



VILNIUS UNIVERSITY
BUSINESS SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Eimantė Vaitekūnaitė

MASTER'S THESIS

<p><i>KONFLIKTŲ VALDYMAS IR REIKŠMĖ PROJEKTO SĖKMEI, ĮGYVENDINANT VIEŠOJO SEKTORIAUS TARPTAUTINIUS PROJEKTUS</i></p>	<p><i>CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR PROJECT SUCCESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC SECTOR INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS</i></p>
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SUMMARY

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

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Conflicts are inevitable and have a major impact on the dynamics of project teams. For this reason, conflict management is one of the best solutions for a productive and efficient team. In this case, project managers and the project team should work together to use and improve conflict management strategies within the project team to achieve better project results.

Aim and objectives: The aim of the Master's thesis is to analyze the characteristics of conflicts, their management, and impact on the implementation of public sector international projects. The study recognizes the unique challenges of cultural diversity, communication dynamics, and the context of global project management. This study covers two groups of respondents: project managers and project team members, and therefore the differences and characteristics of conflicts from the perspective of each group are analyzed.

Research methodology: A qualitative research method was applied to obtain empirical information. The research was carried out using a semi-structured interview: seven project managers and five team members who work in the public sector on international projects in Lithuania were interviewed. The results were analyzed using the previously developed theoretical framework.

Research results: The results of the study show that conflict and its management in public sector international project teams strongly contribute to project success, performance, and results. Furthermore, it was discovered that no conflict management strategy is used in the public sector to help achieve project results more quickly and efficiently, and it is suggested

that public sector organizations working on international projects should consider and use it in order to achieve project success.

The thesis provides a basis for future research and practical insights for project managers and stakeholders facing the challenges of managing international projects.

SANTRAUKA

VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETO VERSLO MOKYKLA TARPTAUTINĖS PROJEKTŲ VADYBOS PROGRAMA

Baigiamojo darbo autorius	Eimantė Vaitekūnaitė
Pilnas baigiamojo darbo pavadinimas	Konfliktų valdymas ir reikšmė projekto sėkmei, įgyvendinant viešojo sektoriaus tarptautinius projektus
Baigiamojo darbo vadovas:	Assoc. prof., Dr. Dalia Bagdžiūnienė
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Konfliktai yra neišvengiami ir daro didelę įtaką projektų komandos dinamikai. Dėl šios priežasties konfliktų valdymas yra vienas iš geriausių sprendimų siekiant produktyvios ir veiksmingos komandos veiklos projekto įgyvendinimo procese. Projektų vadovai ir visa projekto komanda turėtų dirbti kartu ir naudoti bei tobulinti konfliktų valdymo strategijas, kad pasiektų geresnių projekto rezultatų.

Tikslas ir uždaviniai: išanalizuoti konfliktų ypatumus, jų valdymą ir poveikį viešojo sektoriaus tarptautinių projektų įgyvendinimui. Tyrime atsižvelgiama į unikalius iššūkius, kuriuos kelia kultūrų įvairovė, bendravimo dinamika ir specifinis tarptautinių projektų valdymo kontekstas. Šis tyrimas apima dvi grupes respondentų - projektų vadovus ir projekto komandos narius, todėl taip pat identifikuojami konfliktų ir jų valdymo ypatumai kiekvienos grupės požiūriu.

Tyrimo metodika: Empirinei informacijai gauti pasirinktas kokybinis tyrimo metodas. Tyrimas atliktas taikant pusiau struktūruotą interviu. Buvo apklausti septyni projektų vadovai ir penki projektų komandos nariai, dirbantys Lietuvos viešojo sektoriaus tarptautiniuose projektuose. Rezultatai buvo analizuojami remiantis tyrimui parengta teorine schema.

Tyrimo rezultatai: Nustatyta, kad konfliktai ir jų valdymas tarptautinėse viešojo sektoriaus projektų komandose turi įtakos projekto sėkmei, įgyvendinimo procesams bei rezultatams. Gauta, kad viešajame sektoriuje nėra taikomos konfliktų valdymo strategijos, kurios padėtų greičiau ir efektyviau pasiekti projekto rezultatų. Todėl viešojo sektoriaus

organizacijoms, dirbančioms su tarptautiniais projektais, siūloma apsvarstyti ir taikyti konfliktų valdymo strategijas projekto sėkmei užtikrinti.

Šiame darbe pateikiamas pagrindas būsimiems tyrimams ir praktinės įžvalgos projektų vadovams ir suinteresuotosioms šalims, susiduriančioms su tarptautinių projektų valdymo iššūkiais.

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INTRODUCTION

This fast-changing world presents many new challenges to which all people must adapt. It is not surprising that it is not only natural disasters or the consequences of globally spread diseases that we have to deal with, but also one of the most unexpected and unpredictable forces - human beings themselves. Every day, we are confronted with a bunch of human emotions, different expectations, and constant ups and downs, especially in the work environment. In such circumstances, conflicts become an inevitable aspect of our communication, which can cause disagreements and unsolved problems in our world. The common mission in working together is therefore to prevent these conflicts or to manage them effectively, finding optimal solutions for all parties involved. Hence, conflict management plays an important role in people's daily lives as well as in social and business environments. In order to avoid conflicts, it is necessary to be aware that conflicts are very different each with different consequences and possible solutions.

According to the Workplace Conflict Statistics research (Pollack Peacebuilding Systems, 2023), the vast majority (85%) of employees at all levels experience conflict to some extent. Furthermore, employees dealing with workplace conflict are 12% less productive. It is also important to stress, that according to the statistics, 60% of employees never received basic conflict management classes or training for conflict resolution in the workplace. Nevertheless, of those who did, 95% claimed that the training helped them navigate workplace conflict positively and seek mutually beneficial outcomes. Moreover, the statistics show that conflict management can have a direct impact on the project's success since it appeared that 9% employees have noticed that projects tend to fail due to workplace conflicts.

As can be seen, there are significant issues with conflicts emerging in the workplace. Therefore, conflict management is a huge trend these days and is starting widely used in today's world for teams to work efficiently and collaboratively.

Unfortunately, there is not a lot of research related to conflict management in the public sector rather than the private sector, so wider research could be beneficial to investigate the conflicts and the use of conflict management in public sector organizations.

The **research problem** is linked with conflict management and project success in international projects within the public sector. Furthermore, it is crucial to find out conflict management strategies that play a key role in the overall success of projects. It takes into

account the particular challenges posed by cultural diversity, communication dynamics, and other specific circumstances of international public sector project implementation.

Master's study aims to analyze the characteristics of conflicts, their management, and impact on the implementation of public sector international projects.

Analyzing the problem and aim of this study, the following research questions arise:

1. What are the common types, sources, and challenges related to conflicts encountered in the implementation of public sector international projects?
2. How do cultural diversity and differences in communication styles among international project team members impact the occurrence and resolution of conflicts in public sector projects?
3. What are the main factors that lead to project success in the context of conflict and conflict management?
4. What conflict management strategies, and techniques are commonly used in the public sector to address conflicts in international projects, and what is their effectiveness in achieving project success?
5. What intervention strategies are important in conflicts prevention while implementing public sector international projects?

The **objectives** of the Master's Thesis:

1. To analyze theories of conflict management and its importance for project success in implementing public sector international projects.
2. To empirically investigate the most common types and sources of conflict encountered in international public sector projects.
3. To identify the key factors contributing to effective conflict management in international project teams.
4. To assess the role of cultural diversity in impacting conflict dynamics and resolution in international projects.
5. To determine the relationship between constructive conflict management and project success in public sector international projects.
6. To reveal intervention strategies for conflict prevention and effective management while implementing public sector international projects.

7. To make practical recommendations for conflict management based on empirical research.

The research methodology. The empirical information was obtained from primary and secondary sources. The first stage of information gathering focused on a literature review. The empirical research is based on a qualitative research strategy, which includes interviews with team members and project managers working in. A semi-structured interview guide was developed for this study. The method helped to receive qualitative research data and to analyze more deeply different aspects of conflicts and conflict management in international projects in public sector organizations, to reveal the impact of conflict management on project success.

The structure of the Master's Thesis. The Master's thesis consists of the following key parts: literature review, research methodology, research results and analysis, conclusions, and recommendations. In the theoretical review, the main concepts of conflict, conflict management, and project success are described. The research methodology section presents the methods and techniques used in the study. After that, the results of the study are presented and analyzed, and at the end research conclusions, limitations, and practical recommendations are presented.

However, there are some **limitations of this study**: due to the scope of the research area, this article is limited in scope and depth. This study is seen as an initial one, which is unlikely to provide definitive and accurate results in this field, but may provide a framework that will guide future research.

Keywords: conflict, conflict management, project success, international projects, cultural aspect, project team, public sector.

1. THEORETICAL PART

This chapter provides the theoretical background and explains the main concepts and the theoretical model of the study: a detailed description and analysis of the literature on conflict, conflict management, international projects, and project success factors. A framework for the empirical research prepared for this study is based on the theoretical background presented in this chapter.

1.1. Workplace conflicts and conflict management

There are many publications and research that concentrate on organizational psychology, human resources, and sociology in the field of workplace conflicts. These studies have provided valuable insights into the causes, consequences, and management strategies of workplace conflict. Nevertheless, conflict management in the workplace is not fully investigated due to a fast-changing work environment (caused by the pandemic, Russian aggression against Ukraine, etc.), work ethics, relations between employer and employee, and many other aspects. Conflict and (un)effective conflict management make a huge impact on the well-being of employees, the performance of the organization, and workplace dynamics in general. To comprehensively examine workplace conflicts and conflict management, it is essential to grasp the definitions of these pivotal terms and consider the various ways in which they can be interpreted.

In the 20th century, the definition of conflict by the researchers was claimed not unanimously. L. Coser (1956) described the conflict as a “struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the opponents aim to neutralize, injure, or eliminate the rivals”. In 1990 R. Fisher claimed that conflict is characterized by a misalignment of objectives or values among two or more parties within a relationship, accompanied by efforts to influence one another and the presence of hostile sentiments. Nevertheless, the modern conflict definition that was presented by Wilmot and Hocker (2010), combined all previous researchers’ statements and provided a wider definition - “conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals”.

Until the early 20th century, conflict was seen only in its negative and destructive aspects. Researcher M. P. Follet (1920) gave a new perspective on the conflict, noting that it could have a positive impact and be beneficial to society. While her work did not necessarily

provide a concrete definition of conflict in the traditional sense, she emphasized the notion of "integrative conflict" and focused on the potential positive impact of conflict on organizations in society as a whole. I was a huge mind-changer when conflicts started being considered not destructive, but constructive in an organization if approached in a productive and collaborative manner. W. H. Schmidt (1974) also came out with the negative and positive outcomes of the conflict. On the negative side, conflicts increase the distance between team members, make the team climate uncomfortable, lead to mistrust, or even those who do not deal with conflicts leave the organization, while on the positive side, better ideas can be generated, new insights can be found, spark transformation, enhance interpersonal communication, creativity increases, each team member has the opportunity to try out his/her own abilities, etc. From that time, the conflict was no longer evaluated as a bad aspect, but more like a healthy phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is healthy only then, when correctly managed, and leads to fear negotiations and structural adaptation. It was seen that the best possible way to approach is not to avoid it, but to adopt specific tactics that would benefit the company. This is why conflict management was introduced at the beginning of the 20th century.

In the past four decades, alongside the expansion of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), a noteworthy evolution has taken place, introducing a distinct method of addressing disputes termed conflict management. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) generally refers to a range of dispute resolution processes and techniques that parties can use to resolve their disputes with the help of a third party. They are used for disagreeing parties who are unable to come to an agreement without going to court. Alternative dispute resolution is now also increasingly used as a tool to help resolve disputes in the court system. Apparently, conflict resolution become one of the main objectives of all ADR processes, and conflict management here is become of the best approaches to solve it.

Not surprisingly, conflict management by different scholars is described differently, but mainly the same aspects are introduced by each of them. According to Kolb and Bartunek (1992), conflict management is considered a set of tools and techniques designed to assist parties in preventing, managing, or resolving differences. It demonstrates the possibility to identify and manage conflict intelligently, fairly, and, above all, effectively, especially in a business environment. In conflict management, incompatibilities and disagreements arising from different objectives, needs, multicultural aspects, etc., are or should be addressed and resolved by finding the best solution for all parties to the conflict. Conflict management, on the other hand, is the process of reducing the negative aspects and increasing the positive aspects of conflict, also it increases learning and group outcomes.

Since every conflict in various organizations and companies is routine, conflict management is a necessity. Therefore, organizational conflicts in the workplace are an integral part of the whole conflict management. Organizational conflict always has more or less the same causes. Usually, conflict begins when one person perceives that the other may interfere with their efforts and could endanger them in any way the other space. The conflict and organizations are so getting together, that it is said, that organizations do not exist without conflict and conflict cannot exist without people who work in the organization.

Also, conflict management is very crucial for organizations since it strongly depends on the results achieved. If organizational conflicts are properly managed, group performance can be improved. In the past years, the organizations evolved and the new forms of work organizations expanded, new human resource innovations were introduced. Therefore, better conflict management practices in organizations have become a key element in reducing the number of conflicts. The important developments were about how to deal with individual employees as well – work groups.

Dreu and Gelfand (2008), identified 4 main causes of conflict in organizational environments.

1. **Changes** – the management as well as the rest of the team members appreciates when the project goes according to the plan and without any urgent and unclear alterations that could affect the goal of the task. Unfortunately, changes are introduced at each step of the way and the need for negotiations and setting the priorities are the most important thing within the team when the changes arise.
2. **Globalization** – due to globalization in economies and political elements, organizations have to deal with a diversified workforce, that leads to different work of different employees. Here, the cultural environment plays a significant role. Teams and managers must engage with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, religions, and personal perspectives. Failure to delve into these aspects invariably leads to conflicts.
3. **Communication** – these days online work is widely acceptable and due to less communication time, misunderstandings arise. That leads to more conflicts among the team members. Especially, these days, when remote work is widely spread, miscommunication increases which can harm the performance of the organization.
4. **Teamwork** – in these modern times, a new team approach, called self-managing teams, was introduced. Even though it created independence and self-responsibility among colleagues, often it welcomes more conflict situations than in a hierarchical team. In addition,

each team member has a different work culture, character, and routine, which can lead to conflicts on a daily basis.

