fostering and maintaining an ethical approach to managing people. However, as already mentioned in the Introduction, personnel managers face numerous challenges and problems in gaining status within organizational hierarchy that will allow them to participate in strategic decision-making, competition with the lower level managers and the need to continually substantiate the value of their professional role. Therefore, questions arise about the experiences personnel managers go through; how they manage their inner world of thoughts, emotions and have the ability to control themselves when attempting to manage relationship between employees and their managers. A potential mediator in any conflict has to be aware of possible dangers and the means to avoid them. Hence personnel managers must have sufficient knowledge and be psychologically prepared for a future where more conflicts are likely to occur. But, are they properly prepared to manage not only a conflict situation, but also themselves, their emotions and to quickly regain psychological balance? Will they be able to stay neutral and unbiased in conflict situations, to save their authority and trust? The review of scientific literature revealed that there is a shortage of knowledge in this area. In order to find out what experiences a personnel manager undergoes resolving conflicts in an organization, we used qualitative approach. Qualitative research focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences (Flick, 2009) and can serve improving the understanding and managing of conflict within the work context.

## **Research methodology**

*Sample.* Three female personnel managers of companies and one personnel specialist of a company, who was taking care of the work of a unit having 160 employees and who was performing the functions equal to those of a personnel manager, participated in the research (in total, four women). The age of the research participants was between 25

and 42 years. The informants were selected through purposive sampling, and they had experience of not less than two years in the position they held. Two of them represented foreign capital companies, and two of them were representatives of public institutions. Research participants Ema, Eva, Rasa and Siga were renamed.

*Measures.* The data were collected by means of a semi-structural interview. Semi-structured interview was used in order to reconstruct the interviewee's subjective theory about the issue under study (Flick, 2009). Three interview questions were given starting with the broad one descriptive and ending with the narrow one reflective: (1) What kind of conflicts does the personnel manager face within the organization? (2) How does the personnel manager resolve conflicts in the organization? (3) What kind of inner feelings does the personnel manager experience in solving the conflicts in the organization?

The method of Braun and Clarke was used for the research, which was adapted for psychologists for a thematic analysis (hereinafter in the text "the TA method") which provided an opportunity to see and perceive the overall and personal meanings and experiences of the research participants, by systematically structuring them into semantic meanings – themes and responding to the research questions. "TA is a method to systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set.

TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences. This method, then, is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities. The patterns of meaning that TA allows the researcher to identify need to be important in relation to the particular topic and research question being explored. Analysis produces the answer to a question, even if, as in some qualitative research, the specific question that is being answered only becomes apparent through the analysis. Numerous patterns could be identified across any data set – the purpose of analysis is to identify those relevant to answering a particular research question" (Braun and Clarke, 2012, p. 57).

### Analysis of research results

Research findings are provided: they comprise the notional themes of research personal experience of research participants and are divided into three common themes which are characteristic of all research participants. The first one are the conflicts caused by changes, which are attributed to the type of conflicts at the organization. The first theme with subthemes and the examples illustrating them are provided in Table 1.

*Conventional notation:* emphasized by the speaker; a pause ...; an insert of the researcher or informant (R: hm); "direct speech"; [...] the researcher's statements.

Table 1

### Theme No. 1 with subthemes and the examples illustrating them

Theme No. 1. Conflict caused by changes
<p><i>Subtheme No. 1. Structural changes</i></p> <p>We were <u>merged</u> from several institutions into one approximately four-five years ago. So let's say, there were some &lt;...&gt;, even <u>personal</u> conflicts, they still have the dragging consequences of the reorganization, after which this institution was established (Rasa).</p> <p>Unambiguously the change has influence when [conflicts] arise. As I try to remember other cases, I think that they were determined by some changes... or change of a working group, or task, or manager (Siga)</p>
<p><i>Subtheme No. 2. Change of managers</i></p> <p>Then we still had that situation that during the time when I was there, I think, I had three or four managers, you know, I don't even remember, I mean &lt;...&gt;. And there was no unified understanding or wish to understand how we work because the managers were changing (Ema).</p> <p>This manager has been working for nearly nine months in this institution... and the former manager had a very different style of management from this one, and in half a year after he first started working the members of the team of the manager addressed me stating it "is too difficult for us" (Siga).</p>

The second theme is conflict prevention: the methods for conflict resolution chosen by research

participants. The second theme with subthemes and the examples illustrating them are provided in Table 2.

