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CONFLICTS IN THE ORGANIZATION: HOW CAN MEDIATION AFFECT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION?

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Abstract. *Modern organizations in conditions of globalization and high uncertainty have not only a complex development trajectory, but also face a high number of organizational conflicts (both internal and external). For the stable functioning of organizations and the creation of comfortable working conditions for their employees, it is important to implement effective methods of resolving conflict situations, such as mediation, into organizational practice. The aim of the paper is the systematization of the modern approaches to organizational conflicts and assessment of the mediation influence on organizational development on the example of the social and healthcare spheres. Also, research is devoted to identification of the main causes of conflicts in institutions of the social and healthcare, participants in conflicts, methods of their resolution. Empirical research was conducted with the involvement of 88 representatives of social and healthcare institutions from three regions of Ukraine (Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, and Kharkiv). Within the framework of the research, the frequency and types of conflicts that arise in organizations of the social sphere and healthcare were studied. The causes of conflict situations are considered, the influence of conflicts on the development of modern organizations was determined. The key areas of work on conflict resolution and prevention were identified according to employees. The degree of awareness of employees regarding the mediation procedure was determined and the readiness for its implementation in organizations of the social sphere and healthcare was assessed.*

Directions for further research into the impact of conflicts and mediation on the development of modern organizations are proposed.

Key words: *conflict, development, dispute resolution, mediation, organization*

JEL Classification: M12, M19

1. INTRODUCTION

Modern conditions of globalization and open markets based on fierce competition create new challenges for the success of the implementation of the development strategies of any organization, and its success depends on its ability to manage personnel. At the same time, in the process of formation and development of the personnel management system, organizations should take into account the causes and frequency of conflicts inside them: different visions, needs and interests of both individuals and organizational groups, which lead to conflicts that reduce work productivity and activity efficiency.

Papers of modern researchers of conflict management emphasize the significant role of conflicts in the organization's development, as they can have both a constructive and a destructive nature (Tjosvold et al., 2014). Resolving conflict situations is a widespread task of the head of the organization. The resolution of a conflict situation usually requires a lot of time and the development of appropriate preventive measures to avoid a recurrence of the conflict. That is, organizational conflicts cause significant resource losses, which affects the result of doing business (Munduate et al., 2022).

The destructive impact of conflict situations on the organization as a whole, on employees, and other stakeholders (De Dreu, 2008; Giebels & Janssen, 2005) confirms that the task of effective conflict management is to resolve them in a constructive way (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997). The need to transform the conflict into a constructive one is confirmed by the possible negative consequences of its escalation for all participants.

In developed countries, mediation is a widely accepted effective, and flexible alternative to resolving disputes in court (a slow and time-consuming process). Research shows that this practice is gradually spreading to developing countries as well (World Bank, 2017).

The practice of commercial mediation in the USA and European countries has been actively implemented for more than 40 years. According to the World Bank's "Doing Business" report, alternative conflict resolution through voluntary mediation or conciliation is already recognized in about 174 economies of the world. In many countries, this is an existing method of resolving contractual disputes, which is combined with formal courts (Doing Business, 2019).

Business conflicts without proper management can cause many systemic problems (from the hiring process to production process, communication with external stakeholders, etc.), delaying the development of the company. Mediation strategies and methods implemented during conflict resolution provide efficiency, confidentiality, greater flexibility, saving time and financial resources, preserving autonomy, and restoring relations between the parties (if possible). This characterizes mediation as an effective tool for conflict management, including organizational ones (Souza, 2021).

Reestablishing communication between the parties through mediation is more informal, allowing them to choose a mediator, make their own decisions and take responsibility for them, form an agreement and ensure its implementation.

Organizational conflicts become more complicated and widespread both in small firms and in international corporations, from IT companies to healthcare institutions. And according to this scenario, it is necessary to understand impact of conflicts on organizations and how mediation can affect development processes in organization.

