



**VILNIUS UNIVERSITY
BUSINESS SCHOOL**

INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Rita Klein

THE FINAL MASTER'S THESIS

<i>KONFLIKTUS LEMIANTYS VEIKSNIAI IR JŲ VALDYMAS TARPTAUTINIŲ ĮMONIŲ PROJEKTŲ KOMANDOSE</i>	DRIVERS OF CONFLICTS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES PROJECT TEAMS
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SANTRAUKA

VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETO VERSLO MOKYKLA
TARPTAUTINIŲ PROJEKTŲ VALDYMO STUDIJŲ PROGRAMA

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KONFLIKTUS LEMIANTYS VEIKSNIAI IR JŲ VALDYMAS TARPTAUTINIŲ ĮMONIŲ
PROJEKTŲ KOMANDOSE

Darbo vadovė – prof. dr. Dalia Bagdžiūnienė

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Trumpas darbo apibūdinimas. Konfliktai tarptautinių projektų komandose kelia iššūkių projektų vadovams. Jie veikia darbuotojų nuotaikas, kelia stresą profesinėje veikloje. Neišspręsti, nevaldomi konfliktai gali itin neigiamai paveikti profesines patirtis, sukelti sveikatos problemų. Tinkamas konfliktų valdymas padeda tinkamai spręsti tarp organizacijos narių kylančius konfliktus.

Darbo problema, tikslas ir uždaviniai. Darbo problema suformuluota tokiais klausimais: kokie veiksniai lemia konfliktus informacinių technologijų projektuose? Kaip tikslinga veiksmingai valdyti konfliktus, kylančius informacinių technologijų projektuose tarptautinėse įmonėse? Darbo tikslas – išanalizuoti pagrindinius konfliktų veiksnius ir jų valdymą tarptautinių įmonių projektų komandose ir parengti konfliktų valdymo komandose gerinimo kryptis. Uždaviniai:

1. Identifikuoti konfliktų projektų komandose veiksnius ir pasekmes.
2. Atlikti teorinių konfliktų valdymo tarptautinių įmonių projektų komandose prielaidų analizę.
3. Atskleisti konfliktų veiksnius tarptautinėse komandose, dirbančiose informacinių technologijų srityje.

4. Išnagrinėti konfliktų valdymo ypatumus tarptautinėse komandose, dirbančiose informacinių technologijų srityje.
5. Parinkti konfliktų prevencijos sprendimus, taikytinus tarptautinėse komandose, dirbančiose informacinių technologijų srityje.

Darbe taikyti tyrimo metodai. Empiriniam tyrimui atlikti taikyta kokybinė metodologija, atliekant interviu su informacinių technologijų srityje dirbančių tarptautinių komandų vadovais ir nariais.

Atlikti tyrimai ir gauti rezultatai, išvados. Konfliktus tarptautinių projektų komandose dažniausiai lemia nuomonių, požiūrių skirtumai, profesinių funkcijų neatlikimas, supratingumo stoka ar nesusipratimai, netinkama komunikacija. Veiksnių poveikio koregavimui, svarbu tinkamas valdymas. Tarptautinių projektų komandose konfliktų valdymas yra dažniausiai nukreiptas į konflikto priežasčių ar tinkamiausio konflikto sprendimo paiešką.

Informacija apie darbo rezultatų publikavimą ar pritaikymą publikuoti. Darbo rezultatai gali būti publikuojami. Po darbo gynimo planuojama parengti publikaciją recenzuojamame moksliniame periodiniame leidinyje.

SUMMARY

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

INTERNATIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT STUDY PROGRAM

RITA KLEIN

DRIVERS OF CONFLICTS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL
COMPANIES PROJECT TEAMS

Supervisor - prof. dr. Dalia Bagdžiūnienė

The thesis was prepared in 2022 in Vilnius

Thesis consists of 65 pages.

Number of tables in thesis - 15 pcs.

Number of figures in thesis - 12 pcs.

Number of references – 50 pcs.

Short description of the thesis. Conflicts in international project teams pose challenges for project managers. They affect the mood of employees and cause stress in their professional activities. Unresolved, unmanaged conflicts can significantly negatively impact professional experience and lead to health problems. Proper conflict management helps to resolve conflicts between members of an organization properly.

Problem, aim and tasks of the thesis. The problem of the thesis is formulated with the following questions: what factors determine conflicts in information technology projects? How to effectively manage conflicts arising from information technology projects in multinational companies? The thesis aims to analyze the main factors of conflicts and their management in the project teams of multinational companies and to develop solutions for improving conflict management in teams. Tasks:

1. Identify the factors and consequences of conflicts in project teams.
2. To analyze the theoretical assumptions of conflict management in the project teams of international companies.
3. To reveal the factors of conflicts in international teams working in the field of information technology.
4. To examine the peculiarities of conflict management in international teams in the information technology field.

5. To select conflict prevention solutions applicable to international teams in the information technology field.

Research methods. A qualitative methodology was used to perform the empirical research by conducting interviews with the leaders and members of international teams in the information technology field.

Research and results obtained, conclusions. Conflicts in international project teams are usually caused by differences of opinion, attitudes, failure to complete professional functions, lack of understanding or misunderstandings, and poor communication. Proper management is essential to adjust for the effects of factors. In international project teams, conflict management is usually focused on finding the causes or the most appropriate solution to the conflict.

Information on the publication or adaptation of the results for publication. The results of the research may be published. After the defense, it is planned to prepare a publication in a peer-reviewed scientific periodical.

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INTRODUCTION

The relevance and novelty of the thesis. Interest in project activity has increased tremendously during the last decade. Changes in the socio-economic environment have determined such an increase. These changes encouraged the dynamism in processes and intense digitalization of business. In such a context, the application of project-based methods became very wide. Projects become popular, and various organizations frame their processes, tasks, and functions as interrelated projects. Project management becomes necessary to meet the challenges of the current market environment, which requires organizations in all industries to make substantial changes in the fields of technologies, planning, market, human resources, etc. (Stoyanova, 2015). Teams realize projects. The majority of large companies, according to G. Georgiadis (2015, 187 p.), "engage a substantial proportion of their workforce in teamwork".

There exists a debate on what constitutes a successful project (Thomas, Tucker, & Kelly, 1999; Hirst & Mann, 2004; Brenner, 2007; Chiocchio, 2007; Triana, Kirkman, & Wagstaff, 2012; Miller, Balapurria, & Sesay, 2015), however few can disagree that communication is an essential driver for successful management of a project. Three trends may explain such an emphasis on communication in project management. First, it is essential to mention the increasing globalization and complexity. The other trend is the increasing usage of project teams. Apart from these trends, rapid technology change is also worth mentioning. These changes correct the way of communication. Information technologies modify communication between team members. According to Chiocchio (2007), "these trends appear in parallel to recent accounts of alarmingly high and worsening project failure rates". The worsening rates might be related to conflicts among team members.

Conflicts in project teams are challenging for project managers in international companies. Conflicts are essential in shaping professional experiences. Conflicts affect employees' moods and can cause stress at work, which becomes a driver of psychological stress (Hagemeister & Volmer, 2018). The problem is not the conflict itself, its rise, but the inability to act during conflicts. Therefore, conflicts in the professional environment appear to be one of the ten negative professional factors. Unresolved, unmanaged conflicts can strongly negatively impact work experiences, such as personal mood, lead to health problems, and become physical determinants of stress (e.g., noise, poor working conditions) (Hagemeister & Volmer, 2018). Proper

management of professional conflicts helps to resolve instantaneous conflicts between members of an organization and positively impacts the organization's long-term development (Yin et al., 2020). The challenge that arises in project teams is related to the fact that conflicts can be functional or dysfunctional. In order to get benefits from the functionality of conflicts, it is essential to manage them effectively.

Problem description. With the IT industry's rapid growth, many projects are undertaken in various countries. Therefore, the competition in the market becomes even more intense. With the increasingly complex business environment, conflicts in IT projects and companies have become typical. The success of project teams in international companies depends upon management and the minimization of conflicts. In order to manage conflicts effectively and minimize them, it is essential to know the factors that stimulate the conflicts. Conflict management in IT contexts has not been systematically researched before across many examples of IT projects or companies. This research intends to identify drivers of conflicts in international companies' project teams working in IT, and to provide solutions for managing conflicts effectively.

The object of the thesis is conflicting in international companies' project teams.

The thesis aims to identify the main drivers having an impact upon conflicts and their management in international companies' project teams, and to provide guidance for effective management of conflicts in such teams.

The objectives:

1. to identify drivers and consequences of conflicts in project teams;
2. to theoretically analyze management of conflicts in international companies' project teams;
3. to evaluate the drivers of conflicts in international teams operating in the IT industry;
4. to present peculiarities of conflict management in international teams operating in the IT industry;
5. to find out appropriate solutions for the prevention of conflicts in international teams.

Methods of the thesis. The author of this thesis has chosen to apply the qualitative methodology to research drivers of conflicts and their management in international companies' project teams. The research participants were members of IT project teams in international companies or other types of project teams in international companies operating in the IT industry.

The structure and scope of the thesis. The thesis consists of the introduction, three parts, conclusions and recommendations, a list of references, and annexes. The first part presents a

theoretical review of conflicts and their management in international companies' project teams. The second part presents the research methodology. The third part is up for the analysis of the research results.

Difficulties and limitations. Interpretation of the results of qualitative research is subjective. It is affected by time, place, people, and circumstances. Results of the research conducted in a different setting might give different results.

1. THEORETICAL REVIEW OF CONFLICTS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES PROJECT TEAMS

1.1. Communication in project teams

1.1.1. Project teams

A project is “a temporary group activity designed to produce a unique product, service, or result” (Averweg, Addison, 2015, 17 p.). In order to produce this specific product, service, or result, there exists a demand for a project team. The project team realizes the project. Definitions of project teams are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Definitions of project teams

Author(s)	Definition
Jones (2008, 113 p.)	The group of people charged with gathering information and mapping the processes, developing and carrying out change management initiatives, and regularly interfacing with top management, organizational members, and other stakeholders during the project
Wakefield, & Leidner (2008, 435 p.)	“A collection of individuals that works on organizational tasks interdependently, shares responsibility for team performance, and is viewed as a distinct social entity embedded in a larger organizational system”
Stulgiene, & Ciutiene (2014, 227 p.)	“An interdependent collection of individuals who work together towards a common goal and who share responsibility for specific outcomes of their organizations”

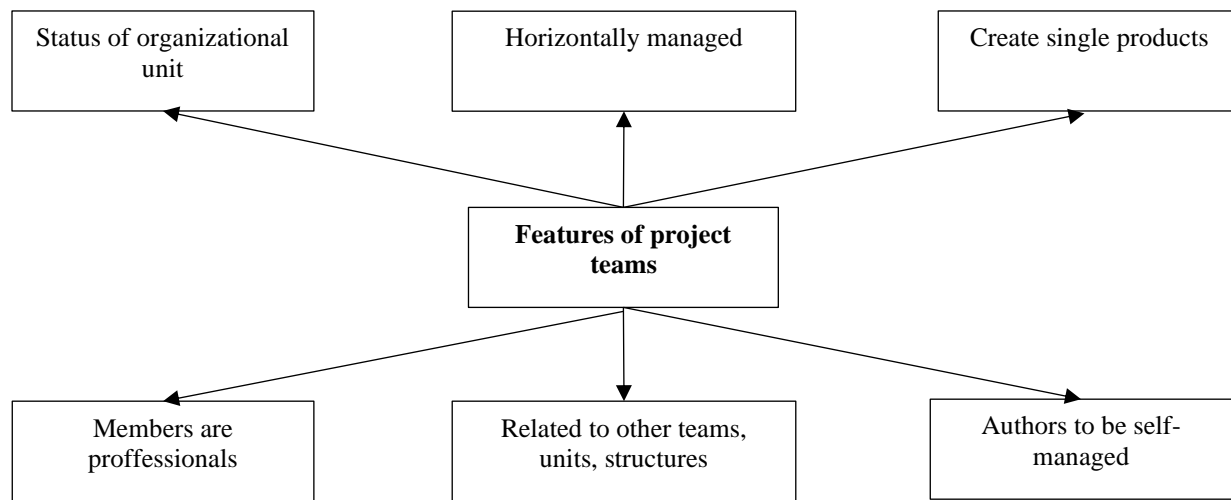
Source: compiled by the author based on Jones (2008); Wakefield & Leidner (2008); Stulgiene, Ciutiene (2014).

Chen (2006, 105 p.) defines project teams as follows: “(1) the project team is regarded as a social system; (2) team members are interdependent to finish a common task assigned by the organization during a fixed time; and (3) the project outcomes need to meet stakeholders’ requirements”.

Project teams have specific features (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Features of project teams



Source: compiled by the author based on Stoyanova (2015).

Project teams feature the status of organizational units. Even if project teams are temporary, they have to be institutionalized, i. e. to have boundaries, position in organization, composition, deadlines, goals, and budgets. The management of project teams is horizontal. It means that managers of the project team are members of the team. Project teams create single products. Project teams consist of good professionals. Teams are directly related to other units, teams, and structures. Usually, they are authorized to be self-managed (Stoyanova, 2015).

There are various types of project teams. All of them have different names, features, contributions, and benefits. Stoyanova (2015) mentions specific criteria for the typology of project teams. They are the degree of their autonomy and the degree of control, degree of efficiency, and purpose of formation (Table 2).

Project teams can be virtual, co-located, or hybrid (containing both local and remote members) (Wakefield, Leidner, & Garrison, 2008; Webster, & Wong, 2008; Meyer, Bond-Barnard, Steyn, & Jordan, 2016). Meyer, Bond-Barnard, Steyn, & Jordaan (2016, 61 p.) have analyzed virtual teams. According to the authors, virtual teams are “groups of individuals collaborating in the execution of a specific project while located at multiple individual sites or multiple group sites”. These teams allow organizations to complete projects in a faster manner by the usage of the skills of geographically distributed team members. In reference to Wakefield and

Leidner (2008, 435 p.), “is a team whose members rely on technology-mediated communication in working across geographical, organizational and/or time boundaries to accomplish team tasks and achieve team goals”. Virtual teams use modern information and communication technologies to work across space and time. It is more challenging to achieve management efficiency in virtual teams than in co-located teams. This is because virtual teams decrease control and monitoring activities. Virtual teams are also vulnerable to communication breakdowns, mistrust, power struggles, and conflicts. Their cultural and functional diversity might lead to differences in the thought process. Virtual teams also face difficulties in developing a conceptual background of a problem (Meyer, Bond-Barnard, Steyn, & Jordan, 2016).

