MOTIVATION – A FACTOR TO REDUCE THE INTRAPERSONAL CONFLICT GENERATED BY THE COVID PANDEMIC

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Abstract:

Conflict is an inevitable part of our lives. In relation to the crisis, the conflict is subordinated to it and supports the tensions, mental discomfort, poor cooperation between the actors involved. The Covid pandemic generated a general crisis, in which, along with other types of conflict, the intrapersonal conflict is manifested, with predilection.

According to the interactionist meaning, the conflict can also be constructive, generating change and innovation. Motivation is the mobilizing element in the management of intrapersonal conflicts in general, through a series of motivational factors: intrinsic (individual) and extrinsic (organizational) and in the pandemic context, in particular. Due to the importance of these factors, we can say that part of the success of a business lies in managing and resolving conflicts through the effective motivation of all staff who are part of an organization, especially in times of crisis.

Keywords: conflict, motivation, crisis, pandemic.

JEL Classification: I00, I21, P46.

1. Introduction

Over the last decades, the organizational landscape has undergone many changes. The technological revolution of our product form of organization of life and work, the phenomenon of globalization gradually dissolved the social, political, economic borders, capitalism allowed the transition from local to global business, thus appearing multinational. Currently, the current pandemic crisis is forcing managers to manage their resources even more carefully, especially human resources, to reconsider their priorities and business model.

The SAR-COV-2 pandemic dramatically changed employment across sectors in 2020, having a significant impact on public and private employees (Thomason B., Williams H., 2020).

In the current economic context, many small and medium-sized companies face difficult internal situations, especially in terms of employee retention and motivation. We started this research considering relevant the knowledge of the motivating factors for employees, in crisis conditions, characterized as a challenge for the current labor market.

This study can give employers an overview of the employees' view of work and the expectations they have in these times of crisis. Thus, organizations can focus more on employee retention through motivation, the benefit being on both sides.

The aim is to provide a general perspective on the needs of employees and, at the same time, to highlight the defining elements by which they take into account the performance at work.

The theme of this paper focuses on how employees conceptualize the values located at work and the expectations they project, regarding the benefits that an employer can offer in times of crisis: work environment, program flexibility, opportunities for promotion, personal development, and professional, labor relations. These are the indispensable influencing factors in deciding on a possible job.

The main objectives of our research are to identify the motivating factors that diminish the situations of intrapersonal conflict that the employees of an organization may face in these moments of change and uncertainty.

Therefore, the research questions through which we want to achieve the objectives are the following:

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1. What are the intrapersonal conflicts that employees face during the crisis period?

2. What are the most popular ways in which organizations can increase an employee's motivation to reduce intra-person conflicts generated by the crisis?

This research is based on the sociological survey conducted through the interview, which offers broader horizons on the perspective of the subjects. We chose to use this method because we want to know in-depth the reasons and beliefs that underlie the formation of opinions about the current labor market.

In conducting this research we chose subjects based on theoretical sampling, whose essential feature is the subjectivity of the choice of the target group depending on the relevance it has for the research topic.

This type of sampling does not seek to validate hypotheses, but to build ideas or theories about a phenomenon. Thus, our sample was represented by subjects who went through changes in the workplace generated by the current crisis, being in line with the research topic, obtaining relevant data through interviews. The chosen subjects are represented by twenty employees from the private environment of Târgoviște Municipality who currently carry out their activity from home, through telework.

Following the analysis and interpretation of the data collected after the interviews with representatives of the educational environment, we aim to formulate empirical ideas to answer the questions from which this study started.

2. Theoretical framework
2.1 Conflict in crisis conditions

There is a close connection between the crisis and the conflict. Also called the "younger brother of the crisis" (Bodea D., 2020), the word "conflict" is associated with "opposition" or "antagonism". Social conflict occurs when individuals or groups of individuals depend on each other for valuable results and, through their independent or coordinated actions, deprive each other of such valuable results (De Dreu, 2011).