The current studies emphasize the changes as one of the most important conflict sources. Even though in some of the theories, the changes should be always welcome, in reality, it is often judged and considered as the one that created the mess, uncleanliness, leaving the comfort zone, and other consequences. Armstrong (1990) noticed that changes are always with us but not necessarily always welcomed. However, without conflict, the change does not appear, but also, without change, no conflict emerges as well. In 1956 L. A. Coser said that changes could lead to the emergence of different systems or different requirements. Katz and Kahn (1978) also complement L. A. Coser (1956) by noticing that “every aspect of organizational life that creates order and coordination of effort must overcome tendencies to action and in the fact lies the potentiality of conflict”.

Changes impact the conflict in different ways. Thamhain and Wilemon (1975) have found seven major sources of conflict specifically in project management that include different types of changes and make them the most crucial reasons for the conflict.

Procedural changes, that mainly focus on simple work procedures. Each of the departments knows their responsibilities and works according to the procedures that were given (e.g., contract for the IT company – project assistant makes the contract according to the template he/she was given, then project managers check the terms that were agreed, finance officers make their input regarding the payment procedures, etc.)

Personnel changes, that focus on moving people in or out of the project to resolve personality conflicts that arose working together (e.g., the IT expert does not like the pace of the other expert and it makes a significant issue for reaching the project goals, so one of them are transferred to the other project to satisfy both parties and restore the productivity).

Authority changes focus on authorities and responsibilities changes to avoid conflict (e.g., when the leading person of the team does not have authority and some changes regarding this aspect should be introduced – changing the team leader or setting clear lines between the team and the leader, etc.).

Layout changes focus on workspace issues (e.g. if some team members are distracted by others by sitting near each other, the arrangement of the office is needed).

Resource changes focus on resource distribution (e.g., due to a lack of accounting resources, the project managers are not happy that some of the financial work is not done timely, so the solution to avoid the conflict is to hire a new accountant so each the projects will have their own).

Due to the variety of conflicts and their types, organizations need different strategies to deal with them. Researchers identify the 4 orientations' approach as the main method used by organizations to measure the process and outcomes of conflict: *win-win*, *lose-lose*, *lose-win*, and *win-lose*. It will more widely be introduced later in regards to the M. Rahim (2002) theory on different strategies. But briefly, in a *win-win* solution, all parties can satisfy their basic interests and are satisfied with the received outcomes; in a *lose-lose* situation, the parties go into a conflict where the consequences are negative for all the parties involved, and *win-lose* situation, where one party receives a full positive gain and the other stays without any gain at the expense of the other party. Later, the fifth type emerged that stated that sometimes compromise (small win) could be the best option in the negotiation process. Compromise decisions are often made when both parties are pressed for time, have incomplete information, or believe they have to decide in circumstances where both parties have equal power. Apparently, according to Covey (2020), an outcome that is not win-win in the long term is ultimately a loss for all parties involved. In this case, managers must obtain a win-win situation in the negotiations, otherwise, any other option would be inappropriate because alternative positions lead to mistrust in the relationship and are virtually guaranteed to worsen the long-term relationship between the parties. In addition, research shows that conflict management can be useful in many everyday communication situations even when the conflict itself is not intense, but the situation requires harmonizing the different opinions of team members. In this case, given that team members can make a great team, they can turn potential conflict into a productive and constructive communication way. Nowadays, one of the goals of organizations is to make conflict worthwhile and useful for the organization itself.

1.2. Conflicts in project teams

Conflict becomes very significant for the project teams, especially for the team members, that are oriented to project success. The project-related conflict between the project team and non-project groups can be detrimental to project results (Yu-Chih Liu J., Chen H., Chen C. C., Sheu T. S., 2011). Moreover, some researchers, who have analyzed the contingency perspective of conflicts in projects and organizations, have found that it is crucial to evaluate the positive and negative impacts of conflict on the success of the project team by distinguishing between the 3 main types of conflict: interpersonal conflicts (relational tensions between team members), task conflicts (when stakeholders do not agree on the priority, scope

or requirements of the project), and process conflicts (how to perform the task in order to complete the project goals).

Other scholars in the field of organizational behaviour have a bit changed the types of conflict and referred to conflicts that occur within organizations as organizational conflict, which can manifest in various forms, such as **intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, and inter-organizational conflicts** (Almost, Wolff, Stewart-Pyne, McCormick, Strachan, S'Sauza (2015), Beheshtifar, Zare (2013), Derlega, Cukur, Kuang, Forsyth (2007), Lumineau, Eckerd, Handley (2015)). Intrapersonal conflicts are conflicts that arise within an individual and relate to his/her values, priorities, emotions, etc., while interpersonal conflicts are conflicts in which two or more people are already involved, and which can be expressed in written verbal communication. Interpersonal conflict is described as a dynamic interaction that occurs when individuals experience negative emotional reactions as a result of disagreements and obstacles that prevent them from achieving their goals. This type of conflict always arises from personal disagreements as culture, values, perceptions, personalities, etc. In this kind of power struggle between individuals, the prevailing tactics frequently involve an exaggerated utilization of rewards and penalties, threats and emotional manipulation, or persuasive tactics but also be introduced in respectful disagreement scope. The interpersonal conflict could arise without any clue that it is there. Another interesting type of the conflict is intergroup type, which reflects the disagreements among teams, for instance, in the workplace it would be different departments, during the war, different armies representing different states or delegations representing different opinions. It was noticed, that groups are more competitive and less cooperative than individuals among other individuals. Broader of all 4 types it is an inter-organizational conflict style that covers a wide spectrum of cooperative interactions, encompassing strategic alliances, joint ventures, buyer-supplier agreements, franchising, cross-sector partnerships, networks, trade associations, and many more. It is very important to stress that in this case, the conflict could not only make a small impact between individuals or groups, but it influences the organizational level.

Team conflicts could be also divided into task conflicts, relationship conflicts, and process conflicts (duties and resource delegation highlighting who will do what and how much each one will do) (Beheshtifar Malikeh and Zare Elham, 2013). Task conflict is a perception of differences in attitudes and opinions related to a group task, it is rational behaviour. Such conflict in project management happens because of such aspects as time, costs, and quality. Task conflict helps to increase the performance of the team. Relationship conflict indicates

that perceptions of interpersonal incompatibility, feelings such as tension and friction, dislike of group members, and feelings such as frustration, disappointment, and annoyance occur. The relations often happen between the project manager and team members, and other stakeholders) and are linked to low performance. Process conflicts arise for reasons such as different approaches to a task by individual project teams or the overall organization of project tasks. This is closely linked to the problems related to the rights, responsibilities, and advantages given to each project team. From these team conflict types, it can be seen that a team should have particular competencies in order to deal with conflicts in the right way. That is why organizations must invest in conflict management training for the team and knowledge gaining for better employee performance and overall organization image.

Managing conflict is one of the major works for the project managers among the team or the project stakeholders. Surprisingly, on average, a manager spends 20% of his or her time resolving conflicts (Yingshan, Zhu, Hu, Cui, 2016). In order to have a great manager who can deal with these conflict issues and bring home win-win situations, it is important to prepare them with the training and additional internal procedures of the organization. The Managerial grid (Blake, Mounon, 1964), which will be analyzed more deeply in the next section, is considered the perfect tool for project managers. Since conflict is the fuel for the Grid training, the aim of it is to encourage participants to confront the underlying issues of conflict, rather than focusing only on the views being defended. Team members are encouraged to share and combine their opinions to arrive at a common team view derived from a broader base of information than that held by any individual team member. In theory, this should lead to a higher quality opinion than the independent opinion of one team member.

It is also important to note that project managers have often had to deal with conflicts in the traditional way - by reducing, suppressing, or eliminating them. Over the years, a modern approach has come into fashion and shaken the world by introducing different types of team management based on understanding, listening, and other soft management techniques. Soft management also supports the approach of seeing employees as valuable assets, a source of competitive advantage due to their commitment, skills, quality, and adaptability. Having seen the effectiveness of this strategy, other organizations have also started to adopt a more flexible approach to management. However, it is important to stress that a hard management approach cannot be completely forgotten and must be mixed with a soft management approach, as a hard voice is also needed to manage team members of different types and personalities.

But, overall, as conflict can in some cases be beneficial, project managers should focus on managing it effectively rather than suppressing it or eliminating it at all. There are 2 different

effects of conflicts: individual-level effectiveness and group-level effectiveness. Individual level often refers to personal development, gain of knowledge, deepening the skills of certain abilities, and personal motivation. The group-level effectiveness focuses on team impacts such as the increased ability to work together as a team, gain knowledge that is beneficial for the whole team, and deepen relationships among each other. It is very beneficial to the project team since the team matures in this way and can work more productively. Even some researchers think that conflict is a major aspect for the organization to grow and increase its performance.

Nevertheless, the question remains, if the conflict does not cause more damage than gives positive outcomes? Frequently, it is noticeable that conflict in the team damages relationships and trust in each other rather than having some good effect on it. On the other hand, as stated by McNamara (2013) conflict is not the problem, however, poor management of the conflict is the problem. So, effective conflict management fosters positive relationships between team members. Moreover, teams that can resolve conflicts constructively often work more cohesively and achieve better results.

Having all the aspects of project management nuances, it is needed to stress that project managers should be competitive and have leadership, management, and diplomacy skills to maintain good relationships with stakeholders, as well as conflict management skills to mitigate the conflict throughout the project implementation. To achieve effective conflict management, the project manager should apply the correct conflict management style that will be introduced further.

1.3. Project success and conflict management

Based on the compiled research and studies, it becomes evident that every organization's objective, when engaged in projects, is to achieve remarkable success. Therefore, there are so many different opinions on what kind of factors can lead to the success of the project. Also, there are different understandings of success, which is why it is important to describe the success individually to make sure what it is trying to be reached. According to Turner (2015), success is when the project achieves the overall strategic objectives.

It is important to stress, that there are differences as well as similarities between the terms “project success” and “project management success”. Project success concentrates more on the evaluation of the achievement of the project's goals and objectives, while “project management success” is more related to the traditional approach to the results in terms of time, cost, and quality (*Figure 1*). Nevertheless, it is feasible for a project to be deemed successful

despite encountering ineffective project management, and conversely, for well-executed project management to yield an unsuccessful project outcome.

Researchers Yong and Nur (2017) noticed the emergence of new criteria that supplement the traditional “time, cost, quality”, approach to project success: user/ customer satisfaction, soft project goals, or impact of the business or organizations.

Figure 1. Traditional approach to project success



Source: Composed by the author based on Pollack, Helm, and Adler (2018).

Even though this thesis will concentrate more on project success, as mentioned before, project success has not only differences but and similarities to project management success, so this aspect will be touched on. For instance, project management success also matches the traditional approach to project success, but the formulation of the criteria is a bit different (Yong et al.):

1. Delivering on time (traditional approach aspect - “time”).
2. Completing the work in the frames of the project budget (traditional approach aspect - “costs”).
3. Fulfilling the requirement of the project (traditional approach aspect - “quality”).

Shenhar, Dvir, Levy, and Maltz (2001) searched for new definitions of success and, specifically, project success aspects. Even though society has not moved away from the traditional model, new insights have been found. The new four dimensions for the project's success were formalized:

1. **Project efficiency** (meeting constraints) –refers to how the project meets the resource constraints. While the success of this dimension may indicate that the project has been well managed and effective, it may not indicate that the project will be considered a

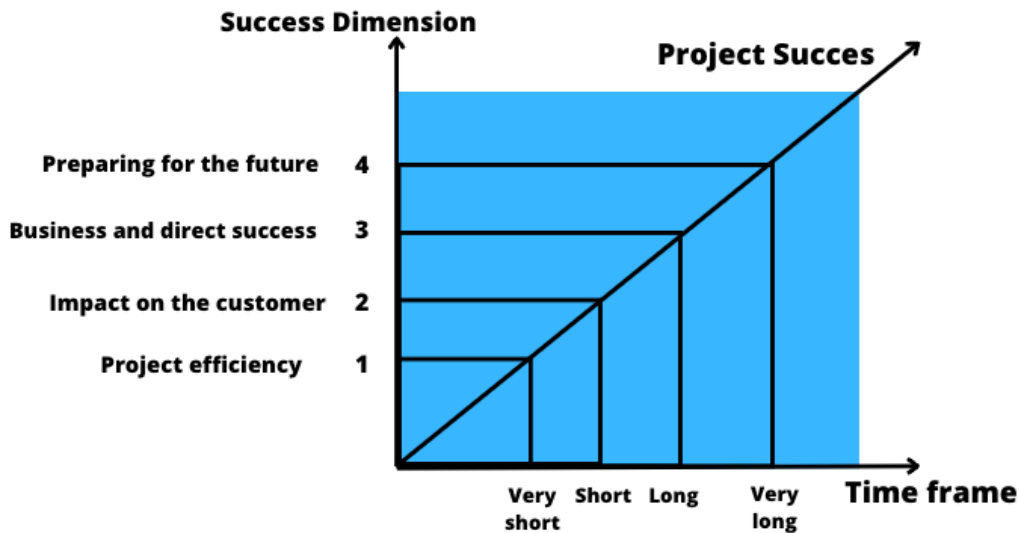
success in the long term and will benefit the organization later on. Nevertheless, efficiency is very important for the success of implementation.

2. **Impact on the customer** - meeting customer requirements and needs. This aspect also includes the level of customer satisfaction, the extent to which the customer uses the product, and whether the customer is willing to return in the future to obtain the product or another project.
3. **Business and direct success** - not so immediate impact of the project on the organization compared to the previous factors. It is important to evaluate if the project delivered sales, revenues, and profits as it was expected and predicted. In addition, it is also evaluated if the project contributed to the organization's performance increase.
4. **Preparing for the future** – an organization's preparedness for its future and opportunities in the longer term. This aspect evaluates if the project helped to develop new skills for the future and if the organization needed technologies and competencies to expand and evolve.

In addition, project success dimensions can lead to project success during different periods. One could take a few weeks, while for other dimensions it could take years to see the consequences (Shenhar et al.) (*Figure 2*).

1. The dimension “Project efficiency” can be evaluated exclusively in the immediate short term, typically during a project's execution or/and immediately upon project conclusion.
2. The second dimension “Impact on the customer” can be assessed shortly thereafter, once the project has been handed over to the customer, and customer satisfaction could be seen within a few months of getting the product.
3. The third dimension “Business and direct success” takes one or more years to assess since it could be evaluated when a substantial number of sales has been achieved.
4. The fourth dimension “Preparing for the future” can be evaluated only after a longer period – from 3 or 5 years.

