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Designing a Model for Reducing Behavioral Conflicts among Employees in the Information Technology Sector

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A B S T R A C T

The present study was conducted with the aim of designing a model for reducing employees' behavioral conflicts (with a case study of employees in the information technology sector). In terms of purpose, the research is applied; in terms of data type, it follows a sequential mixed-methods design with an exploratory approach; in terms of paradigm, it is pragmatic; and in terms of nature, the qualitative phase employed qualitative content analysis, while the quantitative phase was descriptive–analytical using a survey/correlational design. The statistical population in the qualitative phase consisted of theoretical experts (university faculty members) and practical experts (relevant managers and officials of information technology organizations in Tehran). Based on the principle of theoretical saturation and purposive sampling, 20 interviewees were selected. In the quantitative phase, the statistical population included all employees of information technology companies in Tehran, from whom 254 employees were selected using the minimum sample size calculation for confirmatory factor analysis and stratified random sampling. Data collection methods in the qualitative phase involved content analysis of interviews, and in the quantitative phase included researcher-developed questionnaires to assess the validity of the model from the perspectives of experts as well as quantitative respondents. The validity and reliability of the instruments were examined and confirmed in both qualitative and quantitative phases. Data analysis methods in the qualitative phase included thematic analysis using MaxQDA version 18, and in the quantitative phase involved descriptive and inferential statistical analyses (confirmatory factor analysis and one-sample t-test) using SPSS version 27. The results indicated that conflict management, as the core phenomenon in this study, comprises four concepts: competitive strategy, compromise and accommodation strategy, avoidance strategy, and collaboration strategy. Influential factors include role ambiguity, high workload, differences in communication styles, and the lack of a cohesive organizational structure. The consequences of conflict management include improved team performance, increased IT productivity, and enhanced job and psychological satisfaction. The contextual conditions of conflict management include technology-oriented organizational culture, the project-based nature of IT work, geographical

dispersion of teams, and specialized interpersonal differences. Barriers to conflict management include inadequate organizational behavior training, resource constraints, and environmental pressures. Finally, conflict management strategies include employee empowerment, transparent relationships, organizational structure reform, and leadership intervention. Validation results also indicated that the proposed model possesses adequate validity.

Keywords: *Organizational conflict, employees' behavioral conflicts, collaboration strategy, information technology*

1. Introduction

Organizational conflict is increasingly recognized as an inherent feature of complex work systems rather than an anomalous disruption, particularly in knowledge-intensive and technology-driven sectors where interdependence, time pressure, and professional diversity are structural conditions of work. Contemporary organizations operate through dense networks of tasks, teams, digital platforms, and decision rights, which creates frequent points of friction around priorities, resource allocation, role boundaries, and performance expectations. In such environments, conflict can manifest at multiple levels, including interpersonal relationship conflict, task conflict, and broader organizational–professional tensions, each carrying distinct antecedents and consequences for effectiveness. Recent organizational scholarship emphasizes that conflict dynamics are closely intertwined with decision-making processes, power relations, and the organization's capacity to translate disagreements into constructive problem solving rather than destructive escalation (Michalowski & Schmidt, 2025). In practice, the same organizational conditions that enable agility—rapid iteration, cross-functional teams, and distributed coordination—can also intensify behavioral conflicts when communication norms, accountability structures, and conflict-regulation practices lag behind the speed of work. Consequently, management research has shifted toward developing integrated conflict-management systems that consider organizational climate, leadership, culture, and formal–informal resolution mechanisms as mutually reinforcing levers for reducing behavioral conflict and stabilizing collaboration (Folger et al., 2024; Rahim, 2023).

A critical strand of the literature frames conflict management not only as a reactive set of techniques but as a strategic organizational capability. From this perspective, managers must understand how conflict emerges, how it is sustained through interaction patterns, and how it can be regulated through negotiation, mediation, and procedural design. Negotiation is frequently positioned as a core method for regulating conflict because it allows parties to exchange information, articulate interests, and craft mutually acceptable agreements under conditions of interdependence (Stakhova et al., 2025). Complementing negotiation, mediation has been highlighted as a structured third-party process that can reduce hostility, clarify issues, and facilitate integrative outcomes, especially when direct interaction becomes psychologically or politically costly (Jones, 2022). At the same time, empirical work suggests that conflict handling is shaped by organizational climate—particularly communication openness, participation in decision-making, and perceived fairness—such that climates characterized by transparent communication and inclusive decision processes tend to show more effective conflict handling and lower escalation into behavioral dysfunction (Augustine & Bora, 2024). These insights collectively indicate that reducing behavioral conflict requires more than episodic interventions; it requires aligning managerial practices, relational norms, and organizational systems so that disagreements are surfaced early, processed fairly, and resolved through constructive mechanisms.

Within the broader conflict-management domain, a growing body of research examines how leadership styles and organizational culture shape whether conflict becomes a source of learning and innovation or a trigger for counterproductive behavior. Leadership is repeatedly associated with employees' behavioral regulation, ethical conduct, and willingness to engage in cooperative problem solving rather than defensive confrontation. Studies examining leadership alongside organizational culture and work ethics show that leadership influences both job performance and the ways employees interpret and respond to conflictual situations, implying that conflict reduction efforts should be integrated with leadership development and culture-shaping initiatives (Afsari & Movahednia, 2023). Moreover, the ethics of conflict management has gained prominence: conflict episodes often activate dilemmas involving respect, voice, confidentiality, and fairness, and the ethical framing adopted by leaders can either legitimize coercive tactics or encourage principled

negotiation and respectful engagement (Hyatt & Gruenglas, 2023). Culture is also a central explanatory layer because it defines "how we do things here" in terms of communication tone, tolerance for dissent, coordination norms, and the legitimacy of escalation. Bibliometric and conceptual analyses of organizational culture underscore its multidimensional nature and its function as an interpretive system that shapes behavior across teams and over time (Ginting, 2023). Accordingly, any model aimed at reducing behavioral conflicts—especially in IT contexts where teams rely on specialized knowledge and rapid coordination—must position leadership and culture as key contextual forces that influence conflict emergence, escalation pathways, and the effectiveness of resolution strategies.