Table 2

Types of project teams

Criteria	Types
Degree of their autonomy and the degree of control	Manager-led, self-managing, self-created, self-directed, managerial teams
Degree of the efficiency	Efficient in producing a specific product, efficient in supporting an organization cope with a situation, efficient in encouraging the personal and professional development of members
Purpose of formation	Operational, project, parallel, management, informal

Source: compiled by the author based on Stoyanova (2015)

Chen (2006) classifies project teams into service-driven and technology-driven. The author has drawn these types of project teams from Taiwan’s context.

Some types of project teams gained exceptional attention in scientific literature. Huo, Zhang, and Guo (2016) concentrated on cross-functional project teams. According to the authors, the cross-functional project team is “often defined as a collection of individuals who are interdependent for team performance, who view themselves as embedded in political organizations, and who manage their relationships across organizational boundaries” (Huo, Zhang, & Guo, 2016, 52 p.). The composition of a cross-functional project team involves members that are drawn from various functional units of the organization. This type of team is desirable in new product design, strategic planning, crisis response, health care, and executive leadership (Young-Hyman, 2017).

Z. Yazid (2015) focused on the self-managed project team. These project teams are also known as bossless; such teams have no leader.

There also exists a possibility to classify project teams depending upon their scale. Jones (2008) mentions large scale, mid-project, and small project teams.

1.1.2. Relevance of fluent communication and barriers to fluent communication in project teams

Communication is critical in any change process. The project is related to some change, so fluent communication is essential for its successful implementation. Communication is "the exchange of information between sender and receiver to equalize information on both sides" (Senescu, Aranda-Mena, & Haymaker, 2013, p. 185). It means that communication is not just speaking. Communication can be spoken, but it is written or expressed in another form. It might be person-to-person in a group setting. Apart from this, communication can be formal or informal (Brenner, 2007).

The communication process might be based on different technologies in particular types of project teams. Webster & Wong (2008) have analyzed communication patterns in virtual, semi-virtual, and co-located teams. Members of semi-virtual teams experience a higher level of identification with local team members and communicate with them more frequently than members of other types of teams. Semi-virtual teams report overall high communication. This is "due to more face-to-face communication with their local (as compared with their remote) members, not due to differences in other types of technology-mediated communication" (Webster, & Wong, 2008, 50 p.). Differences in types of communication between virtual, semi-virtual, and co-located teams exist. Face-to-face communication is most frequently used in co-located and semi-virtual teams (local members). In semi-virtual and virtual teams (remote members), the most appropriate form of communication is e-mail.

According to Brenner (2007, 19 p.), "keeping the project team informed is crucial. Whether communicating informally or formally, written or verbal, communicating helps build the team's focus and gives them a clearer idea of their roles and what is expected of them, so they understand their individual goals and the team's overall goal for a successful project".

Thomas, Tucker, and Kelly (1999), Brenner (2007), Chiocchio (2007), Henderson (2008), and Vond-Barnard and Steyn (2013) emphasize the importance of effective communication between team members. Effective communication in the case of engineering organizations is the third most significant factor contributing to a project's success (Thomas, Tucker, & Kelly, 1999). In the academic paper by Henderson (2008), experts rated listening and verbal communication "in the top 10 of a list of 50 competencies important for project managers to be successful in today's organizational environments". Hirst & Mann (2004) emphasize that effective team communication predicts innovation and project performance.

Effective communication is vital for the success of a project because it stimulates cooperation between team members. However, not every type of communication has a significant effect (Chiocchio, 2007). For example, the impact of frequent formal communication on the degree of cooperation in a project team seems to be very slight. In contrast, frequent informal communication leads to better collaboration between team members. Informal communication might include telephone calls or casual discussions. One of the reasons why effective communication in a project team has such a significant impact on the success of a project is the human factor. This factor specifies that people deliver projects, not systems or processes.

Stulgiene and Ciutiene (2014) have also found that fluent communication leads to collaboration in the project team. Fluent communication is essential in open and repeating formal relationships and informal relationships. Authors state that effective team communication is "one of the means to reach project's success because ineffective communication determines misunderstandings, destructive conflicts, complaints, and low working efficiency" (Stulgiene, Ciutiene, 2014, 229 p.).

Browne, Dreitlein, Ha, Manzoni & Mere (2016), and Mueller (2015) emphasize the importance of culture in ensuring successful communication. According to the authors, for communication to be successful, a clear understanding of culture exists.

Henderson, Stackman, and Lindekilde (2016) have researched the centrality of communication norm alignment, role clarity, and trust in the global project team. A questionnaire survey of 218 global project workers representing 33 different project teams was used to find the relationship between the criticality of communication norms, role clarity, and trust in the workings of global virtual teams. Later interviews with members of global project teams were accomplished. Eighteen members took part in in-person interviews. Instruments (questionnaires) were specially

designed for particular research. Results of the research have shown that role clarity, and trust are essential factors for the individual's satisfaction with participation in a project team. The research provided a model for creating and sustaining global project teams that would benefit researchers and practitioners.

According to Guang-Dong (2013), communication can, to some extent, reduce the problems caused by asymmetrical information, strengthen the understanding between project teams, and reduce misunderstandings and conflicts.

In reference to Guang-Dong (2013), "sound communication can contribute to accurate and timely information exchanges. The project will be implemented soundly as long as project teams make sense of their respective roles and responsibilities through communication. Communication allows one party to understand the other's ideas and intention and express their ideas to see how the other responds".

In order to get benefit from the mentioned aspects, Browne, Dreitlein, Ha, Manzoni & Mere (2016) recommend to:

- “establish and schedule regular communication activities;
- provide a fully detailed project plan for each member;
- establish a reliable communication method for each team member;
- foster bonds and trust among the members; and
- provide great leadership as the project manager”.

Fluent communication is one of the important jobs of a project manager. He has to ensure successful communication in the project team. However, there is a trend of popularizing self-directed teams (Chiocchio, 2007). In an environment where some projects might not even have a project manager, it might become unclear who is responsible for fluent communication in the project team.

One more barrier to fluent communication in project teams is the lack of measurement of communication effectiveness in project teams. Thomas, Tucker, and Kelly (1999) emphasize that there are no universally confirmed and used means for reasonably measuring communication effectiveness.

In cross-functional project teams, an essential barrier to fluent communication is the diversity of communication rules, values, and beliefs among different functional departments (Huo, Zhang, & Guo, 2016). Such diversities raise challenges for cohesion, trust, and group

identity among team members. Jones (2008) also emphasizes the impact of diversity in ensuring fluent communication in the project team. According to the author, “project managers <...> are faced with how to create hybrid team cultures that integrate a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, cultures, and goals”.

Kwofie, Adinyira & Fugar (2016) examined barriers to fluent communication in mass housing project teams. Researchers found that communication is ineffective due to distortions, barriers in accessibility, underloading, overloading, difficulties in procedures, misunderstanding, and gatekeeping.

Jones (2008) has researched four firms. Using a case study methodology, the author found that there are two types of obstacles in the way of fluent communication: internal and external. External obstacles form due to the previous experience and perceptions of project team members. Internal obstacles are related to the progress of the project. For example, the context of the project might become an internal obstacle in the way of fluent communication.

One more barrier to fluent communication is the struggle to leverage information technology to ease communication in the projects. This problem, in reference to Senescu, Aranda-Mena, and Haymaker (2013), is widespread in the architecture, engineering, and construction industry. Triana, Kirkman, & Wagstaff (2012) propose that information technology should be used for electronic meetings. Such meetings should be organized before face-to-face meetings. Such a choice can potentially increase the inclusion of project team members. However, Meyer, Bond-Barnard, Steyn, & Jordaan (2016) found out that the usage of information and communication technologies can stimulate mistrust and communication breakdowns.

To sum up, it can be stated that effective communication helps every team member build confidence. Specific barriers to effective communication in project teams exist. A significant barrier in international project teams is the lack of measurement of communication effectiveness. The barriers may lead to conflicts in project teams. The thesis continues by analyzing the drivers and consequences of conflicts in project teams.

1.2. Conflicts in project teams: their drivers and consequences

1.2.1. Definition and types of conflicts

According to Guang-Dong (2013), “conflict refers to the phenomena when two or above individuals have different beliefs, ideas and interests”. Kudrevičiūtė and Stankūnas (2018) suggest defining the conflict as opposing needs, goals, interests, positions, opinions or views, or severe disagreements during which a person is overwhelmed by unpleasant feelings or experiences. In reference to Wu et al. (2017, p. 1467), conflicts can be defined as “mutual interactions among project teams due to different perspectives on project objectives (e.g., quality, time, cost, safety), as well as poor communication”. Malinauskas and Bukauskas (2018) explain the concept of conflicts as a confrontation of opposing incompatible trends leading to unpleasant solid experiences. According to Wang and Wu (2020), conflict is a set of processes that encompasses the latent, emotional, perceptual, manifestation, and outcome stages.

A project conflict means an interaction between project team members due to a contradiction of project control objectives or different interests. Cahyono & Hartijasti (2012, p. 68) define conflict “as an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals”. In the project team context, conflict is “task conflict and interpersonal conflict occurring among team members within a team” (Chen, 2006, 107 p.).

Conflicts in project teams usually appear in specific stages of project team formation. Project teams evolve through four stages of development in their path to effectiveness. These stages are forming, storming, norming, and performing. In the forming stage, a diverse group of people is brought together to interact as a specific entity. During the storming, stage, conflicts appear as members define their expectations and role. Conflicts are solved during the storming stage when team members try to understand each other’s expectations. In the performing stage, teamwork, productivity, and collaboration build projects result (Matthews, McLees, 2015, 22 p.). Chen (2006) also confirms that the nature of conflicts varies during different stages of the project’s life cycle. However, Chen (2006) mentions different stages than the ones described before. According to Chen (2006), the project team moves through early, middle, and late stages.

The frequency of conflicts is also dependent upon the project life cycle. Chen (2006), who researched the benefits and detriments of conflict in the team creativity process, found out that task and interpersonal conflicts are most frequent in the testing stage.

There are various types of conflicts. Choi and Cho (2011), Guang-Dong (2013), Wu, Zhao and Zuo (2017) mention three types of conflicts in project teams. They are process conflict, task conflict, and relationship conflict.

Process conflicts. Process conflict “surfaces when members disagree on the methods and processes required to complete tasks” (Wakefield & Leidner, 2008, 435 p.).

Task conflicts. Task conflicts are defined as disagreements between members of an organization about the tasks that need to be performed in terms of content. This type of conflict involves differences in attitudes, ideas, and opinions (Hagemeister & Volmer, 2018). This type of conflict is related to the performing of tasks. Usually, tasks are proposed in order to improve the quality of teamwork by stimulating the generation of alternative solutions, and to prevent a team from conformity traps or group thinking (Choi & Cho, 2011). Wakefield and Leidner (2008, 435 p.) state that “task conflict arises when task knowledge—an understanding of the necessary activities to reach team goals – is not fully understood or shared by team members”. Chen (2006, 107 p.) emphasizes that “task conflict exists when there are disagreements among team members about the content of the tasks being performed including differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions; interpersonal conflict exists when there are interpersonal incompatibilities among team members including tension, animosity, and annoyance among members within a team”.

Relationship conflicts. Relationship conflicts arise when “there is an interpersonal incompatibility between group members that causes tension, hostility, resentment” (Hagemeister & Volmer, 2018, p. 214). According to Huo, Zhang, and Guo (2016), relationship conflicts are common in cross-functional project teams. This type of conflict usually is caused by interpersonal animosity (Choi & Cho, 2011). Wakefield and Leidner (2008, 435 p.) presume that “relational conflict arises when relational knowledge – personal understanding of team members including individual cultures and norms – is insufficient”.

Occupational conflicts can be constructive or destructive (Liu et al., 2020). In this case, the type of conflict depends on how the conflict is resolved. One essential feature that distinguishes constructive from destructive changes in relationships. When conflict is constructive, relationships are strengthened as good relationships are built through conflict. When the conflict is destructive,

the relationship either breaks down completely or at least weakens. Efforts to manage the conflict, regulate the process, limit the negative consequences or eliminate them completely are considered to be a precondition for a constructive conflict. An indifferent approach to everyday, simple conflicts is seen as a precondition for destructive conflict. In this case, unresolved destructive conflicts tend to grow according to the principle of snowball (Čiuladienė, 2018). Destructive conflicts can lead to a variety of negative feelings.

Conflict classifications based on other criteria are also found in the scientific literature. For example, M. Kudrevičiūtė and M. Stankūnas (2018) used the following classification of conflicts in their empirical research on conflict management in a multi-profile hospital: pseudo-conflicts, interpersonal conflicts, structural conflicts, conflicts of interest, conflicts of values. The authors used the cause criterion as the basis for the classification of conflicts. The results of the above study revealed that pseudo-conflicts and interpersonal conflicts are the most common in a multi-profile hospital.

An analysis of the scientific literature allows conflicts to be described as a clash of conflicting interests, goals, positions, views, or opinions between two or more parties. Summarizing the analysis of conflict types, it can be stated that conflicts can be classified according to various criteria. Based on the analysis of the scientific literature, the most common classification distinguishes the following types of conflicts: process, task, and relationship.

1.2.2. Drivers and consequences of conflicts in project teams

According to M. Kudrevičiūtė and M. Stankūnas (2018), conflicts are caused by individual goals, needs, different opinions, differences in values, expressed emotions, discrepancies in actions, different motivations, lack of communication in teams, and differences in education. A manager of an organization can also become a possible cause of conflict if its activities are not in line with the level of employees, it does not provide its subordinates with the opportunity to achieve the goal if the manager does not meet the expectations of employees.

Conflicts between groups usually arise due to limited resources, different interests, and the exercise of authority (authority). The causes of conflict within a group are different goals, ineffective group leadership, avoidance of responsibility, intense competition, ideological differences, and lack of communication (Milavic et al., 2020).

Guang-Dong (2013) has employed a structured equation model to examine the impact of project soft factors, interest demand, dependency, communication, and trust on project conflicts and success. The authors measured the impact of mentioned drivers on various types of conflicts, i. e. relationship conflicts, process conflicts, and task conflicts. Results of the research have shown that trust and communication mechanisms are essential to establish the fluent activity of the project team and minimize conflicts. The mentioned factors can potentially minimize adverse effects in relationship and process conflicts. The researcher has also found that relationship and process conflicts help stimulate project success.

Huo, Zhang, and Guo (2016) have given exceptional attention to one particular type of conflict in project teams, i. e. relationship conflicts. According to the authors, relationship conflicts are determined by uncertain project tasks, intrapersonal diversity, inappropriate behavior, and organizational culture diversity (Table 3).

