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Managing Conflict and Negotiation in the Workplace

A Systematic Review of Strategies, Employee Psychology, and Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Conflict and negotiation are key dynamics in modern organizations that influence the quality of working relationships, the effectiveness of collaboration, and the sustainability of performance. This study aims to synthesize the latest empirical findings on the relationship between conflict and negotiation through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach based on the PRISMA guidelines. A search of the Scopus database for publications from 2020 to 2025 yielded 1,030 initial articles, which were gradually selected until 10 core articles were selected that integrated conflict and negotiation in an organizational context. Descriptive and thematic analyses were conducted to answer three research questions: (RQ1) the influence of conflict and negotiation strategies on the effectiveness of conflict resolution; (RQ2) the role of emotional and psychological factors in shaping employee behavior; and (RQ3) the influence of social identity, organizational culture, and leadership support on conflict dynamics. The results of the study show three main findings: collaborative strategies are more effective than competitive strategies; psychological factors such as mindfulness and emotional intelligence significantly influence employee responses; and professional identity, organizational culture, and supervisor support play an important role in preventing conflict escalation and increasing the success of negotiations.

Keywords
Conflict Managemen
Employee Behavior
Negotiation
Organizational Conflict
Supervisor Support

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Introduction

Conflict in the workplace is an inevitable phenomenon that continues to be a strategic challenge for modern organizations. Conflict not only affects employee relationships but also has a direct impact on organizational effectiveness through the emergence of destructive behaviors such as knowledge hiding, employee silence, work stress, decreased motivation, and increased turnover intention [1][2]. These findings are reinforced by recent literature showing that unmanaged conflict can disrupt negotiation processes, erode trust, and undermine the collaboration needed to achieve common goals. In other words, conflict is not just an interpersonal issue, but a managerial issue that has implications for the overall performance and sustainability of the organization.

Studies show that higher levels of mindfulness are positively associated with more integrative and cooperative styles of conflict resolution, which involve negotiation and collaboration rather than avoidance, indicating that mindfulness can help individuals engage in more constructive responses to conflict situations in organizational settings [3]. On the other hand, research on workplace dynamics indicates that social identity differences and hierarchical organizational norms contribute to persistent gender inequalities, which can intensify interpersonal and professional tensions, thereby undermining open communication and cooperative interactions within organizations [4]. Research in negotiation shows that when negotiators adopt cooperative or mixed social motivation strategies, they tend to achieve higher joint outcomes, both economically and relationally, highlighting the importance of collaborative and problem-solving negotiation tactics in producing mutually beneficial results [5].

Although research on conflict and negotiation in organizations has expanded, integrated frameworks that jointly examine both phenomena remain limited, particularly in studies published between 2020 and 2025. Prior research largely treats conflict and negotiation as separate domains, with conflict studies focusing on antecedents such as leadership, professional identity, and communication, while negotiation is often examined as an individual skill or process detached from conflict dynamics. Moreover, emotional and psychological mechanisms, including psychological contract violations, emotion regulation, and employee silence, have rarely been systematically analyzed as mediators linking conflict and negotiation behavior. Evidence regarding the role of leadership and HR functions, especially supervisor support in conflict management, also remains fragmented. To address these gaps, this study synthesizes empirical evidence from ten selected Scopus-indexed articles to integrate conflict strategies, emotional–psychological factors, and organizational context in explaining conflict–negotiation dynamics within organizations.

Material and Methods

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to comprehensively synthesize the relationship between conflict and negotiation in organizations during the period 2020–2025, as SLR enables a transparent and systematic integration of empirical findings across fragmented research streams [6]. This approach was chosen because it provides a comprehensive overview of the patterns, determinants, psychological mechanisms, and conflict resolution strategies relevant to the three research questions (RQ1–RQ3). The SLR process was structured according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines to ensure methodological transparency and replicability across all review stages [7].

The literature search was conducted using the Scopus database due to its extensive coverage, rigorous journal selection criteria, and reliability as a bibliometric data source for high-quality academic research [8]. The publication range used was 2020–2025, with a combination of main keywords such as "organizational conflict," "workplace conflict," and "negotiation strategies." In addition, supporting keywords such as employee, communication, job stress, problem solving, HRM, leadership, and conflict resolution were also used to broaden the scope of the search in line with the research focus. The inclusion criteria included articles in English, with full text, empirical research-based, and focused on the organizational context. The selection of keywords, as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria, followed established systematic review and bibliometric research practices to ensure relevance, quality, and analytical rigor [9]. Articles in the form of proceedings, editorials, non-empirical reviews, technical reports, and articles that were not relevant to the integration of conflict and negotiation were excluded from the analysis.