Figure 2. Time frame of success dimensions



Source: Composed by the author based on Shenhar, Dvir, Levy, and Maltz (2001).

With that said, what are the key factors for the implementation and success of projects? Later researchers such as Thomas and Anu (2018) stated that the most crucial success factors in the project are the following: (1) project innovation, (2) team performance, (3) risk management, (4) resources controlling, and (5) schedule monitoring. Even though these days there are a lot of studies done on project success factors, the authors came to different conclusions on which factor best describes project success. One states that communication is the best success factor, others, that planning is the most crucial aspect, and third - objectives and goals formulation.

One of the newest approaches to project success factors is described by Radukovic and Sjekavica (2017). They stated that key factors that lead to project success are the following:

1. Competent team
2. Competent project manager
3. Coordinated manager and team
4. Adequate organization structure
5. Culture
6. Atmosphere
7. High usage of project methodologies, methods, tools, and techniques

As previously described, the project team is an essential part of the project results and performance of the organization. Mainly, when project teams are running projects on a day-to-

day basis, they tend not to pay attention to the general organization view. They focus on the operational work and just try to get the job done. This mindset of project teams may help to complete the work efficiently without wasting time and money, but it can be disappointing in terms of overall organizational results. Here it is seen the traditional approach to the project success – teams believe that their job is successful when the project is finalized on time, within the given budget and requirements as well as if the customer is satisfied.

Moreover, additional attention to achieving project success should be given to the project manager, who accomplishes success through the project team by motivating them meanwhile meeting the client's and stakeholders' requirements and satisfaction. While there exists no universally accepted definition of project success, it is a common consensus among authors that effective actions taken by the project manager play a pivotal role in its attainment. Throughout the project lifecycle, project managers have to deal with a wide range of decision-making processes, from project initiation to project closure. This responsibility becomes particularly important in the early stages when careful project planning is essential. To ensure good decision-making, project managers need to have a good understanding of the key factors that contribute to project success. However, due to the unique characteristics of each project, including its nature, scope, complexity, methodology, and other aspects, it can be difficult to identify precisely the success factors that are most important for a particular project. So, as mentioned above, a project's implementation depends on constant communication between team members. Therefore, it is natural that different, even conflicting, opinions may be expressed, leading to conflict situations. It is therefore important for project managers and team members to understand and manage such situations. Specific conflict management strategies are presented in section 1.4.

Today's changing world adapted the approach to responsibilities and work scope of the project managers by putting them in the strategic leader's position. The project manager not only concentrates on the "job done" specifics but also becomes responsible for the general organization's aspects. The project success and the product success become the same thing with the same goals. Finally, in the near future, projects will no longer be just operational tools for implementing the strategy but will become the engines that drive the strategy (Shenhar et al).

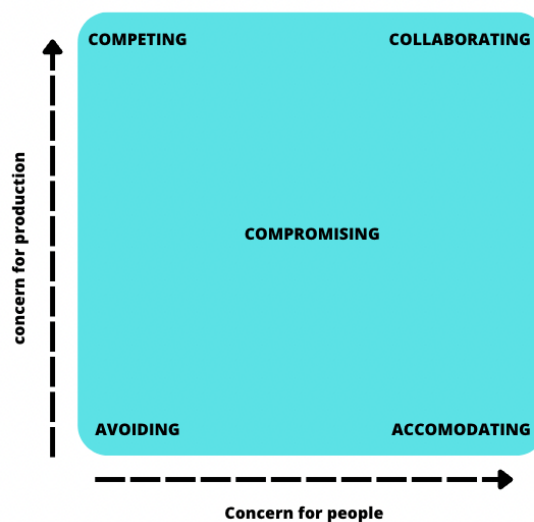
In conclusion, the research examining the factors contributing to project success reveals that internal communication and conflict management within the team are among the most important factors that should be given special attention.

1.4. Theoretical approaches to conflict management

The first germ of conflict management was called “peacebuilding” stated by the UN in the 1990s and was more used when talking about government and, as mentioned above, for judicial matters, but new approaches and models were soon introduced which allowed the use of conflict management in other areas.

The first conflict management models were introduced in the 20th century in Blake and Mouton's 1964 study "The Managerial Grid", which identified 5 different ways of managing conflict: competing, collaborating, avoiding, accommodating, and compromising. It is important to stress that the managerial grid model does not directly address conflict management itself as it refers more to the field of leadership and management, but some scholars and practitioners have drawn connections between leadership styles and conflict resolution approaches. Thus, 5 core leadership styles were replaced by 5 conflict resolution strategies: **competition, collaboration, avoiding, accommodation, and compromise**. After investigating the similarities and differences between these 5 conflict styles, it has been clarified that the styles varied in 2 different dimensions – concerns for people and concerns for production. The people were categorized into five styles according to which of the following attributes they psychologically occupied in the five two-dimensional grid positions (*Figure 3*). Nevertheless, the Grid leadership style model can potentially be decomposed into several dimensions, of which conflict resolution style is only one.

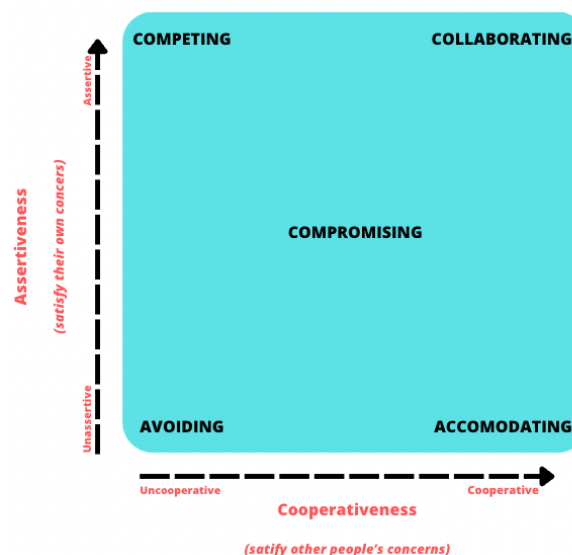
Figure 3. Grid as a Model for Conflict Management



Source: Composed by the author based on Molloy (1998).

In 1976 K.W. Thomas interpreted this model a bit differently by combining 2 dimensions: “cooperation, or attempting to satisfy the other party's concerns, and assertiveness, or attempting to satisfy one's own concerns”. W. Thomas complements Blake’s and Mounon’s 5 different approaches model by expanding the meanings as „competition is assertive and uncooperative, collaboration is assertive and cooperative, avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative, accommodation is unassertive and cooperative, and compromise is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness “. Moreover, Thomas and Kilmann (1974) in relation to the Managerial Grid, created the Conflict Mode Instrument (Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument - TKI) and published one of the most popular questionnaires that people can use to describe their perceived use of the five styles of grid conflict management. The TKI categorizes conflict managing styles into five types: competing (high level of assertiveness and a low level of cooperation), collaborating (high assertiveness and high cooperation), compromising (balance levels of both assertiveness and cooperation), avoiding (low assertiveness and low cooperation) and accommodating (low assertiveness and high cooperation) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. 5 styles of grind conflict management according to TKI

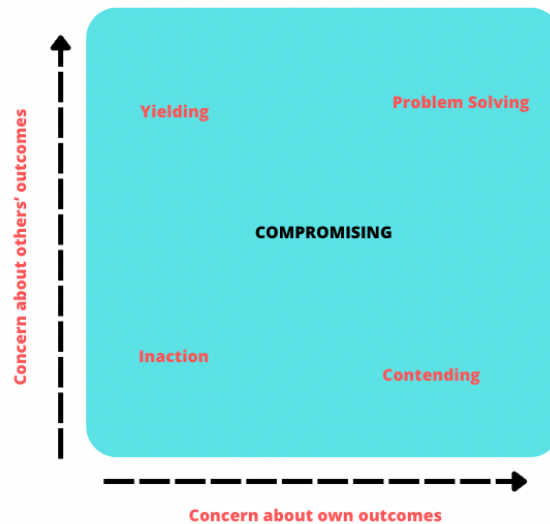


Source: Composed by the author based on Khanaki (2010).

Later a new trend emerged called negotiation skills and theories. Even though Pruitt (1993) deepened their research on the exact negotiation topic, he clearly stated that in the negotiation there is no way that conflict not should be indicated. In his dual concern model established in 1993, he highlighted 2 dimensions: concern about his own outcomes and concern

about others' outcomes. This model has attracted a great deal of interest and empirical validation in both laboratory and field studies and is now at the forefront of conflict management. These dimensions were created as the basis for choosing one of the conflict strategies: contending, problem-solving, yielding, and inaction (*Figure 5*).

Figure 5. Dual concern model



Source: Composed by the author based on Das and Kumar (2010).

Khun and Poole (2000) break down the model into two sub-models that were named distributive and integrative. The distributive model says that conflict becomes a distribution of a fixed number of positive outcomes or resources, where one side wins and the other loses, even if they win some concessions, while the integrative sub-model claims that conflict is an opportunity to integrate the needs of both sides and achieve the best possible result (win-win). This model is about compromise and researchers believed that the integrative model produced consistently better task-related performance than the distributional model.

After a thorough and deep investigation of current conflict management styles, in 2001 DeChurch and Marks (2001) identified a "meta-taxonomy" that encompassed all other models. They concluded that all styles were characterized by two dimensions: activeness (the extent to which conflict behavior appears responsive and direct, rather than inert and indirect) and agreeableness (the extent to which conflict behavior appears pleasant and relaxed rather than an unpleasant and tense impression). High activeness is considered as freely discussing the expressing different opinions but keeping self-interest, while high agreeableness is a willingness to satisfy both parties. DeChurch's and Marks's (2001) study shows that activeness

does not have any influence on the effectiveness of conflict management, but agreeableness has a significant impact on the resolution of the conflict.

M. Rahim (2002) understood with all the other scholars that there is no such thing as the best way to manage and solve the conflict, so instead of creating a conflict management model, he created a meta-model that complements DeChurch and Marks's (2001) meta-taxonomy approach. Meta-model consists of conflict styles mainly based on two dimensions - concern for self and concern for others. In this way, we can see a similarity with Blake's and Mouton's (1964) conflict dimensions that were mentioned previously. In Rahim's (2002) meta-model, the dimension of concerns for others supports interests and requirements expressed by one party meanwhile expressing their own interests at the expense of the other party. The second dimension – concern for others focuses on the interests and requirements of others, reflecting the extent to which one party seeks to accommodate the interests of the other party.

Rahim also made a significant contribution to the Managerial Grid (Blake and Mouton (1964)) and as Kilmann and Thomas (1975), created assessment tools for the field of conflict styles. Also, Rahim has developed the Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory (ROCI) in order to measure conflict-handling styles via an assessment tool. He discovered 5 management approaches: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. Integrating style means being receptive, sharing information, exploring alternatives, and scrutinizing disparities to resolve an issue in a way that both sides search for a mutually acceptable agreement to benefit both of them (win-win strategy). Obliging revolves around minimizing discrepancies and accentuating commonalities to meet the other party's concerns rather than reflecting the other's needs more than their own (lose-win). In the dominating style, one party strives to secure their objective to the fullest extent, often neglecting the other party's requirements and anticipations by looking for their own interest rather than the others (win-lose). Avoiding style occurs when a party does not fulfill their own concerns along with those of the other party, so in this case irresponsibility and inaccessibility of solutions prevail. Finally, a compromising style involves a mutual exchange, where both parties give up certain aspects to reach a mutually satisfactory solution, or where a mutually unacceptable deadline may lead to an interim agreement. Even though it is advisable for the leaders to choose the solution individually according to the situation that emerged, some conflict management styles have been empirically judged to be more effective than others (e.g., integrating or compromising is considered more effective when talking about more complex organizations). According to DeChurch and Marks (2001), the use of integrating and obliging styles tends to

lead to greater functional effectiveness in organizational conflict. Furthermore, the use of dominating and avoiding styles negatively affects the trust between members of the organization and the quality of the interpersonal relationship between members and the organization's management.

After the great success of ADR new phenomenon came into town – integrated conflict management systems (ICMS). ICMS has evolved to be easily accessible, to resolve disputes at the earliest possible stage, at the most appropriate level, and in the most appropriate way; it includes rights-based, interest-based, and stakeholder-based options. Finally, it focuses on the causes of conflict and provides a systematic approach to preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts in organizations. Now, the latest research done by Lipsky and Avgar (2010) found that the main aspect of this system, designed for organizations, is that they do not wait for conflict to arise and decide how to manage it, but instead develop internal procedures and policies, in line with the organization's objectives, mission, and other aspects, that can be used in the event of conflict. In addition, conflict critics unanimously agree that active conflict management is an inherently negative organizational phenomenon. Whether conflict management systems and related practices are beneficial or detrimental to a particular organization and its stakeholders depends primarily on how they are integrated into the organization's prevailing culture and strategic objectives, and conflict management practices must therefore be adopted and implemented in a way that is consistent with the organization's mission, vision and objectives. Thus, a specific conflict management system that has the potential to create added value for an organization can only be successful if it is compatible with the organization's strategy and cultural aspects.

For further analysis, the study will use the 5 different ways of conflict management found in Blake and Mouton's 1964 study "The Managerial Grid": competition, cooperation, avoidance, accommodation, and compromise.

1.5. Aspects of conflicts in the implementation of international projects

Some of the most dynamic international organizations are those, that are dealing with projects, and the most dynamic of them are the international projects which contain a lot of conflicts and its management keeping in mind the multicultural environment, religious aspects, age differences, etc. Looking from the international project management perspective, it often happens to have a lot of partners and beneficiaries in the project implementation. All have their own opinions and insights that sometimes do not get along with the others. Nevertheless,

international projects in terms of conflicts are not widely researched and it is not easy to find information on this topic.

In organizations that manage projects, **scarce resources** are one of the most significant and sensitive conflict causes. When it comes to money, each team would like to effectively spend as much as possible to have a great result and reach the objectives of the project. Nevertheless, the organization's goal is not only to reach perfect results but at the same time to achieve them with as less resources as needed. That is where the budget conflicts begin and end only after the project is implemented.

