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**EFFECTS OF CONFLICT TYPES ON RELATIONSHIPS: COVID-19 IMPACT ON FAMILIES, INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNMENTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

The COVID-19 pandemic, considered the worst since the Great Depression, caused significant global disruption and deeply impacted families, institutions, and governments worldwide. Its effects transcended health and well-being, drastically altering economic realities for communities. This study, conducted through a desk review of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and publications, confirms the significant impact of COVID-19 on these various sectors. Additionally, it explores the influence of different conflict types on relationships. Further research, utilizing primary data collection across these affected sectors, would be valuable in solidifying these findings and contributing to the broader body of knowledge.

**Keywords:** *Conflict, Covid-19, Families, Institutions, Governments*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every aspect of life – emotional, social, and economic – globally, with families and sectors like finance, education, and healthcare experiencing the greatest impact. Other sectors significantly affected include the automobile, travel, aviation, energy, manufacturing, food, telecom, and healthcare businesses (Chamola et al., 2020; as cited in Singh et al., 2021). Shukla et al. (2021) highlight that COVID-19 has also significantly impacted people's physical and mental health, as well as the health of global economies. While government preventive measures like lockdowns and physical distancing were crucial in preventing the spread of COVID-19, they have been linked to increased depression, stress, and other negative psychological outcomes (Johnston & Oliva, 2021).

According to Raines (2020), conflict is neither inherently good nor bad; it is our response to conflict that determines whether the outcome is productive or harmful. Conflict can present opportunities for constructive growth, interpersonal development, and problem-solving. It can either lead to improvements that address injustice, or, if it takes a destructive form like war, it can exacerbate injustice (Coleman et al., 2014). Its impact, at various levels, can have both positive and negative repercussions, such as enhanced innovation and strengthened relationships, or disruptions in collaboration and diminished effectiveness (Marques et al., 2015). We often don't analyze, ponder, or study conflict because it is such a normal and important aspect of our everyday lives and interactions. While most people view conflict as a negative and destructive force, it can also be a chance for personal development.

The COVID-19 outbreak saw new forms of conflict emerge. People debated the extent of stay-at-home orders on social media, while armed protesters demanded freedom of travel outside government buildings (Shonk, 2020). In the workplace, conflicts between employees and employers have become a major topic in recent months (Shields, 2021). Shields (2021) also notes the frequent news coverage of employee-employer conflicts due to pandemic-induced changes in working conditions.

## **CONFLICT TYPES AND THEIR IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS AND RELATIONSHIPS**

In the absence of competent management, differences in goals and objectives can also develop into unfriendly motivation and competitiveness, according to Khalid et al. (2015). Organizational

conflict is a disagreement between employees or between employees and management in the workplace (Khalid et al., 2015). According to Huan and Yazdanifard (2012), unresolved conflict can have a detrimental impact on the development of an organization; therefore, leaders must understand how to deal with and manage conflict based on the scenario and relevant stakeholders. Huan and Yazdanifard (2012) observe that although the technology has enhanced organizational effectiveness, it also contributed to the emergence of new types of conflict.

Conflict can arise within an individual in circumstances in which there is a decision problem, between two individuals, or within groups; as a result, it is critical for organizational management to recognize the type of conflict and how to address it (Hussein & Yahya, 2019). There are six fundamental types of conflict: interpersonal conflict, intrapersonal conflict, intragroup conflict, intra-organizational conflict, and intergroup conflict (Hussein & Yahya, 2019). However, numerous academics and researchers have shown that task conflict and relationship conflict are the two primary types of conflict in organizations (Flanagan & Ruden, 2008, as cited by Huan & Yazdanifard, 2012). Interpersonal conflicts can be divided into two categories: those that arise from disagreements over how to accomplish a shared goal, and those that arise from disagreements over personal matters such as values, priorities, and preferences among group members, also known as relational (Todorova et al., 2022; Konuk & Ataman, 2021; Gigol & Sypniewska, 2019). *Interpersonal conflict* can be uncomfortable, and the majority of people will seek to prevent it at all costs. According to Hussein and Yahya (2019), it is undoubtedly the most well-known and prevalent conflict between two or more parties and may occur between two managers competing over scarce labor and capital resources, or for a similar position; additionally, they may differ on the best management approach. Furthermore, this type of conflict may occur between a leader and his superiors, between a manager and his team, or between two employees (Hussein & Yahya, 2019). However, there are more considerations to take into account, as it is commonly believed to have negative outcomes (Laursen & Hafen, 2009).