Table 3

Drivers of relationship conflicts

Block of drivers	Drivers
Intrapersonal diversity	Gender, ethnicity, age, organizational tenure, personality, interest, perception, experience, skill or ability
Uncertain project task	Requirement uncertainty, time urgency, risk allocation
Organizational culture diversity	Regulations or codes, display rules, facework rules
Inappropriate behaviour	Rebuff, cumulative, criticism, distrust, poor communication, abusive supervision

Source: compiled by the author based on Huo, Zhang, & Guo (2016).

These factors were found to correlate positively with relationship conflict. It means that relationship conflicts are more frequent in projects where project tasks have more significant uncertainty, team members are more diverse, misbehave more frequently and diversity in organizational culture is more intensive.

According to Guang-Dong (2013), “conflicts could arise from the mutual dependency of project participants, individual differences, imperfect project mechanisms including a lack of communication mechanism and an environment of cooperation”.

Jiang, Chang, Chen, Wang, and Klein (2014) state that “conflicts occur among project teams due to pursuit of their own goals, their unique approaches to completion of required tasks, and their individual need for limited resources”.

Barki and Hartwick (2001) provide a complex of drivers determining interpersonal conflicts. This complex involves individual, team, project, and organizational characteristics (Table 4).

Table 4

Drivers of interpersonal conflicts

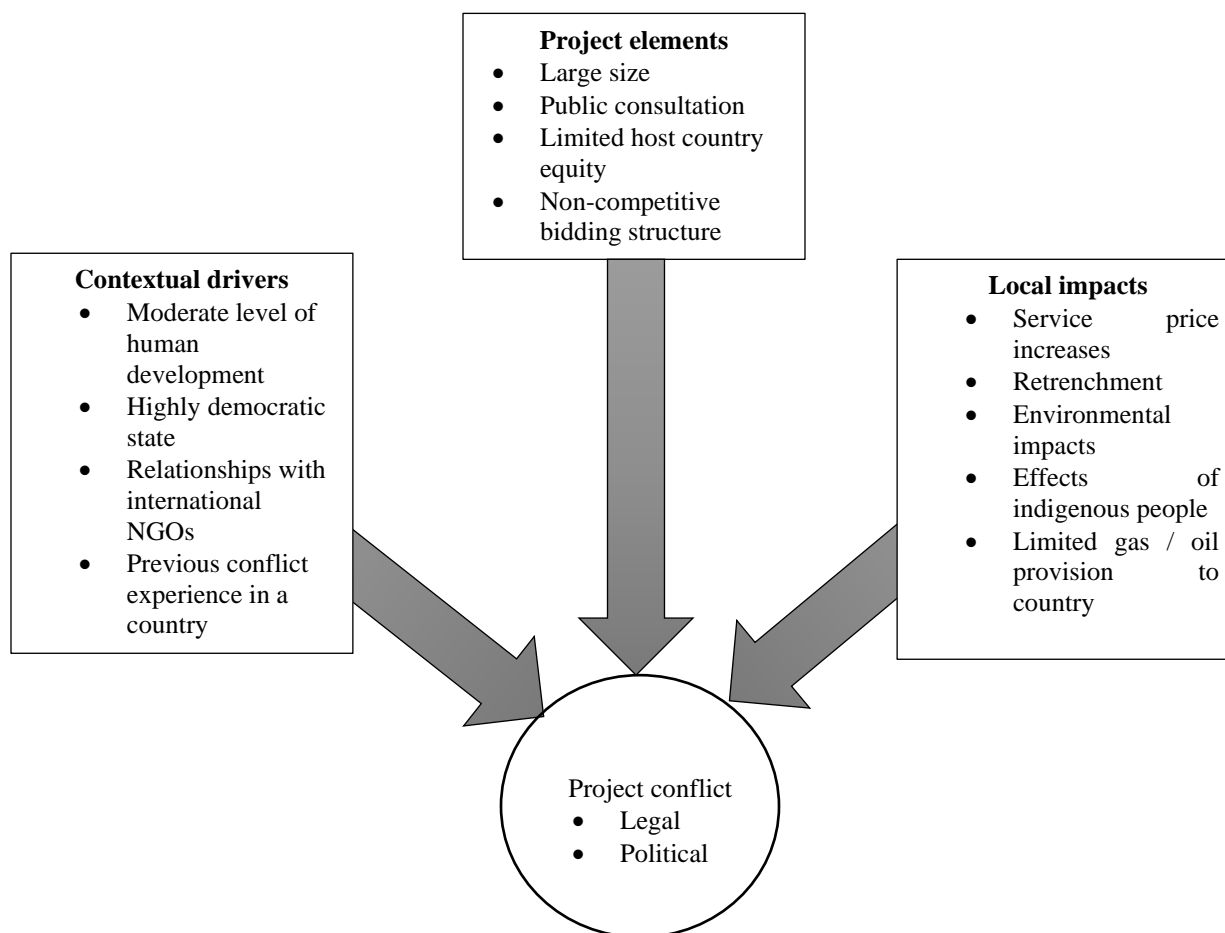
Individual characteristics	Team characteristics	Project characteristics	Organizational characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality • Demographics • Education and experience • Organizational status • Organizational role and department • Needs, interests and goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size • Heterogeneity • Leadership • Team processes including participation, influence and communication • History including previous conflicts, management styles, tactics, and outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System characteristic and importance • Resources • Time pressures and constraints • Success criteria • Top management support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational culture • Organizational climate

Source: compiled by the author based on Barki, & Hartwick (2001, 197 p.)

The other classification of conflict drivers groups them into contextual factors, project elements, and local impacts (Figure 2). Contextual drivers comprise the level of human development, democracy in a state, relationship with international NGOs, and previous conflict experience in the country. Project elements include the size, public consultation, country equity, and bidding structure. Local impacts involve the fluctuations of service prices, retrenchment, environmental impacts, the impact of indigenous people, and gas and oil provision.

Figure 2

Drivers of conflicts



Source: compiled by the author based on Boudet, Yayasundera, Davis (2011, 499 p.)

Project teams in international companies can be faced with unique challenges. One of them is the probability of conflicts.

Project teams in international companies frequently involve diverse members who have diversified views. Such views can potentially enhance teams' creativity in completing the task (Chen, 2006). However, conflicts in processes, tasks, or relationships can emerge.

The consequences of conflicts depend upon the type of conflict. Wu, Zhao, and Zuo (2017) found that relationship and process conflict are negatively correlated with a project's added value. Task conflict has been found to correlate positively with the added value of a project. It means that more frequent task conflicts lead to better project results.

Conflicts may decrease project success "by jeopardizing team collaboration, and cohesion, and can threaten the existence of the project" (Miller, Balapurria, & Sesay, 2015). However, Chiochio, Forgues, Paradis, & Iordanova (2011), provide controversial findings.

Task conflicts. In reference to Choi and Cho (2011, 1107 p.), "task conflict benefits groups under non-routine task situation, whereas its effects are dysfunctional under routine task situation as it interferes effective group processing". Chiochio, Forgues, Paradis, & Iordanova (2011) state that "task conflicts can be discussed effectively or ineffectively. When individuals are highly concerned with themselves and concerned with others in the team, they tend to choose problem-solving strategies of conflict resolution".

Relationship conflict. "Relationship conflict stems from interpersonal incompatibilities and triggers negative feelings among team members, such as animosity and hatred" (Huo, Zhang, & Guo, 2016). Relationship conflict disturbs harmony and causes interpersonal hostility. Commonly relationship conflict is treated as detrimental to the team (Choi & Cho, 2011). Wakefield and Leidner (2008, 435 p.) confirm that "relational conflict may evoke negative emotions and interpersonal disagreements between members not directly related to tasks".

The majority of researchers emphasize the negative side of conflicts. However, despite their negative side, conflicts have some benefits. Miller, Balapurria & Sesay (2015, 41 p.) state that "too much agreement among top management teams undermines project success because people who think in similar ways and agree on issues most of the time are more likely to become complacent". In some cases, conflicts might increase the probability of project success. Even if not every conflict is detrimental to the success of project teams in international companies, the identified consequences of conflicts require effective management.

1.3. Management of conflicts in international companies' project teams

Early detection of conflicts and active management may be crucial in international companies' project teams. Companies need appropriate conflict management models, strategies, and tools.

Conflict management is "the ability of the team to reach agreements among members" (Jiang, Chang, Chen, Wang, & Klein, 2014, 86 p.). Conflict management is the selection of effective management strategies to maintain a certain number of conflicts related to professional

tasks and minimize relationship-related conflicts and strengthen the constructive function of conflicts (Liu et al., 2020).

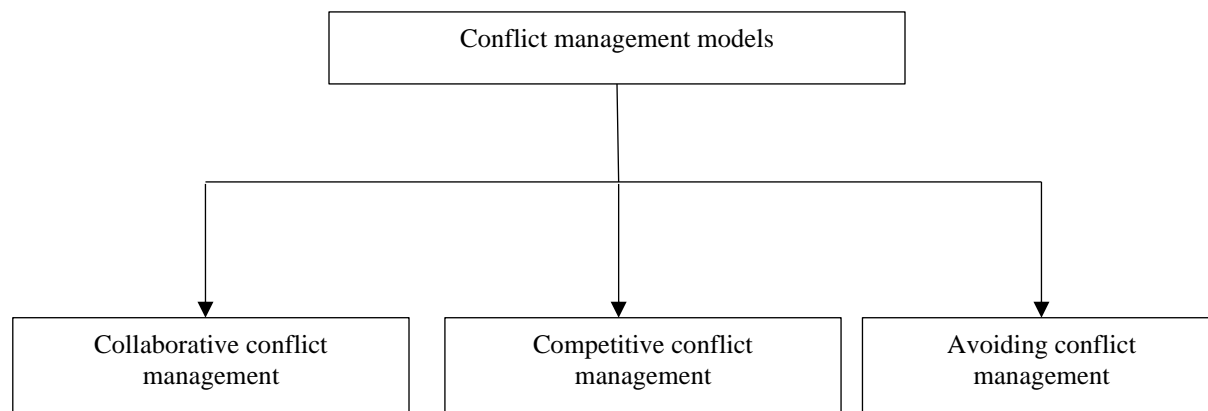
According to M. Žukauskas and R. Korsakienė (2019, p. 1), conflict management is “a mechanism for coping with differences in the existing social system, but also as a method that can facilitate a constructive social change towards a responsive and just system”.

The project team manager has a vital role in the management of conflicts. Cahyono & Hartijasti (2012, 67 p.) state that “in the context of conflict management, project managers must identify, analyze, and evaluate both positive and negative values of conflict and their effect on performance, subsequently seeking resolution of any conflicts arise during project execution”.

Scientific literature (Curcija et al., 2019) reviews many conflict management models. Yin et al. (2020) and Liu et al. (2020) mention three basic conflict management models. They are named in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Conflict management models



Source: compiled by the author based on Yin et al. (2020), Liu et al. (2020).

Under the collaborative conflict management model, conflicting parties seek cooperation, thus ensuring that the interests of all parties to the conflict are met (Liu et al., 2020). J. Yin et al. (2020, p. 376) note that this model views conflict as “a common problem that requires finding a solution that suits all parties to the conflict”. For this purpose, open discussions, objective evaluation of information, and joint work to find the best solution are used.

Under a competitive approach, the parties to a conflict seek to satisfy their interests without regard to the arguments of other parties to the conflict (Liu et al., 2020). This means that “the interests of one party to the conflict are considered more important than the other” (Yin et al., 2020, p. 376).

The pattern of avoidance means that parties to a conflict tend to escape or suppress conflict, even when it is evident they are occurring (Liu et al., 2020). Following this model, efforts are made to smooth out conflicts (Yin et al., 2020).

Approaches. Cahyono & Hartijasti (2012) suggest five approaches to conflict management (Table 5).

Table 5

Approaches to conflict management

Approach	Description
Avoidance style	Features low concern for others and low concern for self. This approach is associated with intentionally withdrawing from the conflict situation
Accommodating style	Features high concern for others and low concern for self. This approach refers to focusing on areas of agreement and thus smoothing over differences
Competition style	Features low concern for others and high concern for self. This approach is described as forcing one’s own views on others
Collaborative style	Features high concern for others and high concern for self. This approach pertains to integrating the views of all involved
Compromise	Features moderate concern for all. This approach is associated with finding a middle ground solution. This occurs when members focus on finding a common solution that addresses everyone’s interest

Source: compiled by the author based on Cahyono & Hartijasti (2012, 69 p.)

Strategies. According to scientific literature, “traditionally, conflict handling strategy has been viewed as a way to encourage and creatively channel conflict into effective problem-solving. Conflict handling is seen not only for effective problem solving but also for effective management as well as a way of meeting the time frame of any particular project” (Yazid, 2015, 66 p.).

Yazid (2015) tried to determine which conflict management strategies are desirable in self-managed project teams. These teams were chosen for the research due to their peculiarity of being

responsible for finding solutions and making decisions by themselves. The author employed a qualitative method in order to research the area of conflict management. Semi-structured interviews and weekly telephone interviews collected data for the research. Researchers also took a case study approach, known for its suitability in answering why and how research questions. Results of the research proposed that conflict management strategies in self-managed project teams experience changes from cooperative and confronting style to avoiding conflicts. The factors of reputation and deadline determine these changes.

Conflict resolution strategies are also named by M. Kudrevičiūtė and M. Stankūnas (2018). According to the authors, conflict resolution strategies are possible:

- avoidance;
- adaptation;
- compromise;
- competition;
- cooperation.

The authors mentioned above found that a conflict avoidance strategy is the most common in practice. Such research results were obtained by interviewing 98 employees of one clinic of the Lithuanian Multi-Profile Hospital.

The scientific literature also suggests teamwork or collaboration as a means of conflict management (Başoğul, 2021) and the development of emotional intelligence (Winardi et al., 2021).

Mechanisms. Wu, Zhao, and Zuo (2017) suggest developing trust mechanisms to manage conflicts properly. According to scientists, “trust mechanisms should be established among project teams based on equal cooperation to take advantage of the positive effects of task conflict and to avoid the negative effects of process conflict and relationship conflict” (Wu, Zhao, & Zuo, 2017, 1 p.).

Contact centers might be another tool for managing conflicts (Bond-Barnard, Steyn, 2013). Such centers are defined as traditional call centers that receive queries, collect, process, and supply information to customers through various communication channels, i.e., telephone, email, SMS, social media, etc.

Analysis of theoretical aspects of conflicts and their management shows that existing studies have limits in explaining drivers of conflicts and their management in project teams, mainly

international companies project teams. It means that it is essential to perform empirical research in this field.