Another issue international project faces in terms of emerging conflict is different **stakeholders** (Altonen, Jaakko, Tuomas, 2008). As one of the main causes of conflict is the need to meet the requirements of all stakeholders to achieve an excellent project outcome. Moreover, the potential conflict may arise when the concept of stakeholder management becomes relevant to projects. In this case, the conflict escalation strategy could be used by stakeholders to promote other non-project-related goals. This aspect is a bit clashing with the cultural diversion type since in the first place, it is needed to explore the cultural environment to understand the nuances of each of the stakeholders. On the other hand, each stakeholder has its interests, priorities, and goals, which could not match with other stakeholders, organizations, or team approaches and create conflict as well. It is important to engage stakeholders in the project as earliest as possible clearly investigate their needs and consider this in the project implementation process. To anticipate conflicts, a stakeholder analysis must be carried out prior to project implementation (Ed. Buckles, 1999).

According to the studies, diverse workgroups can face more conflict situations, decreased job satisfaction, and more communication issues. So, it's no surprise that international project teams have a lot of intra-team **communication**, and resolving conflicts is one of the most important aspects of working efficiently and collaboratively that helps to achieve project goals (Löhr, Weinhardt, Graef, Sieber, 2017). Also, it increases the trust among the team members. These days, communication issues in international project teams have increased significantly. During the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work became a trend and live till now. Meanwhile, communication has faced some challenges, with face-to-face meetings becoming not only rare but non-existent. It has been investigated that a lack of face-to-face communication can create huge misunderstandings. This can make it difficult to build mutual trust in multicultural project teams. It is also difficult to manage or supervise multicultural project teams without face-to-face contact or the possibility of face-to-face consultation or relationship building. Even though the communication challenges are not new, international

project teams are still lacking effective communication skills such as negotiation, diplomacy, etc. Failing to overcome the challenges will inevitably lead to conflicts (Berggren, Al-Mashhadami, 2023).

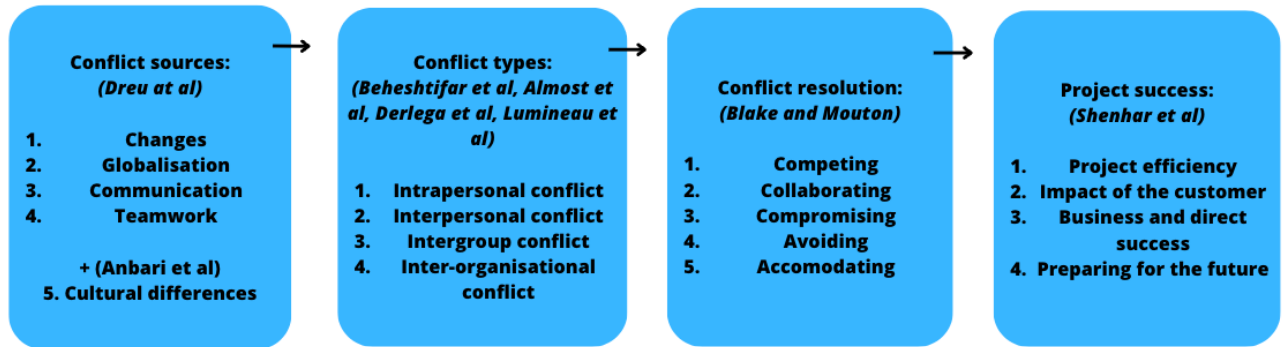
The other and one of the most crucial causes of conflicts in international projects is **cultural differences**. The projects became the specific and good ground for the expansion of conflict due to the different cultures, religions, and characters of the team members. It is even more evident in international projects, where these aspects become crucial even more. It is found, that cultural differences are an important aspect that could affect the outcomes of international projects. Some projects even fail due to multicultural aspects. One of the examples are Iridium project. Despite other important factors, cultural differences undoubtedly contributed to the project's failure: the 28 members of the board spoke many languages, so meetings were held in small groups and translated into five languages, not talking about the other cultural aspects that were not managed correctly. These issues had a significant influence on the failure of the project. This suggests that global project management can be successful if there is effective leadership, cross-cultural communication, and mutual respect. Without these, it is doomed to failure (Anabari, Khilkhanova, Romanova, Umpleby, 2003).

Even though in international projects cross-culture nature is very evident, the best response to this conflict is to have high demand for good communication and coordination among the team as well as to understand the cultural differences and investigate possible sensitive spheres of it as well as additionally attend the trainings. Moreover, globalization, as mentioned above, is one of the main reasons that should nevertheless be given special attention. Globalization not only speaks of cultural differences but also creates a dependence on others that can lead to very serious conflicts, not only between individuals but also within teams or organizations worldwide.

To conclude the theoretical analysis, conflict management in international projects is an essential aspect, and its successful implementation within the project team can almost guarantee the success of the project. In this case, it is important to choose the best way of conflict resolution and management and to ensure the continuous improvement of the knowledge of team members and project managers in this area.

According to the gathered and investigated information and theories, it was decided to use the following sources for further research on conflict management and its importance for project success in implementing the public sector in international projects (*Figure 6*).

Figure 6. Theoretical framework for the empirical study



Source: Composed by the author

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Conflicts in the workplace are inevitable, no matter the size of the team, the volume of work, or any other aspect. When conflicts are not handled properly, they overwhelm your team. These unhealthy conflicts are characterized by disrespect, refusal to compromise, anger, defensiveness, and fear. On the other hand, when conflicts are managed successfully, they can increase the team's productivity, creativity, and ability to debate with each other to reach the best possible solution. For this reason, as well as challenges such as change, globalization, and the uniqueness of the team, organizations need to implement conflict management.

Unfortunately, while the private sector in today's world is focusing more on conflict management, and for that conflict management is thriving, the public sector is not giving it the attention it needs. Bureaucracy, strict instructions, result orientation, and workload do not let the public sector productively use the conflict management approach during project management.

Navigating the complexities of conflict management in international public sector projects requires a well-thought-out research methodology. This chapter describes the approach taken to explore the interaction between conflict management strategies and project success, taking into account the particular challenges posed by cultural diversity, communication dynamics, and the specific context of managing public sector projects globally.

In this chapter, the methodology of the research process is described. The description of the method used research model of the study, sample, and other aspects are introduced.

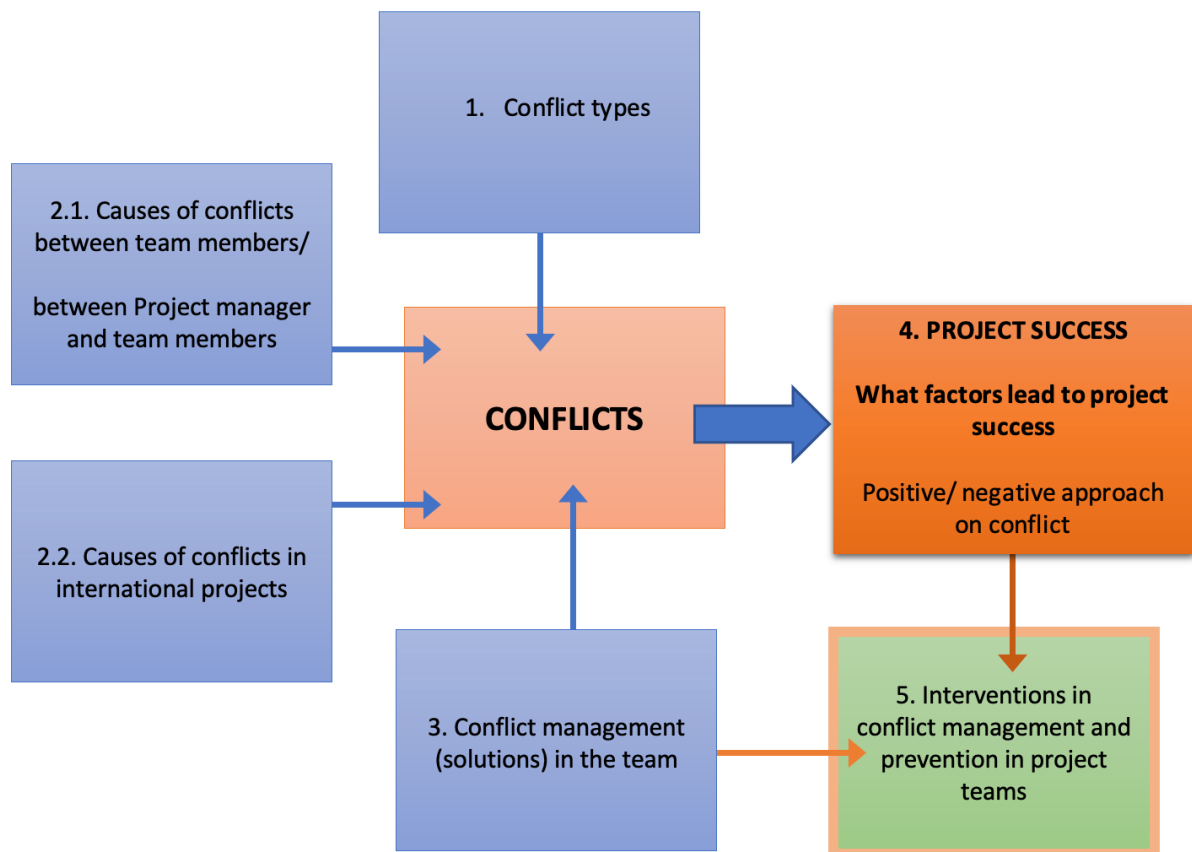
2.1. Research model

As mentioned before, this research seeks to explore and understand the aspects of conflict management while implementing international projects in the public sector. The study strives to investigate how effective conflict management strategies contribute to the overall success of projects, taking into account the unique challenges posed by cultural diversity, communication dynamics, and the specific context of managing public sector projects with an international dimension.

To structure the research process, it was necessary to develop a research model. To build this model, the existing literature and relevant theories were used to assess the

complexity, identify the boundaries, and assess the feasibility of the planned study. Based on the insights gained from the main literature reviewed, this study aims to investigate conflict and its management in the public sector, focusing on two perspectives - project managers (PMs) and team members (TMs). The research model of the study on which this study is based is shown in *Figure 7*.

Figure 7. Research model of the study



Source: Composed by the author

The research model shows that effective conflict management has a direct impact on project success, but to verify this, it is necessary to analyze conflicts in international public sector projects in more depth, to learn more about the types of conflicts, their causes, and how they are managed. Subsequently, prevention aspects emerge from this and should be applied to further actions in public sector management of international projects.

In designing the research model, it was important to determine the aim and objectives of the study that are presented below.

The research aim was to investigate the characteristics of conflicts, their management, and impact on project success in public sector international projects.

Research Objectives:

1. To empirically investigate the most common types and sources of conflict encountered in international public sector projects.
2. To identify the key factors contributing to effective conflict management in international project teams.
3. To assess the role of cultural diversity in impacting conflict dynamics and resolution in international projects.
4. To determine the relationship between constructive conflict management and project success in public sector international projects.
5. To reveal intervention strategies for conflict prevention and effective management while implementing public sector international projects.

2.2. Research method

To achieve the aim and objectives of the research and to identify common insights related to conflict management and its importance for project success, the qualitative interview method was applied to gather empirical data, and the content analysis method – to analyze the research results.

In qualitative research, as in research in general, rigorous data collection procedures have been identified as key factors influencing quality and reliability and significantly influencing study results (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, 2016). Furthermore, qualitative research is not statistical and involves multiple realities that let this research broader analyze results from multiple perspectives. Qualitative research provides a contract in-depth image of the relationship between information processing and performance, so this type of research focuses on questions that require analysis of content-related variables. There is also a great ability to not only check the theories selected but also to find the new today's current developments and specificities.

In addition, the qualitative method gives respondents enough freedom to decide what is appropriate for them to share and not to share, letting respondents feel comfortable and, assumably, give honest answers.

Of course, the qualitative method has disadvantages that will be mentioned later as the limitations of the study, such as personal interpretation of the research conductor, and smaller sample size can put into question the research since it could not reflect the population. Nevertheless, as Darlington and Scott (2003) stressed “If one considers the unit of attention as the phenomenon under investigation, rather than the number of individuals, then the sample is often much larger than first appears”.

In this research, to gather empirical data the semi-structured interview questions were prepared. This interview type entails a qualitative data collection approach where the researcher poses a set of predetermined open-ended questions to the participants. One of the main shortcomings of this interview is that it allows the respondent to give open wide descriptive responses, instead of short positive or negative answers. It is worth mentioning, that a lot depends on the interviewer's tone, skills to make the respondent feel comfortable and safe, ability to choose the location for the interview, selection of the respondents (introvert/ extrovert, warm communication/ cold communication), etc. (Madalin, 2021).

The semi-structured interview for this research was used due to the following characteristics:

1. the versatility and flexibility of the interview.
2. ensuring reciprocity between interviewer and participant.
3. the interviewer is allowed to improvise additional questions based on the participant's answers.
4. the ability to participants' verbal expressions.
5. the ability to guide the interview by directing and stressing the questions that are necessary and relevant to the research.

Overall, this qualitative semi-structured framework aims to conduct the research in a critical and collaborative manner, so that the interviews are ethical, credible, valid, results-oriented, and user-friendly for all participants.