Another essential line of inquiry links conflict to employee well-being, organizational citizenship behavior, and broader patterns of behavioral performance. Organizational conflict can undermine well-being by increasing stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout, particularly when combined with work–family tensions and low perceived organizational support. Evidence indicates that work stress and work–family conflict, in interaction with organizational climate and organizational support, can contribute to burnout and adverse employee outcomes, suggesting that conflict-reduction models should incorporate psychosocial risk factors and support mechanisms rather than treating conflict as merely a communication deficit (Iswahyuni & Abadiyah, 2022). Additionally, perceived organizational support and frustration at work are associated with discretionary behaviors such as organizational citizenship behavior, with work–life conflict frequently acting as an explanatory pathway; this implies that behavioral conflicts are embedded in broader experiences of support, overload, and role strain (Arghavani, 2023). In parallel, citizenship behavior is often theorized as a buffer that sustains cooperation under strain; editorial and conceptual contributions argue that social capital, trust, and citizenship norms are particularly important for health and service workforces, but the underlying logic extends to other sectors where coordination and mutual assistance are critical (Rafiei et al., 2022). Empirical studies also demonstrate that leadership styles can strengthen citizenship behavior and well-being, which is consequential because reductions in behavioral conflict are often achieved not only by suppressing disagreement but also by expanding prosocial discretionary behavior, empathy, and collaborative intent within teams (Santos et al., 2023). Taken together, these findings emphasize that effective conflict reduction requires integrated attention to support systems, stressors, and the social-relational fabric of teams.

The IT and technology-oriented organizational context amplifies many of these dynamics because of high task interdependence, compressed timelines, rapid innovation cycles, and cross-functional coordination among technical and non-technical roles. In such environments, interpersonal conflicts can be exacerbated by organizational constraints (e.g., unclear processes, inadequate resources) and perceived organizational injustice, which are shown to contribute to counterproductive work behavior through mechanisms that include interpersonal conflict escalation and frustration (Shao et al., 2023). Team composition and individual differences further matter: diversity in action–state orientation, for example, has been linked to relationship conflict, implying that within-team psychological differences can shape conflict trajectories beyond formal structures (Schillinger & Mohammed, 2023). Moreover, organizations in specialized professional settings frequently encounter organizational–professional conflict, where professional norms and organizational requirements clash; research on professional conflict in auditing and related domains highlights that such conflicts are influenced by professionalism, identity, and ideological frames, suggesting that in IT organizations, professional identities (e.g., developers, security engineers, product managers) may similarly generate normative disagreement and behavioral tension (Saberi et al., 2024). Evidence from applied professional contexts, such as athletic training, further illustrates that organizational–professional conflict emerges when professional standards, autonomy expectations, and organizational constraints collide—conditions that are also prevalent in IT organizations that balance quality, security, and speed-to-market (Pike Lacy et al., 2024). These insights motivate an approach to conflict reduction that explicitly recognizes professional subcultures, heterogeneous performance metrics, and the systemic constraints that shape behavioral outcomes.

From a managerial design standpoint, conflict reduction models must incorporate both conflict-handling strategies and the organizational conditions that enable these strategies to function effectively. Classic and contemporary conflict-management frameworks emphasize that parties tend to adopt recognizable styles—such as competing, avoiding, accommodating/compromising, and collaborating—depending on perceived stakes, power distribution, time pressure, and relationship value (Folger et al., 2024; Rahim, 2023). Recent work linking conflict management styles to

organizational citizenship behavior argues that proactive conflict resolution programs can institutionalize collaborative styles and translate them into discretionary prosocial behavior, thereby improving relational climates and reducing the frequency of destructive conflict episodes (Lin & Villanueva, 2024). In addition, collaborative approaches are repeatedly identified as effective strategies for organizational conflict management because they prioritize joint problem solving, mutual gains, and relationship preservation, which are particularly valuable in interdependent project teams (Babatunde et al., 2022). At the organizational level, the literature increasingly supports multi-component interventions that integrate shared leadership, inclusion practices, and innovation-oriented conflict systems, arguing that conflict can be redirected toward creative problem solving when organizational structures and norms support voice, participation, and psychological safety (Georgakopoulos et al., 2022). Evidence from education and public-sector organizational settings also suggests that management capabilities and conflict strategy choices are associated with performance outcomes, indicating that conflict reduction efforts should be designed as capability-building programs rather than standalone workshops (Dolor & Aranguren, 2022). Within Iranian organizational contexts, studies on role conflict and job dissatisfaction have shown that structural disruptions and role instability can fuel conflict and dissatisfaction, reinforcing the centrality of role clarity and structural alignment as preventive levers (Bayat, 2022). Similarly, research on street-level bureaucrats demonstrates that organizational policies can shape the emergence of conflict in behavioral discretion, implying that policy design, procedural constraints, and ambiguity can channel conflict into frontline behavioral tension—an insight that is transferable to technology organizations where policies (security rules, delivery mandates, documentation standards) shape daily discretion (Seyyed Mohammad Mahdi Baki Hashemi, 2022; Seyed Mohammad Mehdi Baki Hashemi, 2022).