The aim of the paper is the systematization of the modern approaches to organizational conflicts and assessment of the mediation influence on organizational development on the example of healthcare sphere. Also, our research is devoted to identification of the main causes of conflicts in institutions of the social and healthcare, participants in conflicts, methods of their resolution.

The structure of the paper is represented by 5 logically connected parts. In particular, it includes an introduction, literature review, and formation of relevant research hypotheses, which consider the theoretical foundations of the impact of conflicts and mediation on organizational development. The next part of the research presents the results of the empirical research and their discussion. The final part of the work is devoted to conclusions, determination of theoretical and practical implications of the research, as well as its possible limitations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Corporate culture and social norms usually act as a basis for building a conflict management system in an organization, and in combination form an organizational culture of conflict (Gelfand et al., 2012). Gelfand also notes the existence of several forms of conflict, including:

1. "Cooperative" conflict cultures, within which the conflict situation is resolved through cooperation - through constructive dialogue, negotiations, preparation, and implementation of joint solutions for all parties of the conflict;

2. "Dominant" cultures of the conflict, within which the main things for the parties are not understanding and solving the problem, but competition and victory;

3. "Avoidant" cultures of conflicts, within which the parties to the organizational conflict do not solve the problem, but only avoid it. Or they generally try to get out of the conflict and "freeze" the problem.

This study of conflict cultures confirmed that the development of a conflict culture based on cooperation has a positive effect on the functioning of the organization, and the formation of innovative and more productive approaches in their activities. A culture of "collaboration" recognizes that conflict is part of organizational development and is inevitable. That is why they support constructive and integrative problem-solving and dispute resolution. This, in turn, helps to optimally use the potential of conflicts for the sustainable development of the organization and prevents the destructive consequences of conflicts (Katz & Flynn, 2013). Cultures of "cooperation" are oriented towards equal support of the parties in the conflict and actively implement mediation. Necessary to note that mediation as a method of alternative conflict resolution has a wide range of applications: intra-organizational conflicts (vertical and horizontal), conflicts with suppliers, customers, state representatives, and other stakeholders. Mediators can be involved at various stages of the conflict - both in the conditions of an escalation of confrontation between the management and employees of the organization and in routine misunderstandings between colleagues (Bollen et al., 2016).

In their study, Martinelli and Almeida (2014) stated that conflicts can usually lead to the experience of frustration by one of the parties, problems in communication, and increased misunderstanding between the future parties of the conflict. McIntyre (2007) notes the problem of "hiding" conflicts in the workplace - the conflict exists, but its presence is not immediately recognized by the organization. This is due to the fact that organizations try to keep their own reputation and consider conflict as a failure and a "loss of control" over employees. There are also theories about the lack of solidarity, cooperation, and support in a team experiencing conflict. But in reality, it reveals problematic points that hinder the development of the team and the organization as a whole. Thus, many organizations avoid acknowledging conflicts because they consider it a negative business practice.

Commercial mediation and mediation in the organization are of particular interest in resolving corporate conflicts. Commercial mediation is a procedure for resolving conflicts in the field of economic relations, corporate management and between parties who are independent of each other. External independent mediators are involved in commercial mediation. Mediation in the organization is a procedure for resolving disputes in which the parties to the conflict are employees of the same organization, and the mediator can be an internal or external independent expert.

The spread of mediation in different countries of the world helps to move away from expensive, long, and often unsatisfactory court procedures. It is a non-judicial form of resolving various types of organizational conflicts (Bollen, et al., 2016). Even 30 years ago, Europe faced resistance to the introduction of mediation to resolve labor disputes and the implementation of various out-of-court strategies. This was mainly due to the strengthening of the trade union movement and the active legalization of labor relations (Rodriguez-Piñero et al., 1993). During this time, mediation has proven to be effective as a constructive way to resolve conflict and reduce the high cost of labor disputes – both at the level of the organization and at the level of individual employees (Elgoibar et al., 2019). In order to promote the further spread of mediation and the transition to a new paradigm of conflict resolution, in 2008 and 2013, the European Parliament adopted European directives on mediation, Directive 2008/52/CE and Directive 2013/11/EU. The stated objective is "to facilitate access to dispute resolution and to promote amicable settlement of disputes by encouraging the use of mediation and ensuring a balanced relationship between mediation and judicial proceedings" (Art. 1).