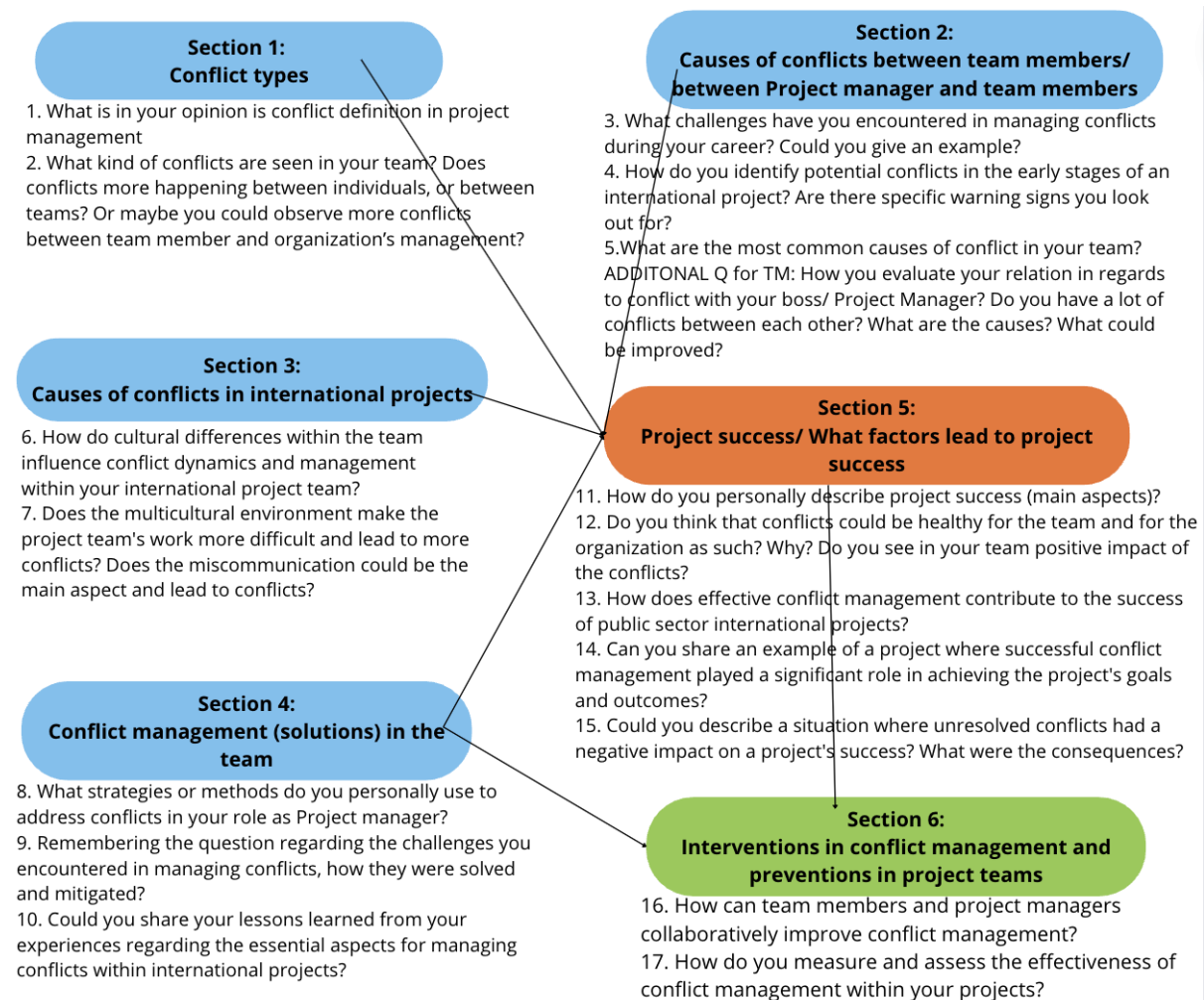
2.3. Interview structure

As can be seen from the interview question's structure (*Figure 8*), the questionnaire was divided into 5 topics. Each of the topics refers to the theory selected and presented in the Theoretical part of the research (*Figure 6*. Theoretical framework for the empirical study):

1. Conflict types → Theory regarding the conflict types, that includes conflict definition as well.
2. Causes of conflicts between team members/ between Project manager and team members → Theory regarding the conflict sources.
3. Causes of conflicts in international projects → Theory regarding the conflict sources, including the cultural differences.
4. Conflict management (solutions) in the team → Theory regarding conflict resolution.
5. Project success/ What factors lead to project success → Theory regarding conflict resolution, which includes project success definition and positive impact of the project, as well as the health of the conflict.
6. Interventions in conflict management and prevention in project teams include monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of conflict management in the team/ organization.

According to the scheme introduced above (*Figure 8*), the following questions were clarified as could be seen in the interview guide in Annex 1.

Figure 8. Interview questions structure



Source: Composed by the author

In total 17 questions for both Project managers and team members were developed within the interview guide. Additionally, for the team members, 1 question was added to investigate the relations in regards to the conflict between team member and their project manager (“How do you evaluate your relation in regards to conflict with your boss/ Project Manager? Do you have a lot of conflicts between each other? What are the causes? What could be improved?”).

2.4. Research sample

In addition to choosing the topic and the right research design, it is also important to select the right sample for the study. Ensuring that sufficient data are collected is a prerequisite

for sound analysis and reporting. Unfortunately, the main qualitative research methodologies provide little specific guidance on estimating sample size. The general opinion trend is that the more respondents, the more accurate the survey results are. However, certain scholars argue that more data does not particularly result in more information on the topic. In qualitative research, what matters is not frequency but richness of understanding, where a single instance of data is of equal value in understanding the nuances of a topic. This is due to the understanding that qualitative research focuses on clarifying meaning rather than formulating generalized hypotheses (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, Fontenot, 2013).

To be precise, there is no unique agreement of the research sample as different scholars provide different insights. Morse (1994) states that 30-50 should be enough, while Bernard (2000) believes that studies should be based on approximately 30-60 interviews. Criswell (1998) sticks to 5-25 respondents and Buertaux (1981) thinks that 15 should be the smallest acceptable sample. However, each researcher does not argue why the sample they propose is the best.

Although most researchers believe that the sample should be quite large and does not quite match the sample of this study, it is important to stress that the sample of interviews in this study was accurate due to saturation repetition of the information. It will be seen later when analyzing the data results.

The method of this research was qualitative research that was carried out among the several organizations' project team members of the public sector in Lithuania that specifies international project management.

To gather the necessary number of respondents, recommendations were sought from Heads of Units and colleagues from a few public organizations who identify the best experts in the field who can provide relevant and accurate information.

Although 15 participants were planned and requested to be interviewed, only 12 respondents were involved. One respondent could not be interviewed due to the need for an urgent business trip and another due to lack of time during the day. One participant decided not to take part in the survey because of an intense conflict with the project manager at the time.

To conclude, 12 employees were interviewed, of which 7 were project managers and 5 were team members of the project. The experience of the respondents varies from 1 to 16 years.

The summary of the research respondents is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. *Table of main information of respondents*

Index	Position	Experience in project management
PM1	Project Manager	5 years
PM2	Project Manager	4 years
PM3	Project Manager	3 years
PM4	Project Manager	TM – 5 years, PM – 7 years
PM5	Project Manager	TM – 3 years, PM – 1 years
PM6	Project Manager	16 years
PM7	Project Manager	9 years
TM1	Financial officer	5 years
TM2	Technical support	PM – 1 year, TM – 6 years
TM3	Administrative assistant	4 years
TM4	Event manager	8 years
TM5	Financial officer	11 years

Source: Composed by the author

It is important to note, that 3 participants at some point were involved in both positions. This data allows to gather more accurate information since the respondents could compare from both position perspectives meanwhile concentrating on the position they are currently occupying.

Moreover, some of the recipients also worked in the private sector and can compare their experiences in the public and private sectors.

All of the participants working in the public sector international projects can provide up-to-date information during the interview.

2.5. Research process and data analysis methods

Research process. Using this content-gathering technique, the following process was implemented. This research utilized a qualitative research method with an open questions questionnaire that was presented to the 12 respondents. The structured questionnaire and interview guide were developed to align with the research objectives and questions that were raised. The aim of the interview guide is to collect interview data, building on previous knowledge of structural, logical, and sequential forms. An interview guide is defined as a list of questions that guide the conversation toward the research topic during the interview. It is

essential to carefully formulate and develop the interview guide because the quality of the interview guide influences the implementation of the interview and the analysis of the data collected.

The interviews took about 30-60 minutes and were conducted mainly face-to-face manner. The interviews were recorded and transcribed (an example of the interview in not corrected language is presented in Annex 2. *Example of transcribed interview*). The confidentiality and anonymity of the survey and the participants' responses were protected by the use of identification codes. In addition, all other measures of confidentiality were held, including agreement to record during the interview and use of the information provided.

To know more about the background of the respondents, each of them was asked before the recording and interview questions to share the background information about the project they are involved in, the specifics of the role, and other details. For the purpose of confidentiality and inability to gather sensitive information, this kind of information was not registered in the interview transcription and was not part of the research analysis. It was done to ensure the same project scope and roles to avoid unclear and incorrect information.

Data analysis method. As mentioned before, the qualitative research method was used for the main study due to the willingness to investigate wider information that semi-structured interviews can provide. Data were analyzed using the content analysis method.

According to Zinyama, Matare, Chimbanga, and Shava (2022), there are a few main steps to perform an analysis of the content gathered:

- Comply with and organize data
- Disassemble (segregating or organizing the data)
- Reassemble, and identify themes, relationships, and patterns
- Ensure reliability and validity (trustworthiness) in the data analysis
- Interpretation and conclusion of the results
- Content analysis

A deductive approach was used to develop the introduced above interview guide, which included predetermined themes that were expected to emerge during the research, based on theories developed or existing knowledge.

To summarize, the interview method results:

1. 12 respondents were interviewed

2. the recordings were made and transcribed
3. the information was coded and analyzed
4. the information gathered was provided in the tables for results analysis

The empirical results are presented in the 3rd chapter.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

Following the survey, the results were analyzed and are presented further in this chapter. The results of the main study were assessed and analyzed according to the research model developed earlier (*Figure 7*). The results are presented in the following sequence. Firstly, in the 3.1 chapter, the conflict definition and conflict types will be analyzed according to the provided answers by the respondents (1). Later, the 3.2 and 3.3 chapters will introduce the opinion on causes of conflicts between teams and/ or between project members and team members as well as causes of conflicts in international projects within the public sector (2). The 3.4 chapter is dedicated to conflict management and its solutions in the team (3). Afterward, according to this research topic, all the other chapters link to project success, so the survey results will show the factors and project success relation to the conflict and conflict management as well as the positive/ negative approach to the conflict as such (chapter 3.5) (4). Last but not least, the intervention and prevention of conflicts in the project teams will be introduced taking into account the previous results and respondents' answers in chapter 3.6 (5). The summary of the interview's answers can be found in Annex 2. "Summary of the study results".

3.1. Conflict types

In order to analyze the types of conflicts that occur in project teams working on international projects in the public sector, several questions were asked to both project managers and team members about the types of conflicts and especially types that are commonly observed in project teams. The respondents were asked what in their opinion the conflict definition in the project management sphere. Surprisingly, the answers vary from the thinking that *it is an opinion that occurs from one source and is not unacceptable for the other part to believe that conflict is the directing of negative emotions towards each other*. No one from the interviewed people said the exact conflict definition and it shows that from the beginning, the understanding of the conflict within the public sector in project teams is vague.

In addition, it was noticed that some respondents do not differ the "conflict" and "anger" definitions and often mix these 2 words. Anger as an emotion can arise from a variety of elements and can be individual. In contrast, conflict usually arises between individuals as a result of disputes or disagreements, bringing out the relational aspect. However, conflict can

lead to anger. Specific anger management and effective conflict resolution strategies can address both anger and conflict together.

It is important to note that before the interview most of the participants expressed shame and worry that they will not be able to answer questions or will not know the answers to the questions that will be presented. This uncertainty shows that respondents do not have a firm grasp on conflict and its management in organizations, which is already a red light.

To identify the conflict types, the theories of Beheshtifar et al. (2013), Almost et al. (2015), Derlega, et al. (2007), and Lumineaur et al. (2015) (indicated in *Figure 5* Theoretical framework for the empirical study) were used. According to them, the types of conflict can be divided into interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup, and inter-organizational. In this case, the question on types of conflict was asked to identify the most common types of conflict in public sector projects. The most common questions vary between 3 types - interpersonal, intergroup, and mixed - between individual and organization.

It seemed that this question regarding the types of conflicts that are seen in the project team was a challenge, so the clarification was provided and the question was expanded by indicating the following guiding questions “Do *conflicts more happening between individuals, or between teams? Or maybe you could observe more conflicts between team member and organization’s management?*”. The summary of the answers is provided below.

Table 2. *Summary of answers to types of conflicts*

	Project Managers	Team members
Between individuals in the team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There are team members who argue with each other.</i> • <i>The conflicts start form the individuals.</i> • <i>conflicts between individuals because of disagreements about how to do a task or other nuances of a project.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Team members are unwilling to take on their responsibilities and avoid them.</i> • <i>Conflict occurs between one or more team members due to some disagreements about the task at hand or personal problems.</i>
Total number of respondents	6	5 (all team members indicated that conflicts happen often between individuals in the team)

indicated the answer		
Between groups/teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Teams have been competing for years for the best implemented project, the project with the most benefits or the most satisfied beneficiaries.</i> 	–
Total number of respondents indicated the answer	3	0
Between individual and organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>often the anger of project team members is directed at the organisation's policies, and at the organisation itself.</i> • <i>conflicts between departments (between teams), because if one starts a job, the other can't continue until it's done, creating a chain that leads to conflicts and project disruption.</i> 	–
Total number of respondents indicated the answer	1	0

Source: Composed by the author

It has been observed that conflicts between individuals are most common in the public sector. One respondent indicated that conflicts start for the individuals but could lead to wider conflict as such: “*Then you can have these alliances where one supports the other, but then the conflict escalates and becomes more serious within the team itself. Then the organization can be involved, but usually it starts with individuals*”. This opinion shows a new approach to the types of conflicts indicating that one conflict could cover all the types and develop into a huge conflict that could rise even to the international level.

Individuals → groups → organizations → countries.

However, it is also interesting to note that team members do not see any other conflicts in their environment other than individual conflicts, while project managers tend to see conflicts between teams or departments, and between the individual and the organization. One

respondent commented, *“it is hard to tell if there is any conflict between teams since we are kind of closed in our team and do not collaborate externally with other teams”*. This comment leads to the assumption that team members are sort of locked in their teams and do not interact with other project teams. Moreover, the lack of information regarding the conflicts in the teams could elaborate that conflicts do not arise because the interaction between teams is low, so conflicts are not as visible as when working together as a team daily. This leads to the conclusion that more communication leads to more conflicts.

Few respondents indicated, that conflicts in their teams and departments are the “silent” ones. This type of conflict often provokes tension in the team, an uncomfortable environment, and miscommunication.

It is worth mentioning that one team member noticed, that conflict arises all the time they cannot be seen *“because our project manager does a great job to hide and solve it without knowing of other team members”*. Furthermore, the respondent thinks that it is very valuable that the project manager of the team can do so. On the one hand, it is great that the project manager tries to avoid unnecessary discussions on conflict if it creates negative value, but on the other hand, avoiding conflict and not bringing it to the attention of the rest of the team can be damaging and disruptive to the team itself. The best solution would be to carefully select and anticipate conflicts that may not create value for the team resolve them quietly, and introduce to the team those conflicts that are more likely to be discussed and lead to positive outcomes of the conflict.