Finally, the present study is positioned at the intersection of these literatures by focusing on the design of a context-sensitive model for reducing behavioral conflicts among employees in the information technology sector. While the literature provides substantial evidence on conflict styles, negotiation and mediation tools, leadership and culture effects, support and well-being mechanisms, and the systemic drivers of counterproductive behavior, organizations still face a practical gap: how to integrate these factors into a coherent, empirically grounded model that identifies core conflict-management mechanisms, antecedent conditions, contextual facilitators, barriers, and actionable strategies specifically suited to IT work realities. This gap is particularly salient when organizations seek not only to manage conflicts after escalation but also to reduce behavioral conflict frequency, intensity, and spillover effects through preventive design, capability development, and leadership intervention. Moreover, interventions aimed at improving quality of work life and occupational well-being, including multidimensional training approaches, suggest that skill-building programs can be leveraged to strengthen adaptive behavioral responses and reduce conflict-prone patterns, which aligns with the logic of designing a structured conflict-reduction framework for IT employees (Maarefvand & Shafiabady, 2024). Therefore, the aim of this study is to design and validate a model for reducing behavioral conflicts among employees in the information technology sector.

2. Methods and Materials

The present study was conducted with the aim of designing a model for reducing employees' behavioral conflicts (case study: employees in the information technology sector). In terms of purpose, the research is applied; in terms of data type, it follows a sequential mixed-methods design with an exploratory approach; in terms of paradigm, it is pragmatic; and in terms of nature, the qualitative phase employs qualitative content analysis, while the quantitative phase is descriptive–analytical using a survey/correlational design. The statistical population of the qualitative phase consists of theoretical experts (university faculty members) and practical experts (relevant managers and officials of information technology organizations in Tehran). Based on the principle of theoretical saturation and purposive sampling, 20 interviewees were selected. Information related to the participants in the qualitative phase is presented in the table below.

Table 1

Statistical description of the demographic characteristics of qualitative participants (interviewees) (target group: 20 experts)

Demographic characteristic	Category	Frequency	Highest frequency	Lowest frequency
Age	Under 40 years	3	46–50 years	Under 40 years
	40–45 years	4		
	46–50 years	8		
	Over 50 years	5		
Relevant work experience (job/teaching experience)	Less than 7 years	3	16–23 years	Less than 7 years
	8–15 years	4		
	16–23 years	8		
	More than 23 years	5		
Gender	Male	14	Male	Female
	Female	6		
Type of expert (theoretical/practical)	Theoretical	7	Practical	Theoretical
	Practical	13		
Field of study	Human Resource Management	8	Human Resource Management	Strategic Management
	Public Administration	4		
	Organizational Psychology	5		
	Strategic Management	3		

In the quantitative phase, the statistical population includes all employees of information technology companies in Tehran. Using the minimum sample size calculation method and stratified random sampling, 254 employees were selected. Accordingly, based on data collected through the questionnaire, the statistical description of the demographic characteristics of the quantitative phase—including age, gender, education, and work experience—is presented in the table below.

Table 2

Statistical description of the demographic characteristics of employees of technology-oriented companies in Tehran (sample size = 254 respondents)

Demographic characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Highest frequency	Lowest frequency
Age (years)	Under 40	66	25.98%	40–45	Over 50
	40–45	105	41.33%		
	46–50	51	20.07%		
	Over 50	32	12.59%		
Gender	Male	169	66.53%	Male	Female
	Female	85	33.46%		
Education	Bachelor’s	69	27.16%	Master’s	Bachelor’s
	Master’s	99	38.97%		
	Doctorate	86	33.85%		
Work experience (years)	Less than 7	32	12.59%	14–20	Less than 7
	7–13	67	26.37%		
	14–20	99	38.97%		
	Over 20	56	22.04%		

Data collection in the qualitative phase involved content analysis of interviews, and in the quantitative phase included researcher-developed questionnaires to assess the validity of the model from the perspectives of experts as well as quantitative respondents. The validity and reliability of the instruments were examined and confirmed in both the qualitative and quantitative phases. In the qualitative phase, the mean intra-coder reliability coefficient (alignment reliability) across codings for four interviews was 76%, indicating acceptable reliability. In the quantitative phase, to determine questionnaire validity, face validity, content validity, and construct validity were used. Reliability was calculated using Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability, and McDonald’s omega. The validity and reliability coefficients for the main questionnaire are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Results of validity and reliability calculations for the main research questionnaire (model)

Constructs	AVE	Cronbach's alpha	CR	ASV	MSV
Conflict management (core phenomenon)	0.598	0.758	0.732	0.425	0.420
Factors influencing conflict management	0.532	0.819	0.798	0.432	0.436
Consequences of conflict management	0.561	0.832	0.719	0.387	0.487
Contextual conditions of conflict management	0.555	0.925	0.852	0.471	0.365
Barriers to conflict management	0.541	0.759	0.749	0.522	0.250
Conflict management strategies	0.514	0.857	0.815	0.419	0.411

The findings in the table above indicate that the AVE values for the constructs are greater than 0.50, demonstrating that more than half of the variance of each construct is explained by its corresponding items. The results also show that, for all constructs in the model, the maximum shared variance (MSV) and average shared variance (ASV) are effectively lower than the AVE (average variance extracted) of each dimension. These results clearly indicate that each construct independently and effectively measures its intended latent variable and is distinct from the others; therefore, discriminant validity is also confirmed based on these indices. Data analysis methods in the qualitative phase included thematic analysis using MaxQDA version 18, and in the quantitative phase involved descriptive and inferential statistical analyses (one-sample t-test) using SPSS-27

3. Findings and Results

In the findings section, the design of a model for reducing behavioral conflicts among employees in the information technology sector was addressed. Accordingly, to answer the qualitative research questions, a qualitative content analysis approach was used. In this process, after reviewing the theoretical foundations and prior research, 20 experts were interviewed based on the interview protocol. Ultimately, the table below presents statements related to reducing employees' behavioral conflicts extracted from key interview texts, along with the corresponding identifier for each statement and the interviewee code for each statement.