Summarizing the analysis of conflict management models, strategies, and tools, it can be argued that the models most commonly cited in the scientific literature are based on collaboration, competition, and avoidance. Conflict management strategies are selected according to the applied conflict models. By choosing the most appropriate management model, strategy, and tools for a given conflict situation, it is possible to maintain a certain number of conflicts related to professional tasks, minimize conflicts related to relationships and strengthen the constructive function of conflicts.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research scope

The object of this research is conflict management within international companies' project teams.

The main aim of this research is to explore the drivers of conflicts and their management in international companies' project teams. Hence, in order to achieve this aim, there exists a demand for a research strategy. The author of the thesis did not focus on a particular conflict, but rather sought to research conflicts in project teams in IT field from a broad perspective. The author has chosen to interview people who are currently participating in international IT projects or any other projects in IT companies around the world.

Assumptions. The research is based on the following assumptions:

- conflict is a dynamic, not a static process;
- conflict in international companies' project teams is something that cannot be avoided and will be experienced by every member of a project team.

Selection of cases. Selection of research participants is one of the important decisions that have to be made prior to data collection. Data was collected in various organizations around the world. The data of ten project teams of international companies seems to be sufficient, because scientific literature provides evidence about reliable researches including two or three companies (Yazid, 2015; Young-Hyman, 2017).

2.2. Research method

Type of methods. Research of conflict management within international companies' project teams employs qualitative methodology. This methodology "is described as the non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationship" (Yazid, 2015, 67 p.). A qualitative methodology was chosen to gain specific empirical knowledge about conflict drivers and management in international companies.

Qualitative methods are more frequently used in studies of conflicts in project teams (Huo, Zhang, & Guo, 2016; Paulus, Bichelmeyer, Malopinsky, Pereira, & Rastogi, 2005; Yazid, 2015;

Hosseini et al., 2018) than quantitative methods. Yazid (2015) argues that qualitative methods are more appropriate than quantitative when the study deals with conflict management. The reason for superiority of qualitative methods might be related to abilities of qualitative methods to find out attitudes, feelings, values and beliefs of the participants of conflicts.

Research method – interview. The research adopts semi-structured interview, because compared to the structured interview, the first one allows to generate more knowledge. Apart from this, semi-structured interview allows to adapt questions to the particular context of the project team. Particularly for this research semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted.

Sampling. Wakefield and Leidner (2008), Huo, Zhang, and Guo (2016) suggest to research viewpoints of experienced professionals and practitioners in projects. Important criteria in sampling are current position, years of working experience and specialities of participants of the research. The research approach combined purposeful sampling (defined managers or members of projects in different regions around the world) with snowball sampling when research participants were asked to recommend additional contacts. The sample is projected to be relatively broad in terms of type, duration, complexity of the project and number of team members. All the participants satisfied the following criteria:

- 1) at the moment of the research they were working in international companies' project teams;
- 2) had more than two years of experience in project teams;
- 3) the project is related to IT or the organization operates in IT industry.

It was planned to interview at least 5 managers and 5 members from different project teams. However, according to Z. Yazid (2015), “the researcher has to keep recruiting and interviewing respondents until no new data is produced that adds new insights to theory construction or no new information is learned about the research topic”. So it was planned to continue the research until new data is presented. It means that more than ten members might be needed to include into the research. The research ended with ten participants. Their roles in the projects, positions and professional experiences are provided in Table 6. The more comprehensive data about research participants shall be presented in section 3.1.

Table 6*Characteristics of informants*

Code	Role in the project	Position	Professional experience (years)
I1	Member of the project team	Account executive	2
I2	Member of the project team	Specialist, agent compliance	2
I3	Project manager	Team leader	7
I4	Project manager	Manager	8.5
I5	Member of the project team	Senior accountant	5
I6	Member of the project team	Agent administrator	3
I7	Member of the project team	Foreign manager	5
I8	Project manager	Project manager	3
I9	Project manager	E-shop project manager	7
I10	Project manager	Hotel manager	4

Source: compiled by the author.

Questionnaire. Research questionnaire is described in Table 6. Author of this research seeks to find out characteristics of informants, projects, the frequency of conflicts in project teams, drivers of conflicts, peculiarities of conflict management, consequences of conflicts, attitudes to recent conflict situations, pathways for the development of conflict management. Table 7 presents the interview guide.

Table 7*Interview guide*

Sections	No.	Question	Purpose	Authors/ Literature sources
Characteristics of informants	1.	Your current position	To find out positions and experience of interview participants	Huo et al. (2016)
	2.	Years of professional experience in current position		
Characteristics of the projects	3.	How long the project lasts?	To find out main characteristics of IT projects or non-IT projects in IT companies	Stoyanova (2015), Huo et al. (2016)
	4.	How many members participate in the project?		
	5.	How would You describe the project that you work in at the moment?		
	6.	What are your functions in the particular project?		

Continuation of Table 7

The frequency of conflicts in project teams	7.	Do you face conflicts between team members during the implementation of the project? How often do they appear?	To find out the frequency of conflicts	Huo et al. (2016)
Drivers of conflicts	8.	Why conflicts arise in the project team you work in?	To identify drivers of conflicts	Guang-Dong (2013), Jiang et al. (2014), Huo et al. (2016)
Conflict management	9.	How would you describe the management of conflicts in the project team you work in?	To find out peculiarities of conflict management	Cahyono & Hartijasti (2012), Jiang et al. (2014)
	10.	What is the role of project manager in the solution of conflicts in the team?		
Consequences of conflicts	11.	What are the positive consequences of the conflicts in the team?	To find out consequences of conflict management	Huo et al. (2016)
	12.	What are the negative consequences of the conflicts in the team?		
Recent conflict situation	13.	Could You please describe the last conflict that you faced while working in a project team?	To evaluate recent conflict experience	Choi and Cho (2011), Guang-Dong (2013), Wu, Zhao and Zuo (2017)
	14.	What was its reason / source?		
	15.	How long did this particular conflict lasted?		
	16.	Who and how many team members or other stakeholders were involved?		
	17.	What was the impact of the conflict upon the work of the team? Upon the cooperation of the team members?		
	18.	How was the conflict solved? How would you describe the behaviour of the participants of the conflict?		
	19.	What was the role of team manager in the conflict? Did he help to solve the conflict? How?		
	20.	How would you describe the consequences of this conflict? Was the solution of the conflict beneficial for the work of the project team?		
Development of conflict management	21.	How do you think, what competences and skills of team members have to be strengthened aiming to avoid the unnecessary conflicts or solve the conflicts in a constructive way?	To find out effective pathways for conflict prevention	Cahyono & Hartijasti (2012), Jiang et al. (2014)
	22.	What other preventive tools would be useful for the reduction of conflicts in team work?		

Source: compiled by the author.

One pilot interview was completed in order to find out its comprehensiveness, readability and precision. After the pilot interview several questions were specified.

2.3. Data collection and analysis

The data gathered from interviews with team members provide the contextual background for the research. Before starting interview, the researcher presented the purpose, significance and concept of the research. Apart from this, the issue of data confidentiality was explained to every respondent.

Face-to-face and virtual interviews were chosen for the research. The face-to-face interviews required visits to the companies that were selected for a research. The researcher was introduced to the members of project teams. Such an introduction made it easier for the researcher to contact team members and arrange time and place for the interview. Interviews were conducted during office hours, lunch break or outside office hours. Virtual interviews were conducted through “Zoom” and “Teams”. Interviews were arranged to be conducted on specific days that were suitable both for the respondents and for the researcher.

The current research adopts the paradigm of interpretivism, because findings of particular research shall be drawn from the experience and interpretation of the respondents. This paradigm “is known as being appropriate to effectively investigate the complex nature of reality as understanding of the world can only be achieved through knowledge as perceived by individuals” (Yazid, 2015, 67 p.).

During the data collection process organizations involved into the research provided additional documents that might be important for the research. In reference to Yazid (2015, 71 p.), “documents are written data sources which include published and unpublished documents, company reports, and newspaper articles, and they can be used both in quantitative and qualitative approaches to research”.

Content analysis is employed for the analysis of the results of semi-structured interviews with team members.

3. DRIVERS OF CONFLICTS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES PROJECT TEAMS: ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1. Overview of the projects

The research involved ten managers and members of international project teams. At the research moment, these teams were working on IT projects, or the projects were based in IT company. It means that all the research participants are somehow related to IT. The projects differ in length and number of members (Table 8).

Table 8

Characteristics of the projects

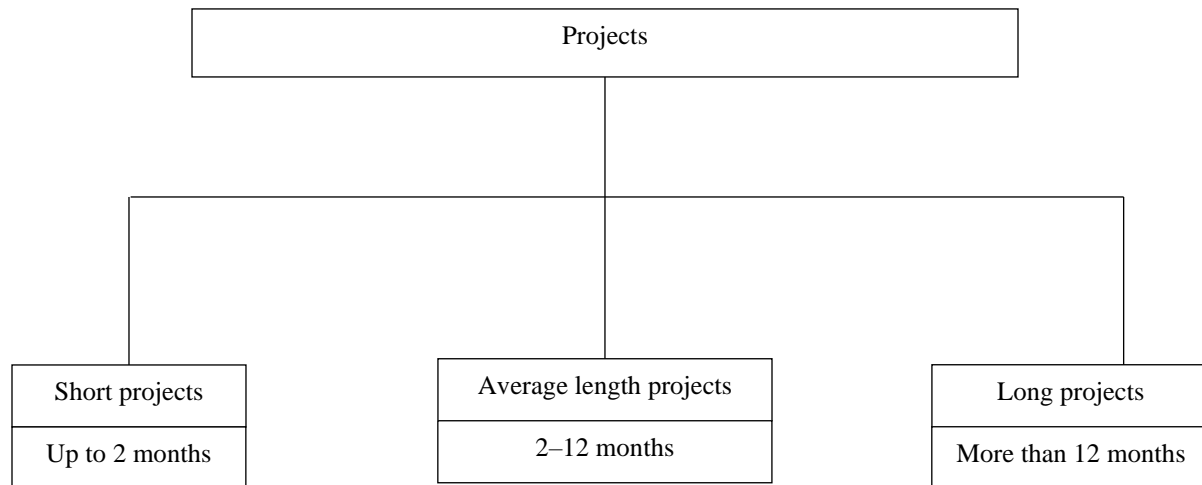
Code	Role in the project	Length of the project	Number of project members
I1	Member of the project team	6 weeks	3–6
I2	Member of the project team	5–6 months	10
I3	Project manager	It depends upon the project (there are several overlapping projects)	3–4 for smaller projects and around 15 for bigger ones
I4	Project manager	It depends upon the project (there are several overlapping projects). From 3 months to 1 year	3–5
I5	Member of the project team	It depends upon the project (there are several overlapping projects). From 2 months to 1 year or longer	2–10
I6	Member of the project team	It depends upon the project (there are several overlapping projects)	4–15
I7	Member of the project team	2–3 years	About 70
I8	Project manager	2–5 months	Up to 10
I9	Project manager	2 years	4
I10	Project manager	2 months	4

Source: compiled by the author.

Table 8 shows that the projects that fit into the scope of the research last from 6 weeks to 2 years. Some interview participants could not provide a particular project length because the length depends upon the project. The organizations have several overlapping projects; therefore, it is not fair to distinguish one of them. The research participants' answers let to prepare a typology of international projects based on their length (Figure 4). Short projects last up to 2 months. The length of average projects is between 2 and 12 months. Long-term projects last longer than 12 months.

Figure 4

Classification of the projects based on the length

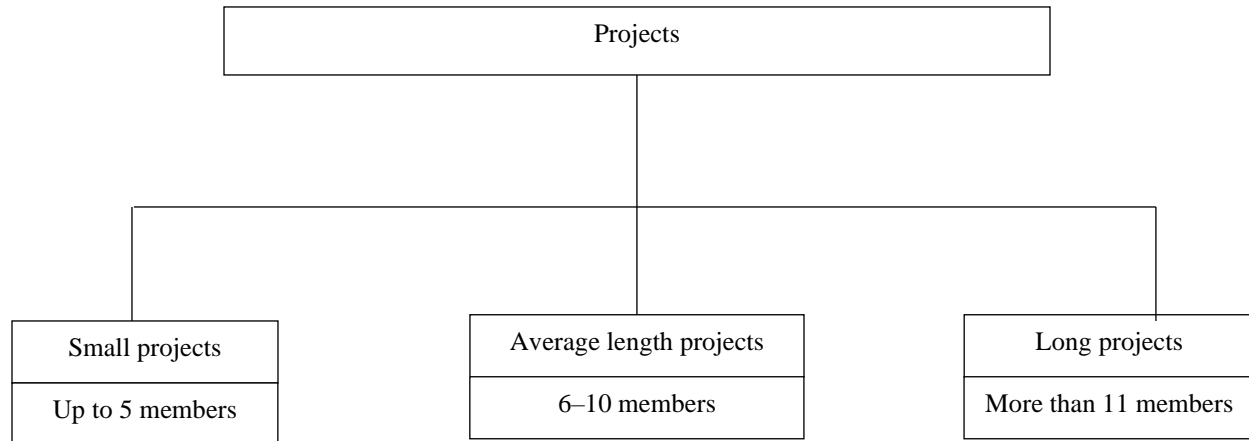


Source: compiled by the author.

The projects usually involve less than ten members, however, the interval of members of the projects was 2 to 70. Based on the number of project members, the projects may be classified into three types (Figure 5). The classifications of projects in terms of the length and number of members are based only on the results of this research. This classification may be specific to IT projects or IT companies. Therefore, these classifications should not be taken for granted in the other types of projects or companies from other industries.

