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## **THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN MANAGING ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICTS**

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### **Abstract**

Given that in everyday life, most of the time, we interact in group at work. This article aims to analyze conflict management in the organizational environment. There are multiple methods of conflict management but this article focuses on highlighting the role that communication has in the process of managing conflict situations. Conflicts are inevitable in any organization, regardless of its type. In this article we start from the premise according to which approximately 90% of the conflicts appeared in the society, are based on communication deficiencies.

Key words: *conflict management; organizational environment; communication deficiencies.*

### **1. Introduction**

Studies conducted by the American Management Association have concluded that managers use two hours of their time daily to resolve conflict situations within their organization.

Just as there is no social group without divergences, so there is no organization without conflicts. In fact, where at least two people interact, a favorable environment is created for the appearance and development of conflict situations.

In a narrow sense, we can define the conflict as a natural phenomenon, both in the private and in the public organizations, which can be seen as a situation in which the visions of two or more people are incompatible and tend to occur when individuals or groups considers that other people are preventing them from achieving their goals.

In a broad sense, the conflict is an interactive process that manifests itself through disagreement or divergence between social entities (eg, groups, organizations, individuals, etc.). [1]

There are multiple researches on conflict and conflict management.

As the demands on productivity and cohesion within the organization are increasing, more and more importance is beginning to be given to managing conflict situations. The issue of organizational conflicts in particular and the issue of communication and organizational behavior, in general, arouse great interest in any management system.

In the Romanian public and private management, where the material motivation is not sufficiently given according to the employees' needs and where the fundamental needs are not satisfied, there will be a permanent conflict state, which will generate interpersonal conflicts and / or group conflicts.

An organization in which informal communication is overdeveloped precisely due to faulty formal communication will go through dysfunctional conflicts and will have difficulties in managing them.



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Conflict is good and necessary, because it can stimulate our creative thinking only if it is managed correctly. The manager's ability to manage conflicts starts from the formation of connections and the development of communication channels with the members of the organization acting on the basis of his/her own previous experience. [1]  
Proper management of conflict situations will make our lives richer (we can live without fear of misunderstandings) and energy-consuming conflicts with friends, colleagues, superiors, will be transformed into experiences of improving interpersonal relationships.

## **2. Communication in conflict management.**

Organizational management has revealed that the analysis of the factors that determine the decrease of the organization's performance involves taking into account the psycho-behavioral reactions of employees.

In this sense, the idea that efficiency and the climate at work have to do with the attempt of employees to change unsatisfactory and conflicting factual situations through communication have emerged. Employees may have different values, beliefs, experiences, and ideas about the organization's conflicting issues. Certainly, if the people within the organization feel that they cannot openly express their opinions and, as such, they do not, the organization does not benefit from this diversity of opinions. People's reactions to conflicts that lead to dissatisfaction at work have taken complex forms, even leading to leaving the organization by resignation. Modern organizations carry out special programs to train people in discussions for the purpose of making decisions about certain improvements that can be made in the workplace. [1]

Managers of organizations can develop communication by stimulating the "voice" of employees, engaging them in discussion circles, letting them communicate freely, informing themselves about the problems they face and stimulating them in formulating solutions. In the conditions of a highly competitive and constantly changing environment, employees are increasingly seen as an inexhaustible source of solutions, creativity, learning and change, this obtaining the free expression of their opinions without constraints. In our study, we start from the hypothesis that in managing situations of organizational conflict, communication has an essential role.

Organizations work through the associated work of people, but each person can manifest singular actions that contradict company's policy and regulation. These actions may not be properly communicated to those able to be informed (managers). In order to obtain the optimal results in a coordinated way, it is necessary to have an efficient communication system within the organization of which we are part.

Organizations are permanently exposed to the influence of changes of various sizes that affect the work and safety of its members. If the affected persons are communicated the causes and implications of the change in terms that they can understand and admit, the change can be managed by the managers of the companies.

The attitude of the employees towards the work and towards the compensations that accompany it depends very much on the effectiveness of the communication with their managers and in general on the effectiveness of the communication within the organization. I believe that, first of all, it is necessary a good two-way communication so that managers can keep the members of the organization up to date with the policies and plans they have and employees can formulate opinions on the proposals and activities of the management. Change can



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be managed correctly, if the fears of those affected by it are understood, thus requiring an efficient communication system.