### Theme No. 2 with subthemes and the examples illustrating them

<b>Theme No. 2. Conflict prevention</b>	
<i>Subtheme No. 1. On the level of organization (strategic: culture, values, responsibility)</i>	
One of the values is that we believe in what we do. This... is something I have heard a colleague saying to a colleague by using the value and reminding "what are you doing, is this alright?" I mean, do you really contribute, do you believe in what you do? Do you fully contribute? I mean, do you do this professionally and qualitatively?" In this regard, I think this is a proof that he, <...> by appealing to the values he tries to, he tries to solve the arising conflict (Siga).	
Another, I think, that we are saying this very consciously, that the function of personnel is not someone who is between the two conflicting parties in, <...>, solving conflicts. And there is a great danger in this, I think: if you position yourself as a <u>decision maker</u> , then you mainly take the responsibility from all the participating parties. <...> I think we are very conscious in stating, I mean, that we can help, you know, in creating there a space, in encouraging a constructive dialogue and so on, but I do not solve conflicts (Ema).	
<i>Subtheme No. 2. On the level of a group/ individual (tactics)</i>	
And they also have <u>their</u> people, for example, who, you know, see some kind of tears, and it is also that you have to support them, you know, in some way, to support them in sensitivity, indeed (Ema).	
I have taught them some methods, to put questions, to talk, by the way, I have not used that I have told him that from what I hear, this makes me sad, bewildered, because I hear only negative answers... and they put a barrier for my own communication (Siga).	

The third theme is going through the conflict: telling about the conflicts experienced in the organization and the participants involved. The third

theme with subthemes and the examples illustrating them are provided in Table 3.

Table 3

### Theme No. 3 with subthemes and the examples illustrating them

<b>Theme No. 3. Going through the conflict</b>	
<i>Subtheme No. 1. Retreat from the situation, try to remain neutral</i>	
And probably the main thing is, you know, that if you want to solve them, you have to stay away from them. Since if you get involved, you will not manage to do anything. Well, since you will automatically be forced to take some position (Ema).	
How do they manage to control this? I said I do manage, then how, I mean I simply restrain, and think "well, yes, yes... you keep a distance from this how you accept a person, help him hear this", and then just there are things which help methodologically, don't they? (Siga)	
<i>Subtheme No. 2. Work with yourself</i>	
And once again to sit down quietly, think about the situation, to identify your feelings and this alone helps to get out of the situation. Because if you simply get involved into emotions, this is not good. You live in the emotion and do not see anything. That's how it is, I guess (Eva).	
I play [smiles]. I play the grand piano. This is my therapy since childhood. When I would be exhausted from learning, or something else, or, I don't know, from any activity, I would sit down and play for several hours, and then I would go to bed, and this really helps me until now (Rasa).	
<i>Subtheme No. 3. Sensitive reaction to conflicts, in which the personnel manager is involved</i>	
This is becoming an increasingly difficult case, probably. More or less it is always there, but that is, let's say, it is more like a conflict about values, attitudes and works (Eva).	
Well, well... It does not arise each time... If we get on well, it is all fine, but if, well... because this person likes contradicting, he starts contradicting again, and then I have the feeling again that it has not been solved (Siga).	

## Discussion

Upon completion of an analysis of the data of participants' interview, three themes that are characteristic to all research participants, which reveal the experience of the personnel manager in solving conflicts within an organization. It was established that the main reason causing conflicts are constant changes in the organization, which are related to the reorganization and change of managers (T1, S1, S2).

These conflicts last long, they are long remembered and even when reflecting them they cause intensive emotions. Where a person has competences to get to know the emotions of the conflicting parties, one can not only direct them in the desirable direction, but also better know the organizational culture, vision, values and their importance, to rethink the processes happening during the changes, different rate of accepting changes, to create such an atmosphere

that the employees are not afraid of acting and sharing their opinion (Lawrence et al. 2014). Hence, neither national nor international capital companies manage to avoid conflicts of changes, this is a given phenomenon, which has to be accepted in a stoic way and one needs to think how to control the situation, to make it favourable and useful to the company.

The second common topic of findings is conflict prevention (T2, S1, S2). By using a number of ways and different attitudes, such as conflicts, the number of those that are non-productive may be reduced, however, it is worthwhile to first of all establish their reasons. Often the work-personal life conflicts arising are some of the reasons for changes, where organizations change their attitude towards completion of work, work time, and work place. Work gradually stops being merely a job and becomes a lifestyle or activity, since organizations do not want to lose their most valuable resources, that is their employees, they create the work conditions reducing both internal role-related and interpersonal conflicts (Webber et al., 2010).