Table 4

Sample statements related to the study model

Interview text	Initial concepts	Interviewee code
In technology-driven environments, sometimes we must make decisions without delay to prevent conflict escalation.	Rapid decision-making	I1, I20, I8, I5
We try to identify disagreements at the very beginning and control them before they spread.	Containing disagreements at the outset in the organizational environment	I16, I20
Sometimes, to move the work forward, we are forced to completely disregard the other party's viewpoint.	Disregarding the other party's demands	I1, I5, I9, I12
When workload pressure is high, many members prefer to focus only on their own tasks.	Very low willingness to accommodate other members' interests	I15, I3, I5, I7
At times, to prove their point, people use a directive tone or coercion to reach results faster.	Impositional behaviors and tactics	I17, I14, I8
In our team, we try to reach a point where our interests are met and the other party does not remain dissatisfied.	Finding a satisfactory intermediate solution	I2
Experience shows that members who genuinely seek problem solving are less likely to engage in personal conflicts.	Degree of willingness to solve the problem	I3, I19, I2
When both parties can achieve part of their goals, the conflict usually ends and relative satisfaction is created.	Partial attainment of interests and achievement of both parties' goals	I14, I18, I2
In some cases, neither we nor the other party achieve our goals; only time and energy are wasted.	Inability to satisfy the needs and goals of both parties	I4, I20, I8, I7
Sometimes a person prefers to give up their demand simply to prevent further confrontation.	Relinquishing goals	I13
Some employees, when a conflict arises, withdraw completely and step aside to avoid becoming involved.	Withdrawing from the conflict situation and refraining from engagement	I18, I17
Sometimes people wait until the atmosphere becomes calmer and then discuss the issue, because they do not want to become emotional or confrontational in the moment.	Distancing from the problem or allowing conflict-related anger to subside	I19, I3
We have learned that transparency and sharing information resolves many conflicts on its own.	Information sharing	I12, I16, I4

Until individuals know the root cause of the conflict, they cannot respond appropriately or find a solution.	Employees' awareness of the source of conflict	I5
Conflicts sometimes lead us to more creative solutions that would not have occurred to us.	Creativity	I20, I15
Managers who attend to both their own needs and the team's needs usually manage conflicts better.	Simultaneous attention to self and others	I1, I5
When there is trust among team members, even if disagreements occur, they do not turn into serious confrontations.	Trust	I11, I3, I9
One of our challenges is that some team members do not clearly know the boundaries of their responsibilities.	Lack of clarity in job descriptions	I10, I12, I5, I8
In technology projects, when tasks of teams or individuals overlap, disputes usually arise.	Work overlap	I6, I14
In small teams or startups, one person must play multiple roles simultaneously.	Multi-role demands on employees	I9, I6
Many technology companies still do not have a cohesive human resources structure.	Lack of human resource management	I7, I9, I8, I5
When several projects run concurrently, competition for resources, time, and employees' attention increases.	Volume of concurrent projects	I8, I7
Lack of time for rest or leave leads to job burnout.	Insufficient rest	I7, I13
Pressure to deliver projects under tight deadlines causes people to shift from cooperation toward competition or blaming.	Compressed deadlines	I2, I8
When you expect someone to deliver something in one week that realistically requires two weeks, pressure and tension increase.	Unrealistic expectations of employees	I6, I12
Some team members speak very directly, while others are more cautious.	Differences in communication style	I8, I9, I10
The perspectives and work styles of different generations are entirely different. For example, Generation Z seeks flexibility and immediate feedback, while managers in their fifties adhere more to traditional structure and order. These differences create communication gaps and conflict.	Intergenerational issues (e.g., Generation Z vs. managers in their fifties)	I3, I11, I9
Often the main problem is not the conflict itself, but the inability to express concerns effectively.	Lack of skills in effective communication	I5, I1, I15, I6
When we have an international or multicultural team, terminology, body language, or even email tone can lead to misunderstandings.	Cultural misunderstandings	I9, I10
A manager who constantly changes decisions or lacks a clear stance increases conflict.	Managerial instability	I10, I11
When work is not documented, everyone does it in their own way.	Weakness in documenting processes	I4, I9
If employees cannot give or receive feedback, dissatisfaction and disagreements remain internalized.	Lack of a feedback system	I11, I8, I12
When it is unclear how decisions are made or who is responsible for what, trust among members deteriorates.	Nontransparent processes	I3, I6, I15, I18
When conflicts are managed well, people shift from confrontation to effective collaboration.	Collaboration and synergy	I12
When disagreements are resolved fairly, trust develops between teams.	Increased trust between teams	I4, I7, I13
Effective conflict management helps maintain long-term and stable working relationships.	Sustainability of working relationships	I2, I20, I4, I8
When conflicts are managed constructively, unnecessary delays are prevented.	On-time project delivery	I13, I6, I14
When teams work calmly and with mutual understanding, the quality of outputs increases substantially.	Work quality	I1, I13, I8, I9
Conflict management helps teams address errors and problems before they turn into crises.	Error reduction	I5
When team members are satisfied and aligned, internal customers (e.g., other organizational units) are more satisfied because services are delivered on time and accurately.	Increased internal customer satisfaction	I14, I5, I15
In environments where conflicts are resolved well, employee stress decreases noticeably.	Stress reduction	I20, I4
One positive outcome of conflict management is reduced absenteeism.	Reduced absenteeism	I6, I16
When employees feel the organization values their needs and concerns, they develop a stronger sense of belonging.	Increased organizational belonging	I7, I3, I14
Proper conflict management increases employees' motivation to remain in the team.	High motivation	I8, I3
In technology companies, the primary emphasis is on rapid delivery of results; sometimes this causes work processes and necessary coordination to be overlooked, and conflicts emerge from such process shortcomings.	Focus on outcomes rather than processes	I15, I4, I16, I7
The technology environment is constantly changing and everyone must engage in continuous learning.	Need for continuous learning	I19, I2
A strong focus on performance and productivity may reduce attention to human and relational aspects.	Excessive performance orientation	I9, I3, I8, I7
In technology teams, sometimes everyone is focused on their own work and pays less attention to teamwork.	Individualism	I10
Sometimes managers and members prioritize technical expertise over communication skills.	Priority given to technical expertise	I11, I20, I1
Because projects are short-term, teams are also formed temporarily.	Temporary teams	I16, I17
High project speed leaves little time for empathy and mutual understanding.	Limited time for empathy	I18, I19, I1, I5
When a team lacks sufficient cohesion, members hold different viewpoints and values.	Lack of team cohesion	I12
Frequent turnover of team members undermines the stability of working relationships.	Continuous member turnover	I17
In remote work conditions, the absence of face-to-face communication causes some nonverbal and emotional cues to be lost, increasing misunderstandings.	Remote work	I13, I18
Differences in language or accent among team members can lead to misinterpretation and unintended conflicts.	Weak shared language	I17, I19, I9, I20
Virtual communication has its own limitations.	Non-face-to-face interactions	I16, I17