Contemporary managers are forced to resolve differences in employee priorities and preferences and use conflict in a way that their organizations can benefit from.

The procedures for internal communication must be based on analyzes related to:

- what the management wants to transmit to the employees;
- what the members of the organization want to hear;
- what problems arise in the way of transmitting and receiving information. [2]

Analyzes of this kind can be used to define which are the communication systems in the company that need to be formulated and what training and learning programs are needed to make them operational. In most cases, the main causes of ineffective communication are poor management and inadequate planning of activities.

In general, managers seek to achieve three things: first, to get employees to understand and accept the actions they want to take; secondly, to ensure the permanent adherence of the employees to the objectives and values of the organization; third, to support employees to get a clear idea of the contribution they can make to the success of the organization and how it will benefit them.

Communication from managers must target values, plans, proposals and results.

Employees instead want to hear and discuss issues that directly affect them.

Usually, these are: salary or job security, changes in employment conditions, changes in overtime, benefits provided by the company, etc.

Management has the task of understanding what employees want to hear and planning the communication strategy. In this sense, discussions can be organized in "focus groups", in which employees focus their attention on their issues of interest.

In this sense, questionnaires can be used, questions addressed to employees' representatives, "listening" unofficially to what employees have to say and to analyzing their needs.

Working in an organization implicitly means getting involved in conflicts, because people who work together have different personalities but also different conceptions of life.

Therefore, they cannot avoid conflicts at work. In recent years, organizations have changed radically, as has their attitude toward conflict management.

Companies are thus trying to adopt a strategic approach to managing organizational conflicts. [1]

### **2.1. The typology of the conflict**

A classification of conflict situations can be made according to the level at which it manifests itself, or according to the subjects which are involved in the conflict. [3]

Therefore, there may be:

- intra-personal conflicts;
- interpersonal conflict;
- intra-group conflicts;
- inter-group conflicts.

At the intra-personal level, the conflict appears at the level of an individual's personality.

The sources of conflict can be: emotions, feelings, conceptions, personal goals, which can conflict with each other.

Interpersonal conflict occurs in relationships between people.

Conflict between managers and subordinates, or between co-workers, are conflicts in



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which one person prevents another from achieving his goal.

In interpersonal conflicts we can distinguish two other major types: consensual (when opinions, ideas, principles of conflicting parties are contradictory) and competition on limited resources (when people understand that they must use the same limited resources).

Intra-group conflict occurs within a group due to the pressure it exerts on its members. More broadly, there are inter-group conflicts, which often occur between various departments. These often lead to increased cohesion of the group and loyalty between its members. Identifying with a specific group prepares the ground for organizational conflicts. [3]

Although people face conflicts on a daily basis, the diagnosis of conflict is not only a science but also an "art". A major importance must be given to understanding the cause of the conflict and therefore to resolving it, but many conflicts cannot be understood and therefore cannot be resolved. There are no secret formulas to resolve all conflicts. Conflict theories guide us in their diagnosis and the diagnosis guides us to possible solutions.

However, theoretical knowledge functions as a framework, but the application of these theories requires experience associated with that knowledge and with specific tools that match the problems that have arisen.

Strong feelings (emotions) often intervene in reason and objectivity, and 85% of conflicts have nothing to do with the actors involved in the conflict.

## **2.2. The research methodology**

### **Vertical conflicts in a public institution and the role of communication in their management.**

Working in a public institution, as well as in any type of organization, can lead to comparisons, rivalries and conflicts between departments and individuals.

Communication deficiencies are numerous, even when it comes to internal communication.

This is somewhat neglected in public institutions in Romania.

External communication regarding public institutions is regulated by laws and they establish the rights, responsibilities and obligations of those who work in the public sector (Law no. 544/2001).

In my paper, I focused on the analysis of conflicts in public institutions, because they have been perceived as more serious recently due to the reduction of staff and the increase in the volume of activities.

The managers did not pay due attention to the communication with the subordinate staff and all these aspects aggravated the tensions even more.

In this research, I will highlight the main types of conflicts that manifest vertically, as well as possible ways of resolving conflict situations by addressing communication problems.