Over time, the conflict has experienced different perspectives and angles of approach. According to S. P. Robbins (1978), they can be reduced to three distinct types of approach:

- *the traditional approach*, in which the conflict is considered as dysfunctional by definition. Consequently, at the attitude level, a negative position is adopted towards any type of conflict. This way of approaching the conflict implies a unilateral vision in relation to the complexity of social life. That is why traditional approaches propose as a solution the avoidance or elimination of conflicts, by eliminating their causes and sources.

- *the approach to human relations*, which recognizes that a conflict is a natural and inevitable result for any social group or organization. Conflict is perceived not only as a negative process but also as a positive, functional one, within certain limits. As a result, this concept supports the acceptance of conflict, proposing as solutions both the recognition of conflicts and their resolution or elimination.

- *the interactionist approach* considers the conflict not only inevitable but also necessary, being able to favor innovation and change. This approach encourages the maintenance of a certain level of conflict. The solution is not to eliminate conflicts, but to manage them properly, in order to allow the positive stimulation of groups or individuals in a state of conflict. The interactionist vision of the conflict, much more balanced and realistic, has gradually begun to take its place among specialists and theorists of conflict. Thus, the conflict is no longer seen only as a negative, destructive process, which should be flattened and eliminated as soon as possible, but under certain conditions and at a certain level it can also become a factor in stimulating the positive energies of the conflicting parties (Altimae and Turk, 2009; Rahim, 2002 and Spaho, 2013).

Conflict is a natural part of human interaction, functioning whenever individuals experience differences of opinion, beliefs, or expectations (Wall and Callister, 1995). Conflict is inevitable in any organization because not all people think alike and have the same values or priorities (Jennings J., 2016) and, according to these differences, people react differently in similar situations. Conflicts also stem from dissatisfaction with how the organization's staff interacts, as well as management decisions (Liberman, Levy, & Segal, 2009).

The negative aspects of the organizational conflict are associated with demotivation, stress, and low job dissatisfaction. Taken to the extreme, these forms can lead to violence (Freeley K., 2015).

In the context of human behavior and interpersonal relationships, four main levels of conflict can be distinguished (Lewicki R., Saunders D., Barry B., Minton J., 2003):

1. Intergroup conflicts (between large groups of individuals, international relations, conflicts between nations);

2. Intragroup or intra-organizational conflicts (which occur in smaller groups, within an organization);

3. Interpersonal conflict (at the individual level, the conflict between individuals or the conflict between a person and a group);

4. Intrapersonal conflict (on a personal level) (Figure no. 1).
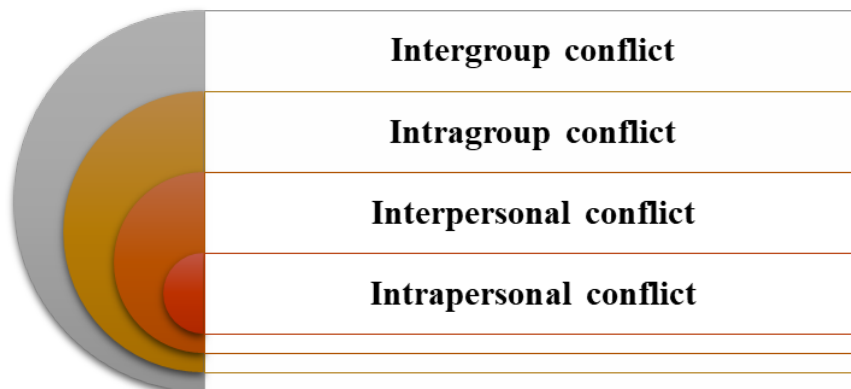
Figure no. 1: Classification of conflicts according to interpersonal relationships
Source: Adapted after De Dreu, C. K. W. (2011). *Conflict at work: Basic principles and applied issues.* In S. Zedeck (Ed.), APA handbook and organizational psychology. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Among these types of conflict, intrapersonal conflict refers to individual psychological dynamics. An example of such a conflict is when they are angry with the manager, but it is not a team that expresses that anger because we know it could fire us.