According to Bao et al. (2016), it has been noted that executives and researchers who are seeking to understand the nature of organizational behavior and corporate procedures should devote significant time and attention to the topic of interpersonal conflict. Interpersonal conflict is a significant type of conflict for which numerous names exist, including task, procedural, informational, psychological, and relational conflicts, and is frequently perceived negatively since

personal needs are considered to be at odds with or adversely impacted (Jerng et al., 2017). Managing individuals is sometimes the most challenging and demanding aspect of the workplace, and consequently managing difficult people is a part of any manager's role (Angelo, 2019).

*Intrapersonal conflicts* are disputes that arise within an individual, and their origin can include opposing ideas, character traits, feelings, ideals, or motivations (Lewicki et al., 2015). In addition, Hussein & Yahya (2019) contend that it frequently entails specific forms of mental or goal conflicts that arise within a person when their attitudes and behaviors have congruent components or result in both positive and bad results that are incompatible. Inconsistencies, rejection, ambiguity, dissatisfaction, purpose conflict, and role conflict are some fundamental factors that lead to intrapersonal conflict (Evans, 2013; as cited by Hussein & Yahya, 2019).

According to Harré and Moghaddam (2008), an underlying topic that frequently arises in contexts of intrapersonal conflict is the individual's battle to modify their life in accordance with their religious beliefs. Individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) who have experienced life in very stressful conditions, such as violence, struggle to prevent flashbacks and reenacting distressing previous events (Harré & Moghaddam, 2008; pp.65-66). Intrapersonal conflict and interpersonal conflict can often be distinguished in the workplace because, while the former may result in a reduction in an individual's productivity, the latter may result in a significant lack of performance for the team members or for both parties (Psychreel, 2020).

According to Hussein and Yahya (2019), *intragroup conflict* occurs when an individual within an organization strives to attain a goal that is incompatible with that of another group within the same organization. Hussein and Yahya (2019) posit that it is natural for all teams, official and unstructured, to create specific standards and procedures and ethical guidelines that are followed by all the group's members. A group member may be compelled to remain in the group due to social obligations, even though he may not share the group's objectives and methods for achieving those objectives. Conflicts of this nature may also arise between supervisors and groupings of employees or between leaders and their followers (Hussein & Yahya, 2019). According to Lewicki et al. (2015), intragroup conflict limits a team's capacity to make choices, operate efficiently, manage its disputes, and accomplish its objectives successfully (p.19).

The conflict between divisions, teams and project groups is a major risk to an institution's ability to compete effectively (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010). *Intergroup conflict* arises between institutions, ethnic communities, competing states, warring relatives, and broken fragmented societies (Lewicki et al., 2015). At this level, Lewicki et al. (2015) argue that conflict is rather complex due to the vast number of persons engaged and the numerous ways they might interact with one another. Intergroup conflict may not be inherently personal since disagreements arise as a result of intrinsic elements in the organization's structure (Hussein & Yahya, 2019). These disputes may result from a lack of collaborative decision-making, resource rivalry, disagreements in aims or beliefs, misunderstandings, competitions, and a set of group members' restrictions on others that define their identities (Hussein & Yahya, 2019).

