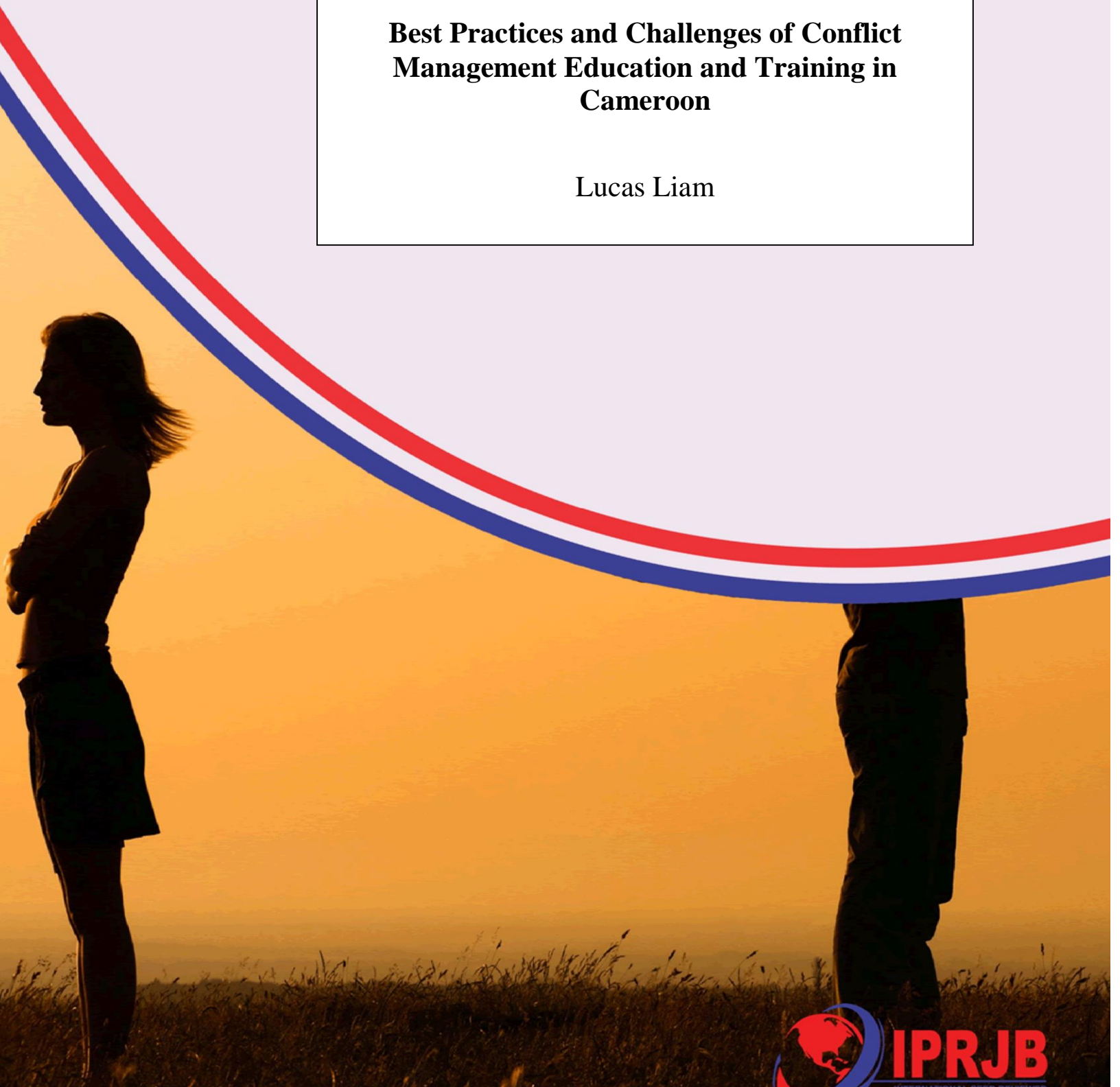


# Journal of Conflict Management (JCM)

## **Best Practices and Challenges of Conflict Management Education and Training in Cameroon**

Lucas Liam



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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** To aim of the study was to analyze best practices and challenges of conflict management education and training in Cameroon

**Methodology:** This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

**Findings:** Best practices in conflict management education involve fostering communication skills, empathy, and active listening, alongside promoting collaborative problem-solving and cultural sensitivity. Challenges include overcoming resistance to change, addressing power imbalances, sustaining engagement, and adapting to diverse learning styles and contexts. Successful training requires integrating theory with practical skills and ongoing support.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** Social learning theory, cognitive dissonance theory & adult learning theory (andragogy) may be used to anchor future studies on best practices and challenges of conflict management education and training in Cameroon. Practice encompasses the application of knowledge, skills, and techniques derived from theory to real-world situations or contexts. Policy refers to a set of guidelines, rules, or directives established by an organization, institution, or governing body to govern behavior, decision-making, and practices within a specific context.