Improving communication within the organization should become the main goal of the new public management.

The research objectives pursued in this article are:

- analysis of the main types of conflicts triggered due to internal communication deficiencies, manifested vertically, in a public institution.

- highlighting the role of communication in conflict management.

As a research method, I chose to use the questionnaire method, in order to objectively analyze the employees' opinion about their relationship within the company, both with colleagues and with managers and department heads.



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Some of the advantages of using this method are the low costs compared to other research tools, the fact that it is easy to analyze and requires little time to complete.

The questionnaire was applied to a sample of 34 employees, with a length of service of at least one year within the institution. The analysis was done within the human resources department. The participants in the study were people with executive positions, but also department heads and directors. The study lasted one day. The subjects were summoned and filled in the questionnaire inside the department they belong to. 15 questions were asked regarding the situation of conflicts and their management within the organization. The study mainly highlights the communication between directors, department heads and officials and which are the most frequent and relevant situations that can be extracted from the performed analysis.

After analyzing the behavior of the people who participated in the study, it was found that the most common type of conflict is generated by the fact that due attention is not paid to the communication process (76% of participants, see Annex 2 figure 3), another major reason of conflict is the difference in perception and the fact that the procedures are not formulated in clear terms (74% of participants, see Annex 2 figure 4).

Asked about the frequency of conflicts within the department, 73% of respondents (see Annex 2 figure 1) said that always, and 44% (see Annex 2 figure 2) answered that conflicts between employees and managers are triggered.

A significant number of the analyzed persons stated that 44% of those surveyed do not have the support of their superiors in solving the difficult situations that appear in the work process (see Annex 2 figure 5).

Another type of conflict that occurs frequently is caused by lack of communication to find solutions in difficult situations. In this sense, 35% of respondents (see Annex 2 figure 14) said they do not discuss, 21% (see Annex 2 figure 14) said as only sometimes, and 23% (see Appendix 2 figure 14) answered as rarely.

Of those surveyed, 35% (see Annex 2, figure 8) claim that there is not enough support, neither practical nor theoretical, for the new service tasks and this leads to the creation of many tense states.

The different perception of efficiency resulting from the application of the manager's leadership style is one of the most common barriers between employee and employer.

Among the people analyzed, 65% (see Annex 2 figure 13) said that they do not feel equal with their superiors, which leads us to the idea that the management style is defective and therefore it is an important source of conflict.

Also due to the faulty management style, 30% of the interviewees (see Annex 2 figure 9) state that conflicts are rarely resolved.

A very high percentage of employees, 50% (see Annex 2 figure 10) say that within the organization they feel that they are not part of a team. Asked about how they manage their activity during working hours, 41% (see Annex 2 figure 7) answered that they cannot fit in during working hours, so they need overtime, and 23% (see Annex 2 figure 7) they answered that they rarely manage to fit.

This conflict arises from the fact that there is a different perception of employees than managers, about how employees spend their time solving work tasks and the time needed to perform a certain activity or learn something new.

This type of conflict is also supported by the reduction of the number of employees of the studied department, as a result of the recent retirement of a significant number of specialists.



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Under these conditions, the volume of tasks of each employee increased significantly, while the possibilities of motivating staff (compensation paid for overtime performed) were reduced.

Asked if they consider that they use working time efficiently, 38% (see Annex 2 figure 15) of the respondents consider that they rarely manage the time correctly, while 29% of them (see Annex 2 figure 15) consider that they use time efficiently.

A large number of employees consider that their work is not appreciated and rewarded enough, therefore, they often express their dissatisfaction reaching conflict states 29% (see Annex 2 figure 6) of those surveyed do not feel appreciated, 20% (see Annex 2 figure 6) only sometimes, 26% (see Annex 2 figure 6) rarely.

The faulty wording of the message by the person transmitting the information is another element that favors the conflict between the department heads and his subordinates (65% of those observed, see Annex 2 figure 11).

An alarming percentage of respondents, 41% (see Annex 2 figure 12) answered that they do not receive feedback on the activities carried out, 18% (see Annex 2 figure 12) answered that only sometimes, 18% (see Annex 2 figure 12) rarely and only 23% (see Annex 2 figure 12) stated that they receive feedback.