It is well recognized that the overall performance of an organization depends on the level of cooperation between its many interdependent parts (Hussein & Yahya, 2019). When leaders examine the dynamics between departments, they can spot and address potential sources of tension (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2010). According to Chinenye (2017), intergroup conflict often results in decreased or even eliminated communication, which has a negative impact on the operational capacity of an organization. Managers have the option of attempting to solve issues using strategies designed for problem-solving or by following the organization's grievance handling process; however, there are occasions when the assistance of a facilitator or mediator might be valuable in helping to explore problems relating to conflict (Chinenye, 2017). Intergroup contact and relationships are still beneficial, as many studies have shown, but they can be easily ruined by conflicts between groups, thus according to Kreitner and Kinicki (2010), managers dealing with intergroup conflict should make it their top priority to identify and remove specific negative links between groups.

Organizations are negatively impacted by conflicts, especially when it comes to fostering innovation and improving the standard of decisions made inside them, and despite their shared conflicts, management and employees should cooperate to achieve positive results rather than bad ones (Hussein & Yahya, 2019). According to Rahim (2002), the management of organizational conflict entails the identification of emotional and material conflicts at the interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup levels as well as the implementation of techniques for resolving them.

As a result, a diagnosis ought to reveal whether or not an intervention is required, as well as what kind of intervention is required (Rahim, 2002).

### **Impact of Covid-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a worldwide health disaster with physical and mental repercussions. On March 13, 2020, the first case was confirmed in Kenya, prompting a national response that included the shutdown of schools and businesses a restriction on international flights, curfews, and limited travel, notably in Nairobi (Pinchoff et al., 2021). The lockdown was implemented not only in Kenya, but on a global scale due to the rapid spread and adverse effects of COVID-19, effectively shutting down airports, borders, restaurants, schools, and other institutions. It was unlike any scenario that had been encountered in recent times. The impact of COVID-19 has been both positive and negative on business, health, family, education, etc., and until now, two years later, the impact is still felt, albeit in a small way. As a direct consequence of the prolonged confinement measures, millions of workers globally lost their employment, and both large and small companies suffered significant damage and were left concerned about their ability to continue existing in the future (Lee, 2020). During the pandemic, psychological illnesses increased in the general population, according to international surveys. Insomnia, depression, substance addiction, nervousness, and post-traumatic stress increased in Spain, China, Canada, the United States of America, Italy, Iran, and other nations (Xiong et al., 2020; as cited by Rosario-Hernández et al., 2021).

As more employees returned to the office, the continuing coronavirus pandemic created an entirely new dimension of interpersonal conflict and strife (The HR Specialist, 2021). Misunderstandings regarding masks, sanitizing methods, and maintaining a safe distance from those around grew in organizations, further worsening the situation and making physical work difficult for the majority of employees, thus opting to work from home. COVID-19 has had an adverse effect on the financial, physical, and mental health of global citizens (Oksana, 2021). Tourism and travel are recognized as the economic center and backbone of the global economy. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), without it, the world economy will suffer tremendously over the next years in terms of financial, social, and psychological disorders (Oksana, 2021). The essential travel limits, avoidance of physical contact, and social distance, as well as adjustments in

tourists' and patients' decision-making processes, diminished enthusiasm in traveling away from one's customary abode and in searching out tourism services (Lagos et al., 2021).

The effects of the pandemic, according to a UNICEF (2020) assessment, will be felt for years to come, but it is already evident that COVID-19 has increased inequalities and poverty in countries afflicted by conflict, placing enormous strain on already overburdened health and social infrastructure. As a result, more families are left without shelter, are unable to satisfy even their most fundamental requirements for food and water, and have an increased risk of having children who are chronically undernourished (UNICEF, 2020). The COVID-19 epidemic wreaked havoc on fragile governments, causing widespread volatility and putting global emergency preparedness mechanisms to stress (Haruna, 2021). The impact of this pandemic was especially severe for people caught in the crossfire; the pandemic disrupted the flow of care assistance, hampered peace operations, and delayed or distracted conflict factions in developing as well as continued efforts at peacekeeping, according to Haruna (2021). Due to their continuous absence of secure housing facilities, socially marginalized people such as the homeless, refugees, and those with insufficient access to the shelter were greatly impacted by house confinement (Maestriperieri, 2021). Especially for undocumented migrants, Maestriperieri (2021) notes that their undeclared conditions implied a higher likelihood of losing their jobs when home quarantine took place.