To spread mediation values and activate practical implementation of mediation, public and private mediation centers offering workplace mediation services were opened in European countries (Bollen & Euwema, 2013). European legal acts also regulate the inclusion of mediation in the system of managing organizational conflicts to increase the efficiency of labor relations and reduce the burden on the court system (Deakin, 2016). Mediation is being actively implemented in the USA as well - the country implements state (Bush, 2001) and private (Kressel, 2014) workplace mediation programs. Thus, mediation is spreading all over the world as one of the most flexible and effective methods of solving various types of conflicts.

Based on the above, the first research hypothesis reads:

H1: Conflicts mostly have negative impact on organizations performance.

Organizations of social sphere and healthcare face conflicts every day, because this is related to the specifics of work in the "person-person" system. In their day-to-day operations, healthcare institutions face both minor misunderstandings and major conflicts

that span the entire organization. These conflicts can lead to lawsuits and sometimes can cause violence between parties. Labor conflicts in healthcare institutions are associated with close interaction of the main stakeholders: medical staff, administrative and service staff, patients, authorities, patients' families, and other stakeholders. It is necessary to understand that in any case, conflict situations have a negative impact on patient care, reduce the efficiency of the healthcare institution and can lead to deterioration of communication, moral and psychological climate, and high staff turnover (Mechteridou & Paglamidis, 2019).

According to Lviv Mediation Center (2018), in the context of reformation and development of social and healthcare systems, it is necessary to implement more flexible and effective conflict resolution practices, based on best European and US practices. And in these spheres it is important to consider:

▪ The importance of social relations. The field of health care is the most delicate and concerns absolutely all people on the planet;

▪ The specifics of the relationship. First, medical law is a complex branch of law that includes civil, administrative, economic, labor and criminal legal relations. In particular, Article 140 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine provides for liability for non-fulfillment or improper fulfillment of professional duties by a medical or pharmaceutical worker. An interesting feature of this crime for mediation is that it is declarative. In addition, it should be taken into account that the participants in this legal relationship, namely doctors and lawyers, are mostly the most closed, cynical and emotionally detached people. Such professional deformation significantly affects the effectiveness of communication between parties to the conflicts. The use of mediation will put the person in the center of medical legal relations.

▪ Confidentiality as a basic principle of mediation. Thanks to this principle, mediation provides an opportunity to preserve information about the state of health, details about the course of the disease and other information that constitutes a medical secret.

Based on the above, the second research hypothesis reads:

H2: Mediation is an effective method of dispute resolution and has positive effect on organizational development on social and healthcare institutions.

3. METHODOLOGY

To analyze the impact of solving organizational conflicts on its development, it is necessary to understand possible reasons. This is aimed at identifying the causes of a possible conflict in the absence of a conflict situation through the assessment of objective and subjective conditions and factors of interaction of people in the group, the adequacy of the distribution of duties and functions, the level of social tension, trust and loyalty, the peculiarities of the psychological atmosphere.

Empirical research uses quantitative methodology. Primary data is collected by the survey method via questionnaire. Data analysis is performed using the techniques of the MS Excel program package.

Research is based on survey conducted in October - November 2021 by the employees of the Karazin Business School (V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University) during the development of short-term study programs for the representatives of health care and social protection institutions.

Participants - representatives of health care and social protection institutions of Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhia and Kharkiv regions. 88 respondents took part in the survey in total.

The survey was conducted in an online format by the method of self-completion of questionnaires (Google form). The choice of such a tool for conducting a questionnaire is due to the possibility of ensuring the transparency of the process of collecting information from respondents, as well as the ease of processing and visualization of the received answers.