Intrapersonal conflict means the antagonism of intrapersonal intelligence, a concept regarding the theory of multiple intelligences, developed by Howard Gardner, since 1983. Intrapersonal conflict is an individual crisis, which occurs against the background of personal frustrations that lead to decreased self-esteem, demotivation, insecurity, depression, social problems (Cox K., 2003).

The contradiction between aspirations, ideas, thoughts, emotions, values, individual predispositions and reality generates intrapersonal conflict.

The specific manifestations in case of an intrapersonal conflict are:
• low self-image;
• introspective inability to behave and act;
• the impossibility of being aware of personal limits;
• the difficulty of anchoring at present;

• difficulty in self-understanding and relationships with others.

With such a great psycho-social impact, the pandemic crisis brings to the fore the intrapersonal conflicts, with fears, anxiety, to the depression of individuals.

According to *the Explanatory Dictionary of Romanian Languages* (2007), the current crisis is "the culminating critical moment in the evolution of a disease, which precedes the cure or aggravation of diseases (med.)" Or "period of tension, disorders, (decisive) trials that manifests in society (econ.)". Using a brief definition, the crisis refers to a decisive moment, a danger and a maximum test of our existence. In this way, the crisis can be seen as a disease that can have at least two evolutionary scenarios: disease cure or disease worsening. An essential role in establishing the intervention (treatment) is to estimate the time needed to overcome the crisis.

We can use these coordinates in the analysis of the current crisis, clarifying the state of uncertainty and planning the next steps in resolving conflict situations. The resolution of the crisis is difficult to estimate: it can take months or years, depending on the management measures taken.

Although the effects are negative and high impact, the crisis can reveal untapped aspects until the moment of its emergence, triggers higher motivational mechanisms that support overcoming obstacles of any kind, train unsuspected forces in the human psyche, stimulate the ability to solve problems, lead to change and evolution.

The current crisis is a real shock for many business models and for the organizational life with which we felt comfortable. The imposed social, economic and individual change is difficult to accept and is a barrier to the rapid resolution of conflicts generated by the crisis.

The biggest challenge imposed by the current pandemic crisis has been social/physical isolation. Social interaction is an indicator of lifestyle, of working, producing results and earning a living. In the absence of direct interaction with clients and/or colleagues, many occupations seem to lose their identity and meaning. For many organizations, the core business becomes uncertain and inadequate, and their business model seems completely outdated in this new social reality (of physical distancing).

Due to the importance of this human factor, we can say that part of the success of the business consists in the correct management through an efficient motivation of all the staff that is part of an organization, especially in crisis conditions.

2.2 About motivation and motivation at work

Motivation is related to the will of man to act in a certain way. Motivation represents the internal condition of the employee, who is oriented and behaves with it to meet certain needs.

The employee's motivation is related to the manager's art of influencing his behavior. Once you are aware of this, there is a chance to get good results both at the organizational level and at the individual level.

A manager cannot ask his employees to be motivated either, instead, he can create a climate in the company that motivates the entire team. Although the organizational climate is difficult to measure, by observing its symptoms (staff turnover, attendance at work, labor relations) one can identify the occurrence of problems that are also signs of low staff motivation.

At the workplace, every employee is motivated by various things, and it is the goal of a manager to influence the employee behavior version view with the correlation of their motivation the company's needs.

Needs at work are different: stability, appreciation, belonging to a group, personal/professional achievement, etc. Depending on the needs of the employee, the manager can build his own motivation system through the individual approach, giving employees what they need most, and, respectively, are motivated by it.