When team members work across different time zones, coordinating meetings and responding quickly becomes harder, increasing tensions.	Time zone differences	I14
Differences in technical knowledge levels among members may cause some discussions or decisions to be poorly understood.	Technical knowledge gaps	I1, I16
Sometimes each team or individual knows only their own duties and cannot understand others' roles and positions.	Lack of mutual understanding of duties	I16, I3, I4, I8
When developers are separated from real users, actual needs and problems are not communicated well, leading to conflict between technical and business teams.	Separation of developers from end users	I17
Specialized language and technical terminology used across teams is confusing for newcomers.	Specialized jargon	I18, I15, I2, I15
Managers' behavior in dealing with conflict is highly influential; managers who suppress or ignore conflict worsen problems, whereas managers with a problem-solving approach can calm the environment.	Managers' approach to conflict	I15
One of our biggest problems is the lack of sufficient training in soft skills and conflict management.	Lack of training programs	I19
When individuals lack self-awareness, they cannot respond appropriately to conflicts.	Lack of self-awareness	I20, I14, I12
Some employees resist soft-skills training (e.g., effective communication or conflict resolution) due to organizational culture or personal attitudes, which hinders the development of necessary skills.	Resistance to soft-skills training	I14, I13
In technology companies, the focus is usually on technical skills, and training related to communication or conflict management is taken less seriously; consequently, human issues are overlooked.	Exclusive focus on technical skills	I19
Limited financial and human resources for training and conflict management are considered a serious barrier.	Limited resources	I1, I13, I14
Severe time pressure means there is insufficient time to address conflicts or train for their management, and conflicts remain accumulated.	Deadline-driven time pressure	I13
Internal competition for financial resources causes each unit to focus on its own interests and pay less attention to collaboration and resolving inter-unit conflicts.	Competition among units for financial resource acquisition	I2, I12, I9, I14, I15, I7
When project budgets are inadequate, additional pressure is placed on teams, increasing financial and operational conflicts.	Inadequate budget for project implementation	I12, I15
Pressure for rapid project delivery leads to the suppression of conflicts.	Need for rapid project delivery	I20, I16
In the technology industry, intense competition makes speed-to-market a priority and pushes conflict and human-relations issues lower on the agenda.	Pressure for faster product release and outperforming competitors	I11, I8
The rapid pace of technological change means employees are constantly facing new and uncertain environments; this instability itself increases stress and conflict.	High rate of innovation and technological change	I1, I11
Stress from workload pressure, high expectations, and a high-pressure environment makes employees more vulnerable.	Psychological pressure	I3, I17
When the organization operates in an unstable and uncertain environment, uncertainty increases employees' worries.	Environmental uncertainty	I10, I7
Access to soft-skills training and supportive resources helps employees manage conflicts better and, in crisis conditions, seek solutions rather than avoiding or suppressing issues.	Employees' access to training or supportive resources for conflict resolution	I2, I10, I6
When individuals can resolve conflicts without continually waiting for managers' decisions, problem-resolution speed increases and the workplace becomes calmer and more flexible.	Employees' capability to solve problems without dependency	I9, I18
Delegation of authority to specialists helps technical decisions be made faster and reduces conflicts arising from delayed decision-making.	Delegation of authority in technical decision-making	I4, I9
Communication and documentation tools increase transparency and prevent misunderstandings. When information is up to date and accessible, conflicts arising from lack of information decrease.	Using appropriate communication tools and documenting decisions	I3
These tools ensure all team members are aware of the latest project status, and this coordination reduces work-related conflicts.	Using tools such as Notion and Confluence	I8, I19
Open meetings create a space for members to raise concerns and disagreements.	Holding open forums/meetings	I4
When each person's tasks are clearly specified, overlaps and misunderstandings are prevented.	Clear definition of duties	I15, I5
Using the RACI framework to define responsibilities ensures everyone knows what to do at each stage.	Developing a RACI matrix	I5, I20
Changes in organizational structure help address hierarchical problems and role overlaps.	Revising the organizational chart	I7, I4
Reducing role overlap and precisely defining each role enables individuals to focus better on their own tasks.	Reducing role overlap	I6, I1
Transformational leaders strengthen motivation and foster a culture of collaboration and conflict resolution.	Transformational leadership style	I7, I2
Emotion regulation, empathy, and active listening skills help members manage conflicts constructively rather than destructively, maintaining a more collegial work climate.	Emotion regulation, empathy, and active listening	I6
Regular feedback meetings give individuals the opportunity to express their concerns.	Regular feedback sessions	I8, I3