In general, it is noticeable, that project teams do not quite understand the conflict definition and therefore, it is a route cause in regards to the conflict management usage in the team. Moreover, conflicts tend to arise within teams and range from disagreements over tasks to personal problems, which have a significant impact on project performance.

3.2. Causes of the conflict between team members/ between team members and project managers

It is not surprising, that the most common causes of the conflict are due to project implementation nuances, daily work tasks, etc. Nevertheless, in today’s world, there are a lot of challenges that could introduce new causes of conflicts in the workplace. As mentioned before, conflict and conflict management in the public sector are not widely analyzed and researched. This is also a factor that could provide new insights and aspects into understanding the causes of the conflicts.

To better analyze the results of the causes of the conflict, the Dreu et al. (2008) theory has been selected as the guiding one (indicated in *Figure 5 Theoretical framework for the empirical study*).

Table 3. *Causes of the conflicts analyzed according to the Deau et al. (2008) theory*

	Changes	Globalization	Communication	Teamwork
PM	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they [conflicts] happen because there are different levels of positions in the team, because the team may include different levels of staff-managers, specialists from other departments, and finally, experts from international organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we often don't find the time to sit down with each other and talk and resolve those problems, those conflicts. • the team is already made up of many people, each with their own different views on the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchical relationships - between the project manager and the team members - they are very complex and even though you try to be part of the team, you are still seen as a manager, which causes conflicts. • Competition is [...] very well welcomed and even encouraged in some organisations, because it is thought to promote excellence. But not necessarily. And in this case, it is bad for teams to compete with each other, because they have to help each other, because the projects are different, but they all have to go in the interests of the organisation.
Total number of respondents indicated the answer	0	1	5	4
TM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • due to some changes in the projects, few times a week we have these kinds of conflicts, because the situation changed, requirements changed [...]. 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • misunderstandings between team members, regarding the tasks, responsibilities, evaluation, etc. • poor team dynamics, poor communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more experienced staff are unwilling to listen to the views of less experienced staff. • conflicts happen often if few or more people do the same job at the same time.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [...] changes in the project for sure. currently, we have a really big change – the remote work emerges and dominating the word. 			
Total number of respondents indicated the answer	3	0	3	2

Source: Composed by the author

It is very important to note that, strangely enough, no project manager cited change as the cause of the conflict, and most of them consider communication to be the commonest cause. These reasons may be linked, as communication can always influence change and vice versa, so these results should therefore be viewed critically. Meanwhile, team members see change as one of the biggest causes of conflict. Team members seem to have a better understanding of the day-to-day changes in the project implementation than project managers, who only manage the work and do not get involved in the technical and administrative implementation.

Those respondents who also mentioned communication as a cause of conflict stressed that communication problems are caused by lack of time due to the heavy workload, different approaches to the topic and not understanding each other. Some respondents even linked projects to constant communication, by saying that conflicts are inevitable in a project and are mainly caused by poor communication and tensions within the team.

Such a cause as globalization is mentioned only by one project manager of the whole pool of respondents. The respondent claimed that project implementation is very dynamic and that to achieve results the project actors must unite. Usually, the implementers are from different shares, environments, and even countries. It shows that globalization could also cause a lot of conflicts due to economic political (especially in the public sector), personal, or cultural aspects. Later will be analysed more in-depth.

When it comes to teamwork, it is seen that mainly in the public sector the hierarchical approach is very rooted in. Even though the new trend of self-managing teams is very popular, the public sector cannot get rid of strict employee-employer relations. Due to this matter, the teamwork is understandable differently and could lead to significant conflicts. One project manager noticed, that he/she could not be part of the team since as the project manager he/she

feels different treatment from the rest of the team members due to this position as managing organ. It deeply affects the project and conflict possibility significantly increases in the team.

Another important result shows that competition not only between project teams but between teams themselves could be also a source of conflict. It could be seen from two perspectives: conflict is a positive aspect since it encourages one to do the work better and more productive while on the other side, lowering the communication and best practices sharing that could lead to better results since the different opinions and lessons learned are gathered.

After identifying the conflict causes, the respondents were asked what kind of challenges they encountered in managing conflict and if could, provide examples of it. This question for most of the respondents was the same as previous (causes of the conflicts), and they were unable to provide new insights on it. So, to analyze the results, each challenge identified is linked to the cause of the conflict and presented above:

Table 4. *Challenges linkages with causes of the conflict indicated by the project managers and team members*

Challenge	Links to the causes of conflicts
Miscommunication within the team	Communication
No time to work with the team on atmosphere and other social issues	Teamwork
The difference between team members - different attitudes, different cultures, different characters	Globalization
Disruption to project implementation, inconsistent work	Teamwork, changes
Always assuming, but not speaking with facts	Communication
Remote work	Globalization, communication

Source: Composed by the author

It was alarming, and it is a pity, that conflicts make a big difference to the way team member feel about another colleague and it creates an inability to perform your work if you need to interact with the people, you had a conflict with and were unsolved fully. Those kinds of conflicts mainly could be identified as long-term conflicts and could cause damage not only to the team but to the department of events for the organization as such.

One of the team members claimed that identification of challenges and generally managing conflicts is more of the responsibility of the manager and it does not touch him/her directly. It shows that team members are apathetic and do not care about conflict and conflict management and expect that the project manager must work on it for the whole team. It is a bad approach to exist since all project teams should be aware and work on consistent project conflict management and challenges that arise within the team.

Remote work was also mentioned as one of the challenges of managing conflicts. Even though after the COVID-19 pandemic the world already adapted to the remote work of organizations it usually still becomes a challenge for both project managers and team members.

One of the most interesting parts of the results was the question regarding the identification of the potential conflicts. Respondents were asked, how they identify the conflicts in the early stages of an international project and do they notice some warning signs that they could tell the possible emerging conflict. The answers received were not encouraging: *“Anyway, I don't pay much attention to it, and I'm probably ashamed to say I don't”* (PM), *“I am not very much concentrated on conflict management as such, as well as not searching the signs of the conflict during the project implementation”* (TM), *“no, but I think it is bad”* (TM). Nevertheless, there were some project managers and team members that do not specifically say, that they identifying, but looked at some signs and tried to make assumptions about what could happen: *“I know the main sensitivities of each team member and I just try not to put pressure on them”* (PM), *“I always try to feel the team spirit, the temperature. In meetings or workshops, I sometimes try to observe the team from the side and see how they interact with each other, who doesn't, and so on”* (PM), *“Sometimes that body language says a lot and you have to observe it”* (PM), *“laconic answers, superficial like that. You can see that the person hasn't delved into the situation, then there's an immediate conflict after that, always”* (TM).

All interviewees agreed that they do not specifically focus on identifying potential conflicts, but referred to these aspects only because they only thought about it when the question was asked. This shows that international public sector projects lack attention to the monitoring of emerging conflicts, which is an important aspect of conflict management.

As was introduced previously, for this section one additional question was provided for the team members only in order to evaluate the relationship and conflict of the project management and team members from the team member perspective - *How do you evaluate your relationship in regards to conflict with your boss/ Project Manager? Do you have a lot of conflicts with each other? What are the causes? What could be improved?*

All the team members do not indicate the negative aspects of the project manager. Few of them said that even though the project manager makes a great effort in their relations, they *“do believe that PM could talk to the team more and feel the project and the team more. His workload is very heavy, but I think that the team should be his priority after all”* or that *“We don't resolve such conflicts, because I have my opinion and the manager has his”*.

One team member expressed that *“sometimes we have our hard times, but in our team, the hierarchy is very important, so the project manager is the final decision maker so I am not questioning the solutions he/she makes. Just dealing with it and not keep the angriness on him/her”*. Here it is once again stressed how the hierarchy in the public sector is strictly established and the team cannot work efficiently and express themselves since the final voice project managers have, so the rest of the team does not put effort into discussing and searching for the best possible results to resolve the conflict within the project implementation.

It is important to note, that those respondents, who expressed the suggestion, of how the project manager could work better, asked if the interview was anonymous and if the answer would not be said to the project manager. This shows that there is a possibility that respondents do not answer honestly due to the risk that answers will be provided to the project managers. In this case, the result of these particular questions should be treated critically.

In general, communication is the number one cause of conflict faced by project teams. In addition to communication problems, remote work becomes not only an advantage but also and disadvantage in project management, as miscommunication increases significantly. Unfortunately, conflict management is not important for team members and is considered the project manager's responsibility, who should manage, assess, and be aware of team conflicts. Noo group, neither project managers nor team members, identify conflicts in any way, which is a threat to the smooth implementation of the project.

3.3. Causes of the conflicts in international projects

Since it was noticed, that the multicultural aspect is a key factor in the international project and a huge game changer in the conflict and the conflict management itself, it was decided to analyze the multicultural aspects and influence more widely. For this case, the Anbari et al. (2003) theory (indicated in *Figure 5 Theoretical framework for the empirical study*) is also used but the multicultural aspect covers all the causes indicated.

The respondents were asked to provide answers on the topic of multicultural factors in international projects within the public sector. 2 questions were asked: *How do cultural differences within the team influence conflict dynamics and management within your international project team?* and *“Does the multicultural environment make the project team's work more difficult and lead to more conflicts? Does the miscommunication could be the main aspect and lead to conflicts?”*

Indeed, in one way or another, all the participants agreed that a multicultural environment on international projects makes a huge impact. Some indicated the religious aspects that are hard to deal with, others – language, character traits in regards to the nationality, countries tradition differences, a different understanding of the definition of “hard work” or “quality”. It was interesting to find out that the latter word varies greatly from country to country. Lithuanians are seen as diligent and responsible when it comes to completing a task, Spaniards as more relaxed and leisurely, Germans also as responsible, with a bit of control, etc. Some cultures like to plan everything while others do on the last minute. So, it can be seen that even the same word can cause conflicts and misunderstandings because the interpretation and cultural aspects can be different.

Respondents said that to achieve better results in an international project, managing an international project with a cross-cultural team can only represent one side, so it is always a good idea to have at least one Spanish in the team if you're working on a project in Spain, if you're working in France you to have at least of French, etc., to make sure that the team of the project, and in particular the Project Leader, understands the different aspects of the project in the country in which it is being carried out, and that it will lead to a better result and a more easily achieved outcome in the project. Another team member added that *“if there is at least one member of the team whose country the project is being designed and implemented for, then they know all the nuances of the country, the political aspects, things that someone from another country wouldn't even know. We went to one country on a mission, and with a local expert, we saw learned, and avoided a lot of things, especially when dealing with the various institutions in that country, which have their own specificities. Also, in case of war, you try to*

send an Armenian letter to the Azerbaijani authorities or vice versa, it will be a disaster for the whole project, and this is no joke". So, it is obvious that not taking seriously cultural differences in the international project could even destroy the project.

It was also stressed, that some public organizations in order to avoid conflict on cultural aspects, always organized the new employees' evenings, so the new people could introduce themselves and other team members could understand better the new one. Also, it was mentioned that additional inside training takes place in order to explain how to work in a multicultural environment. It is significant *"to know each other, to understand each other. That's when we learn that you can't invite an Indian to have pork ribs for lunch, or that it's ok for a Frenchman to kiss you on the cheek when you say hello, or that an Italian will never start the day without having an espresso"*. The other respondent complements by saying that *"in international projects, conflicts arise when team members do not communicate with each other correctly"*. In addition, one more project manager disagrees with the rest to indicate that *"miscommunication can be a reason for difficult teamwork, but I don't think it's essential, because even in a non-international team the team members may not get along, so I wouldn't hold out a lot of hope that there's a correlation, that there's some kind of interdependence"*. So, there are different opinions regarding the internationality of international projects and the positive and negative outcomes.

In conclusion, sometimes the combination of different countries, and different cultures can be the result of a great team, and other times the combination is just awful and you couldn't even expect it to be worse. Team composition in international projects is important and it can be a key aspect that can determine the success of a project, but at the same time, it is also a lottery, because it is simply not possible to be guided by and to rely only on stereotypes these days.

Moreover, the multicultural environment in international projects has a huge impact. Most of the factors related to multicultural environments that increase the number of conflicts are religious, nationality-related character traits, language, and different understandings of the same definitions. Team building can reduce conflicts as it allows project participants to learn about the cultural aspects of other team members.

3.4. Conflict management (solutions) in the team

Since on the previous results in regards to the conflict causes it is obvious that in the international projects within the public sector there is a serious and significant source of the

conflicts and that only the majority of project teams work in them, the establishment of the conflict management system is essential part.

To analyze the results of this section and to see if the theory is still relevant these days, the Blake and Mutton (1964) (indicated in *Figure 5* Theoretical framework for the empirical study) conflict resolution model will be used.

Table 5: Conflict resolution analyzed according to the Blake and Mutton (1964) theory

	Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating
PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>replacing team members.</i> • <i>there are certainly situations where you just don't have the time to deal with those conflicts and choose to pretend you don't see anything.</i> 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>we need to talk and have a conversation to reach the decision.</i> • <i>talking - communication. [...] a compromise-type solution.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sometimes you need to stay out of the situation.</i> 	-
Total number of respondents indicated the answer	2	0	5	1	0
TM	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>looking for best practices in other teams or democratic solutions within the team to satisfy all.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>listening and reasoned argument. Not jumping right in, but just listening and understanding rationally why this is the way it is. In other words, be willing to understand the team member and look for compromise.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>to avoid of emerging the conflicts.</i> • <i>Unfortunately, conflicts are not resolved here and that anger is held for a long time.</i> • <i>So mainly avoiding style of managing the conflicts is using – you are not questioning and just go with the flow.</i> 	-

Total number of respondents indicated the answer	0	1	1	3	0
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Source: Composed by the author

The results are very disappointing from a research perspective. It was expected that this part would be the most valuable of all. Unfortunately, the opinion of respondents does not provide the exact results. A lot of respondents think, that “avoiding”, “competing” and “accommodating” styles are the negative ones, and most of them claimed that they do not refer to them. Everyone believes that the best way to manage the conflict is to search for a compromise, although none of the parties in this situation are leaving with a win-win situation, only finding an intermediate option between all needs (50/50).