Following the analysis of the data from the questionnaire, the following proposals for conflict management through efficient communication were submitted:

- Feedback-in the process of improving communication. There is probably no more valuable method than receiving feedback on the impact of the message on others. For example, in the case of managers, they must encourage recipients (employees) to express their reactions and at the same time, they must ensure that the message was perceived correctly or not, by asking questions and listening to opinions.

- Organizational communication must cover both formal and informal communication. If it manifests itself to an extent that does not exceed the limits of common sense, informal communication can be an innovation for the formal one, especially during the restructuring of an organization. The flows of transmission and reception of information themselves carry an informal feedback. A manager who wants to be effective should pay attention to the essential aspect of communication, both formal and especially informal communication. He / she must maintain constant contact with subordinates and identify ways to be applied for this purpose, even if he or she is encouraged to apply methods that involve employees being able to express their suggestions and grievances anonymously.

- Ensuring a clear and concise communication, using a direct, simple, adequate / adapted language to the one with which we communicate and experiment, without too many details, observing the reality as it is transmitted. The information transmitted must be important for the context of communication.

- Sending messages as facts: the contradictions between words and facts can profoundly affect the manager's attempts to gain the trust of his employees. Communication is a balanced act, in which contradictory and unclear expressions must be eliminated. Therefore, communication is essential in any type of organizational conflict resolution.

- Organizing team buildings to strengthen team spirit and increase productivity and empathy between colleagues.

Most of the time, these activities represent a way in which the members of a public organization



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manage to communicate better, to be more casual and more oriented towards personal growth, but also of the team as a whole.

### **3. Conclusions**

The concrete problems that appear in the relations between the members of the organization, when the causative factor was the faulty method of communication must be studied carefully, in order to determine who acted wrongly and what must be done to remedy the situation.

The public organizations are hierarchically segmented into departments, and individuals are characterized by ubiquitous conflicts that manifest within this hierarchy.

Given that conflict situations can have beneficial consequences, but also disastrous at times, it is essential that managers identify in time their ways to manage them.

It is not the presence of the conflict itself that determines the outcome of any conflict situation, but other factors, in particular the way in which the conflict is approached by the parties involved.

In the long run, the needs and objectives of management and employees are similar and their goals and ideas can be brought together to create a unique conceptual framework within the organization.

The most differences of opinion between management and employees occur because the method of communication used was not good enough, and effective management of organizational conflicts is essential for the successful fulfillment of the mission of any organization.

Human communication, even when it presents a dispute or a conflict, is a social binder. The invitation to dialogue represents the unanimous recommendation that accesses the dissensions that lead to violence, thus demonstrating its virtue as a cohesive social factor of communication.