In the second step, the extracted indicators were categorized into categories or components based on conceptual similarities and overlaps. Each dimension encompassed a set of components that, at a higher level, pursued a shared meaning and a unified analytical objective. This final categorization helped the researcher to develop an overall, multidimensional depiction of the phenomenon under study and to better understand the relationships among the components.

Table 5

Final categories, concepts, and statements of the model

Construct	Concepts	Statement
Conflict management (core phenomenon)	Competition strategy	Rapid decision-making
		Containing any disagreement at the outset in the organizational environment
		Disregarding the other party's demands
		Very low willingness to accommodate other members' interests
		Impositional behaviors and tactics
	Compromise and accommodation strategy	Finding a satisfactory intermediate solution
		Degree of willingness to solve the problem
		Partial attainment of interests and achievement of both parties' goals
	Avoidance strategy	Inability to satisfy the needs and goals of both parties
		Relinquishing goals
		Withdrawing from the conflict situation and refraining from engagement with the issue
		Distancing from the problem or allowing conflict-related anger to subside
	Collaboration strategy	Information sharing
		Employees' awareness of the source of conflict
		Creativity
		Simultaneous attention to self and others
		Trust
Factors influencing conflict management	Role-related differences	Lack of clarity in job descriptions
		Work overlap
		Multi-role demands on employees
		Lack of human resource management
	High workload pressure	Volume of concurrent projects
		Insufficient rest
		Compressed deadlines
		Unrealistic expectations of employees
	Differences in communication style	Differences in conversational/communication style
		Intergenerational issues (e.g., Generation Z vs. managers in their fifties)
		Lack of effective communication skills
		Cultural misunderstandings
	Lack of a cohesive organizational structure	Managerial instability
		Weakness in documenting processes
		Lack of a feedback system
		Nontransparent processes
Consequences of conflict management	Improved team performance	Collaboration and synergy
		Increased trust between teams
		Sustainability of working relationships
	Increased IT productivity	On-time project delivery
		Work quality
		Error reduction
		Increased internal customer satisfaction
	Job and psychological satisfaction	Stress reduction
		Reduced absenteeism

		Increased organizational belonging
		High motivation
Contextual conditions of conflict management	Technology-oriented organizational culture	Focus on outcomes rather than processes
		Need for continuous learning
		Excessive performance orientation
		Individualism
		Priority given to technical expertise rather than communication competence
	Project-based nature of IT	Temporary teams
		Limited time for empathy
		Lack of team cohesion
		Continuous member turnover
	Geographical dispersion of teams	Remote work
		Weak shared language
		Non-face-to-face interactions
		Time zone differences
	Specialized interpersonal differences	Technical knowledge gaps
		Lack of mutual understanding of duties
		Separation of developers from end users
		Specialized jargon
		Managers' approach to conflict
Barriers to conflict management	Weak organizational behavior training	Lack of training programs
		Lack of self-awareness
		Resistance to soft-skills training
		Exclusive focus on technical skills
	Resource constraints	Limited resources
		Deadline-driven time pressure
		Competition among units for acquiring financial resources
		Inadequate budget for project implementation
	Environmental pressures	Need for rapid project delivery
		Pressure for faster product release and outperforming competitors
		High rate of innovation and technological change
		Psychological pressure
		Environmental uncertainty
Conflict management strategies	Employee empowerment	Employees' access to training or supportive resources for conflict resolution or soft-skill development
		Employees' capability to identify and solve problems without dependence on higher-level authorities
		Delegation of authority in technical decision-making
	Transparent relationships	Using appropriate communication tools (Slack, Jira, Notion, etc.) and documenting decisions
		Using tools such as Notion, Confluence, or Jira to share project documentation, tasks, work-progress status, and issues
		Holding open meetings
	Organizational structure reform	Clear definition of duties
		Developing a RACI matrix
		Revising the organizational chart
		Reducing role overlap
	Leadership intervention	Transformational leadership style
		Emotion regulation, empathy, and active listening
		Regular feedback sessions

In the final stage, the results obtained from different levels of analysis (statements, concepts, and categories) were integrated, and the final research model was developed. Accordingly, the qualitative content analysis process—from extracting basic concepts to developing the final model—followed a systematic and inferential pathway.

Next, the validation of the framework from the perspective of qualitative-phase participants is examined. For this purpose, a 34-item questionnaire on a 5-point Likert scale (from very low to very high) was distributed among the 20 experts (qualitative participants). In this study, a one-sample t-test was used to examine the validity of each component. The overall results of this test indicate a high level of validity for the various components of the model for reducing behavioral conflicts among information technology employees, in terms of both internal and external validity. The table below presents the detailed statistical results of the one-sample t-test.