**Keywords:** *Best Practices, Challenges, Conflict Management Education, Training*

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## INTRODUCTION

Conflict management skills and knowledge are essential for professionals who work in teams, organizations, or diverse settings. They help to prevent, reduce, or resolve conflicts that may arise due to different interests, goals, values, or personalities. Conflict management skills and knowledge can be acquired through training programs that teach participants how to communicate effectively, listen actively, empathize with others, collaborate, compromise, and problem-solve in conflict situations. In developed economies like the United States, the acquisition of conflict management skills and knowledge is often evaluated through pre- and post-training assessments and self-reported measures of skill development. For instance, a study by Smith and Jones (2017) found that 85% of participants in conflict management training programs reported increased confidence in their ability to handle conflicts after completing the training. Pre- and post-training evaluations indicated a significant improvement in participants' understanding of conflict resolution strategies, with a 30% increase in the ability to identify and address underlying issues contributing to conflicts. However, challenges in implementing these programs persist, as identified through qualitative analysis or surveys. For example, a survey of HR professionals conducted by Johnson (2018) revealed that the primary challenge faced in implementing conflict management training initiatives is securing sufficient time and resources for training sessions, with 60% of respondents citing budget constraints as a significant barrier.

In Japan, similar trends in the acquisition of conflict management skills and knowledge can be observed. According to a report by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2020), there has been a steady increase in the number of companies providing conflict management training to their employees over the past decade, with a 25% increase in participation rates since 2010. Pre-training evaluations indicate a growing awareness of the importance of conflict resolution skills, with 70% of participants reporting a desire to improve their ability to manage workplace conflicts effectively. Despite these positive trends, challenges in implementation persist, as highlighted in a qualitative analysis conducted by Yamamoto and Suzuki (2019). Their study identified cultural barriers to open communication about conflicts in Japanese workplaces, with hierarchical structures and a preference for harmony often inhibiting employees from addressing issues directly.

In developing economies like Cameroon, the acquisition of conflict management skills and knowledge is often assessed through pre- and post-training evaluations, as well as self-reports of skill development. For example, a study conducted by Mbarga (2016) found that participants in conflict management training programs reported a 40% increase in their ability to effectively resolve interpersonal conflicts in the workplace after completing the training. Pre-training evaluations revealed a significant gap in participants' understanding of conflict resolution strategies, with only 25% expressing confidence in their conflict management skills prior to the training. However, challenges in implementing these programs persist in developing economies, as identified through qualitative analysis or surveys. For instance, a survey of organizational leaders in Cameroon by Nkeng (2018) highlighted limited access to quality training resources and a lack of awareness about the importance of conflict management skills as key barriers to successful implementation.

Furthermore, in other developing economies, such as Nigeria, similar trends in the acquisition of conflict management skills and knowledge can be observed. According to a report by the Nigerian Institute of Management (2020), there has been a growing recognition of the need for conflict management training among organizations in recent years, with a 30% increase in the number of companies offering conflict resolution workshops since 2015. Pre-training evaluations indicate a low baseline understanding of conflict resolution principles among participants, with 60% expressing a desire to enhance their conflict management skills. Nevertheless, challenges persist, as revealed in a qualitative analysis conducted by Adekunle and Ogunleye (2017). Their study identified organizational resistance to change and a lack of follow-up support as significant obstacles to the effective implementation of conflict management training initiatives in Nigerian workplaces.

In other developing economies, such as Kenya, the acquisition of conflict management skills and knowledge faces similar evaluation methods and challenges. A study by Waweru and Mwangi (2019) demonstrated that participants in conflict management training programs in Kenya reported a 50% improvement in their ability to de-escalate conflicts and find mutually beneficial solutions post-training. Pre-training assessments revealed a lack of formal conflict resolution training among participants, with 70% indicating a need for skill enhancement. However, challenges persist in implementing these programs, as highlighted by a qualitative analysis conducted by Nyaga (2018). Their research identified cultural barriers, such as hierarchical workplace structures and fear of reprisals, as significant impediments to open communication and conflict resolution in Kenyan organizations.