According to the three essential paradigms singled out, related to conflict management or how to avoid it: methods based on power, rights or interests (Roche and Teague, 2012), one can state that the conducted research proved that the predominating methods in participants' organizations are based on rights, and that smart methods that have been acknowledged for more than 30 years and that are based on interests have not found their way to our organizations. The arguments of representatives of the methods for conflict resolution that are based on power, stating that they reinforce the managers by creating conditions for them to solve the conflicts by themselves or that values are created which help regulate the relationships, remind more of a method to avoid conflicts, as a strategy or organization and personnel managers, rather than prevention (T2, S1). Especially since avoidance of conflict management does not bring desirable results, and the conflicts become greater ones and difficult to control or they may grow into strikes, and the research participants have had experience of long lasting conflict management (Ema for 8 months, Rasa for 4–5 year, T1, S1). In addition to this, it is difficult to imagine a manager solving a conflict with a subordinate. It would be difficult to believe that a manager remains neutral and as demanding for himself as to employees. It may be that he will inflict or suppress the expression of a conflict by his own power, and will face with resistance to other, more subtle forms. Hence it is not clear why organization or personnel managers do not want to move to the implementation of humane and modern, justified interest-based method

systems at organizational level, to create services of ombudsman and to use the services of internal and external mediation services and informally, flexibly resolve arising conflicts as well as train their employees to systematically control them and in this way reinforce the organizational culture. The question is "Is this due to unwillingness of highest level managers or personnel managers?" Amalou-Doņpke and Suņß (2014) established that personnel managers, managing human resources, are using information about them as an instrument for their powers in exchange for recognition. And perhaps due to insufficient status and recognition, personnel managers do not manage to take a strategic decision (Stankevičienė and Šarupičiūtė, 2014; Česynienė and Stankevičienė, 2012). Yet the experience that was shared by research participants witnesses that on the level of a group or individual they still manage to control the inflicting even though for a long time lasting conflicts. Perhaps this is not real prevention, but conflicts do not become widespread and employees may implement their tasks in group work, even though they do not communicate with each other anyway. On the other hand, introduction of a third, not involved person into group work is some kind of variety of mediation, which either consciously or not is used by Rasa (T2, S2). And the shared communication strategies are among the most important instruments in conflict management and their prevention, yet sometimes carelessly pronounced or misarticulated word or expression may inflict a storm. Perhaps that is why the largest personnel/ human resource organizations worldwide give so much attention to communication in various areas of a personnel manager's activity (The SHRM Body of Competency and Knowledge, 2016).

The third topic, reflecting the experience of ongoing conflict, is the most sensitive one for research participants (T3, S1, S2, S3). A proof of this is reflected not the constructive conflicts, on the basis of which the organization is recreated, and whose decision reminds of a creative act and collaboration. Unfortunately, unpleasant conflicts have been reflected, in addition to this, the narrations have revealed that two out of four research participants experienced conflicts during the research, which they were involved into (T3, S3).

Ema understands that by getting involved into the conflict she will be made to take a certain position, hence the aim to remain neutral protects it from consequences where the loss of neutrality could make harm on her reputation, to reduce the confidence of her colleagues. And confidence of employees and managers is a non arguable active assets of a personnel manager, since only by

receiving support he may implement his activities, ensure changes and not to be treated someone who wastes the funds and time of the organization (Chen, Hsu and Yip, 2011). Yet Ema notes that the arising conflicts inflict rage in her. She uses a very strong word – *rage* rather than *anger*. This allows assuming that Ema could have been personally involved into a conflict in the past. This assumption is reinforced by the experience she mentioned and a categorical statement “that it may never act emotionally” (T3, S1). Eva mentions that work with conflicts is “a very stressful issue”, and constant risking of one’s own statements with tag questions show her emotions and willingness to reinforce the arguments. Eva mentions “the black issues” and “failure to sleep at night” (T3, S1), which means her strong emotional and body reactions (Sondaitė and Norvilė, 2009; Sondaitė and Stunžėnaitė, 2010). Eva finds it painful to remember the ongoing conflict, she is still a part of, besides this, the conflict is getting more intensive and it is one of the most difficult ones to solve, as all conflicts related to values. Especially since this is a conflict with the manager (T3, S3). Yet, as Ema and Siga, Eva tries to rationalize and separate deeds from the personality and looks for positive issues in the occurred situation.

Rasa behaves in a completely different way from her colleagues, she does not suppress her emotions, but directs them to the performance of a piece of music, to the relation with the instrument. This kind of dissociation is her therapy since childhood (T3, S2). Siga also tries to rationalize, to control her reactions by thoughts, but she understands that she is going through a difficult conflict she does not want to mention.