From the initial 1030 articles, the PRISMA screening process resulted in 563 articles after the duplication and initial title and abstract screening stages. The next stage left 265 articles relevant for in-depth review. At the full eligibility stage, 36 articles specifically on conflict and 17 articles on negotiation were obtained. However, only 10 main articles explicitly integrated conflict and negotiation in accordance with the focus of RQ1–RQ3 and were therefore designated as the core synthesis in this SLR. See Table 1.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and thematic approaches. Descriptive analysis was employed to map publication trends, countries, and scientific fields, while thematic analysis was used to identify recurring conceptual patterns related to conflict strategies, psychological mechanisms, and organizational context [10]. Meanwhile, thematic analysis was conducted to identify consistent conceptual patterns in the literature, resulting in three main themes as a basis for answering RQ1–RQ3, namely conflict and negotiation strategies, emotional-psychological factors that influence conflict dynamics, and the role of

social identity, organizational culture, and leadership support in the effectiveness of conflict resolution.

Table 1. Previous Research on Conflict and Negotiation in Organizations

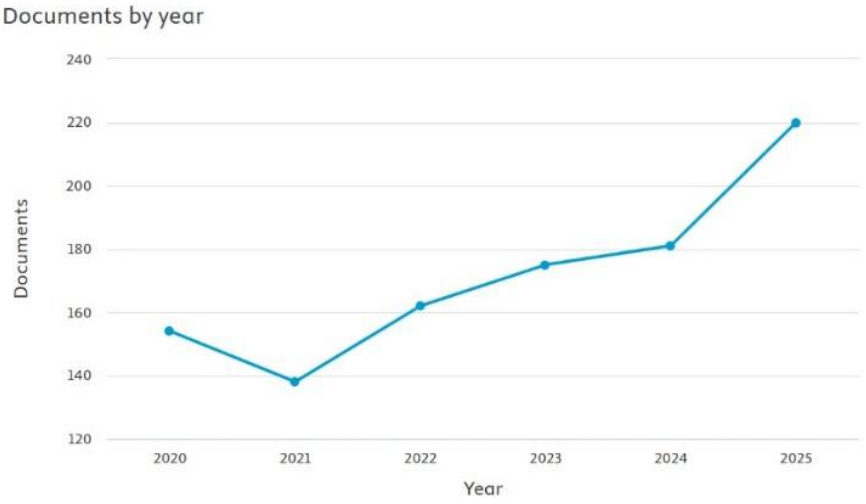
Aspect	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Document type	Artikel ilmiah yang diterbitkan di jurnal terakreditasi, termasuk artikel tinjauan	Proceedings, Editorials, Technical Reports
Language	English	Apart from English
Year of Publication	2020-2025	Outside of that year range
Discussion Focus	Full text	Incomplete
Contextual Relevance	Describes organizational conflict, its impact on employee behavior and performance, and how negotiation strategies are implemented.	Not relevant or not focused on the impact/strategy of the negotiation.

Source: Braun, et.al [10]

Results and Discussions

A. Quantitative Descriptive Analysis of Literature

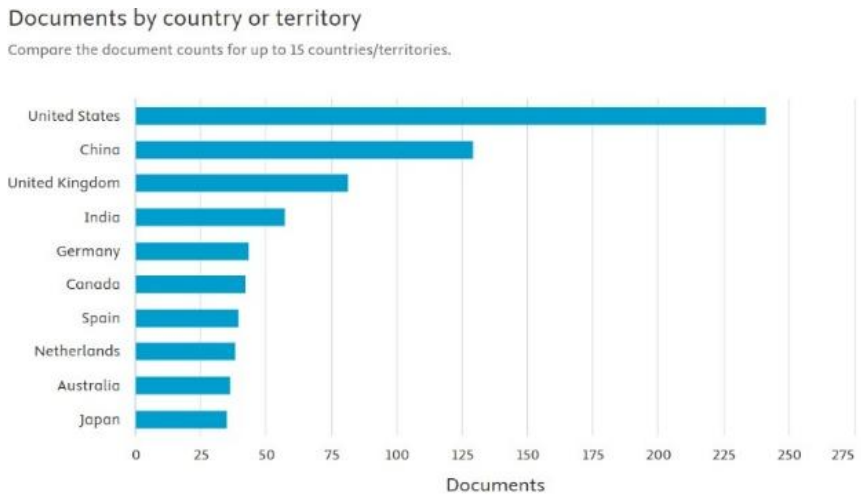
A descriptive analysis of publications related to conflict and negotiation in organizations throughout the 2020–2025 period shows a significant upward trend in academic attention, as can be seen in Figure 1. The number of publications in 2020 was recorded at 154 documents and declined in 2021 to 138 documents. However, the trend increased consistently in the following years, with 162 documents in 2022, 175 documents in 2023, and 181 documents in 2024, before peaking in 2025 with a total of 220 publications. This pattern indicates that the topic of conflict-negotiation is increasingly relevant and has become an important focus in academic studies, especially after the post-pandemic work dynamics that caused major changes in communication patterns, work relationships, and team management in various types of organizations [11].