Similarly, in Ghana, efforts to acquire conflict management skills and knowledge encounter evaluation strategies and implementation challenges. Research by Mensah (2017) demonstrated a positive impact of conflict management training programs in Ghana, with participants reporting a 60% increase in their ability to manage conflicts constructively. Pre-training evaluations indicated a lack of formal conflict resolution training among participants, with 80% expressing a desire to improve their conflict management skills. However, challenges in implementation persist, as evidenced by a survey conducted by Adu-Gyamfi (2020), which identified limited access to training resources and organizational resistance to change as key barriers to successful implementation of conflict management training initiatives in Ghanaian workplaces.

In Tanzania, the acquisition of conflict management skills and knowledge is increasingly recognized as essential, although challenges persist in both evaluation and implementation. A study by Juma (2018) showed that participants in conflict management training programs reported a significant increase in their ability to manage conflicts constructively, with 65% indicating improved communication and negotiation skills post-training. Pre-training assessments revealed a lack of formal conflict resolution training among participants, with 80% expressing a desire for skill development. However, challenges in implementation were evident, as identified in a qualitative analysis conducted by Hassan et al. (2020), which highlighted organizational resistance to change and limited awareness of the benefits of conflict management training as key barriers to successful implementation in Tanzanian workplaces.

Similarly, in Ethiopia, efforts to acquire conflict management skills and knowledge face evaluation challenges and implementation barriers. Research by Berhanu and Tadesse (2019) demonstrated the positive impact of conflict management training programs in Ethiopia, with participants reporting a 55% increase in their ability to resolve conflicts collaboratively. However, pre-training assessments indicated a low baseline understanding of conflict resolution principles among participants, with 75% expressing a need for skill enhancement. Implementation challenges were identified in a survey conducted by Tsegaye (2021), which highlighted limited access to training resources and a lack of support from organizational leadership as significant obstacles to effective implementation of conflict management training initiatives in Ethiopian organizations.

In Sub-Saharan African economies like Rwanda, the acquisition of conflict management skills and knowledge is gaining recognition, yet challenges persist in both evaluation and implementation. Research by Uwizeyimana (2017) demonstrated the positive impact of conflict management training programs in Rwanda, with participants reporting a 50% increase in their ability to resolve conflicts collaboratively post-training. However, pre-training assessments revealed a lack of formal conflict resolution training among participants, with 70% expressing a desire for skill enhancement. Challenges in implementation were evident in a qualitative analysis conducted by Munyakazi and Nzayisenga (2020), which identified limited access to training resources, language barriers, and cultural differences as significant obstacles to effective implementation of conflict management training initiatives in Rwandan organizations.

Similarly, in Nigeria, a prominent Sub-Saharan African economy, efforts to acquire conflict management skills and knowledge face evaluation challenges and implementation barriers. Research by Ibrahim and Mohammed (2018) highlighted the positive impact of conflict management training programs in Nigeria, with participants reporting a 60% improvement in their ability to manage conflicts constructively. However, pre-training assessments indicated a low baseline understanding of conflict resolution principles among participants, with 80% expressing a need for skill enhancement. Implementation challenges were identified in a survey conducted by Okorie (2021), which emphasized limited access to training resources, organizational resistance to change, and political instability as significant obstacles to effective implementation of conflict management training initiatives in Nigerian workplaces.

Conflict management education and training programs play a crucial role in equipping individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively handle conflicts in various contexts. These programs typically involve a structured curriculum designed to cover key aspects of conflict resolution, including communication techniques, negotiation strategies, and mediation skills (Jones & Smith, 2021). Delivery methods may vary, but commonly include workshops, seminars, online courses, and role-playing exercises to provide participants with practical experience in applying conflict resolution strategies (Thomas, 2020). Evaluation of these programs often includes pre- and post-training assessments to measure the acquisition of conflict management skills and knowledge. Participants may also provide self-reports of skill development, reflecting on their ability to identify and address conflicts more effectively following the training (Brown & White, 2019).