Among the results of the survey, it is appropriate to note:

1. According to the gender structure, the survey participants were distributed as follows: 89.8% of the survey participants were women, 10.2% were men.

2. The largest share of respondents belongs to persons aged 51-59 years (30.7%) and 31-40 years (27.3%), and the smallest - to representatives of the age category under 30 years (Fig. 1).
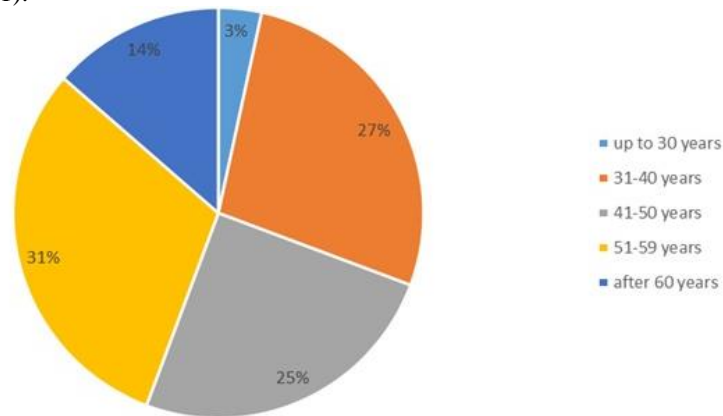

Fig. 1 Age structure of respondents, %

3. By region, the participants were distributed as follows: Dnipropetrovsk region – 48.9%, Kharkiv region – 44.3%, Zaporizhia region – 6.8% (Fig. 2).
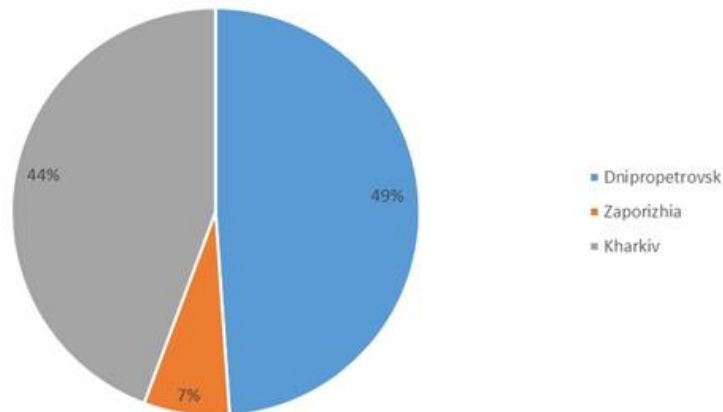

Fig. 2 Regional structure of respondents, %

4. 60.2% of respondents represent health care institutions, 39.8% - social protection institutions (Fig. 3).
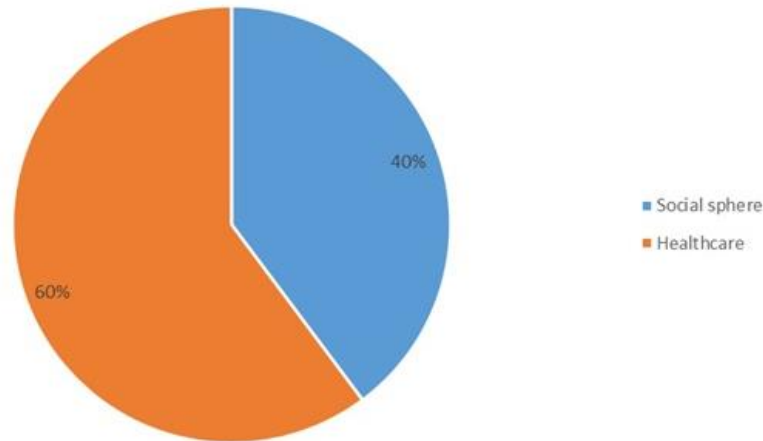

Fig. 3 Distribution of respondents by specific activity of the institution in which they work, %

The majority of survey participants represent communal (80.7%) and state (18.2%) healthcare and social welfare institutions, only 1.1% of respondents work in private institutions of the corresponding profile.