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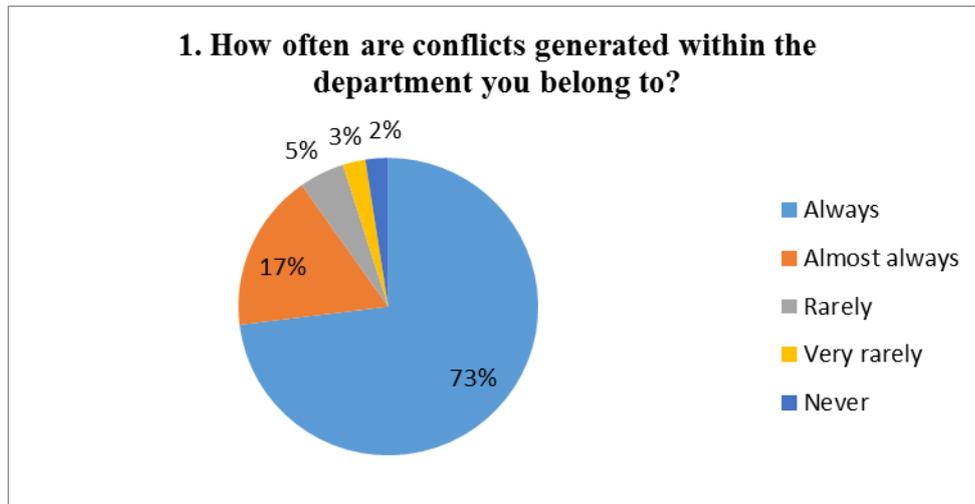
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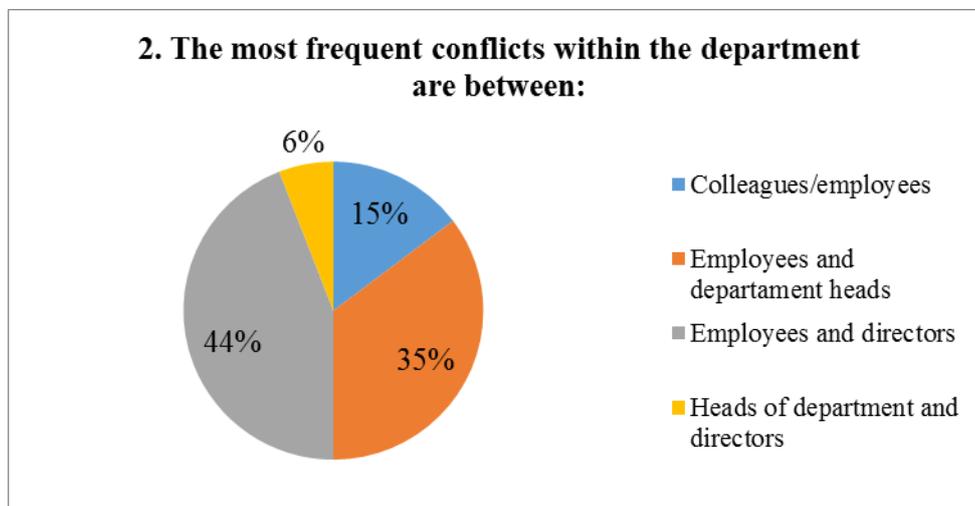
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**ANNEX**  
**THE RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE APPLICATION**



*Fig.1*



*Fig. 2*



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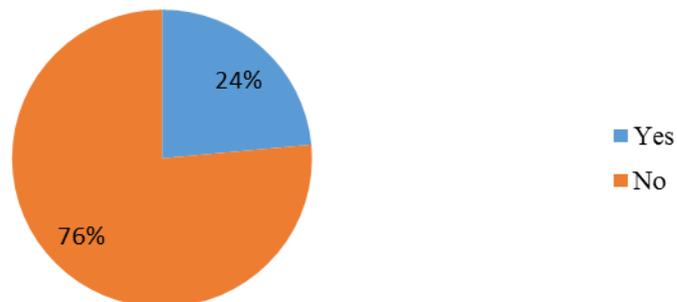


**3. Do you consider that due attention is paid to the communication process between direct bosses, directors and employees?**



*Fig. 3*

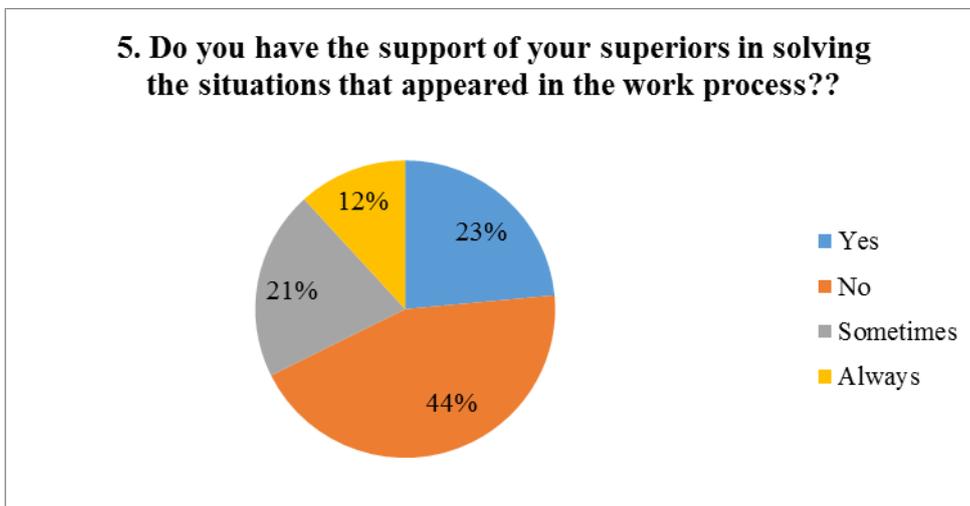
**4. Are the communication of work procedures and service tasks formulated in clear, concise terms?**