Source: Author's analysis of Scopus database results (2020–2025)

Fig. 1. Distribution of reviewed documents by year of publication from 2020 to 2025

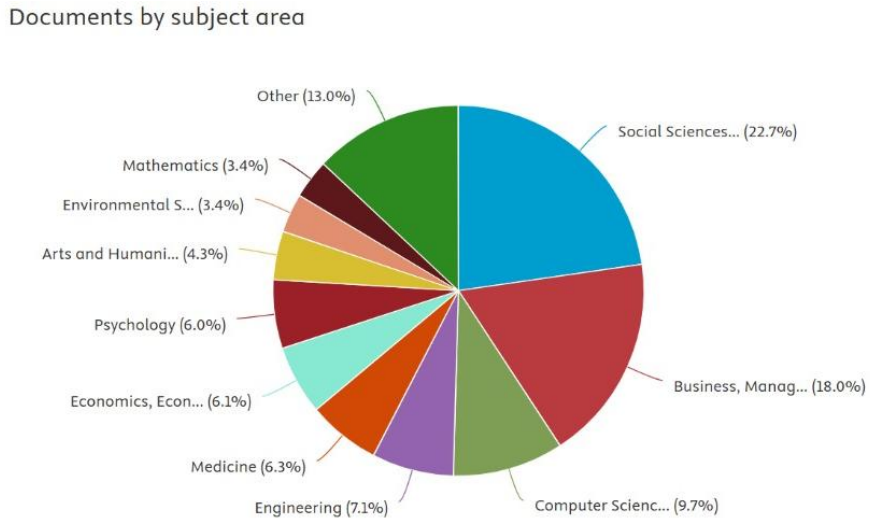
Based on the distribution of countries in Figure 2, publications on this topic are dominated by countries with strong research capacity and complex organizational structures. The United States ranks first with 241 documents, followed by China with 129 documents, and the United Kingdom with 81 documents. Other countries such as India, Germany, Canada, Spain, the Netherlands, Australia, and Japan also made significant contributions. This distribution shows that the issue of conflict and negotiation is a phenomenon that has received global attention and has been studied in the context of diverse cultures, organizational structures, and labor dynamics. The dominance of the United States and China indicates the importance of this issue in multicultural environments, large-scale organizations, and competitive work contexts that often give rise to the need for effective negotiation and conflict management [12].



Source: Author's analysis of Scopus database results (2020–2025)

Fig. 2. Distribution of scientific documents by country of origin, based on the top 10 countries with the highest number of publications

Meanwhile, analysis based on scientific fields in Figure 3 confirms that conflict and negotiation are multidisciplinary topics. The Social Sciences field contributed the most publications with 427 documents, followed by Business, Management, and Accounting with 339 documents. The presence of publications from other fields, such as Computer Science (182 documents), Engineering (134), Medicine (119), Psychology (112), and Economics (114), shows that the issues of conflict and negotiation are not only relevant in management and organizational behavior, but also arise in technical, health, psychological, and economic contexts. This reflects that the dynamics of conflict and negotiation can occur in various types of professional collaborations, ranging from technical engineering, interdisciplinary projects, health services, to coordination in public and private organizations [13].



Source: Author's analysis of Scopus database results (2020–2025)

Fig. 3. Distribution of fields of study in reviewed articles

Overall, these three descriptive analyses reinforce the understanding that conflict and negotiation within organizations are global, dynamic, and multidisciplinary phenomena. The increasing trend in publications, wide geographical distribution, and diverse disciplinary contexts show that this issue continues to develop as an important field of study in understanding work relationships, organizational performance, and managerial strategies in the modern era. These descriptive findings provide a strong basis for continuing more in-depth thematic analysis of conflict strategies (RQ1), emotional-psychological dynamics (RQ2), and the role of organizational context and leadership (RQ3).

Based on a rigorous selection process using the PRISMA method, 10 core articles were identified that were most relevant and contributed directly to understanding the interaction between conflict and negotiation in organizations. Table 2 below summarizes these ten articles as the main basis for in-depth thematic analysis in the following section.