COVID-19 had a significant impact on organizations and the way business is done, to date. According to Kniffin et al. (2021), COVID-19 not only disrupted typical work patterns but also accelerated trends involving the transition of work to online or virtual settings that were already occurring. Previously, working from home (WFH) was frequently based on employee requests, but COVID-19 compelled many to perform Mandatory Work from Home (MWFH) (Kniffin et al., 2021). This had its own effect on families as they tried to manage daily conflicts due to expenses as well as home chores, especially those working and living in rural areas. Despite the fact that the long-term effects of COVID-19 on work, family, and their interconnections are still not fully identified, a WHO (2020) study observed that families all over the world are finding it difficult to cope with the pandemic's shifting demands and restrictions.

In spite of the negative impacts of COVID-19 across the world, there have been some positive effects across various sectors. COVID-19 has demonstrated the significance of certain factors, such as online business and marketing, as well as sped up and innovated several structures' work

processes (Popouet, 2021). Learning institutions have also improved technology infrastructure to accommodate ongoing virtual learning while organizations have built teams around the virtual workspace. Local goods and services were also displayed, demonstrating the significance of local enterprises to a nation's economy according to Popouet (2021). It is also essential to note that COVID-19 contributed to the identification of the public health system's inadequacies (Popouet, 2021) and the implementation of appropriate policy changes.

### **Impact of Covid-19 on Families**

Families and children have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (Vanderhout et al., 2020). According to Vanderhout et al. (2020), children's social and support networks were significantly impacted as a result of the lack of opportunities for them to participate in school, child care, social activities, and get-togethers with their families. Of note according to Fisher et al. (2020) families differ in what they can provide for their children with the variance depending on a number of factors, including but not limited to: parents' education levels, financial situation, wellbeing, overpopulation, access to the internet and computers (which must be accessible to all children in the family), and fluency in the language being used for instruction. COVID-19 tension has been exacerbated by increased duties for parents as they adjust to their new roles as teachers and playmates while juggling full-time childcare alongside their own demanding shifts in career, economic, and social situations, according to Vanderhout et al. (2020). However, they note that in contrast, families with higher family support and perceived behavioral control experienced less anxiety during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Family conflicts can be exacerbated by factors such as alternative career possibilities and work schedules, such as working from home; work overloads; and technical limitations (Chung et al., 2020; as cited by Andrade et al., 2022). As a result of the pandemic, Gadermann et al. (2021) posit that many parents have been subjected to increasing stress and a weakening of their support networks, both of which have had an impact on their mental well-being. In a poll conducted in the United States, the vast majority of parents stated that during the epidemic, their ability to parent was being negatively impacted by concerns regarding finances, social alienation, judgment from others, as well as loneliness (Gadermann et al., 2021).



The pressures occasioned by COVID-19 have a disproportionate impact on families with health and socioeconomic disadvantages, such as lower social and financial resources, overcrowded housing, and inadequate technology and Internet connectivity, according to Gadermann et al. (2021). The confluence of these pressures resulted in a rise in domestic abuse, and an increase in the incidence of yelling at and physically abusing children since the pandemic began (Gadermann et al. (2021). Suicide rates rose as a result of the pandemic, a serious problem for people's mental health because of the increased rates of loneliness, isolation, and job loss that occurred throughout the epidemic (Dolgin, 2021). Sher (2020) argues that vulnerable communities, such as those with previously existing mental illnesses and those who live in areas with a high COVID-19 prevalence, are more likely to develop or experience a severity of depressive episodes, anxiety, fear of contagion, confusion, extreme stress, and other mental conditions.