Nevertheless, the avoiding style was especially mentioned by the team members. Even though all of them tried to explain that they do not speak to avoid conflicts on a daily basis, but just sometimes, when other options are not suitable or impossible to use. One respondent indicated that conflicts in his/her team are not solved at all, because of “*inadequate team members who don't want to resolve conflicts, and unfortunately, the project manager doesn't have any say in this, because it's so naturally distributed in the team that he doesn't make the final decisions*”. Thus, avoiding conflict management type could be adapted due to some external actions. In this case, team members are not involved in the conflict and its resolution because there is no established authority in the team and there is no equality in the discussion.

5 out of 12 respondents indicated that no strategy is used by them or the team to work with the conflicts. Many of them confessed, that they were not aware of any kind of strategies or types of conflict management, nevertheless, some respondents informed, that specific training was organized for the teams to familiarize themselves with this information, but they treated these trainings as optional and not necessary to participate.

It is unfortunate, that more results and interpretation could be done due to the lack of information provided by the respondents.

When respondents were asked, what kind of lessons learned they could share how to manage the conflicts, the answers were similar:

1. Communication, talking with the team often
2. Need to give ourselves enough time to resolve conflicts and not ignore them
3. Hierarchy is needed for the public sector teams
4. Avoid huge workload for the team members
5. Avoid getting emotional and be rational
6. Team members should have an opinion that can be proved by facts

In general, most project teams adopt a compromise style of conflict management and try to satisfy both sides of the conflict. Unfortunately, most project teams do not use any strategy for conflict management that highlights the potential challenges to achieving excellent project objectives.

3.5. Project success

The most crucial goal of the project is to not only succeed in the implementation of objectives and reach the target set but also to achieve overall project success. The project's success does not necessarily refer only to the reached goal, but to many other factors that will be discussed in this chapter.

In the first place, respondents were asked to describe in their own words what is project success. Most of them referred to the triangle that was presented in the theoretical part - "*I always follow that triangle - quality, budget, time*", "*costs, scope and quality*", and "*scope, time, quality and budget. These are the main aspects for sure*".

Some of them were asked why the traditional approach (*Figure 1*), developed many years ago, is still the best possible definition. Respondents believe that nothing better has been developed and, in their opinion, should not be developed. Although projects may be different and change over the years, the triangle of cost, quality, and time will always be relevant.

The results of project success factors will be analyzed according to the selected theory of project success – Shenhar et al. (2001) (indicated in *Figure 5* Theoretical framework for the empirical study) project success theory. It is important to note, that some aspects were adapted accordingly to the public sector projects since, for instance, business and direct success or preparing for the future factors are treated differently in private and public sectors.

Table 6. Shenhar et al. (2001) factors of project success

	Project efficiency	Impact on the customer	Business and direct success	Preparing for the future
PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>achieving the project's objectives.</i> • <i>Timely and high-quality project delivery.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>to ensure customer satisfaction.</i> • <i>If the client is satisfied, the project is a success.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In the private sector, I would say that the project must generate a profit or some other added value, which should have been stated as the project's desired outcome. Here in the public sector, it is very important not only that the project achieves a result, but also bonuses such as contacts with the institutions, maintaining a good reputation.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>that they would like to work with you [after the project] in the future, maybe some suggestions for new projects for partners.</i>
Total number of respondents indicated the answer	2	5	1	1
TM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the team provides the good result of the project</i> • <i>A project carried out efficiently, also at minimum cost.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>[...] a project that would also satisfy the client.</i> • <i>the success of a project is when the client is satisfied.</i> 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the project must also benefit the organisation, if it has been successful, the organisation already has a name in other countries and therefore gets better and more projects [...], the reputation improves.</i>
Total number of respondents indicated the answer	4	2	0	1

Source: Composed by the author

The results show that project effectiveness in international public sector projects is the most important determinant of project success. This means that the success of a project is reflected in the achievement of the objectives set. In addition, the impact on the client is an equally important factor. Most respondents agreed that even if a project has achieved its objectives, this does not mean that the client will be satisfied and that the project should therefore pay particular attention to obtaining and taking into account client feedback. It should also be noted that project effectiveness was often linked to client satisfaction and mentioned together, indicating that both factors create the best view of project success.

It is worth noting that in public sector projects, the client is not the one who commissions the project or directly expects a certain monetary gain. Here the structure is slightly different. The project may be funded by international organizations such as the EU, UN, etc., or from a variety of sources to provide hard or soft 'services' to the recipient country. This means that the country benefits directly from the objectives of the project, but the institutions or organizations of the country that need it benefit directly. In this case, the client can be any beneficiary of the project - the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Moldova, youth centers in Ukraine, an employment agency in Azerbaijan, etc. These beneficiaries are not looking for profit, they are looking, for instance, for the provision of equipment they cannot afford, an exchange of practice - knowledge or support in setting up any institution they need. Thus, customer satisfaction is measured in terms of the number of satisfied project beneficiaries, mainly through satisfaction surveys and verbal feedback.

The same applies to long-term factors, business and immediate success, and preparation for the future. In the public sector, the situation is somewhat different. For the public sector, success includes maintaining a good reputation or establishing new relationships with institutions or organizations that could support future projects. It also shows that there is the possibility of getting more or better projects if word of a successfully implemented project spreads.

The research survey shows that project managers and team members do not think about the longer term. It is more of a responsibility of senior management and therefore respondents are not very aware of it and do not mention it as an important factor. However, there was one project manager and one team member who did mention it as an important aspect of project success. These two respondents have solid experience in such projects, suggesting that their experience allowed them to see the bigger picture.

Respondents were also asked how, in their opinion, effective conflict management contributes to the success of public sector international projects. The main insights were:

1. YES, it contributes:

- *effective conflict management saves time that can be used more productively.*
- *if the conflict is also made public from within the organization, the organization's reputation suffers.*
- *working more effectively as a team, which often leads to better results.*
- *a conflict-free project has a direct impact on project success.*
- *speed, quality, and good decision-making resulting in a high-quality project, and budget savings can be made.*

2. No, it does not contribute:

- *Have not noticed anyone highlighting good conflict management and what it contributed to success or failure.*
- *effective conflict management and the project success, it is hard to talk about it when we talk about the public sector – not so sure.*

It is worth mentioning, that none of the interviewed people thought about the conflict management's direct impact on the project success till the questions were asked. Some of them just assumed that it could have a positive impact, but did not measure it during the implementation of their projects. Moreover, respondents were asked to provide examples of how negatively or positively the conflict management influenced project success. Unfortunately, the majority of the respondents do not have any examples in mind that could support the answer. It was also indicated by one team member, that the private sector puts a lot of effort into establishing effective project management in the team, while the public sector does not give enough attention and still thinks that it is not needed.

Since in today's world, conflict is also not a bad, but a good thing that could provide positive aspects to the team and project, the particular question to the respondent was provided: *“Do you think that conflicts could be healthy for the team and the organization as such? Why? Do you see in your team the positive impact of the conflicts?”*

Table 7. Summary of answers to negative and positive approaches to the conflict

	Positive approach	Negative approach
PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I think you can definitely see the positive side of it, there are certainly situations where Antanas makes a conflict out of nothing and sticks to his opinion and Laura does the same, but when they're mad at each other, they sit down and find the best solution.</i> • <i>the team atmosphere improves and there's some kind of better communication.</i> • <i>conflict, it's just experience and lessons learned.</i> • <i>conflict helps to look deeper into a situation and to find a solution that works for everyone.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I always see conflict as a negative thing.</i> • <i>the conflicts are very destructive thing.</i> •
Total number of respondents indicated the answer	6	1
TM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We learn from our mistakes, so the same goes with the conflict as well.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>because the same disagreements tear the team apart and an angry person can't think in a clear and logical way, and productivity drops and they can't work productively.</i> • <i>Discussion brings better solutions, whereas conflict is such a selfish thing and destroys rather than creates.</i>
Total number of respondents indicated the answer	1	4

Source: Composed by the author

Here it can be seen the opposed views of a team member and a project manager. Almost all of the project managers believe that conflict brings positive results such as finding the best solution, improved communication, and lessons learned, while team members almost unanimously say that conflicts are negative and only destroy the team, and decrease

productivity. The different approaches of the project manager and team members could also escalate conflicts that could direct project success.

In general, the best approach to project success is the traditional: cost, quality, and time. It is important to note that the best factor for project success is the project's effectiveness and impact on the customer, i.e. a short-term and quickly observable result. Most respondents believe that good conflict management contributes to the success of projects and that the conflict itself can benefit the project team.

3.6. Interventions in conflict management and prevention in project teams

To productively use conflict management strategies and tools it is also important to work in a team to prevent conflicts. For this analysis, the respondents were asked to brainstorm how team members and project managers collaboratively improve conflict management concentrating on international projects within the public sector.

From the research survey, the following insights were found:

1. Improve communication and spend more time on it so the conflict possibility decreases.
2. The team itself should formulate the conflict management strategy because no strategy could fit all the teams, although they work with similar projects or in the same department.
3. Do not let the responsibilities of the team members overlap and clearly indicate who is responsible for what.
4. Organise team buildings, because then the team more closely communicates and it decreases conflict possibility.
5. Training on the conflict and conflict management topic.
6. Do not be afraid to ask other teams for the sharing practices and lessons learned and collaborate more.

It was also interesting to hear how teams measure and evaluate the effectiveness of conflict management in projects. It was unfortunate to learn that none of the respondents, neither project managers nor team members measure effectiveness and rarely think about the need to do so. Some indicated that it is measured by feedback from a colleague, others said it is measured from the perspective of the training. The project managers are asked to take a closer look at conflict management after the training and to observe it more so that they can present the results to the HR department so that they know whether the training was useful.

Most respondents think that measuring conflict management could be useful, but is not necessary in itself. Unfortunately, conflict management and its measurement are not taken seriously and this may prevent better results from being achieved in projects.

In general, to maintain or improve conflict management, it is important to improve communication between the project team(s), organize team meetings and training on conflict and conflict management, share good practices between teams, and avoid overlapping roles. It is sad to note that neither project managers nor project team members use any evaluation system to assess conflict and its impact. This aspect should be addressed.

3.7. Other findings

As the survey is aimed at the public sector, during the interviews respondents pointed out several findings and distinctions that are relevant for the review.

One respondent pointed out that conflicts in the private and public sectors are different. He claimed that in the private sector, the problems and arguments are more flexible, whereas, in the public sector, the bureaucracy makes conflicts between teams more complex and frequent because the public sector itself is more rigid and strict. Another project manager adds to the answer by saying that in the public sector, everything is more restricted and this problem makes conflict management difficult to overcome.

In addition, a respondent said that hierarchical and strict management is necessary for public sector teams because team members are different from the private sector due to their inflexibility, demanding nature, and inability to work independently. Indeed, it is hard to work in public sector international projects, because *“you have to fight between strict rules and projects that are just crying out for flexibility, for novelty and innovation. There is more risk here. In the private sector, it is more a case of 'let's try and see', and in the public sector, it is a case of 'how to make it safe and not a penny is lost'. That is why there are certainly many, many more conflicts in the public sphere, both because there is more fear and because there are more rules and because the thinking of our institutions has not changed”*. For these reasons it is hard to implement and work with conflict management, says one team member: *“when you ask about the effective conflict management and the project success, it is hard to talk about it when we talk about public sector. However, I think that conflict management in the private sector is important. Is it important in the public sector – not so sure”*?

It was also pointed out that the public sector often does not have sufficient resources to invest in team building and training, and as a result, the sector is not implementing conflict management quickly enough and is struggling greatly.

In addition, as mentioned above, the objectives of private and public sector projects are somewhat different. The public sector aims to improve a system that could bring more profit or benefit the project in one way or another, while the private sector is more profit-oriented. In the public sector, the objectives are not only to achieve the project objectives but also to gain a good reputation in the county or to gain knowledge within the organization in order to be able to manage other similar projects productively, and the objectives in terms of the monetary unit of profit are not stated.

The private sector also has a different perception of the need for conflict management integrated into the company. It was observed from the interviewer that *“there is a common logic that in the private sector people need to develop their soft skills, while in the public sector, they should do the same thing over and over because it's all very bureaucratic there. On the contrary, there is a very big trend at the moment to train the public sector, and it even seems sometimes that they train more than the private sector, because in the private sector, there is 'business' and 'money', and they don't find the time to develop spiritually and emotionally while they are making 'money'”*. Unfortunately, the public sector does not prioritize conflict management, but more research is needed to show that it is as important as in the private sector.

In general, the public sector is more bureaucratic and rigid and does not have the resources to invest in conflict management, team building, and training than the private sector. In this case, conflict management is not a priority in the public sector and has a significant impact on project success. The public sector should focus more on conflict management and prevention.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study was to analyze the characteristics of conflicts, their management, and impact on the implementation of public sector international projects. The main findings according to the study objectives are presented below.

Most common types and sources of conflict encountered in international public sector projects

The study supports the view that conflicts occur internally in the team, within teams, and in organizations. Team members are more likely to see conflicts within the team, while project managers are more likely to feel conflicts not only within the team but also between groups of teams. Internal conflicts can range from types related to tasks and procedures to personal aspects. Conflicts between groups, teams, and departments arise from competition and poor communication.

In addition, the root cause of further conflict and conflict management problems may be that project managers and project team members are not aware of the correct definition of conflict and conflict management from the project team's perspective, which leads to a subsequent failure to use it during the project implementation process.

Communication, teamwork, and emerging changes are the most common sources of conflict, which are directly related to the challenges of conflict management in the project team. However, team members and project managers have slightly different views. Team members identify change and miscommunication as the main causes of conflict, while project managers believe communication and teamwork can be the biggest escalators of conflict. The communication aspect is due to the high workload of the project team, and different team members.

Key factors contributing to effective conflict management in international project teams

The most common success factors are project effectiveness and client/beneficiary impact factors. This shows that project teams are more focused on short-term benefits and would like to see project results and success as soon as possible. However, project managers

and team members have different views. Project managers identified client impact as the main factor, while team members identified project effectiveness as the most crucial factor. However, it is very important to note that even if the project has achieved its objectives and has been effective, this does not necessarily mean that the client will be satisfied. Both factors are therefore equally important. Needless to say, project teams do not think about long-term success factors, such as business and direct success, or preparing for the future.

It is evident, that project teams still consider the traditional approach as the best one to achieve project success. These factors are the following: cost, quality, and time.