Among the participants of the survey representing healthcare institutions, representatives of managerial positions (directors, chief doctors) predominate, among the representatives of social institutions - leading specialists in social work.

Most of the survey participants have many years of work experience in institutions of the corresponding profile: more than 15 years - 51.1% of respondents, 1-5 years - 19.3%, 11-15 years - 14.8%, 6-10 years - 12.5 %, less than 1 year – 2.3%.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As part of the survey, the participants provided answers regarding the nature, causes, and frequency of conflicts in their organizations. Also, the main participants of the conflicts in healthcare and social sphere organization and methods of conflict resolution were determined. Next, we will consider the obtained results in details.

The respondents emphasized that mostly, in their organizations, conflicts arise between employees and patients (clients) (51.1%), between employees (21.6%) and between employees and the owner of the institution (6.8%) (Fig. 4).
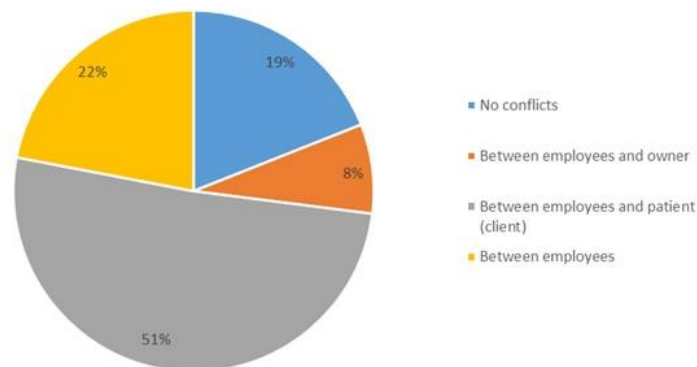
Fig. 4 Distribution of respondents' answers to the question "What type of conflicts occur more often in your organization?", %

The majority of respondents face conflicts in their professional activities several times a month (28.4%), several times a year (21.6%), once a year or less often (19.3%), several times a week (11, 4%). 5.7% of respondents noted that there are no conflicts at all in their institutions (Fig. 5).

Among the main causes of conflicts in their professional activities in the form of open answers, the respondents noted the following:

- misunderstanding, dissatisfaction of patients with the healthcare reform and the implementation of paid services;
- social tension in society, inability to listen to each other;
- intolerance to other people's opinion;
- workload;
- different interpretation of legislation;
- limited resources;
- refusal to cooperate, violation of agreements;
- aggressive attitude of people towards the healthcare field;
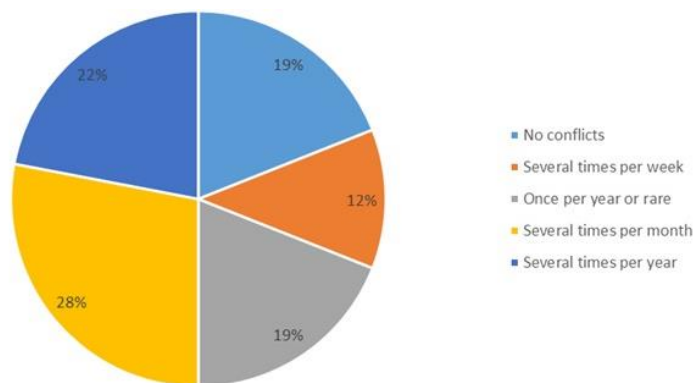- innovations in the healthcare system.

Fig. 5 Distribution of respondents' answers to the question "How often in your professional activity do you encounter conflicts?", %

Our research revealed that most of the participants note the negative impact of conflicts on the activities of their organization. Individual respondents emphasize the lack of impact of conflicts on the organization's activities, as they quickly identify and resolve them. Only one respondent sees conflicts as having a positive impact on the activities of the institution where he works, as "conflicts mobilize and mobilize the team".