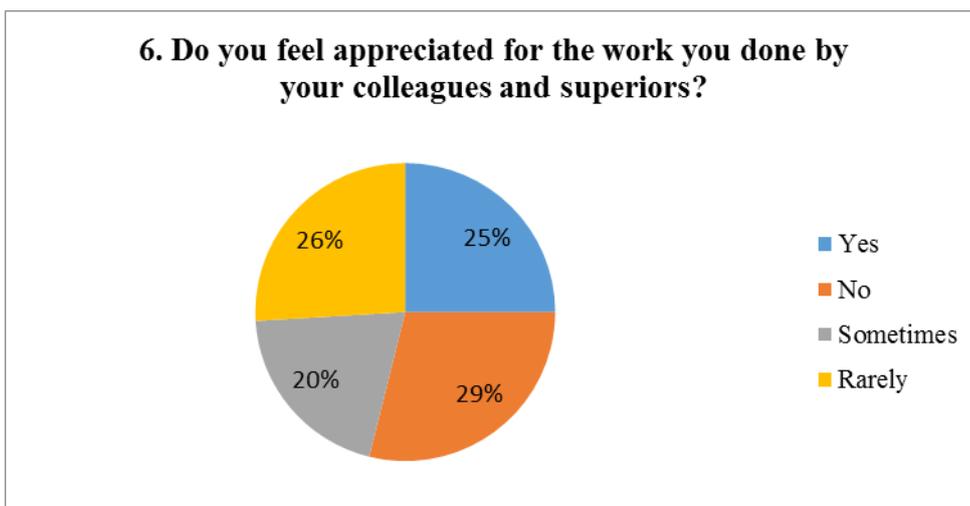
*Fig. 4*



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*Fig.5*



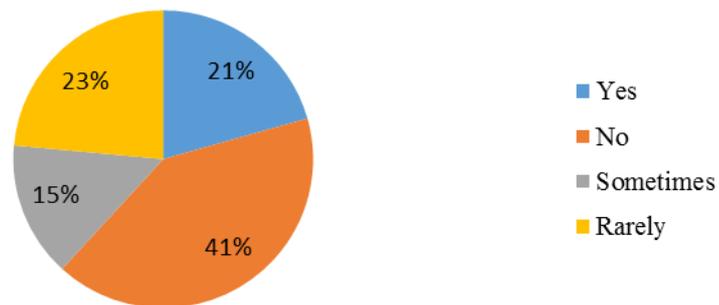
*Fig. 6*



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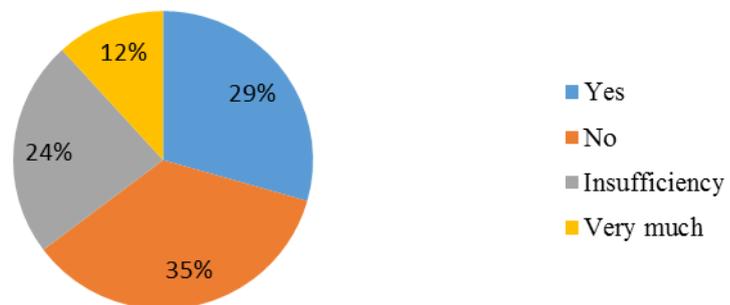