Figure 5

Classification of the projects based on the number of members

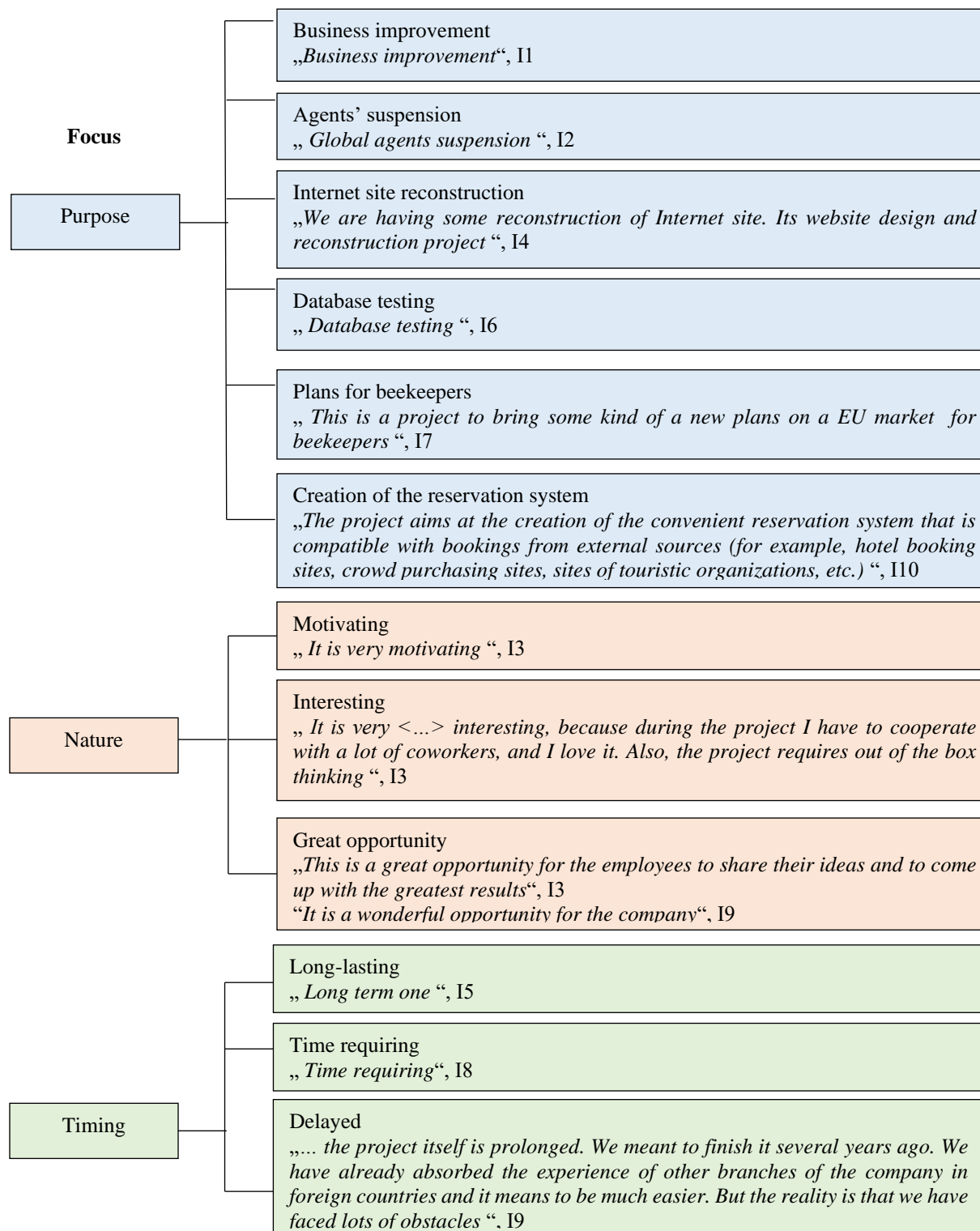


Source: compiled by the author.

In the fifth question the research participants were invited to describe the projects that they participated in. The descriptions of the projects are provided in Figure 6.

All the descriptions were classified into several groups based on the focus. The first group of research participants focused their descriptions of the projects on the purpose of the projects. They mentioned that the projects aim at business improvement, agents' suspension, internet site reconstruction, database testing, preparation of plans for beekeepers, the creation of the reservation system. These purposes of the projects let to imagine the scope of the projects where conflicts arise.

Some participants of the research focused on the nature of the project. They mentioned projects as motivating, fascinating in nature is full of opportunities. The last group of interviews focused on the timing. They mentioned the project's long-term, demand for time, and delays.

Figure 6*Descriptions of the projects*

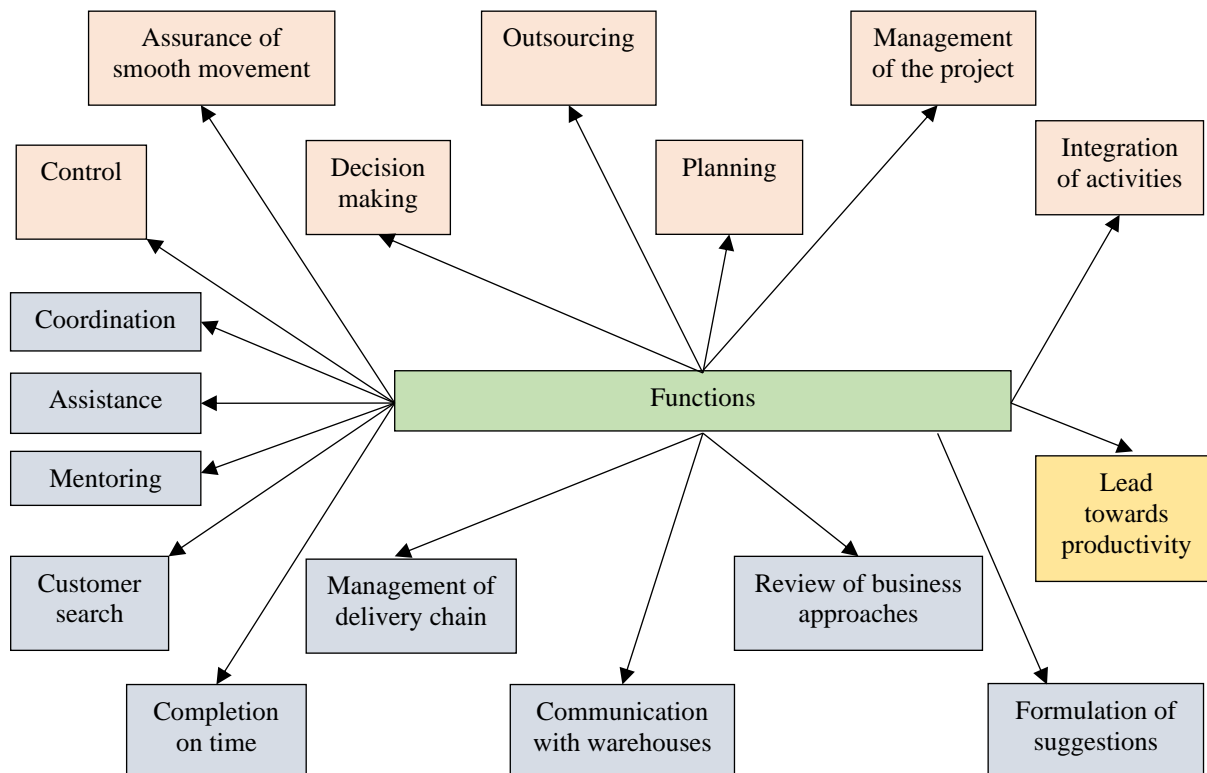
I1–I10 are the codes of research participants.

Source: compiled by the author.

Project managers and members of the projects have indicated their functions in the projects in the question no. 6. The analysis of the research results let to identify a wide variety of functions (Figure 7).

Figure 7

Functions of the research participants



Source: compiled by the author.

The variety of functions mentioned in Figure 7 shows that the functions of project managers in most cases differ from the functions of project team members. The project manager mentioned only one function, i.e. leading towards productivity (*“My main function is to ensure <...> satisfactory final result”*, I10) and project team member (*“... lead to saving time and efficiency”*, I1). It is praiseworthy that both managers and members understand the importance of the final result. Project managers have mentioned a smaller number of their functions. The activity of the project manager usually starts with planning (*“I have to plan everything”*, I9). The other important functions of project managers are decision making (*“I’m the head. The main person who decides*

what to do", I4), management of the project ("*Project manager*", I8; "... *manage*", I9), outsourcing ("*The main person who <...> outsource stuff*", I4), control ("*... control*", I9), assurance of the smooth movement ("*My main function is to ensure the smooth movement of the project*", I10), and integration of activities ("*The main person who <...> tries to put everything together. Everything*", I4). The members of project teams have envisaged a broader functionality for themselves. They have identified the following functions:

- coordination ("*I'm coordinating the process*", I2);
- assistance ("*Assistant*", I6);
- mentoring ("*I'm doing mentoring*", I5);
- customer search ("*... to find a client*", I7);
- completion on time ("*... ensuring everything is completed on time*", I2);
- management of delivery chain ("*... to manage the chain of the delivery*", I7);
- communication with warehouses ("*Later I have to communicate with the warehouses*", I7);
- review of business approaches ("*To review existing business approaches*", I1);
- formulation of suggestions ("*... to suggest improvements*", I1).

The overview of the projects has shown that in the IT industry, the projects usually last from 6 weeks to 2 years. The number of members of the project teams usually does not exceed 10; however, exceptions exist. The interview participants are involved in projects aimed at business improvement, agents' suspension, internet site reconstruction, database testing, preparation of plans for beekeepers, and creation of the reservation system. The functions of the research participants differ in the projects based on the role (member or project manager).

3.2. The frequency of conflicts in project teams

The project managers and members of project teams were asked to share their attitudes towards the frequency of conflicts in project teams in the question no. 7. The conflict occurrence among research participants depending on their professional experience is provided in Table 9.

Table 9*Conflict occurrence among research participants*

Code	Role in the project	Professional experience (years)	Conflict occurrence	Frequency of the conflicts
I1	Member of the project team	2	Yes	All the time
I2	Member of the project team	2	No	-
I3	Project manager	7	No	-
I4	Project manager	8.5	Yes	n.a. ¹
I5	Member of the project team	5	No	-
I6	Member of the project team	3	Yes	From time to time
I7	Member of the project team	5	Yes	Quite common
I8	Project manager	3	Yes	Often
I9	Project manager	7	Yes	Sometimes
I10	Project manager	4	Yes	Sometimes

Source: compiled by the author.

The data in Table 9 provides evidence about the experience of conflict in the majority of project teams. Several project managers claimed not to have conflicts in their team. One of them stated:

“I would not call it conflicts, I would say more like sharing their own opinion. I never had an experience of a conflict between my team members because they have great values and, respect each other, know how to express their opinion without hurting each other. I think it is the most important to say your thoughts with respect”, I3.

This expression shows that values and respect for each other are relevant tools for the prevention of conflicts. At the moment of the research, this project manager had seven years of experience in the current position. Such a length of experience is one of the longest among the research participants; however, one participant had 8.5 years of professional experience in the current position. She claimed to have experienced conflicts among team members. More vast professional experience in the current position is not a protector of conflict experience.

¹ No data received.

Two project managers stated that conflicts sometimes emerge. The remaining project manager confirmed that the conflicts are often. The members of project teams claimed to experience conflicts commonly, from time to time, or all the time.

The research results of conflicts in international project teams have shown that most international teams implementing IT projects face conflicts. Conflicts are quite common. There are cases when the project team's work goes smoothly without any conflicts. In such cases, team members' values and respect for each other play a significant role in preventing situations where conflicts could appear.

3.3. Evaluation of drivers of conflicts in international teams

Managers and members of international teams were asked to name the drivers of conflicts in the question no. 8. The analysis of the interview results has shown that the most frequent drivers of conflicts in international teams are differences in attitudes and opinions, failure to complete functions, lack of understanding and misunderstandings, and miscommunication (Table 10).

The other drivers of conflicts that were mentioned rarely are:

- accidents (*"The conflict appeared when a child of one of the administrators accidentally deleted several reservations from the PC. Of course, I have tried the "undo" function, but at that moment I was not sure if all the reservations were restored"*, I10);
- cultural differences (*"Cultural things"*, I8);
- failure to provide the information (*"The reason of the conflict was the failure of Italians to inform that the platform lacks compatibility with the other IT solution"*, I9);
- lack of experiences (*"... the lack of experience"*, I1);
- lack of integrity (*"I suppose the main reason is related to the lack of integrity between the different systems and decisions"*, I9);
- personal features (*"... because I'm more expressive in communication with clients"*, I7);
- small things (*"Because of small things"*, I10);
- unrealistic expectations (*"Client already bought several trucks, but the director decided he wanted clients to buy even more"*, I7).

Table 10*Conflict occurrence among research participants*

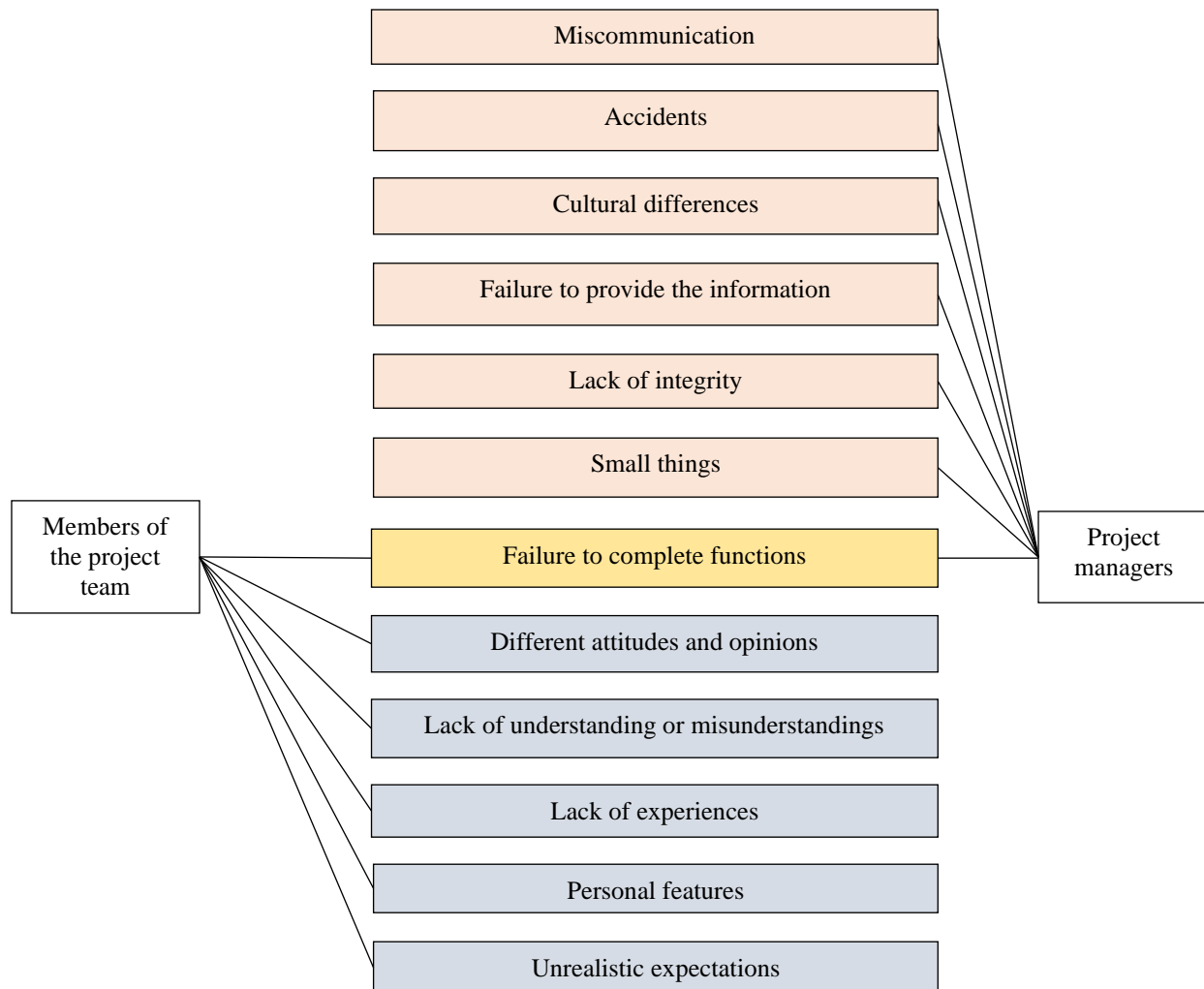
Category	Subcategories	Meaning units
Drivers of conflicts	Different attitudes and opinions	<p>“Because of the differences <...> different views“, I1</p> <p>„Perhaps because of different opinions“, I5</p> <p>„Sometimes we have some things that do not align with every member“, I6</p>
	Failure to complete functions	<p>“This guy just disappeared in the middle of his job without answering the phone <..>. The conflict itself happened out of nowhere cause the guy did not say he was not coming “, I4</p> <p>“I saw something was missing during the project, and I raised a question, and my colleague who left the team tried to blame me“, I6</p> <p>“...failure to ask for the telephone number of the guest who made a booking on the telephone“, I10</p>
	Lack of understanding or misunderstandings	<p>“...sometimes because of lack of understanding of the situation <...>. The project member did not understand the situation with the client that she passed on, and I explained to her the situation, she refused to understand the impact on our business. I tried to give her some more information, but she was not open-minded to learn it and to see the situation from the business perspective, she just saw the situation from her perspective and she wanted to gain personal benefits from the situation “, I1</p> <p>„Because of the misunderstandings“, I2</p>
	Miscommunication	<p>“Most probably because of miscommunication, that means little things of whom he or she wants to have to be done and another party does not understand what is required“, I4</p> <p>“Missing proper communication between team members“, I8</p>

Source: compiled by the author.