Thus, the conducted analysis provides us with the confirmation from the representatives of healthcare and social organization's representatives that conflicts cause a lot of problems in their daily activity, and prevent effective development of organizations. In addition, these confirm H1 of our research: Conflicts mostly have negative impact on organizations performance.

Next part of the survey includes questions regarding conflicts resolution, and it reveals most of organizations are just trying to avoid conflict instead of finding the way to resolve it effectively. The most common way to resolve conflicts among respondents is to avoid it (68.2%) and involve a third party for an objective resolution of the conflict (Fig. 6).

If the conflict is internal, the manager (62.5%), colleague (17%), lawyer (8%) or psychologist (3.4%) of the organization where the respondent works most often acts as a "mediator" in its resolution.

According to the respondents, the most effective measures to minimize the occurrence of internal conflicts in the organizations where they work are: encouraging staff to develop positive working relationships (56.8%), conducting conflict resolution training (34.1%), providing training in communication skills (29.5%), development of powerful communication channels (14.8%).

Almost 38% of respondents met legal conflicts in their practice (when there were issues of disciplinary violations by employees, "problematic" dismissals, conflicts with patients, problems in processing appeals, conflicts with low-quality counterparties, etc.), 62.5% emphasize lack of similar experience. 8% of respondents noted that less than 5 such court cases were recorded in their institutions during the year.
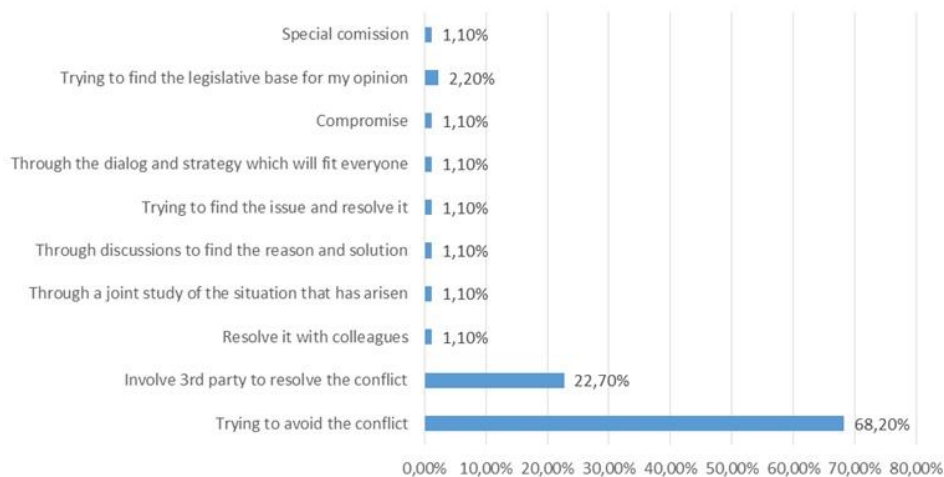

Fig. 6 Distribution of respondents' answers to the question "How do you usually resolve conflicts?", %

In this case, we can sum up that healthcare and social organization in the regions of Ukraine are trying to avoid escalation of conflicts and prefer to negotiate. But there is a lack of professional negotiations in these spheres.

As mediation is one of the most effective methods of alternative dispute resolution, it can be implemented in healthcare and social sphere conflicts too.

Mediation is the consequence of the failure to reach an agreement between two parties. The failure of negotiation has a cost both in terms of the relational capital between the parties and in terms of the psychological processes of the individuals themselves. The negotiation impasse led to a distributive spiral, where parties experience negative emotions, develop a negative perception of their counterparts, and the negotiation processes. This failure reduces self-efficacy and willingness to work together in the future, to behave less cooperatively, losing faith in negotiation as an effective means of managing conflicts (O'Connor & Arnold, 2001).

Although the conditions under which mediation arises are negative, it has proven to be a very useful conflict resolution tool in order to promote efficiency, equity, and voice in employment relations (Munduate et al., 2022).