**7. Do you manage to manage the current activities, without having to exceed the normal work schedule?**



*Fig. 7*

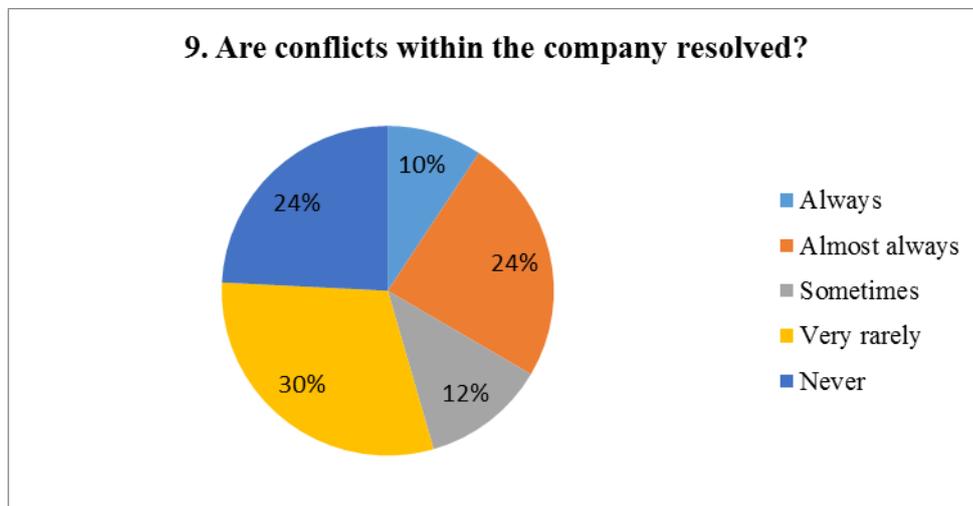
**8. There is a practical and theoretical support for the new procedures that are emerging?**



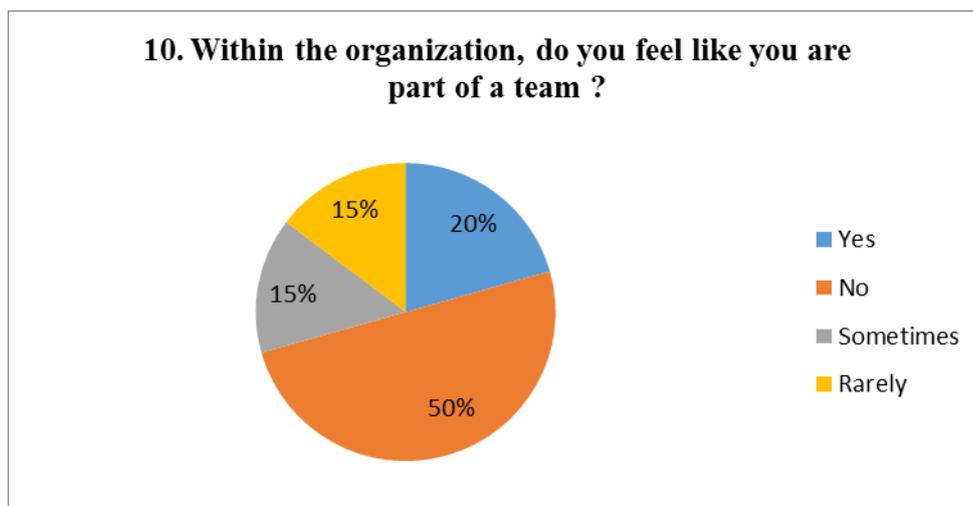
*Fig. 8*



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*Fig. 9*



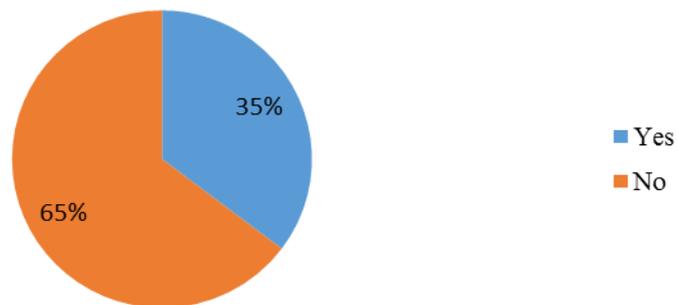
*Fig. 10*



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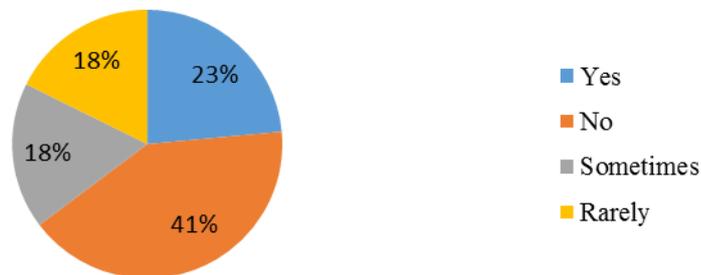