Table 2. The top ten articles in the analysis results of this study

No	Title	Year	Author	Main Findings
1	Cultivating a conflict-positive workplace: How mindfulness facilitates constructive conflict management	2020	Kay and Skarlicki, 2020	Mindfulness and Conflict
2	Women Surgeons' Experiences of Interprofessional Workplace Conflict	2020	Dossett *et al.,* 2020	Female Surgeon Conflict
3	Coping With Conflict: Examining the Influence of PSM on Perceptions of Workplace Stressors	2020	Davis *et al.,* 2020	Union-Management Conflict
4	Effects of power on negotiations: a comparison of collaborative versus competitive approaches	2021	Fousiani, Steinel, and Minnigh, 2021	Power in Negotiation

No	Title	Year	Author	Main Findings
5	Negotiation as an interpersonal skill: Generalizability of negotiation outcomes and tactics across contexts at the individual and collective levels	2020	Martin-Raugh *et al.,* 2020	Negotiation as a Skill
6	Teamwork, professional identities, conflict, and industrial action in Nigerian healthcare	2020	Mayaki and Stewart, 2020	Conflict in Nigerian Healthcare
7	Workplace conflicts and knowledge hiding: Mediating role of relational psychological contract breach	2023	Qiao *et al.,* 2023	Conflict and Knowledge Hiding
8	"Silent reactions": a PLS-NCA study of workplace conflict and psychological contract breach	2025	Kamini, Madan, and Yadav, 2025	Conflict and Silent Reactions
9	Supporting resolution: the impact of supervisors on workplace conflict management	2025	McCarthy and Pearce, 2025	Supervisor Support
10	Two Workplace Behaviors to Effectively Navigate Conflict in Today's Workplace	2024	Thornton and Fletcher, 2024	Conflict Navigation Behavior

B. Conflict and Negotiation Strategies

That mindfulness can create a "conflict-positive" work environment by encouraging constructive conflict resolution. They report that "mindfulness facilitates constructive conflict management by increasing collaboration and reducing avoidance in negotiations" [14]. The power approach in negotiation is also discussed by Fousiani [15], who found that in negotiation situations, "powerholders prefer collaborative strategies, whereas powerless negotiators prefer competitive strategies". This means that those in power tend to choose cooperative strategies, while those without power are more competitive, with the perception of threat as a mediator of this effect.

The findings of Martin-Raugh et al. [16] reinforce the importance of collaborative strategies: they found that negotiation skills are stable and generalized across contexts. Furthermore, tactical analysis shows that "greater use of cooperative tactics was associated with higher joint negotiation scores," confirming that cooperative tactics (such as making concessions or seeking joint solutions) contribute to better collective negotiation outcomes.

Thornton and Fletcher [17] identify two practical behaviors for resolving conflict: "Engage the Mess" and "Suppress the Noise". Based on participants' real-life stories, it was revealed that Engage the Mess helps manage conflict in a healthy way (e.g., through awareness of others, clear communication, and joint solution-seeking), while Suppress the Noise helps eliminate emotional distractions to focus on the core issue. The two work synergistically as a simple framework for navigating conflict in the workplace. Overall, these four studies emphasize that collaborative strategies and interpersonal skills (mindfulness, open communication, cooperative tactics) are crucial for effective negotiation and constructive conflict resolution.

The systematic review shows that conflict and negotiation within organizations are multidimensional phenomena influenced by conflict management strategies, emotional-psychological factors, and the social-organizational context. In response to RQ1, the synthesis results show that collaborative strategies, including the use of cooperative tactics, mindfulness, and open communication patterns, consistently produce more effective conflict resolution than competitive strategies. The collaborative approach not only increases the chances of achieving win-win solutions but also strengthens interpersonal relationships and reduces long-term conflict escalation. Conversely, competitive and avoidance strategies have been shown to worsen the effectiveness of negotiations and damage work dynamics.

C. Emotion and Psychological Aspects of Conflict

The psychological impact of conflict is also evident in employee behavior. Qiao et al. [18] revealed that both interpersonal and task-related workplace conflicts act as "antecedents of knowledge-hiding behaviors." Conflict damages mutual trust (breach of relational contract), which then mediates an increase in knowledge hiding by employees. In other words, conflict causes a breach of the relational psychological contract and, in turn, causes employees to "keep quiet" about important information.

Empirical studies indicate that workplace conflict is positively associated with employee silence, and that psychological contract breach serves as a key mediating mechanism through which conflict experiences lead employees to withdraw voice and withhold information [19]. This suggests that intense task and relational conflicts can trigger negative emotional responses that foster defensive or acquiescent silence, thereby undermining open communication and subsequent negotiation processes within organizations [20]. Findings show that emotional and psychological factors play a key role in determining employee responses to conflict.