Pareto's principle "80/20" describes the fact that in almost any problem, 20% of causes generates 80% of the effect, by extrapolating this principle in the issue of motivation we can say that about 20% of employees of an institution can be self-motivated, they are people who do not need continuous control and supervision, therefore being considered systems that can self-plan, self-organize, self-control. The attention of managers thus falls on the 80% of employees who need their activity to be planned, coordinated, managed, monitored, and evaluated through various professional techniques and methods.

An individual's motivation for work is determined by a number of motivational factors: intrinsic (individual) and extrinsic (organization). In the general model of motivation (Rotaru, Prodan, 1998) presented in Figure no. 2, we observe how the combination of these factors will determine an individual motivated behavior (or not) in order to obtain the expected performances.
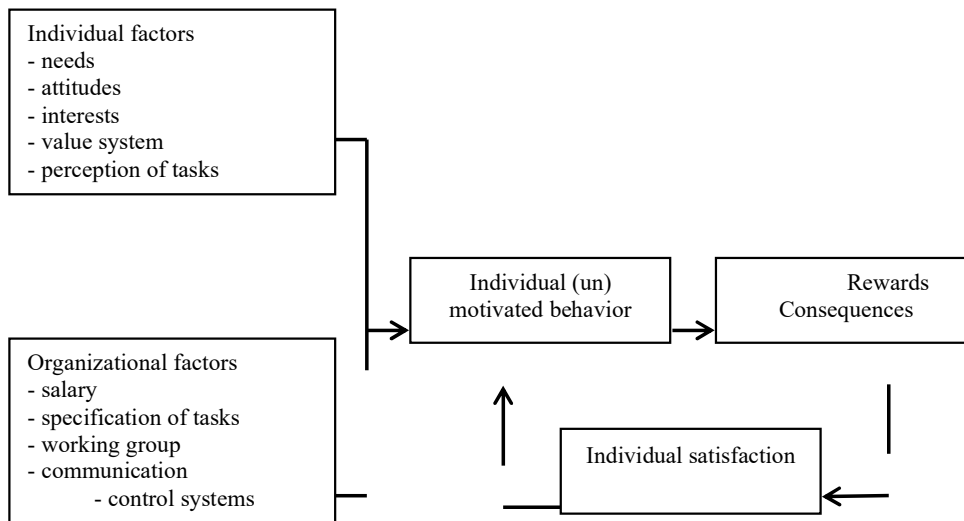
Figure no. 2: The general model of motivation
Source: http://psihologie.tripod.com/motivatia.htm

Based on Figure no. 2 we can identify another important aspect of motivation, namely the managerial connotation of this process.

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A. Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" theories can be used to identify employees' own needs. Maslow's pyramid plays an important role in resolving conflicts.

Thus, if the needs and motivations of a party in conflict are identified below in the pyramid of needs, we realize that the generation of options in resolving the conflict is limited.

On the other hand, if the needs and motivations of the other party are identified at the higher levels of the needs pyramid, we realize that the generation of options, in this case, is much higher.

"Depending on the level where the need has been identified, the solutions oscillate:

1) the higher they are at the level of the pyramid, the more solutions there are to extinguish the conflict;

2) the lower down the pyramid, the less conflict resolution there is. "

Motivation is one of the most important responsibilities of managers, who must find the best ways to make their subordinates perform at work. An important thing in the

organizational environment - often insufficiently emphasized - is that the employee alone is able to motivate himself because the motivational processes are triggered and coordinated from within the human being. The role of the manager is to identify and specify how the achievement of the organization's objectives also ensures the satisfaction of the employees' own needs.

According to Foster, the following practices can be used that can increase employee motivation:

• ensuring the job is appropriate to the values and needs of employees;

• increasing the attractiveness of the workplace, taking into account the values and needs of employees;

• establishing clear, attractive, and achievable work objectives;

• ensuring the necessary resources;

• creating a supportive social climate;

• strengthening performance;

• harmonization of all these elements in a socio-technical system.