The conflict drivers depending on the role in the international project are provided in Figure 8. Such drivers as miscommunication, accidents, cultural differences, failure to provide the information, lack of integrity, and small things are typical to project managers. Members of the project team identified the following drivers of conflicts: different attitudes and opinions, lack of understanding or misunderstanding, lack of experiences, personal features, and unrealistic expectations.

Figure 8

Conflict drivers depending on the role in the project



Source: compiled by the author.

The evaluation of drivers of conflicts in international teams has shown that significant drivers of conflicts in international teams are differences in attitudes and opinions, failure to complete functions, lack of understanding and misunderstandings, and miscommunication. It was found out that project managers tend to mention the following drivers: miscommunication, accidents, cultural differences, failure to provide the information, lack of integrity, and small things, while members of the project team identified the following drivers of conflicts: different attitudes and opinions, lack of understanding or misunderstanding, lack of experiences, personal

features, and unrealistic expectations. There are possibilities to minimize these drivers' impact with proper management; therefore, the following section analyses conflict management in project teams.

3.4. Conflict management in project teams

In question no. 9 managers and members of the project teams were asked to describe conflict management. The subcategories that were generated are provided in Table 11.

Table 11

Attitudes to conflict management

Category	Subcategories	Meaning units
Conflict management	Oriented toward the search for solution	<p><i>"Finding the root cause of the conflict and solutions to resolve the conflict", I2</i></p> <p><i>"...try to calm down conflicting sides with the mention that we are looking for the best solution and we are not here to fight", I3</i></p>
	Oriented towards the search for the reason	<p><i>"Problems are solved by revealing the situation, like what is the root cause <...> First, we try to establish the reason why the difference of opinion happened, later we try to identify root causes like the lack of training, misunderstanding of the situation, and depending on the root cause", I1</i></p> <p><i>"Finding the root cause of the conflict", I2</i></p>
	Difficult	<p><i>"I try to find some common points and try to listen for clients and for a boss. I'm like in the middle of the fire", I7</i></p> <p><i>"It is a difficult task, but we manage somehow", I9</i></p>
	Based on talking	<p><i>"If it would happen on my team, I would listen to both sides. I would interact with them in a nice manner, supporting both sides", I3</i></p> <p><i>"We try to speak, try to have five minutes talks on Mondays", I4</i></p>

Source: compiled by the author.

The research data shows that conflict management in international teams is usually focused on searching for a proper solution or search of the reason for the conflict. In some cases, the search for the proper solution is based on talking. Sometimes conflict management in international teams seems to be complicated.

The participants of the research have also described the management of conflicts as:

- providing an opportunity to look at the situation from a different angle (“... if it was the lack of training, or general differences and subjective opinions we try to look at this situation from the different angle”, I1);
- non-inveterate („I personally approve that conflicts are not chronic, they are solved at the moment they appear or after a short period of time”, I10);
- reasonable (“I would describe it as reasonable”, I10);
- timely (“I would describe it as <...> timely”, I10);
- reevaluating (“... reevaluate, to see what the right decision is objective”, I1);
- unifying (“I try to find some common points”, I7).

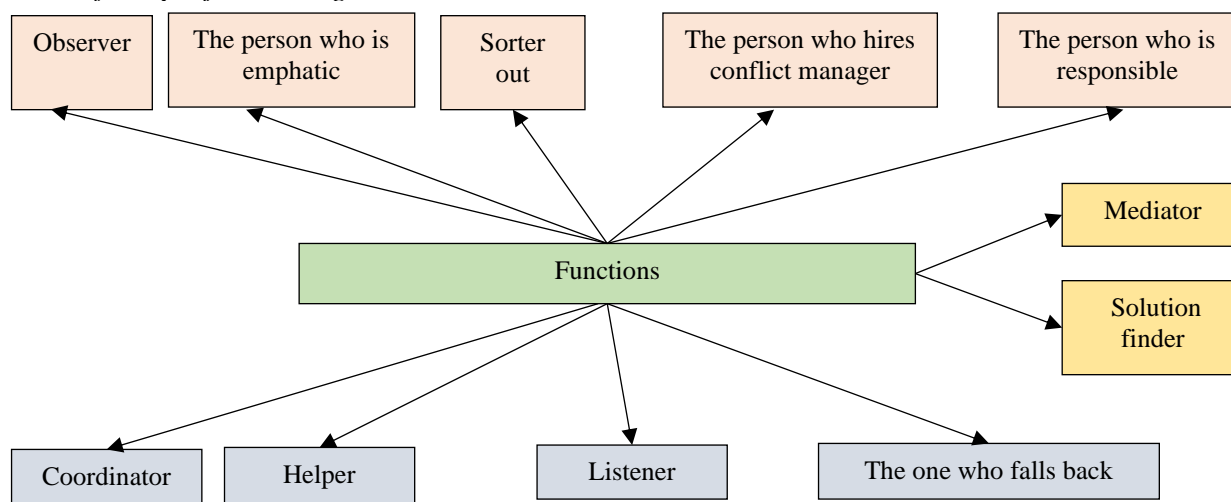
In the question no. 10 research participants were asked to describe the role of project manager in the project team they work in. It seems that project team managers have different attitudes to conflict management based on conflict solution strategies, their experiences, and their roles. The research participants have highlighted the relevance of the manager's role. According to one of the project managers, the role of the manager is critical:

"Critical, I guess. It depends upon the manager if the conflict evolves <...>. My role was essential because I knew that I had to sort the conflict out and take responsibility for the delay of the project termination ", I9.

Managers' roles in conflict situations are various (Fig. 9).

Figure 9

Roles of the project managers



Source: compiled by the author.

The most frequently mentioned role of the project manager was the mediator. The project manager is seen as a mediator not only by team members (*“They act as mediators between people that had conflict”*, I1) but by project managers themselves (*“I am ready to mediate”*, I8) as well. Both groups of research participants see project managers as solution finders (*“He or she has to be there, try to find a solution, to involve other people to see more points of the view”*, I4; *“... to try to find the best solution”*, I7).

Members of the project team perceive managers as coordinators (*“He should coordinate everything”*, I2), helpers (*“Project manager helps to resolve conflict”*, I1; *“He helped. He talked separately to us, not on the same table”*, I6), listeners (*“The main role is to hear both sides”*, I7), and sometimes the ones who fall back (*“The team manager was not involved”*, I1). The latter role may sound inappropriate, but this role was identified when the manager was not involved in the conflict. It may be that the manager has not known about the conflict. Project managers usually see themselves as active participants in conflict solutions. They have mentioned the roles of sorter out (*“I did not have any specific role in that particular conflict. I just had to sort it out”*, I10) or the one who takes responsibility (*“I feel responsible”*, I8). Some project managers tend to see themselves as passive participants with the roles of the observer (*“Manager has to be the one who is always observing the situation and he cannot be hiding from the problem”*, I4). There are cases when the project manager is searching for the help of a conflict manager (*“Maybe even hire someone to work with conflict management”*, I4). One manager tries to solve the conflict with her empathy (*“She is very emphatic and solves the conflicts respecting the interests of every part”*, I10).

The analysis of conflict management in international project teams has shown that usually, the management of conflicts is oriented toward the search for conflict reason or acceptable solution. The research participants found conflict management as a difficult task where solutions are found during communicative actions. Project managers see themselves as observers, sorters out or persons who have to hire conflict managers. They have also mentioned the importance of empathy and responsibility when the conflict is faced. At the same time project members tend to describe the role of project managers as coordinators, helpers, listeners or the ones who fall back. Opinions of project managers and members coincided regarding the mediating or solution finding role.

3.5. Consequences of conflicts in the international project team

The managers and members of international project teams in questions no. 11 and 12 were asked to identify the positive and negative consequences of conflicts in international project teams. Only one project manager has confirmed that the conflict did not impact the project team (“*I suppose the conflict did not have any impact*”, I10). The other research participants managed to identify the positive and negative consequences of conflicts (Table 12).

Table 12

Consequences of conflicts

Category	Subcategories	Meaning units
Positive consequences	Leading to closer relationships	<p>“<i>Sometimes people who were in a conflict even make great friends after the situation resolves</i>”, I3</p> <p>“<i>In the end, we have a deal</i>”, I7</p> <p>“<i>...we become more familiar with each other</i>”, I9</p> <p>“<i>And, of course, we become closer to each other</i>”, I10</p>
	Learning	<p>“<i>It was in the end, because it was a unique situation, where I could learn a lot. The consequence was professional growth. So if something like this happens in the future, we will be able to consult them</i>”, I1</p> <p>“<i>People can share opinions and learn</i>”, I2</p> <p>“<i>...on the psychological side - I learned to control myself and my team. This control of myself and my team taught me that everything goes as it goes, but you have to do your best <...>. I should say we learn a lot <...>. We are growing from the inside, we are learning that, for example, for me it is very hard to speak sometimes and say my opinion <...> Through the conflict management I try to solve this problem I have. I speak, I have to speak. It makes me communicative</i>”, I4</p> <p>“<i>We learn how to communicate with each other in the frames of the project</i>”, I9</p>
	Gaining knowledge	<p>“<i>Usually when people are not afraid to express their thoughts, they sometimes think from another point of view</i>”, I3</p> <p>“<i>It allows to use new knowledge</i>”, I8</p>

Continuation of Table 12

		<i>“One of the positive consequences, I suppose is that with every conflict, we become more familiar with the project, the process, and the result that we aim for”, I9</i>
	Better results	<i>“...that leads to growth and development”, I1 “... develop themselves”, I3 “It allows to use new knowledge and improve”, I8 “Conflicts help us to strive for a better result”, I10</i>
	Sharing opinions	<i>“People can share opinions”, I2 “The exchange of information between the participants in every conflict”, I5 “We analyze things together”, I6</i>
	Gaining experience	<i>“Always growing experience, a lot of the times new situations that people had not experienced before, and that leads to growth and development”, I1 “The consequences of this conflict were clear – we put the boundaries for kids in terms of computers”, I10</i>
Negative consequences	Time consumption	<i>“I cannot say I am happy with the timing. I am asking myself - what if we finished earlier? Maybe it would be better; maybe we would earn more money for our company”, I4 “It takes time to discuss. Discussions take time and sometimes we could make a deal faster”, I7 “To my mind, one of the negative consequences is time. Conflicts take our time that could be used for the more productive work <...>. The failure to inform me now will result in approximately 2 or 3 months of extra time”, I9</i>
	Psychological pain	<i>“If a person takes things personally, they might take some things as a personal attack”, I1 “If a person takes some of the comments personally, he would be negatively affected psychologically”, I3 “...think he is not good enough”, I4 “Sometimes people take it too personal”, I8 “Even though the hotel personnel know that conflict is not something bad and it will be solved, sometimes it hurts”, I10</i>
	Worsen relationships	<i>“It may sometimes negatively affect the relationships with the team”, I1 “My relationship grew colder with him, because he did not sell goods well”, I7 “I have completely lost the trust in the other part of the conflict. I mean I have to check every matter”, I9</i>
	Stress	<i>“The stress itself”, I5; “It is stressful”, I6</i>

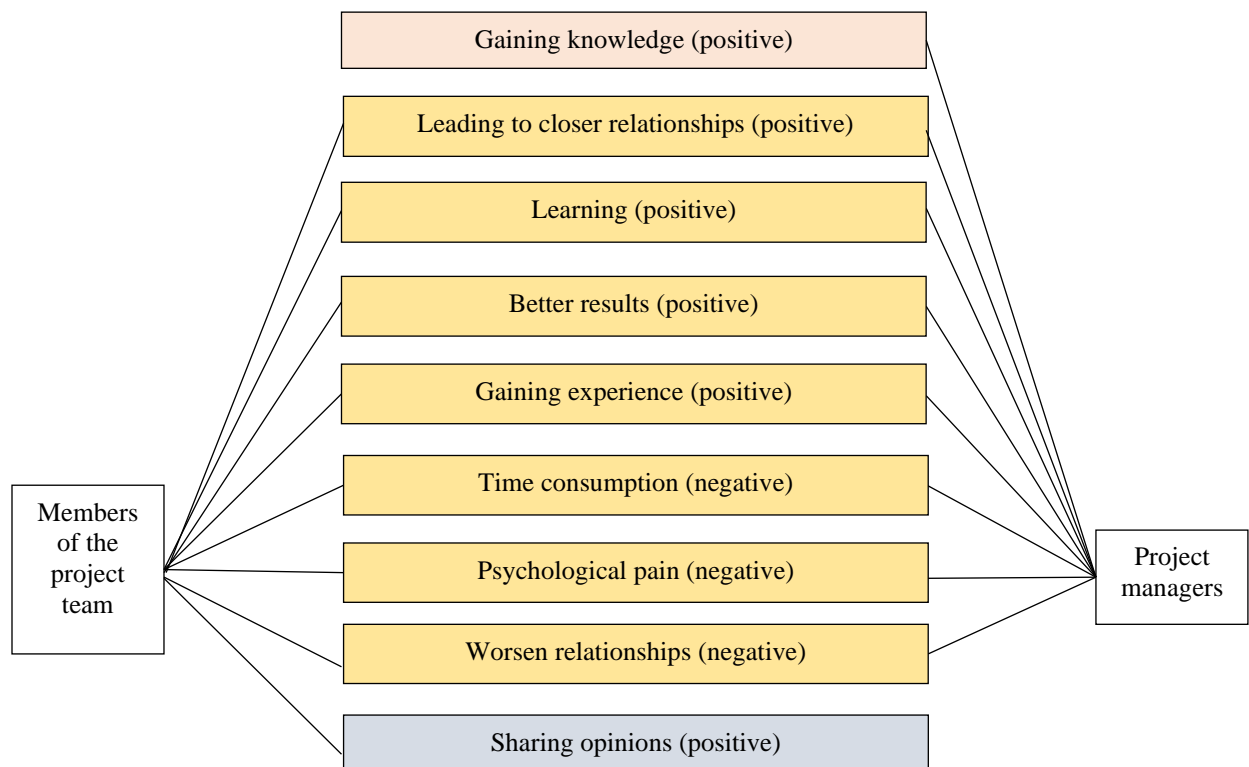
Source: compiled by the author.