Psychological contract violations, negative emotions, employee silence, and knowledge-withholding behaviors emerge as important mechanisms linking conflict to various destructive impacts within organizations [21]. Conversely, emotional intelligence and mindfulness have been shown to mitigate these negative effects and enhance individuals' capacity to engage in constructive negotiation. Thus, psychological dynamics in the workplace, whether in the form of emotional regulation or relational perception, are important components in successful conflict resolution.

D. Organizational Identity and Culture in Conflict

The social and cultural background of employees also shapes the dynamics of conflict. Dossett et al. [22] highlight the existence of gender-based double standards in interprofessional conflicts: female doctors are often treated differently and expected to conform to gender norms even if they contradict professional norms. In their main findings,

they mention that participants see “double standards related to these conflicts” and experience double pressure due to conflicting gender expectations and professional norms. As a result, these conflicts not only damage personal well-being but also professional reputation.

Mayaki & Stewart [23] examined conflicts in Nigeria's health sector through the lens of social identity theory. They identified two arenas of conflict: interpersonal conflicts arising from “professional hierarchy, role ambiguity, and poor communication” (e.g., competition between doctors, nurses, laboratory analysts) and systemic conflicts in the form of strikes triggered by issues of leadership and remuneration.

The importance of professional identity is emphasized in their findings: a strong identity between professional groups “provides a link between interprofessional conflict in the workplace and competitive industrial actions.” In other words, an “us vs. them” identity encourages interprofessional conflict and exacerbates collective bargaining (such as wage negotiations), thereby triggering competitive industrial action. Both studies confirm that identity factors (gender, profession) and organizational culture (hierarchy, communication norms) can intensify conflict and complicate resolution; thus, mitigation strategies must take this social context into account [24].

E. The Role of Leaders in Conflict Management

McCarthy & Pearce [25] highlight the importance of leadership intervention through a new construct called Supervisor Conflict Management Support (SCMS). This study found that conflict support from superiors significantly “improves conflict resolution outcomes and enhances organizational commitment while increasing employees' intent to stay.” In other words, proactive supervision in resolving conflicts not only improves conflict resolution outcomes but also increases employee commitment while reducing turnover. Moderating analysis shows that the positive effects of SCMS are strongest when conflicts are still in the early stages (low severity), and the organizational communication culture is open (free expression of opinions). These findings emphasize the crucial role of managers/HR in providing early conflict support and fostering an open communication climate. Practically, recommend leadership training to implement effective conflict interventions before issues escalate into serious problems [26].

Overall, the findings from these ten journals form a comprehensive framework of understanding: conflict in organizations must be managed with collaborative strategies and effective communication, with attention to underlying emotional and identity factors, as well as the active role of leadership. Empirical evidence shows that the use of collaborative negotiation strategies enhances trust and produces higher joint outcomes, supporting the effectiveness of win–win negotiation approach [27].

Conversely, conflicts that are ignored or responded to emotionally can trigger sabotage behaviors such as withholding knowledge or silencing employees [28] [29]. Social identity (gender, profession) and power structures also influence conflict dynamics and negotiations, so they need to be recognized in organizational policies. Timely leadership intervention (SCMS) can increase the success of conflict resolution and maintain organizational commitment [30]. Thus, effective conflict management requires a holistic approach that includes collaborative strategies, emotional support, contextual awareness, and an active leadership role in facilitating negotiations.

The study also reinforces the understanding that the organizational context, including social identity, work culture, power structure, and the role of leadership and HR, greatly determines the pattern of conflict emergence and how it develops. Professional and gender identities have been proven to exacerbate intergroup conflict, while a hierarchical organizational culture or closed communication weakens negotiation efforts. On the other hand, managerial support through Supervisor Conflict Management Support (SCMS) and HR intervention plays a significant role in preventing conflict escalation and increasing organizational commitment and employee retention.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of conflict management and negotiation in organizations is a multidimensional phenomenon that depends on the interaction of three main pillars. First, collaborative strategies (such as open communication and mindfulness) have consistently proven to be superior in producing win-win solutions and strengthening interpersonal relationships compared to competitive or avoidance strategies. Second, emotional-psychological factors play a crucial role, where emotional intelligence can mitigate the destructive impact of negative emotions or psychological contract violations, while employee silence exacerbates the situation. Third, the social-organizational context, including work culture, power structures, and leadership and HR support, significantly determines the patterns of conflict emergence and the success of its resolution.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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