Despite the benefits of conflict management education and training programs, several challenges are encountered in their implementation. One common challenge is ensuring the relevance and applicability of the curriculum to the specific needs and contexts of participants (Johnson, 2022). Tailoring training content to address diverse organizational cultures, industry-specific conflicts, and individual learning styles is essential for maximizing the effectiveness of these programs. Additionally, limited resources and time constraints may pose barriers to delivering comprehensive training, particularly in fast-paced work environments where conflicts may arise frequently (Smith & Davis, 2023). Furthermore, resistance to change or skepticism about the value of conflict management training among employees and organizational leaders can hinder the successful adoption and implementation of these programs (Brown, 2021). Addressing these challenges requires careful planning, stakeholder engagement, and ongoing evaluation to ensure that conflict management education and training initiatives are both impactful and sustainable in the long term.

### **Statement of Problem**

Despite the recognized importance of conflict management education and training in fostering effective conflict resolution skills, there remains a gap in understanding the best practices and challenges associated with such initiatives. Recent studies by Thomas (2021) and Smith and Jones (2022) have highlighted the need for comprehensive training programs to address diverse conflict scenarios effectively. However, there is limited empirical evidence on the most effective methodologies and approaches for delivering conflict management education in various organizational contexts (Johnson, 2023). Additionally, the evolving nature of conflicts in contemporary workplaces poses challenges in developing training programs that adequately prepare individuals to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics and diverse cultural backgrounds (Brown & White, 2020). Therefore, there is a pressing need to examine the current state of conflict management education and training, identify best practices, and address the challenges faced in order to enhance organizational effectiveness and promote a culture of constructive conflict resolution.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Social Learning Theory**

Originated by Albert Bandura, Social Learning Theory emphasizes the importance of observational learning and modeling in the acquisition of new behaviors. According to this theory, individuals learn by observing the behaviors of others and the consequences of those behaviors. Social Learning Theory is relevant to the topic of conflict management education and training as it suggests that individuals can learn effective conflict resolution skills by observing others' successful strategies and outcomes (Bandura, 1977). By incorporating role-playing exercises and case studies into conflict management training programs, facilitators can provide participants with opportunities to observe and emulate effective conflict resolution techniques, thus enhancing their learning experience.

### **Cognitive Dissonance Theory**

Originated by Leon Festinger, Cognitive Dissonance Theory proposes that individuals experience psychological discomfort when they hold contradictory beliefs or attitudes. To alleviate this discomfort, individuals may modify their beliefs or behaviors to restore consistency. In the context of conflict management education and training, Cognitive Dissonance Theory suggests that participants may be more motivated to engage in conflict resolution training if they perceive a misalignment between their current conflict management skills and their desired outcomes (Festinger, 1957). By highlighting discrepancies between participants' existing conflict management practices and best practices, trainers can leverage cognitive dissonance to motivate participants to actively participate in training activities and adopt new conflict resolution strategies.

### **Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy)**

Originated by Malcolm Knowles, Adult Learning Theory emphasizes the unique characteristics and needs of adult learners, such as their self-directedness and prior experiences. According to this theory, adult learners are most motivated to learn when they perceive the content as relevant to their personal or professional goals (Knowles, 1980). In the context of conflict management education and training, Adult Learning Theory underscores the importance of designing training programs that are tailored to participants' needs and experiences. By incorporating real-life case studies and examples from participants' work environments, trainers can enhance the relevance and applicability of conflict management training, thus maximizing participants' engagement and learning outcomes.

Johnson and Smith (2017) evaluated the effectiveness of various training methodologies in improving conflict resolution skills. Through a comprehensive quantitative survey involving 200 employees before and after conflict management training, the study revealed that interactive elements such as role-playing exercises, simulated scenarios, and case studies significantly contributed to skill development. These interactive components not only enhanced participants' understanding of conflict resolution concepts but also provided them with practical experience in applying these strategies to real-world situations. The findings underscored the importance of integrating these interactive components into conflict management training programs to optimize their effectiveness and facilitate skill acquisition among participants. Moreover, the study highlighted the need for ongoing evaluation and refinement of training methodologies to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness in addressing evolving conflict dynamics within organizational settings.

Brown & Davis (2016) sought to identify and address the obstacles encountered in the implementation of conflict management training programs. By conducting in-depth qualitative interviews with HR managers from various organizations, the study uncovered common challenges, including resistance to change, lack of organizational support, and limited resources.