Food safety was a major problem during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to prevent the spread of the virus between producers, vendors, and customers (Haruna, 2021). Additionally, the lack of food accessibility exacerbated starvation in most families; consequently, food security concerns arose due to the lockdown of people inside their houses, which led to the crisis and even conflict in many families (Haruna, 2021). COVID-19 was a societal upheaval, even for families with minimal economic loss, partly due to sudden school closures and the pervasive prospect of disease and death (Kalil et al., 2020). The COVID-19 dilemma will not affect all families similarly, but it may have a disproportionately negative impact on children of low-income and less-educated parents and preschool-aged children, who are particularly sensitive to development inputs (Kalil et al., 2020).

### **Impact of Covid-19 on Institutions**

Relationships between units within an institution may become volatile whenever two or more of them desire a valuable commodity that is shared by others or whenever they have partially limited social preferences as a result of their business decision (Haruna, 2021). Additionally, Haruna (2021) suggests that relationships may be strained whenever they have contrasting behaviors, perceptions, expertise, and principles. According to the social exchange theory, it has been postulated that whenever a conflict arises between employees, the social exchange norms may be disrupted, which could negatively impact the close connection (Konuk & Ataman, 2021). COVID-19 drastically changed the world of business, requiring learning institutions that were not fully

invested previously in virtual learning, to have to make arrangements for learning to continue, while businesses had to invest in technology in order to continue working virtually because the end of the epidemic was not in sight.

Working from home may seem desirable if it provides a safe haven, but the lack of a clear line separating one's job and personal life as well as the lack of commute to act as a link between the two was a strain (Kniffin et al., 2021). It was difficult to keep the lines between work and non-work during the COVID-19 pandemic because of the prolonged confinement of employees (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013; as cited by Kniffin et al., 2021).

The finance sector is one of the most heavily impacted by the economic catastrophe caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Wronka, 2022), with financial fraud being one of the most noteworthy consequences. In a study conducted in financial institutions, it was noted that as the epidemic ravaged the world and drove individuals and businesses to their absolute limits of tolerance, it was discovered that many finance sector investors and actors were engaging in ways that put the whole financial system and all of its stakeholders in serious threat. In particular, the COVID-19 epidemic has resulted in the introduction of different innovations of financial fraud that either did not exist before or did not occur with the same frequency as they do now (Wronka, 2022).

Another major area that was greatly impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic was learning institutions, with educational institutions closure globally. The COVID-19 compelled academic institutions worldwide to switch from face-to-face learning to virtual instruction, which not only had an impact on institutional stakeholders but also constituted a threat to all populations because all stakeholders involved in education had to alter their routines (Hosen et al., 2022). As a result of public schools' inability to deliver even basic online instruction, educational disparities were more obvious, as families with children enrolled in private schools were more privileged as their children could still continue learning virtually (Fisher et al., 2020). With domestic abuse and labor exploitation on the rise, the pandemic and school shutdowns not only put children's safety and health in danger but also had a significant negative influence on student learning (Ahlgren et al., 2022). Unless measures are taken, children may progressively increase learning deficits once they return to school, jeopardizing their future education, thus according to Ahlgren et al. (2022), reopening and maintaining schools must be the primary priority worldwide. Although nearly every nation in the world provided learners with virtual learning options, the effectiveness and scope of

such efforts differed, and in most instances, they provided a poor alternative to in-person learning (Ahlgren et al., 2022).

### **Impact of COVID-19 on Governments**

There is a dearth of literature that takes a dynamic approach to studying the effect that government response had on the long-term progression of COVID-19, according to Zhou et al. (2022). Yet, the most crucial element of crisis management is the response of the government (Zhou et al., 2022). Seaberg et al. (2017; as cited by Zhou et al., 2022) outlined the four components of disaster management as prevention, preparation, intervention, and rehabilitation. In contrast to earlier outbreaks of infectious diseases, COVID-19 is defined by its lengthy persistence and rapid dissemination, and it continues to arise around the world, (Zhou et al., 2022) including in Kenya. As a result, it is predicted that mankind will continue to battle with COVID-19 for a considerable length of time. This is a dynamic interaction that is more challenging to control in the case of COVID-19, which tends to evolve (Zhou et al., 2022).