It was found out that in international project teams, conflicts lead to closer relationships between team members. Conflicts also become the stimulus to learning; they usually teach through experience and gained knowledge. During conflicts people tend to share opinions. In some cases, these opinions maybe not have been expressed. All these advantages lead to better results: development, growth, improvement. Therefore, conflicts are “*beneficial for the work of the project team*”, I8. There exist negative consequences as well. Conflicts consume time; they determine psychological pain, worsen relationships, and bring stress.

The majority of consequences manifest for members and managers of the project teams (Fig. 10). Only gaining knowledge is a typical positive consequence in the sample of project managers. Sharing opinions as a positive consequence is specific to the project team members.

Figure 10

Consequences of conflicts depending on the role in the project



Source: compiled by the author.

The analysis of the consequences of conflicts in international teams has shown that conflicts have advantages in strengthening relationships, stimulating learning, sharing ideas, gaining knowledge and experiences, and leading to better results. However, there are drawbacks, such as time consumption, stress, psychological pain, and negative impact on relationships (for example, lost trust). Leading to closer relationships, learning, better results, gaining experience, time consumption, psychological pain and worsen relationships were identified both by project managers and members of project teams. Project managers envisaged one more positive consequence, i.e. gaining knowledge, while exceptionally members mentioned the sharing opinions.

3.6. Evaluation of recent conflict situation

All the research participants were asked to remember a current conflict situation. As mentioned before, there were cases when the interview participants did not experience any conflict. According to one of the project managers, *“we do not have conflicts because we have certain values and people act on them. Maybe because the employees are mature, they work together for a long time, so they are respectful. I am happy I do not have to calm down my team”*, I3.

When asked to describe the content of the last conflict (question no. 13), some project managers were laconic. One of them indicated the time of the last conflict (*“The last conflict I faced several days ago”*, I10), while the other mentioned the type of the conflict (*“It was a cultural conflict”*, I8). The conflict experienced by the foreign manager appeared due to the unusual demands of the director (*“Client already bought several trucks, but the director decided he wanted clients to buy even more. I arranged a good deal and he initially bought more”*, I7). The other conflicts originated from the outsourcing experience. For example, a situation when the outsourced service provider has disappeared has put many people in doubt:

“We have a guy who is supposed to do some work on our website reconstruction, and he is outsourced, because we are dealing with other people. This guy just disappeared in the middle of his job without answering the phone. We could not do anything else until he finished his part. So we had a massive fight because another group of people had everything already ready for the start of their work. They became angry because something is not finished. The guy disappears, and here we have a conflict”, I4.

The outsourcing became a context for the other conflict (*The last conflict I faced with the Italian team of programmers who were meant to create the platform for e-shop*, I9).

The recent conflicts differ in their length. Answers of the research participants to the question no. 15 confirm it. In some cases, the conflicts were ended speedily. For example, in the case of conflict in a hotel, the conflict was ended in ten or fifteen minutes. Initially, after the appearance, the other conflict was also solved (*"We ended this conflict at the same one meeting"*, I6). A week for the conflict solution is a frequent practice (*"Around a week"*, I1; *"Approximately a week"*, I8). Some of the conflicts spindle to several weeks or a month (*"Maybe two-four weeks"*, I2; *"Around two weeks"*, I4; *"About a month"*, I7). One of the conflicts was not ended at the moment of the research; it was still undergoing (*"It is still in the process"*, I9). Later the participant of the research confirmed that the conflict is still lasting:

"I cannot say that it is solved; it still lasts. We are not at the peak of the conflict, but we are still trying to work it out. The behavior of the other participants of the conflict did not cross the boundaries but was close to them. I was even thinking about the possibilities of termination of the contract", I9.

In question no. 16 the interview participants were asked to remember who and how many team members or other stakeholders were involved. Usually, conflicts appear between several people. For example, the failure to understand the situation resulted in the conflict between the research participant and the co-worker:

"It was a conflict between myself and another member of the project. The project member did not understand the situation with the client that she passed on, and I explained to her the situation, but she refused to understand the impact on our business. I tried to give her some more information. However, she was not open-minded to learning it and seeing the situation from a business perspective. She just saw the situation from her perspective and wanted to gain personal benefits from the situation", I1. Two people were also involved in the conflict that was experienced at the hotel (*"It was me, the administrator. And her child, but I am not sure if I can name the child as conflict part. She is just four years old and she did not have any intentions to harm"*, I10). In that case, conflict parts behaved properly (*"The behaviour of the conflict participants was appropriate"*, I10). The exact number of participants were involved in the conflict in the database testing project team (*"I saw something was missing during the project and I raised a question and my colleague who left the team tried to blame me"*, I6). Three people were involved in the conflict

between the e-shop project manager and Italian programmers. Frequently the number of conflict participants reaches four (“... it was four people”, I2; “About four”, I8) or five (“Five”, I7). In the already described situation when the outsourced employee disappeared, every participant of the project team was included into the conflict (“Everybody of us. All fourteen people. Because some were related directly, some indirectly, they could not work. We had to close down”, I4).

The solution to the conflicts involved specific strategies. The research participants in their answers to question no. 18 have indicated that removal of the damage, problem-solving sessions, conversations, and discussions were successfully applied to solve recent conflicts (Table 13).

Table 13

Conflict solution strategies

Category	Subcategories	Meaning units
Strategies to solve the conflict	Removal of the damage	<p>“Finally, the guy appeared. It was very hard for me, I wanted to shout. But I did not, just so he won’t disappear again. So, I had to cope and to talk with him nicely. And I had to calm everyone down. But finally, we talked with him and he told me what happened. Nothing serious, he just wanted to have a break. But I asked him, can you inform me in the future if something happens. I asked him how long he is planning to work here”, I4</p> <p>“We figured out what was not working and found a solution”, I6</p> <p>“The conflict was solved when we found out all the missing reservations”, I10</p>
	Problem solving session	<p>“...later the session was set to talk together”, I2</p> <p>“In problem solving session. We tried to speak up”, I6</p>
	Conversations, discussions	<p>“We had discussed the situation on the same day. We discussed the situation the next day, to provide more information. Later I let the team member to rest and to process the information. Few days later she was ready and approachable to discuss it and she was ready to see the situation from a business perspective. Later we discussed the situation from the objective point of view and came up with a solution best for the business”, I1</p> <p>“By proper conversation”, I8</p>

Source: compiled by the author.

Apart from mentioned conflict solution strategies, in particular cases, the advice-giving (“We just suggested to the client to buy more and told why and how to do it”, I7) and individual interviews (“Every member of the conflict was interviewed individually”, I2) were successful.

Every conflict situation has some impact. Sometimes the conflicts do not have any harm in terms of cooperation (“*Not up on a team*”, I6; “*It did not have any impact on the cooperation of the team members*”, I10), but there are cases when the relationship become colder (“*It was frozen for about a week*”, I8) or the work become ineffective (“... *the work was not so effective*”, I2). In the case of the hotel, the conflict provided a good lesson (“*We just had a good lesson that when the child comes to visit mom (administrator), we have to keep the computer safe*”, I10).

To sum up the analysis of current conflict situations, it can be stated that they differ in reasons, length, and number of people involved. It was found that the length of recent conflicts varied from 10 minutes to a month. Usually, conflicts appear between several people. The removal of the damage, problem-solving sessions, conversations, and discussions lead to the solution of the conflict. However, these solutions appeared to be successful in current conflict situations. Supposedly, there are much more alternatives to solve the conflicts.

3.7. Solutions for the development of conflict management in international teams

Willing to develop conflict management in international teams, specific competencies, skills, and features are needed. In their answers to question no. 21 the research participants were able to identify the potential of communication and listening competencies to avoid unnecessary conflicts (Table 14). Understanding, respect for others, calmness, and courage are also in demand.

The research participants have envisaged the need for the following competences and skills as well:

- cooperation (“... *cooperation*”, I1);
- critical thinking (“... *critical thinking*”, I5);
- honesty (“... *honesty*”, I5);
- negotiation skills (“... *proper negotiation skills*”, I5);
- ability to take responsibility (“*I believe, every person has to take responsibility for their own inner peace*”, I3);
- the appreciation of relationships (“... *the appreciation of the valuable relationships with co-workers*”, I10);
- the will to fathom out (“... *the will to go deeper into the situation*”, I10).

Table 14*Skills and competencies needed to avoid unnecessary conflicts*

Category	Subcategories	Meaning units
Competences	Communicational competence	<p>“Communication”, I1</p> <p>“Good communication skills”, I2</p> <p>“First of all, communication skills, definitely”, I4</p> <p>“In the first place I think it is open and proper communication”, I5</p> <p>“Communication is always helpful”, I6</p> <p>“Communication competence”, I9</p>
	Listening competence	<p>“...we have to know how to listen. Because, if somebody speaks and we are having an argument, I noticed, some people don't allow others to finish the sentence. They are just arguing on top. I think it's very important to have 'five minutes' meetings. One person speaks for five minutes. Later other people have to talk for five minutes and to express what is wrong from his side of view”, I4</p> <p>“It is most important to listen to both sides”, I7</p> <p>“To hear, listen”, I7</p> <p>“Listening”, I8</p>
Skills and features	Understanding	<p>“People should not take everything personal. If there is some kind of critique you need to understand correctly”, I6</p> <p>“...try to understand why this person wants something in a certain way understand the differences and appreciate it”, I7</p> <p>“Understanding”, I10</p>
	Respect for others	<p>“...be respectful of others”, I3</p> <p>“...respect each other”, I7</p>
	Calmness	<p>“If a person has calmness in itself, he will not express aggressive things to other people“, I3</p> <p>“...to keep calm”, I7</p>
	Courage	<p>“They have to not be afraid to express their mind, be brave”, I3</p> <p>“...telling the truth, no matter what it is”, I9</p>

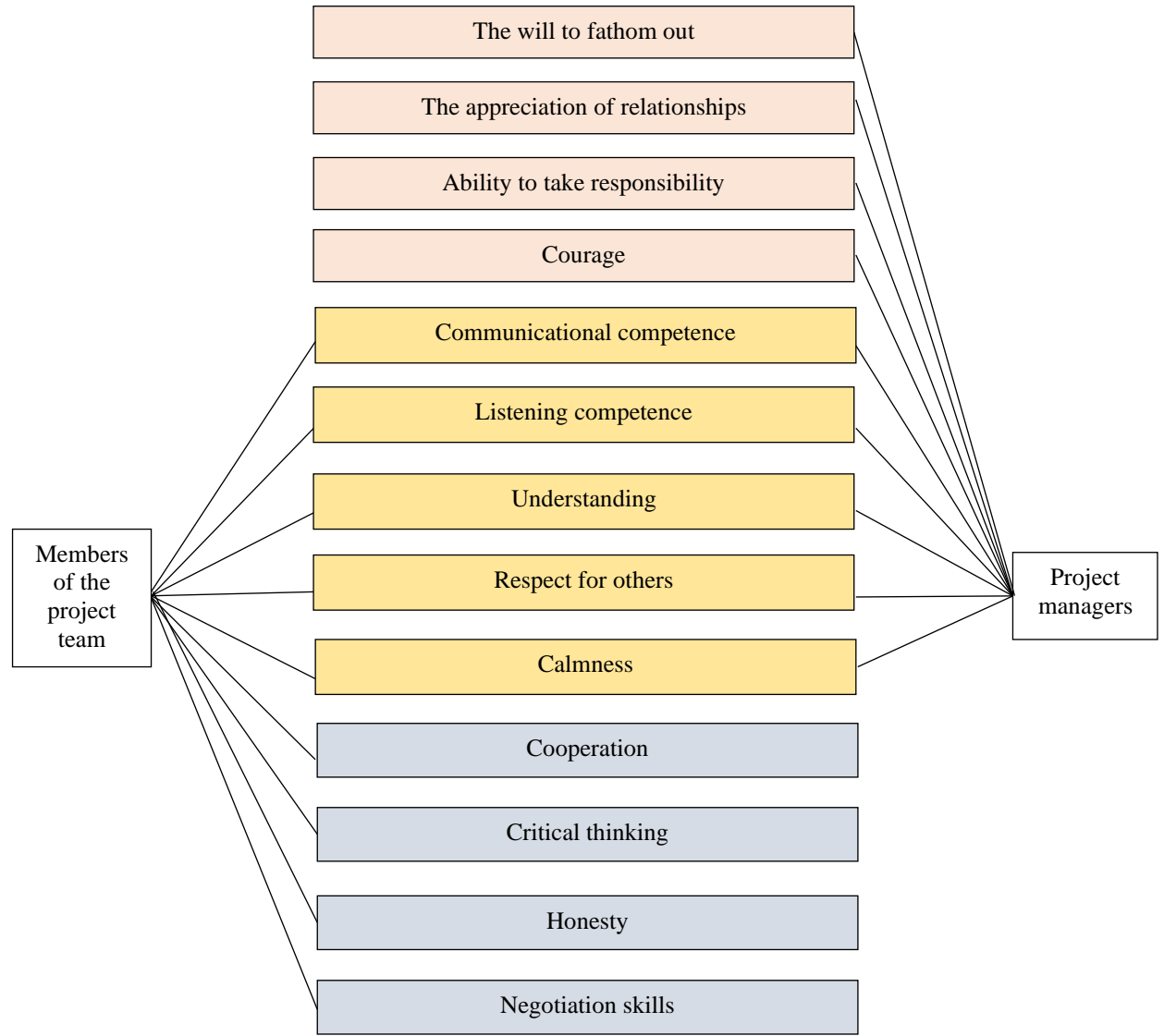
Source: compiled by the author.