It should be considered that almost half of the respondents are familiar with the concept of "mediation". Research participants provided the following definitions:

▪ "a voluntary, out-of-court, confidential, structured procedure, during which the parties, with the help of a mediator(s), try to settle the conflict (dispute) through negotiations";

▪ "a confidential form of dispute resolution that has nothing to do with a court hearing. It takes place with the participation of a neutral third party - a mediator, who helps the parties settle the dispute peacefully, quickly and without lengthy and sometimes expensive court proceedings";

▪ "conflict settlement by studying the position of the conflicting parties through a closed or open meeting in the presence of neutral persons";

▪ dispute settlement technology with the participation of a third (neutral) party, who is not interested in this conflict, to work out an agreement in the dispute. Sometimes this makes it possible to avoid the long duration of the conflict.

75% of respondents are convinced that mediation in Ukraine is known to a narrow circle of people, 9.1% believe that it is widespread in Ukraine, and 9.1% believe that it is completely absent.

Among the main factors that prevent the dissemination of mediation for the resolution of disputes in the social sphere and the healthcare, the respondents note:

- lack of sufficient knowledge about mediation (75%),
- lack of a normative legal act that would regulate mediation as an alternative for the resolution of disputes in the social sphere or healthcare (31.8%),
- instability of legislation (21.6%),
- lack of mutual assistance among workers in the social sphere and healthcare (11.4%).

Since mediation in Ukraine began to spread only in recent years mostly among lawyers and educators, the majority of the population (including healthcare and social workers) have limited information and experience in implementing this conflict resolution tool at the organizational level.

The majority of respondents hesitate to answer regarding the expediency of using mediation in resolving conflict situations in their organizations (54.5%). 42% are convinced that mediation would help their institutions in resolving conflicts, 3.5% of respondents have the opposite opinion (Fig. 7).
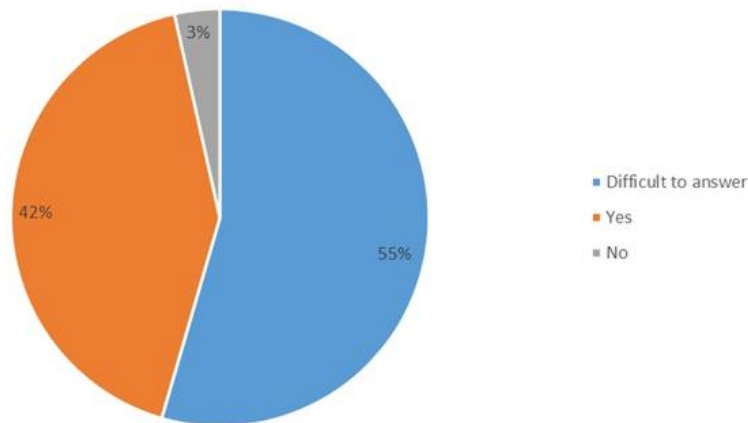
Fig. 7 Distribution of respondents' answers to the question "Do you think mediation would help you resolve conflicts?", %

The majority of respondents are convinced that it is advisable to integrate mediation into their field of activity by using mediation skills in communication by employees (76.1%), concluding a memorandum, contract with an external mediator/s (13.6%), involving a mediator as a staff unit in the institution (9.1%).

Based on the survey results, 46.6% of respondents are convinced that there is no need to involve a mediator specialist in the structure of their institution; 42% - hesitate to answer this question; 11.4% - see the expediency of this initiative. In the meantime, more than half of research participants (63.3%) feel the need to acquire knowledge of legal aspects in their work in a healthcare institution or social sphere institution; 27.3% - do not have such a need, because it is not relevant for them, 8% - do not feel the need, because they already have a professional education in this field.

To sum up, the results of the survey confirm that employees of modern organizations (in particular, the social sphere and healthcare) very often encounter conflicts. These can be both internal and external conflicts. However, all of them have an impact on the development of organizations. Moreover, if these are constructive conflicts, they can act as an impetus for development. And if the destructive ones, which only destroy intra-organizational relations, affect the efficiency of work and the image of the organization, they only stand in the way of the organization's development.