**11. Do you trust that your superiors' decisions are fair and impartial?**



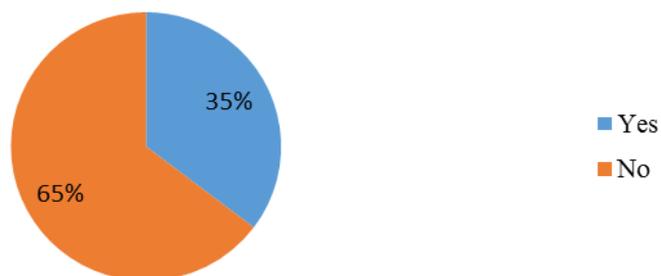
*Fig. 11*

**12. Do you receive feedback from superiors regarding the activities carried out??**



*Fig. 12*

**13. Does communication within the department take place naturally, from peer to peer??**

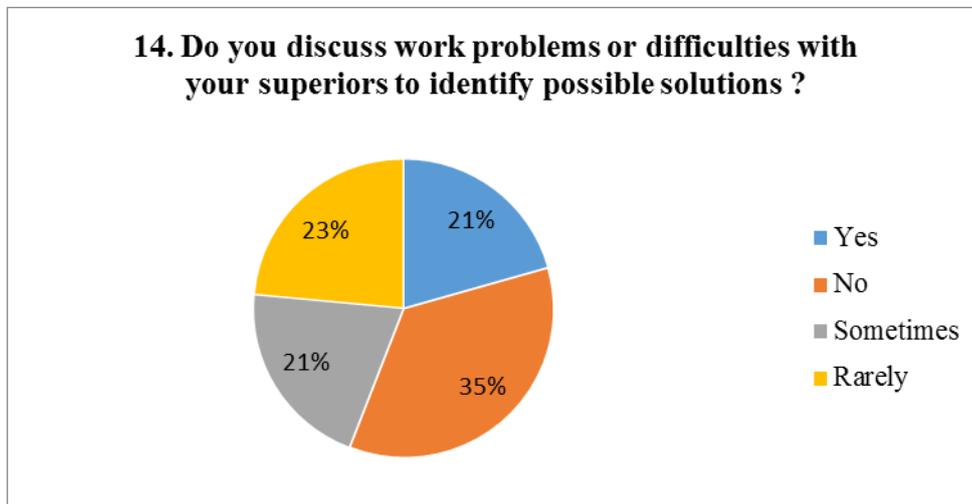




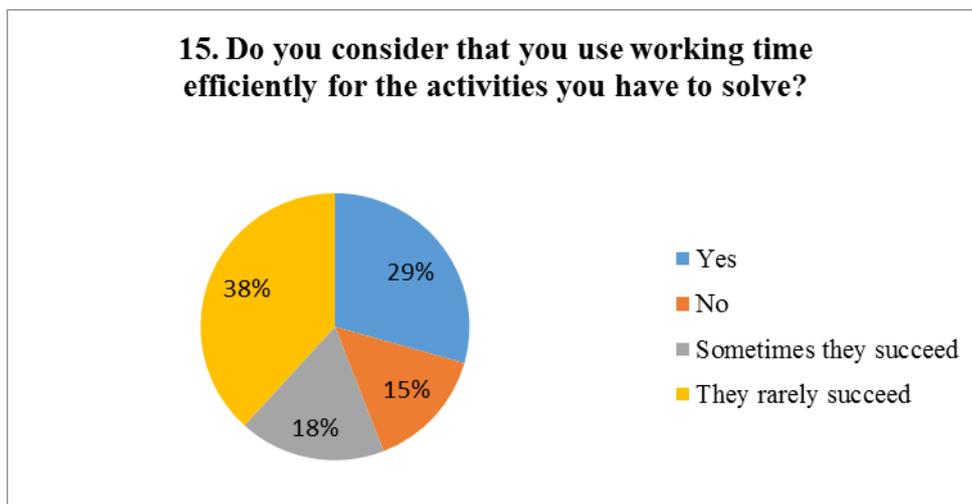
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*Fig. 13*



*Fig. 14*



*Fig. 15*