It is thus desirable for each manager to ensure that all employees are motivated, thus pursuing high performance in the workplace. In other words, the idea is accepted from the beginning that employees have different motivations/needs that must be met in order to obtain the best work results.

3. Analysis and interpretation of research results

The aim of our research is to identify the types of intrapersonal conflicts that employees may face, and what are the most popular ways for organizations to increase an employee's motivation to reduce intrapersonal conflicts generated by the crisis. This paper is an empirical analysis through which we want to answer the research questions.

3.1 Intrapersonal conflicts in crisis conditions

We started this research by identifying the conflicting problems that can arise at the level of each individual, seen as an employee, in the context of the current crisis. From the analysis of the respondents' answers we can say that, in crisis situations, employees need understanding, flexibility, and, often, counseling, in cases of professional burn-out, which is quite common among those who work remotely.

The main specific manifestations in case of an intrapersonal conflict, declared by the respondents, are the difficulty of self-understanding and relationship with others, low self-image, difficulty anchoring in the present, the impossibility of awareness of personal limits, and other characteristics of each individual, according to Figure no. 3.
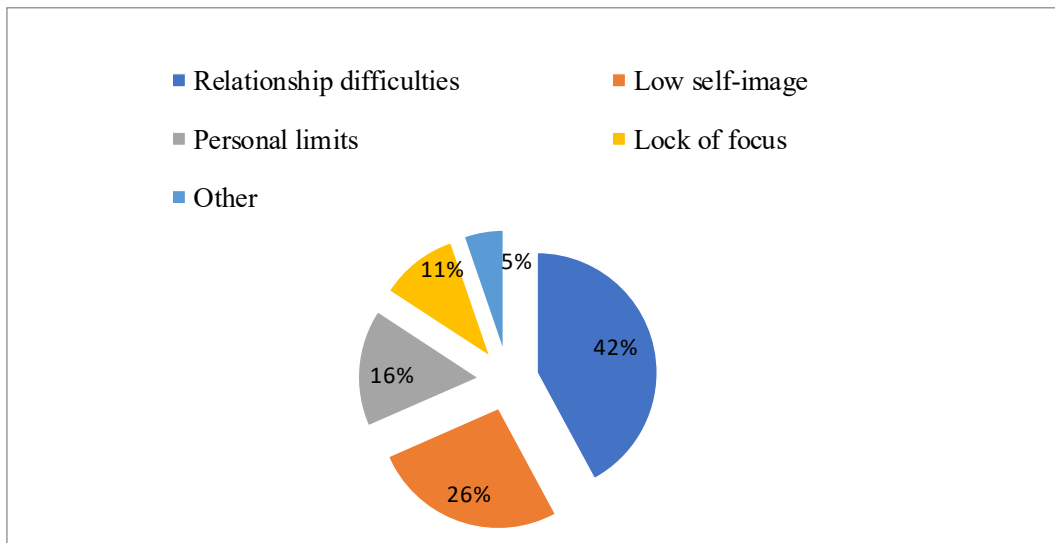
Figure no. 3: **Types of intrapersonal conflicts that respondents face**
Source: Created by the authors

Regarding the crisis, as an intrapersonal conflict, respondents say they needed a gradual exposure to the new situation that triggers fear until they became relatively comfortable with such thoughts and were able to outline action plans.

There have been various conflicts arising from the use of remote information technology needed for communication and related issues (teaching, reporting, maintenance, telemedicine, etc.). Thus, there are difficulties in managing online interpersonal conflicts, compared to face-to-face conflict management.

The appearance of the many negative spontaneous thoughts that accompany the current reality is inevitable. The psychological component could be better managed at an individual level, as the crisis is interpretable at the personal level. It requires a self-management to attenuate the effects of the crisis, to shorten the time needed to overcome it, using a more effective management of irrational and rigid thoughts, full of negative emotions.

3.2 The means by which organizations can increase the level of motivation of an employee in order to reduce intra-person conflicts generated by the crisis

Next, we will discuss the motivational factors identified by the respondents as having efficiency in terms of increasing motivation, implicitly productivity.