Accordingly, more than 60% of respondents stated the need for conflict resolution skills, but only 46% have an idea about the effectiveness of the implementation of mediation and other methods of alternative conflict resolution.

Thus, the H2 hypothesis regarding the significant positive impact of mediation on the development of organizations in the context of the realities of Ukraine was partially confirmed. The majority of respondents consider mediation to be an effective tool for organizational conflicts. However, they do not have enough information about the possibilities and features of its implementation in Ukraine. Especially in institutions of the social sphere and healthcare.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This research demonstrates the influence of organizational conflicts on the activities of modern organizations, especially in the social sphere and healthcare in Ukraine. The general impact of conflicts on the performance of the organization, key participants in internal and external conflicts of organizations, as well as the most common causes of conflict situations are indicated. The paper also notes the essence and advantages of mediation as an effective alternative solution to organizational conflicts.

The paper examines the results of a survey on the specifics of the occurrence and resolution of conflict situations in institutions of the social sphere and healthcare. After all, employees in these areas constantly work with people, and daily deal with conflict situations and misunderstandings, which can go through the stage of further escalation and create obstacles for the further development and effective work of the organization.

An important point is not only to determine the impact of conflicts on organizational development, but also to understand that not all methods of alternative conflict resolution are accessible and understandable to most employees of modern organizations in Ukraine. Despite the fact that the majority of respondents were familiar with the concept of mediation, there are problems with informing the public about the possibilities and advantages of using this method of conflict resolution - and this is confirmed by the results of the survey.

It should be noted that the research participants revealed the need to train employees of social and health care institutions in the skills of mediation and conflict resolution. Accordingly, further dissemination of mediation values and skills is possible through those persons who have undergone or are ready to undergo the relevant training.

The conducted research has certain limitations, from which the directions of future research arise. The first limitation refers to the small number of respondents, which is why the analysis should be repeated on a larger sample. Also, research was implemented in several regions of Ukraine and can be implemented in the whole country.

Future research may also examine the activities on mediation implementation and cover more spheres of economic activity and different organization as well as organizational conflicts.

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KONFLIKTI U ORGANIZACIJI: KAKO MEDIJACIJA UTIČE NA RAZVOJ ORGANIZACIJE?

Moderne organizacije u uslovima globalizacije i velike nesigurnosti imaju ne samo kompleksni razvojni put, već se i suočavaju sa velikim brojem organizacionih konflikata (kako internih, tako i eksternih). Za stabilno funkcionisanje organizacija i stvaranje povoljnih uslova za rad njihovih zaposlenih, važno je implementirati efektivne metode razrešavanja konfliktnih situacija, kao što je medijacija, u praksu. Cilj rada je sistematizacija modernih pristupa organizacionim konfliktima i

odredjivanje uticaja medijacije na organizacioni razvoj na primeru organizaija iz oblasti socijalne i zdravstvene zaštite. Takodje, istraživanje je posvećeno identifikaciji glavnih uzroka konflikta u institucijama socijalne i zdravstvene zaštite, učesnicima u konfliktima, meditama njihovog razrešenja. Empirijsko istraživanje vršeno je uz učešće 88 predstavnika institucija socijalne i zdravsvene zaštite iz tri regije Ukrajine (Dnjepar, Zaporožje, Harkov). U okviru istraživanja, proučavana je učestalost i tipovi konflikata koji se javljaju u organizacijamna socijalne i zdravstvene zaštite. Identifikovane su ključne oblasti rada na rezoluciji i prevenciji konflikata. Procenjen je stepen svesti zaposlenih vezano za proces medijacije i stepen spremnosti organizacija socijalne i zdravstvene zaštite da ga implementiraju. Predložene su smernice za dalja istraživanja uticaja konflikta i medijacije na razvoj modenih organizacija.

Ključne reči: *konflikt, razvoj, rešavanje sukoba, medijacija, organizacija*