Project managers envisage the potential to avoid unnecessary conflicts through the will to fathom out, the appreciation of relationships, the ability to take responsibility, and courage (Fig. 11). The members of the project teams mentioned cooperation, critical thinking, honesty, and negotiation skills. Both groups of research participants identified the remaining skills and

competencies (communicational competence, listening competence, understanding, respect for others, and calmness) irrespective of their role in the project team.

Figure 11

Skills and competences needed to avoid unnecessary conflicts depending on the role in the project



Source: compiled by the author.

Other tools may also prevent from negative consequences of conflict management. The tools were mentioned in the answers to the question no. 22. They are provided in Table 15.

Table 15*Tools for the prevention of conflicts*

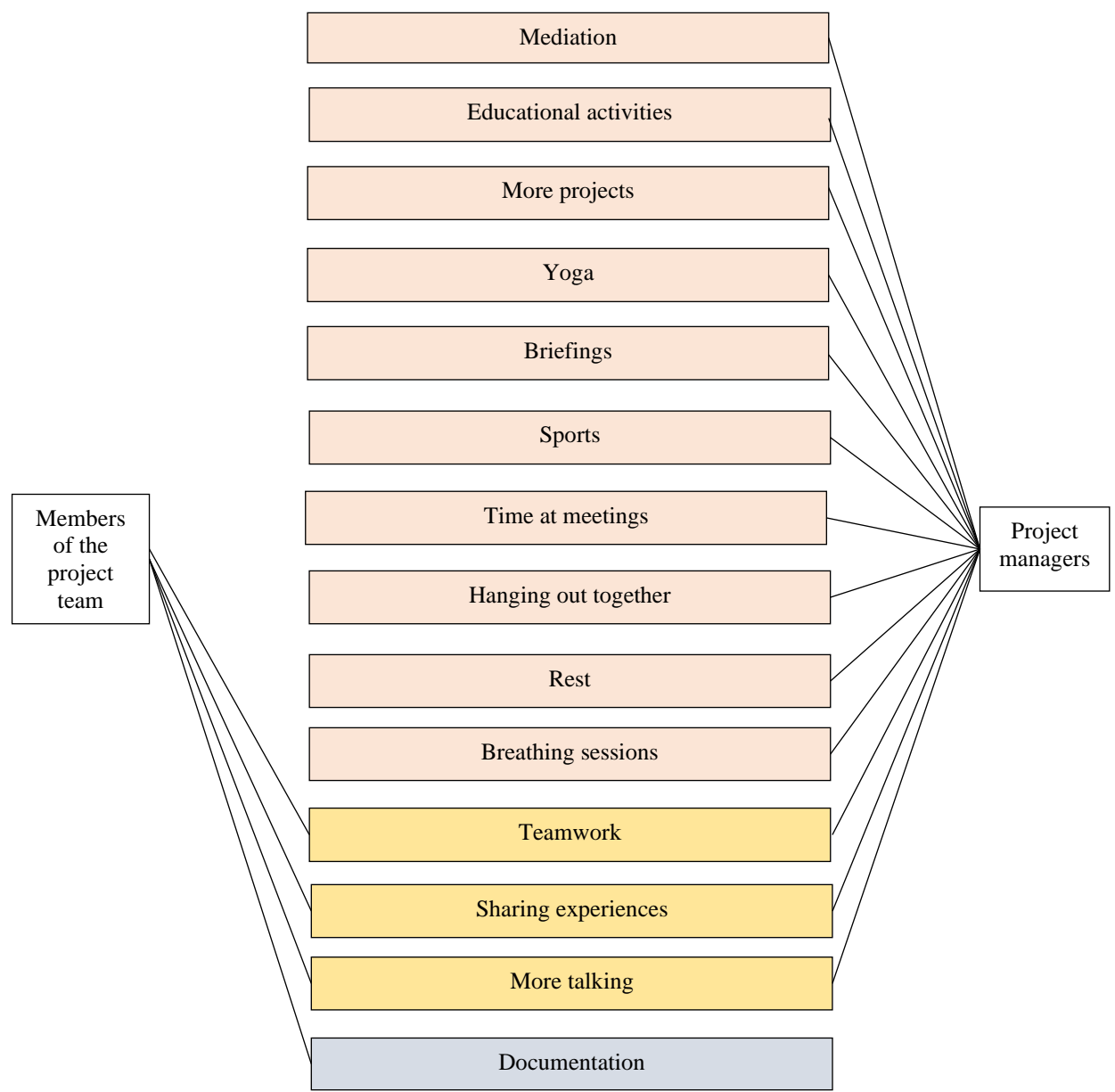
Category	Subcategories	Meaning units
Tools for the prevention of conflicts	Mediation	“...meditation“, I3 “I suppose mediation in this case could do a good job“, I9 “Mediation“, I10
	Educational activities	“Even some educational projects would work. Like psychology sessions or games“, I4 “Educational activities learning how to go through stressful situations“, I10
	Teamwork	“More teamwork“, I3 “...team working“, I5
	Documentation	“Documentation for the training purposes, more detailed information of different cases and scenarios, so that the information is not only held in our heads. To write down in a material for people who'll face similar scenarios, if it arises again“, I1 “...I think it should be some kind of business documentation. We have a rules and it is best to stick to the rules“, I7

It was found that research participants see a meaning in mediation, educational activities, teamwork, and documentation as the tools for preventing conflicts. The following tools were also identified as perspective: more talking (“Talking more with each other“, I2), sharing experiences („... sharing experiences“, I2), more projects („... more projects itself“, I3), briefings (“To do some briefings“, I3), yoga („... yoga“, I3), sports („... sports“, I3), time at meetings (“I think it’s very important to have ‘five minutes’ meetings. One person speaks for five minutes. Later other people have to talk for five minutes and to express what is wrong from his side of view“, I4), hanging out together (“Hanging out together helps. Seeing your colleague in a different environment helps, talking not only about work. Casual places like bars fit“, I4), rest („Also the rest helps to reduce stress level“, I4), breathing sessions (“Breathing“, I8).

To prevent conflicts in project teams, managers suggested mediation, educational activities, more projects, yoga, briefings, sports, time at meetings, hanging out together, rest, and breathing sessions (Fig. 12). Members of the project team were in favor of documentation. Both groups of research participants see the potential in teamwork, sharing experiences, and more talking as tools for conflict prevention.

Figure 12

Tools for the prevention of conflicts depending on the role in the project



Source: compiled by the author.

Generally, the development of conflict management in international teams needs communication and listening competencies and the skills of understanding, respect for others, calmness, and courage. Project managers see the potential in the will to fathom out, the appreciation of relationships, ability to take responsibility, and courage. Both managers and

members of the project teams highlighted the relevance of communicational competence, listening competence, understanding, respect for others, and calmness. Cooperation, critical thinking, honesty and negotiation skills were identified as important only by members of project teams. Mediation, educational activities, teamwork, and documentation were found to have the potential to prevent conflicts.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The analysis of drivers and consequences of conflicts in project teams has shown that at the most general level, conflicts appear due to contextual drivers, project elements, and local impacts. Depending on the type of the conflict determining factors may be different. In case of relationship conflicts, the variety of drivers composes intrapersonal diversity, uncertain project task, organizational culture diversity, and inappropriate behaviour. Interpersonal conflicts are determined by individual, team, project, and organizational characteristics.
2. The scientific literature has shown that managing conflicts in project teams usually accepts one of the following models: collaboration, competition, and avoidance. It is advisable to select the conflict management strategies according to the applied conflict models. By choosing the most appropriate management model, strategy, and tools for a given conflict situation, it is possible to maintain a certain number of conflicts related to professional tasks, as well as to minimize conflicts related to relationships, and strengthen the constructive function of conflicts in the project team.
3. The results of the empirical research have shown that significant drivers of conflicts in international teams, according to project managers, are miscommunication, accidents, cultural differences, failure to provide information, lack of integrity, and small things. In contrast, project team members identified the following drivers of conflicts: different attitudes and opinions, lack of understanding or misunderstanding, lack of experiences, personal features, and unrealistic expectations.
4. Usually, the management of conflicts in international companies is oriented toward searching for conflict reasons or an acceptable solution. The research participants found conflict management a challenging task where solutions are found during communicative actions. Research results have shown that project managers see themselves as observers, sorters, or persons who have to hire conflict managers. They have also mentioned the importance of empathy and responsibility when a conflict is faced. Project members tend to describe the role of project managers as coordinators, helpers, listeners, or those who fall back. Opinions of project managers and members coincided regarding the mediating or solution finding role.

5. It was found that conflicts are beneficial in strengthening relationships, stimulating learning, sharing ideas, gaining knowledge and experiences, and leading to better results. Despite these advantages, conflicts have drawbacks, such as time consumption, stress, psychological pain, and a negative relationship impact. Project managers and project team members identified leading to closer relationships, learning, better results, gaining experience, time consumption, psychological pain, and worsened relationships. Project managers envisaged one more positive consequence, i.e., gaining knowledge, while members mentioned the sharing opinions.
6. Conflict situations in international project teams differ in reasons, length, and the number of people involved. Research results have shown that the length of recent conflicts varied from 10 minutes to a month. Usually, conflicts appear between several people. The removal of the damage, problem-solving sessions, conversations, and discussions lead to the solution of the conflict. However, these solutions appeared to be successful in current conflict situations.
7. In order to develop conflict management in international teams, specific competencies, skills, and features are required. The development of conflict management in international teams needs communication and listening competencies and the skills of understanding, respect for others, calmness, and courage. Mediation, educational activities, teamwork, and documentation should be used to prevent conflicts.

In reference to the scientific literature review and results of the research, the following recommendations should be implemented in international project teams:

- To develop qualifications of project managers and members aiming to strengthen the communicational and listening competencies. External or internal psychologists may organize such events of qualification development.
- To strengthen the skills of understanding, respect for others, calmness, and courage. External or internal psychologists may also organize events and practices to strengthen these skills.
- To implement mediation activities in project teams in case of conflicts. Every project team should have an appointed mediator responsible for mediating the conflict when needed.

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ANNEX

Transcription of the interview

I4

0.00 A: Your current position?

0.05 B: Manager

0.07 A: Your professional experience in your current position?

0.12 B: Eight years and a half.

0.15 A: How long do the projects last on average?

0.16 B: Depends. Mainly we have short period projects. 3 months to one year.

0.34 A: How many members would usually participate in the project?

0.35 B: Three to five.

0.45 A: How would you describe the project you work in at the moment?

0.47 B: We are having some reconstruction. Its interior design and reconstruction project.

1.00 A: What are your functions in a particular project?

1.02 B: I'm the head. The main person who decides what to do, who deals with the outsource stuff, tries to put everything together. Everything.

1.20 A: Do you face conflicts between the team members during the implementation of the project?

1.25 B: Yes, we do.

1.33 A: Why do you think conflicts arise in the project team?

1.36 B: Most probably because of miscommunication, that means little things of who he or she wants to have to be done and another party does not understand what is required.

2.14 A: How would you describe the management of the conflicts?

2.18 B: We try to speak, try to have five minutes talks on Mondays. Sometimes the problem just poppes up. It's easy to say what we'll do next time. It's complicated.

2.45 A: What is the role of the manager of the solution of the conflict?

2.53 B: Manager has to be the one who is always observing the situation and he can't be hiding from the problem. He or she has to be there, try to find a solution, to involve other people to see more points of the view. Maybe even hire someone to work with conflict management.

3.36 A: Can you tell the positive consequences of conflicts?

3.40 B: I should say we learn a lot. It's not only harsh. Not only about the project. We are growing from the inside, we are learning that, for example, for me it is very hard to speak sometimes and say my opinion. Thue the conflict management I try to solve this problem I have. I speak, I have to speak. It makes me communicative.

4.29 A: Do you see negative consequences of conflicts?

4.33 B: Yes. Usually we have small fights. Like someone is wanting to quit the job or think he is not good enough. But the next day we saw it was not a big deal. We forget what happened yesterday and move on.

5.16 A: Can you describe the last conflict that happened on the project team?

5.17 B: We have a guy who is supposed to do some work on our renovation and he is outsourced, cause we are dealing with other people. This guy just disappeared in the middle of his job without answering the phone. The problem was we could not do anything else, till he finished his part. So we had a massive fight, because another group of people had everything already ready for the start of their work. They became angry, because something is not finished. The guy disappears and here we have a conflict.

6.21 A: How long did this particular conflict last?

6.24 B: Around two weeks. The conflict itself happened out of nowhere, cause the guy did not say he is not coming.

6.44 A: How many team members or other stakeholders were involved?

6.48 B: Everybody of us. All fourteen people. Because some were related directly, some indirectly, they could not work. We had to close down.

7.05 A: How was the conflict solved?

7.07 B: Finally the guy appeared. It was very hard for me, I wanted to shout. But I did not, just so he won't disappear again. So I had to cope and to talk with him nicely. And I had to calm everyone down. But finally we talked with him and he told me what happened. Nothing serious, he just wanted to have a break. But I asked him, can you inform me in the future if something happens. I asked him how long he is planning to work here.

8.18 A: How would you describe the consequences of this conflict?

8.20 B: I always think that what happened passed and we tried to do better. Now it's all good. I can not say I'm happy with the timing. I'm asking myself, - what if we finished earlier? Maybe it would be better, maybe we would earn more money for our company. I'm not very happy, but on the psychological side - I learned to control myself and my team. This control of myself and my team taught me that everything goes as it goes, but you have to do your best.

9.39 A: What do you think, what competences and skills should be strengthened to avoid unnecessary conflicts?

9.44 B: Thirst of all communication skills, definitely. Secondly - we have to know how to listen. Because, if somebody speaks and we are having an argument, I noticed, some people don't allow others to finish the sentence. They are just arguing on top. I think it's very important to have 'five minutes' meetings. One person speaks for five minutes. Later other people have to talk for five minutes and to express what is wrong from his side of view.

10.56 A: What other preventive tools do you know for the prevention of conflicts?

11.02 B: Hanging out together helps. Seeing your colleague in a different environment helps, talking not only about work. Casual places like bars fit. Also the rest helps to reduce stress level. Even some educational projects would work. Like psychology sessions or games.