To summarise, one can state that all the research participants, once faced with a conflict within an organization, have strong emotions over the experience of conflicts and try to use the strategies for avoiding, which in the measure of TKI conflict styles means vague inclination to collaborate and rather low assertiveness. One may assume that they raise their reputation and appreciate their relations at work, yet they do not always succeed and there is a style of competitiveness, due to which two participants experience conflicts (T3, S3). The results of our study provide an in-depth insight into the subjective experiences of personnel managers resolving conflict in the organization.

## Conclusions

In solving conflicts in the organization personnel managers get away from the situation, they try to remain neutral.

To maintain psychological balance, personnel managers use various cognitive or emotion directing

strategies: rational thoughts, awareness, and playing a musical instrument.

Even though personnel managers use conflict avoiding strategies, yet they do not manage to avoid conflicts, they go through them sensitively, they raise strong negative emotions and emotional reactions.

Our research provides insights and a deeper understanding of subjective experiences of personnel managers resolving conflict in the organization. It can lead to the following recommendations for organizations in Lithuania.

## Recommendations

Substantial insights, which were brought out after the research, the fact that personnel managers have a number of various activities and could get away from conflict management, yet organizations should create a conflict management system, the design of which would be based on a decision of interest based conflicts. On the one hand, this would make the personnel manager free from difficult experience, on the other hand, this would reduce negative consequences of conflicts, it would train employees and managers to constructively use the energy of the arising conflicts and would help to smoothly go through the stages of various changes.

## Future research

Further research should be based on the need to find out the reasons that preclude the organization from installation of the systems for managing conflicts based on interests.

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## Personalo vadovo išgyvenimai sprendžiant konfliktus organizacijoje

Santrauka

Globaliu tampa verslas, kultūriniai skirtumai, darbo ir šeimai skirto laiko balanso paieška ir nuolatiniai pokyčiai kels vis didesnę įtampą ir konfliktus. Šios srities mokslinių tyrimų analizė atskleidžia, kad yra sukurtos ir išbandytos galia, teisėmis ir interesais grįstos konfliktų valdymo sistemos (Roche ir Teague, 2012), tačiau jų, ypač interesais grįstų, naudojimas nėra plačiai paplitęs, tad nuoseklus požiūris į galimus konfliktus ir jų valdymą trūkumas sukelia streikų ir nepageidaujamų pasekmių

įmonių darbuotojams bei pačiai įmonių veiklai (Llorente, Luchi ir Sioli, 2013; Blazewski, 2009; Sondaitė ir Norvilė, 2009; Sondaitė ir Stunženaitė 2010). Nepriklausomai nuo to, ar organizacija turi įsivedusi konfliktų valdymo sistemą, funkcionuojant personalo padaliniai už darbuotojų ir darbuotojų–vadovų santykius atsako personalo vadovas (Armstrong, 2014, 5–6 p.; The SHRM Body of Competency and Knowledge, 2016). Paradoksalu, jau daugiau nei 100 metų personalo vadovai, pradėdami jų

pirmtakėmis, pradėjusiomis dirbti gerovės tarnautojomis / sekretorėmis (angl. *Welfare officers / secretaries*), rūpinasi žmonių gerove darbo vietoje, tačiau su jų profesija ir atskiromis jos funkcijomis – darbuotojų santykių ir konfliktų valdymu – susiję išgyvenimai netirti. Viena vertus, įvairūs tyrimai atskleidžia, kaip geriau konfliktus spręsti, tačiau trūksta žinių, kokia turi būti juos sprendžianti asmenybė, kaip ir kam ji turėtų būti psichologiškai pasirušusi, kokių išgyvenimų gali kilti valdant darbuotojų ar / ir darbuotojų-vadovų santykius, kaip tvarkytis su galimomis neigiamomis dalyvavimo konfliktų valdyme pasekmėmis. Nežinoma, su kokiomis nuostatomis personalo vadovai sprendžia konfliktus, juolab, kad pačių personalo padalinių statusas nėra labai aukštai vertinamas, jų atstovai savo vertę turi nuolat demonstruoti ir pagrįsti (Stankevičienė ir Šarupičiūtė, 2014; Amalou-Döpke ir Süß, 2014).

Vis daugiau įmonių supranta, kad kvalifikuotas personalas – didžiausias organizacijos turtas, tad didėja personalo vadovų vaidmuo ir atsakomybė ne tik kuriant personalo politiką, ugdant darbuotojų kompetencijas, motyvavimo ir atlygio sistemas, bet ir didinant bendrą žmoniškųjų išteklių gerovę, pasitenkinimą darbu, įsipareigojimą organizacijai, palaikant organizacijos klimata ir kultūrą. Todėl aktuali ir paties personalo vadovo psichologinė gerovė, kuri turi įtakos jo veiklai ir aplinkai.