The role of cultural diversity in impacting conflict dynamics and resolution in international projects

Cultural differences in international projects are a huge game-changer for the project team to achieve project results. It happens due to different approaches, understandings, traditions, languages, or even religious aspects. On the other hand, a multicultural environment is an important factor for the success of a project, because when working on international projects it is essential to have team members from the country in which the project is being implemented who are familiar with the special cultural aspects of the beneficiary country.

In order to reduce conflicts due to cultural differences, it is advisable to organize specific team meetings to introduce the new members. This would help to better understand cultural aspects and deal with them more quickly during the project implementation.

The relationship between constructive conflict management and project success in public sector international projects

Public sector international project teams use a traditional approach (cost, quality, time) to measure project success. Although projects and their objectives may change over the years, the traditional approach is still relevant and used by project teams.

Conflict within the team is seen as both a positive and a negative aspect. On the positive side, better solutions can be found, new practices can be identified as well as lessons learned that have a direct impact on the success of projects. On the negative side, conflicts can increase mistrust, isolate the team, and destroy unity.

The intervention strategies for conflict prevention and effective management while implementing public sector international projects

Compromise is the most common way of resolving conflicts in international public sector projects. Avoidance and accommodation styles are seen as negative and destructive for both project managers and team members. However, some team members indicated that they use the avoidance style in order to stay out of the situation or to avoid escalating the conflict further.

Unfortunately, it was found that during the project implementation, any conflict management strategies, tools, and effective measurements in international public sector project teams were not used. The project teams do not consider it a priority and, if training has been organized, they have chosen not to participate in it.

The most commonly observed conflict prevention and effective conflict management in public sector international project teams are non-overlapping responsibilities of team members, team building and training activities that show a strong need for their use, teams sharing best practices, and developing conflict management strategies and tools.

It is evident from the study that **conflict management greatly impacts international project success in the public sector** due to time and budget savings and increased project team productivity and work quality.

Recommendations

A detailed analysis of conflict management, prevention, and its impact on the success of international projects in the public sector has led to the development of practical recommendations aimed at improving conflict resolution practices in project teams.

First of all, is necessary to challenge the prevailing view among team members that conflict management is the sole responsibility of project managers. There must be unanimous recognition that conflict management is a shared responsibility between project managers and team members. This change not only fosters a more collaborative working environment in the organizations' project teams but also ensures a unified approach to conflict resolution.

Secondly, project managers and team members should be trained on how to effectively identify, address, and resolve conflicts. Workshops and training programmes adapted to the unique challenges of international projects can give individuals the skills needed to overcome cultural differences, communication barriers, and other obstacles. Moreover, project managers

should be culturally competent. This includes a deep understanding of the norms, communication styles, and working habits of different cultures.

Thirdly, recognizing the consensus on the impact of cultural differences on team dynamics, organizations should strategically form project teams. Consideration should be given to including team members from the same cultural background as the project target country. Such inclusion can help team members to communicate, understand, and collaborate more smoothly.

In summary, these recommendations underline the need for a collective and proactive approach to conflict management in international project teams. By fostering a culture of shared responsibility, through targeted training, and strategic planning of teams, public sector organizations can strengthen their projects against the challenges of conflict and contribute to the success of projects.

Limitations of the study

- Public sector international projects vary widely, and the findings may not be fully generalizable to all contexts.
- Conducting interviews and surveys in public sector organizations, especially in international projects, can be difficult due to bureaucratic hurdles, privacy issues, and time constraints.
- When dealing with international projects, language barriers, and cultural differences may introduce misinterpretations or nuances that could affect the validity of the data collected.
- Depending on the willingness of the participants to share their experiences and perceptions of conflict management, response bias may affect the results.

Implication for future studies

Further, this study can be developed in several different directions. Firstly, the multicultural environmental aspect could be taken as the significant one examining specific cultural contexts and their impact on conflict resolution strategies that could lead to valuable insights.

Moreover, this research a bit touched remote work, global challenges, and rapid advancements in technology trends and their effect on the conflict emerge, so future research could explore how digital tools and virtual collaboration influence conflict management in international projects within the public sector.

Furthermore, the research showed, that the beneficiaries and their satisfaction are one of the most important aspects of the project's success, so an in-depth investigation of the role of various stakeholders, beyond project managers and team members, in conflict management could offer good insights and results.

To conclude, the information gathered in this study can be used as guidelines for future research from any angle selected from this study.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Interview guide

The interviews are planned to take around 30-60 minutes.

1. Explain briefly the topic and focus of the study.
2. The anonymity of the interviewee will be protected, so honesty is very much welcomed.
3. There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions and experiences.
4. Request for permission to record the interview.

Theme/ section	Interview question	Section according to the conducted Framework (Figure 6, pp. 42)
Conflict types	Q1 – What in our opinion is conflict definition in project management?	1
	Q2 - What kind of conflicts are seen in your team? Does conflicts more happening between individuals, or between teams? Or maybe you could observe more conflicts between team member and organization's management?	
Causes of conflicts between team members/ between Project manager and team members	Q3 - What challenges have you encountered in managing conflicts during your career? Could you give an example?	2.1
	Q4 - How do you identify potential conflicts in the early stages of an international project? Are there specific warning signs you look out for?	
	Q5 - What are the most common causes of conflict in your team?	
	<i>Additional question for TM</i> - How you evaluate your relation in regards to conflict with your boss/ Project Manager? Do you have a lot of conflicts between each other? What are the causes? What could be improved?	
Causes of conflicts in	Q6 - How do cultural differences within the team influence conflict dynamics and management within your international project team?	2.2

international projects	Q7 - Does the multicultural environment make the project team's work more difficult and lead to more conflicts? Does the miscommunication could be the main aspect and lead to conflicts?	
Conflict management (solutions) in the team	Q8 - What strategies or methods do you personally use to address conflicts in your role as Project manager/ Team member?	3
	Q9 - Remembering the question regarding the challenges you encountered in managing conflicts, how they were solved and mitigated?	
	Q10 - Could you share your lessons learned from your experiences regarding the essential aspects for managing conflicts within international projects?	
Project success/ What factors lead to project success	Q11 - How do you personally describe project success (main aspects)?	4
	Q12- Do you think that conflicts could be healthy for the team and for the organization as such? Why? Do you see in your team positive impact of the conflicts?	
	Q13 - How does effective conflict management contribute to the success of public sector international projects?	
	Q14 - Can you share an example of a project where successful conflict management played a significant role in achieving the project's goals and outcomes?	
	Q15 - Could you describe a situation where unresolved conflicts had a negative impact on a project's success? What were the consequences?	
Interventions in conflict management and preventions in project teams	Q16 - How can team members and project managers collaboratively improve conflict management?	5
	Q17 - How do you measure and assess the effectiveness of conflict management within your projects?	

ANNEX 2: Example of transcribed interview

Interview 11

Team member 4

Experience as TM – 8 years

- *Interviewer: I,*
- *Respondent: R.*

I: hello, and thank you for agreeing to participate in my research.

R: it is my pleasure.

I: so, I will provide a few questions regarding conflict management, international projects in the public sector, and project success, and hope that you will answer honestly.

R: yes, of course, whatever you need.

I. Question: so, first of all, let's start with some easier questions – what in your opinion is the conflict? What kind of conflict do you see mostly in your team?

R. Answer: amm, so basically, the conflict is the difference of opinions that can happen between people who have different opinions. Am I right?

I: there are no right or wrong answers, it is your opinion, and thank you for that.

R: oh, you playing like that. Ok.

I. Question: so, the second question that was not answered was what kind of conflicts you see more often in your team?

R. Answer: aha, so basically, it is worth saying, that there are conflicts that cannot be seen because our project manager does a great job to hide and solving them without knowing other team members and I think this is very valuable. But talking about the conflicts that I have a chance to see, so it literally happens between one or a few team members and it appears due to some disagreements regarding the solution of the task or some personal issues arise.

I. Question: and have you had a chance to be the part of the teams' conflicts? When the teams are having some disagreements?

R. Answer: no, or let's say – not yet.

I. Question: ok, but still, probably you can assume or maybe you talked with other teams' colleagues. So, what are the causes of those conflicts that were mentioned before?

R. Answer: well, mainly due to some changes in the projects, really mainly, a few times a week we have these kinds of conflicts because the situation changed, requirements changed

or any other matter changed. And it happens all the time cause a project without changes is not a project at all.

I. Question: yeah, that is true. Something more?

R. Answer: amm, let's see. Well, it could be changed in the team, I mean employees changing all the time, but it still goes to the changes basket as such.

I. Question: right. Ok, thanks. And, do you think, that conflicts could be healthy to the teams and more constrictive than destructive?

R. Answer: well yeah, probably, I mean, I am not sure of it, since I have not experienced it, in theory it could be, but we are not looking at the conflicts very deeply, because there are conflicts, and they should be solved, that is the only approach we are using when it comes to the conflict and its management. I mean, no tracking or strategies for solving it were and are used, nothing.

I. Question: so, basically, you have not experienced that conflicts could have a positive impact on the team, right?

R. Answer: yeah, that's what I mean.

I. Question: ok, good, thank you. Let's go further. What challenges have you had a chance to encounter in managing conflicts within a team? Maybe you could share some examples from your experience?

R. Answer: let's see. Always assuming, that is the main issue we are facing in our team. I mean that in our team our often-used word is "I assumed" and that means that you have done something not according to the instructions, but you assumed that it should be done like that. Also, doing and not understanding of what doing and what is the purpose of the task. Then it causes a lot of confusion and the quality of tasks suffers as well.

I. Question: let me clarify, you said that you are not identifying the conflicts in your team and not working on them, right?

R. Answer: yeah, that is true.

I. Question: let me clarify, you said that you are not identifying the conflicts in your team and not working what do you think, it is bad or good?

R. Answer: since you asked, I think is bad. But talking seriously, it is hard to understand, I think first of all I need to be in a team, where conflicts are identified, see the purpose and the impact, and then compare to this organization.

I. Question: true, and how do you evaluate your relationship in regards to the conflicts with your project manager? Do you encounter a lot of conflict with PM?

R. Answer: well, yeah, sometimes we have our hard times, but in our team, the hierarchy is very important, so the project manager is the final decision maker so I am not questioning the solutions he/she makes. Just deal with it and not keep the angriness on him/ her.

I. Question: So mainly avoiding style of managing the conflicts is using – you are not questioning and just go with the flow.

R. Answer: the word “avoid” I think is very drastic and has a negative meaning.

I: I mean, it is not a bad conflict management type, really. The word itself sounds bad.

R: yeah, I understand, so, yeah, we can say that the type is avoiding and just not facing it since we have a hierarchy type of project team approach. But of course, with some exceptions as well.

I. Question: and what could be improved?

R. Answer: I don’t know really, maybe nothing, I accept this kind of approach, because we have different responsibilities and different levels of responsibilities and we are very clear, about who is responsible for what kind and level of issues. That is all and I like it.

I: good to know actually, that you are mainly happy with your team and project manager.

R: yeah, I am mainly happy.

I. Question: ok, let’s talk a bit about the prevention of conflicts in the team. I recall you said, that you do not use any kind of strategies to address the conflicts. Am I right?

R. Answer: as far as I know, right.

I. Question: but maybe we could brainstorm a bit, what kind of methods and strategies would you like to see in your team for conflict management?

R. Answer: it is hard to brainstorm when you do not know really, what kind of strategies could be used. So, let’s say I don’t want anything to be changed.

I. Question: ok, thank you. Remembering the question and your answer regarding the challenges faced in managing conflicts, let’s remember that we talked about talking with assumes, right?

R. Answer: yes, indeed.

I. Question: so how it was solved if solved at all?

R. Answer: well, we still have these kinds of issues in our team, but we are trying to work on it all the time. So, yeah, it still had to be worked out.

I. Question: ok. Could you share, if you have any, lessons learned in regard to the essential aspects of conflict management in international projects?

R. Answer: amm, hard to say, probably no. But I personally believe that key aspects would be to understand each other, work in relations within the team, respect each other and not forget and not be scared to tell your opinion even if it argues with majorities.

I. Question: ok, thanks. What do you think, how can team members and project managers together improve conflict management?

R. Answer: so, the same as previously – respect, express your opinion, work together as the team, and reach together the project goal.

I. Question: Thank you. And a few questions about the cultural differences. What do you think, how cultural differences in the team influence conflict dynamics and affect the team that works with international projects, specifically in the public sector?

R. Answer: it does, indeed. In my team, mainly there are Lithuanians and they are more worked together than me and Lithuanians. They have the same understanding; they have their jokes and way to deal with issues and I just try to fit in and catch up and it is hard. From my point of view, the work with different cultures is really hard, especially in a team when everything is about the team itself.

I. Question: and how do you think a multicultural environment makes the project teamwork? Is it more difficult and leads to more conflicts? Does the miscommunication could be the main aspect and lead to conflicts?

R. Answer: with no doubt, it is harder than ever. And when it comes to the miscommunication, yes, indeed. I said previously that, it is harder mainly due to miscommunication in the team. The team understands English very well, and we can change the language, but we cannot change our thinking. I hope you understand what I mean.

I. Question: yes, yes, of course. And the last bunch of questions is about the conflict linkages with project success. How do you personally describe project success? Those main aspects preferably.

R. Answer: for sure – scope, time, and budget.

I. Question: and how does effective conflict management contribute to the success of public sector international projects?

R. Answer: am, better management equals better results for the project. Of course, it is linked to the project's success.

I. Question: and how?

R. Answer: well, we talked about it for a whole hour. The results are better without conflicts, the team works better without any interruptions, and so on and so forth.

I. Question: thank you. And the last question, can you share an example of a project where successful conflict management played a significant role in achieving the project's goals and outcomes or when unresolved conflicts had a negative impact on a project's success? What kind of consequences were faced?

R. Answer: oh, this is the hard one. But of course, we have some. Well, one team member instructed the other one on how to do the task differently than was agreed with the project manager. Then all three were mad at each other and the consequence was that one of them was fired and the other one had to deal with a bigger workload at the end, nothing was happy, the team was split and the beneficiaries were not happy about the results cause due to changes in the team, so we had to fix it that led to more work, more money, and more conflicts actually.

I: thank you for your time and dedication, your answers are very valuable to me and the study. If you would be interested, I definitely would like to share my survey results with you.

R: of course, will wait for the results!