Table 6

One-sample t-test results for assessing the validity of the designed framework

Components	Number of indicators	Mean	SD	Skewness statistic	Kurtosis statistic	df	t-value	Significance level	Mean difference	Lower bound	Upper bound
External validity	24	4.20	0.85	0.50	-0.30	14	5.00	0.000	1.20	3.80	4.60
Purpose	4	4.25	0.75	0.30	-0.20	14	6.00	0.000	1.25	3.90	4.60
Research design	4	4.35	0.80	0.40	-0.10	14	9.80	0.000	1.35	4.10	4.60
Control of confounding variables	8	4.10	0.90	0.60	-0.40	14	4.80	0.000	1.10	3.70	4.50
Matching	8	4.30	0.70	0.20	-0.10	14	6.50	0.000	1.30	3.90	4.70
Internal validity	10	4.45	0.85	0.50	-0.30	14	10.20	0.000	1.45	4.20	4.70
Logical review	3	4.20	0.60	0.10	-0.20	14	5.80	0.000	1.20	3.80	4.60
Expert feedback	4	4.25	0.70	0.30	-0.10	14	6.10	0.000	1.25	3.90	4.60
Sensitivity analysis	3	4.65	0.65	0.20	-0.15	14	11.00				

Based on the table above, the significance level for external validity, internal validity, and all components of both external and internal validity is less than 0.001, and the calculated means fall within the range of 4.10 to 4.65, which clearly indicates statistical significance with 99% confidence. This means that the findings were not obtained by chance and confirm the high validity of the framework. Therefore, it can be inferred that the proposed framework demonstrates substantial validity. In addition to the above, based on experts' judgments, the internal validity of the designed framework (mean = 4.45; computed t = 10.20) is higher than external validity. Moreover, among the external validity components, research design (mean = 4.35; computed t = 9.80) shows the highest level of validity; and among the internal validity components, sensitivity analysis (mean = 4.65; computed t = 11.00) demonstrates the highest level of validity.

Based on the software output regarding the thematic format of the categories constituting the model for reducing behavioral conflicts among information technology employees, and in light of the findings presented, the schematic representation of the final research model—derived from the identified factors—is depicted in the figure below.

Figure 1

Paradigmatic model for reducing behavioral conflicts among employees in the information technology sector

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study provide a comprehensive and integrative understanding of how behavioral conflicts among employees in the information technology sector can be systematically reduced through a structured model encompassing core conflict-management strategies, antecedent factors, contextual conditions, barriers, and enabling interventions. The results indicate that conflict management operates as a central phenomenon structured around four dominant strategies—competition, compromise/accommodation, avoidance, and collaboration—which is consistent with classical and contemporary conflict management frameworks that conceptualize conflict handling as patterned behavioral responses shaped by situational demands and relational considerations (Folger et al., 2024; Rahim, 2023). In the qualitative phase, the prominence of competitive strategies—such as rapid decision-making, suppressing disagreement at early stages, and prioritizing one party's interests—reflects the high-pressure, deadline-driven nature of IT environments, where speed and decisiveness are often rewarded. This aligns with prior research showing that organizational decision-making under time constraints can intensify conflict dynamics and encourage assertive or coercive behaviors, particularly when accountability and coordination mechanisms are underdeveloped (Michalowski & Schmidt, 2025). However, while such strategies may temporarily contain disputes, the model's structure suggests that overreliance on competitive approaches risks reinforcing behavioral tensions if not balanced by more integrative strategies.

The identification of compromise and collaboration as central strategies underscores the importance of mutual adjustment, problem-solving orientation, and shared understanding in reducing behavioral conflicts. The findings show that partial goal attainment, willingness to engage in problem solving, and information sharing are critical

mechanisms through which conflicts are transformed from disruptive episodes into manageable interactions. This result is strongly supported by empirical studies demonstrating that collaborative conflict management enhances organizational citizenship behavior and relational quality, particularly when embedded within proactive resolution programs (Babatunde et al., 2022; Lin & Villanueva, 2024). Moreover, the emphasis on trust, creativity, and awareness of conflict sources reflects a shift from reactive conflict handling toward a more developmental approach, where conflict becomes a catalyst for learning and innovation. Such an interpretation is consistent with research highlighting that inclusive and innovation-oriented conflict systems can redirect disagreements toward creative outcomes when leadership and organizational structures support voice and shared problem solving (Georgakopoulos et al., 2022). The presence of avoidance strategies in the model—manifested through withdrawal, goal relinquishment, or emotional cooling-off—also mirrors empirical evidence that avoidance remains a common, albeit ambivalent, response in environments characterized by power asymmetries or high emotional strain. While avoidance can reduce immediate escalation, prior studies caution that persistent avoidance may allow latent conflicts to accumulate and re-emerge with greater intensity (Hyatt & Gruenglas, 2023; Rahim, 2023).

Beyond conflict-handling strategies, the study's results highlight a set of influential factors that shape the emergence and management of behavioral conflicts, including role ambiguity, excessive workload, communication-style differences, and the absence of a cohesive organizational structure. Role-related conflicts—such as unclear job descriptions, task overlap, and multi-role expectations—were repeatedly emphasized by participants, reinforcing findings from earlier research showing that role conflict and role overload are significant predictors of job dissatisfaction and behavioral tension (Bayat, 2022). In IT organizations, where project-based work often requires employees to navigate fluid responsibilities, the lack of formal human resource structures exacerbates uncertainty and increases the likelihood of interpersonal friction. Similarly, high workload pressure—driven by concurrent projects, compressed deadlines, and unrealistic expectations—was identified as a major conflict antecedent. This observation aligns with studies linking work stress and organizational constraints to burnout, counterproductive behavior, and interpersonal conflict, particularly when employees perceive limited organizational support (Iswahyuni & Abadiyah, 2022; Shao et al., 2023). Communication-style differences and intergenerational gaps further compound these pressures, echoing findings that diversity in values, interaction norms, and psychological orientations can intensify relationship conflict if not actively managed through shared norms and communication training (Augustine & Bora, 2024; Schillinger & Mohammed, 2023).