From the analysis of the answers, we found that we move from the emphasis on extrinsic factors of motivation to intrinsic ones, namely: job security, appreciation for work, empathic help for personal problems, or involvement in projects that ensure the survival of the company, according to Figure no. 4.
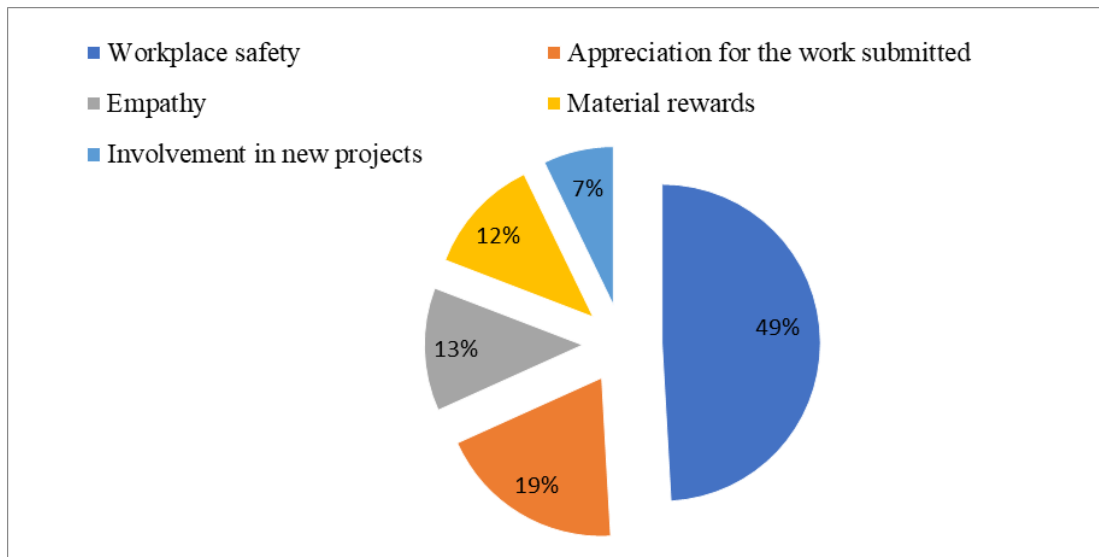
Figure no. 4: Types of intrapersonal conflicts that respondents face
Source: Created by the authors

Obviously, salary or rewards remain motivating factors, but their share in the total motivating factors is diminished due to the limited availability of companies to currently offer such motivations.

All the more so in the current context, in which isolation and social distancing are making an increasingly strong imprint on the psyche of employees, it is important for the manager to take into account measures related to employee motivation.

In times of crisis, no new motivational factors appear, totally different from those of periods of economic development. If we look at Maslow's concept of motivation, people begin to be concerned with the basic levels of the motivational pyramid.

Motivational factors remain the same, but the importance of covering basic and security needs increases. According to the analysis of the data collected, job security and covering the basic needs of employees are the most important things during this period.

4. Conclusions

Following this research, we believe that this crisis has also created panic, fear of the unknown, and uncertainty, but also brought many opportunities. If in some companies we are dealing with decisions to the detriment of employees, many organizations still chose to be close to people and offer them solutions, and the human resources department was and is a real business partner during this period, and it will have to remain so, bringing proactively proposals by which both employees and business can be protected and can manage to overcome this period well.

The level of motivation of employees influences both their results and their productivity. Demotivated employees are apathetic and lacking in energy, while those with a high level of motivation display enthusiastic behavior and are focused on acting. The role of motivation is not limited to making employees work but leads to making them work efficiently, which involves the full use of the physical and intellectual resources they have.

However, the psychological management of the crisis is up to each of us and it means that we have to demonstrate a predictable, future-oriented behavior, which assumes not only survival but also risks of growth, development, evolution.

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