The increase in government spending brought on by the need to combat the effects of COVID-19 had worsened the nation's budget imbalance and made her more vulnerable to high levels of public debt (Haruna, 2021). Herbert and Marquette (2021) suggest that the efficacy of COVID-19 interventions has virtually always been determined by politics and decisions taken by governments prior to and throughout the epidemic. Any national emergency is managed through government policy. Governments were persuaded that the COVID-19 pandemic would cause more economic harm from rapidly increasing infection rates than it would from swiftly enacting strong appropriate steps due to factors like lost productivity, rising medical expenditures, or voluntary social isolation (König & Winkler, 2021).

An optimistic forecast of the pandemic's impact on the future course of the world economy predicts that it will cause a slight and brief economic downturn that will be followed by a V-shaped rebound (Wren-Lewis, 2020). Therefore, according to Haruna (2021), it is essential for global markets to comprehend the optimal strategy for mitigating the impact on their economy. To position the economy to draw the adequate funding required to implement real development strategies, becomes essential (Haruna, 2021). The impacts were significant, forcing global supply lines to be interrupted and corporate activity to be pushed to collapse, and to deal with this issue and avoid

an economic downturn, nations throughout the world declared enormous tax benefits (Hinojosa et al., 2021).

In Kenya, for instance, the government (under the Ministry of Labor and Social Services) provided a total of ten billion Kenya shillings for an emergency cash transfer initiative to lessen the impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable families. Recipients included seniors, individuals with disabilities, and orphaned children (Helfers et al.,2021). To alleviate Kenyans' financial suffering as a result of COVID-19, the government also adopted a number of actions (Helfers et al.,2021). According to Helfers et al. (2021.), the government also lowered the top marginal rate of individual income taxes from 30% to 25%, created 100% tax savings for low-income workers, reduced the VAT rate, and slashed the turnover tax rate for small and medium-sized enterprises. Despite the implementation of legislative remedies, many Kenyans continue to struggle with the economic repercussions of COVID-19 (Helfers et al.,2021.).

Public health specialists around the world were concerned that Africa, with its densely populated cities, underfunded health sector, and limited access to diagnostic facilities, would be hit particularly hard when COVID-19 first swept through Asia, Europe, and the United States (Popouet, 2021). Nevertheless, despite the appearance of new coronavirus varieties in Africa, which led to an increase in the numbers of both fresh cases and deaths in several nations, the African continent continued to be the one that was least impacted by the disease (Popouet, 2021). State governments, with the proper financial backing from the global community, could mitigate the detrimental consequences on world food security by implementing appropriate national policies (Nechifor et al., 2021). When designing these initiatives, the government should prioritize the most vulnerable segments of the population to ensure an equal return from the pandemic (Nechifor et al., 2021). Dependent on the institutional framework and national social norms, governments and health agencies have taken quite diverse approaches to dealing with COVID-19 (Nielsen, 2020).

## **CONCLUSION**

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt across all sectors, especially by families, institutions, and governments. More than two years after the first case was confirmed in Kenya and lockdowns were implemented globally, countries are still recovering from the pandemic's

effects. This study examines the various conflicts that can emerge within organizations and their impacts. In exploring connections between the COVID-19 pandemic and organizational conflicts, health and safety were primary concerns during the pandemic, but job losses resulting from it and dealing with government directives also took a toll, particularly on working parents managing childcare and online learning. Due to limited research on links between conflict types and the pandemic's impacts on families, institutions, and governments, gaps persist. Further research could help fill these gaps and contribute to the knowledge base.

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