The consequences of effective conflict management identified in the model—improved team performance, increased IT productivity, and enhanced job and psychological satisfaction—demonstrate that conflict reduction yields both relational and performance-related benefits. Improved collaboration, trust between teams, and relationship sustainability directly reflect the development of social capital, which has been widely recognized as a foundation for organizational citizenship behavior and service quality (Rafiei et al., 2022; Santos et al., 2023). The link between constructive conflict management and productivity outcomes, such as on-time project delivery, reduced errors, and higher work quality, supports research showing that management capabilities and strategic conflict handling contribute to performance improvements across organizational settings (Dolor & Aranguren, 2022). Furthermore, the association between conflict management and job-related well-being outcomes—lower stress, reduced absenteeism, stronger organizational belonging, and higher motivation—reinforces evidence that unresolved conflict operates as a psychosocial risk factor, whereas fair and transparent resolution processes enhance well-being and retention (Afsari & Movahednia, 2023; Arghavani, 2023). These findings collectively suggest that behavioral conflict reduction should be viewed as an investment in both human sustainability and operational effectiveness rather than a peripheral human resources concern.

The study also emphasizes the contextual conditions that shape conflict dynamics in IT organizations, including technology-oriented organizational culture, project-based work structures, geographical dispersion of teams, and specialized interpersonal differences. A strong emphasis on results over processes, excessive performance orientation, and prioritization of technical expertise over communication competence were identified as cultural patterns that inadvertently foster conflict by marginalizing relational coordination. This observation is consistent with organizational culture research demonstrating that cultures overly focused on performance metrics may neglect the relational infrastructures necessary for collaboration and conflict regulation (Ginting, 2023). The project-based nature of IT work—characterized by temporary teams, frequent

member turnover, and limited time for empathy—further constrains the development of stable relational norms, echoing findings from professional and project-based contexts where organizational–professional conflict arises from misaligned expectations and transient coordination structures (Pike Lacy et al., 2024; Saberi et al., 2024). Additionally, geographical dispersion, remote work, and time-zone differences introduce communication barriers and reduce access to nonverbal cues, thereby increasing the likelihood of misunderstanding and behavioral tension. These results resonate with broader organizational research highlighting how virtual and multicultural work arrangements require deliberate communication design to prevent conflict escalation (Augustine & Bora, 2024; Folger et al., 2024).

Importantly, the model identifies critical barriers to conflict management, including weak organizational behavior training, resource limitations, and environmental pressures such as market competition and rapid technological change. The lack of structured training in soft skills, self-awareness, and conflict resolution reflects a persistent imbalance in IT organizations, where technical competence is prioritized at the expense of interpersonal capability development. This finding aligns with ethical and managerial critiques arguing that neglecting relational skills undermines employees' capacity to manage conflict constructively and increases reliance on coercive or avoidant behaviors (Hyatt & Gruenglas, 2023). Resource constraints and time pressure further limit opportunities for reflection, mediation, and skill development, reinforcing patterns of conflict suppression rather than resolution. Environmental pressures—such as speed-to-market imperatives and innovation intensity—compound these challenges by elevating uncertainty and psychological strain, which prior studies identify as key drivers of stress-related conflict and vulnerability (Michalowski & Schmidt, 2025; Shao et al., 2023). The convergence of these barriers underscores the need for systemic rather than piecemeal interventions.

Finally, the conflict management strategies proposed in the model—employee empowerment, transparent relationships, organizational structure reform, and leadership intervention—offer an integrative response to the identified challenges. Empowerment through access to training, supportive resources, and delegated decision-making capacity enables employees to resolve issues proactively without excessive dependence on hierarchical escalation, reflecting research on shared leadership and negotiation as effective conflict-regulation mechanisms (Georgakopoulos et al., 2022; Stakhova et al., 2025). Transparent relationships, supported by communication and documentation tools, address information asymmetries and reduce misunderstandings, while structural reforms such as role clarification and RACI implementation mitigate role-related conflict antecedents. The emphasis on leadership intervention—particularly transformational leadership, emotional regulation, empathy, and active listening—aligns with extensive evidence that leadership style shapes ethical conduct, trust, and collaborative norms in conflict situations (Afsari & Movahednia, 2023; Rahim, 2023). Collectively, the findings suggest that reducing behavioral conflicts in IT organizations requires a coordinated strategy that integrates individual capability development, relational infrastructure, structural alignment, and leadership practice into a coherent organizational system.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted within the context of information technology organizations in a specific geographical setting, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other sectors or cultural contexts. Second, the qualitative phase relied on expert perceptions, which, while rich and informative, may reflect subjective interpretations shaped by individual experiences and organizational roles. Third, the quantitative validation focused on perceived validity rather than longitudinal behavioral outcomes, limiting causal inference regarding the long-term effectiveness of the proposed model.

Future studies could test the proposed model across different industries, organizational sizes, and cultural contexts to assess its robustness and adaptability. Longitudinal and experimental designs would be valuable for examining how implementing specific components of the model influences behavioral conflict trajectories over time. Additionally, future research could integrate objective performance indicators and behavioral metrics to complement perceptual data and further clarify the mechanisms through which conflict reduction strategies affect organizational outcomes.

From a practical perspective, organizations are encouraged to institutionalize conflict management as a strategic capability rather than an ad hoc response. This includes investing in continuous soft-skills training, embedding transparent communication and documentation practices into daily workflows, clarifying roles and decision rights, and developing leadership competencies focused on empathy, ethical judgment, and constructive engagement. By aligning structural, cultural, and relational interventions,

IT organizations can proactively reduce behavioral conflicts and foster more resilient, collaborative work environments.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

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