Šio tyrimo tikslas – atskleisti, kokius išgyvenimus patiria personalo vadovas, sprenddamas konfliktus organizacijoje.

Tyrimo dalyvavo 3 įmonių personalo vadovės ir 1 įmonės personalo specialistė, kurioje dirba 160 darbuotojų padalinio darbu, atliekanti jame personalo vadovei prilygstančias funkcijas (visos 4 moterys). Tyrimo dalyvių amžius – 25–42 metai. Tyrimo dalyvės buvo atrinktos tikslinės atrankos būdu, turėjo ne mažesnę kaip 2 metų darbo užimamose pareigose patirtį. Duomenys rinkti pusiau struktūruoto interviu būdu, tyrimo dalyviams užduoti trys klausimai: 1) Su kokio pobūdžio konfliktais susiduria personalo vadovas organizacijoje? 2) Kokiu (kokiais) būdu (būdais) personalo vadovas sprendžia konfliktus organizacijoje? 3) Kokius vidinius išgyvenimus patiria personalo vadovas sprenddamas konfliktus organizacijoje?

Tyrimo naudotas teminės analizės metodas, kuris suteikia galimybę pamatyti ir suvokti bendras ar asmenines tyrimo dalyvių prasmes ir patirtis, sistemingai jas struktūruoti į prasminius vienetus – temas, atsakyti į tyrimo klausimus.

Pateikti tyrimų rezultatai – atskirų tyrimo dalyvių asmeninės patirties prasminės temos, sujungtos į bendras, visiems tyrimo dalyviams būdingas 3 temas. Pirmą temą yra „Pokyčių sukelti konfliktai“, ji priskirta organizacijoje vykstančių konfliktų pobūdžiams (potemės „Struktūriniai pokyčiai“ ir „Vadovų kaita“). Nustatyta, kad pagrindinė konfliktų priežastis yra nuolatiniai organizacijos pokyčiai, susiję su reorganizacija ar vadovų kaita. Tokie konfliktai trunka ilgai, jie vis prisimenami, šiuos konfliktus reflektuojant kyla stiprių emocijų. Pokyčių sukeltų konfliktų neišvengia nei valstybinių, nei užsienio kapitalo įmonių personalo vadovai, tai yra duotybė, kurią reikia priimti stoisškai ir pagalvoti, kaip situaciją valdyti, padaryti palankią ir naudingą įmonei.

Antra tema – „Konfliktų prevencija“ – skirta tyrimo dalyvių pasirinktiems konfliktų sprendimo būdams (potemės „Organizacijos lygmenyje (strategiškai: kultūra, vertybės, atsakomybė)“, „Grupės / individo lygmenyje (taktika)“). Skirtingose šalyse ir organizacijose naudojama daug būdų ir skirtingų požiūrių, kaip konfliktų, ypač neproduktyvių, skaičių galima mažinti, tačiau tyrimas parodė, kad dalyvių organizacijose dominuoja teisėmis grįsti metodai, o pažangūs ir jau daugiau nei 30 metų pripažinti ir taikomi interesais grįsti metodai dar nėra populiarūs. Tyrimo dalyvių patirtis atskleidžia, kad grupės ir individo lygmenyje pavyksta suvaldyti ir jau ilgą laiką besitęsiančius konfliktus. Gal tai nėra tikroji prevencija, bet konfliktai nesiplėtoja, darbuotojai gali atlikti grupinio darbo užduotis. Patys personalo vadovai, sprenddami konfliktus organizacijoje, atsitraukia nuo situacijos, siekia išlikti neutralūs.

Trečia tema – „Konflikto išgyvenimas“ – skirta pasakojimui apie išgyvenamus organizacijoje, sprendžiamus ar dalyvės įtraukusius konfliktus (potemės „Atsitraukimas nuo situacijos, siekis išlikti neutraliam“, „Darbas su savi“, „Jautriai išgyvenami konfliktai, į kuriuos personalo vadovas įsitraukęs“). Ši tema, atspindinti konfliktų išgyvenimą, yra jautriausia tyrimo dalyvėms. Norėdami išlaikyti psichologinę pusiausvyrą, personalo vadovai naudoja įvairias kognityvines arba emocijų nukreipimo strategijas: racionalias mintis, įsisąmoninimą, grojimą muzikiniu instrumentu. Net ir vengimo strategijos neapsaugo, konfliktų išvengti nepavyksta, jie jautriai išgyvenami, sukelia stiprius neigiamus jausmus ir emocines reakcijas.

**Pagrindiniai žodžiai:** personalo vadovas, išgyvenimai, konfliktai organizacijoje, teminė analizė.