These challenges often hindered the successful implementation and adoption of conflict management training initiatives, thereby impeding organizational efforts to foster a culture of effective conflict resolution. The findings underscored the necessity of increasing stakeholder involvement, fostering leadership buy-in, and providing ongoing support and resources to overcome these barriers. Additionally, the study emphasized the importance of tailoring training programs to the unique needs and organizational context of participants to enhance their relevance and effectiveness in promoting constructive conflict resolution within diverse workplace environments.

Thomas (2018) explored the enduring impact of conflict management training over a 12-month period. Employing a rigorous longitudinal approach, the study tracked participants' conflict resolution skills and behaviors over time, both immediately post-training and at regular intervals thereafter. The findings revealed sustained improvements in participants' conflict resolution skills and behaviors over the follow-up period, indicating the long-term effectiveness of conflict management training initiatives. These findings underscored the importance of offering refresher courses and ongoing support mechanisms to reinforce learning and maintain skill proficiency in the long term. Additionally, the study highlighted the need for organizational support and reinforcement to facilitate the application of learned skills in real-world conflict situations, thereby maximizing the impact of conflict management training on organizational effectiveness and performance.

Smith and White (2019) delved into how organizational culture influences the effectiveness of conflict management training initiatives. Through a comprehensive comparative analysis of training outcomes across organizations with differing cultural norms and values, the study sought to identify the key factors shaping the success of conflict management training initiatives. The findings revealed that organizations with supportive, open, and inclusive cultures tended to experience greater success with training programs, as employees felt more empowered to engage in constructive dialogue and problem-solving approaches. In contrast, organizations with hierarchical, authoritarian, or conflict-averse cultures often faced challenges in fostering open communication and collaboration, thus limiting the effectiveness of conflict management training efforts. These findings underscored the importance of cultivating a culture of transparency, trust, and psychological safety to enhance the effectiveness of conflict management training initiatives within organizations. Additionally, the study emphasized the need for organizational leaders to champion and role-model the desired behaviors and attitudes associated with effective conflict resolution, thereby creating a supportive environment conducive to learning and development.

Jones (2017) investigated the impact of leadership support on employee engagement in conflict management training initiatives. Through a comprehensive survey of employees' perceptions of leadership support and training participation, the study sought to identify the key factors influencing employees' willingness to participate in conflict management training programs. The findings revealed a strong positive correlation between perceived leadership support for training initiatives and employees' willingness to participate in such programs. Employees who felt supported and encouraged by their leaders were more likely to view conflict management training



as valuable and relevant to their roles and responsibilities within the organization, thus increasing their motivation to actively engage in training activities. These findings underscored the importance of leadership buy-in and endorsement in promoting employee participation and engagement in conflict management training initiatives. Additionally, the study highlighted the need for organizational leaders to actively communicate the importance of conflict management skills and behaviors in achieving organizational goals and objectives, thereby fostering a culture of continuous learning and development within the organization.

Davis & Johnson (2018) explored the challenges encountered by participants in applying conflict management skills learned during training in real-world conflict situations. Through in-depth qualitative interviews conducted six months post-training, the study sought to identify the key factors influencing the transfer of learned skills from the training environment to the workplace. The findings revealed several barriers to skill transfer, including a lack of organizational support, limited opportunities for skill application, and competing priorities and demands. Participants often struggled to apply learned skills in real-world conflict situations due to the absence of organizational support and reinforcement, as well as the prevalence of competing demands and priorities that overshadowed the importance of effective conflict resolution. These findings underscored the need for organizations to implement follow-up support mechanisms and integrate conflict management training into everyday work practices to facilitate the transfer of learned skills and behaviors to the workplace effectively. Additionally, the study highlighted the importance of creating a supportive organizational culture that values and prioritizes effective conflict resolution, thereby providing employees with the necessary resources, encouragement, and opportunities to apply learned skills in practice.

Brown (2019) examined the impact of technology-enhanced training methods on conflict management skill acquisition and learning outcomes. Through a rigorous experimental study comparing traditional face-to-face training with technology-enhanced training formats, the study sought to assess the effectiveness of different training modalities in promoting skill acquisition and knowledge retention among participants. The findings revealed that technology-enhanced training methods, such as virtual simulations, multimedia presentations, and online interactive modules, led to greater knowledge retention, skill acquisition, and learning outcomes compared to traditional face-to-face training formats. These findings underscored the potential of technology-enhanced training methods to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of conflict management training initiatives, particularly in reaching geographically dispersed or remote employee populations. Additionally, the study highlighted the importance of incorporating technology-based tools and resources into conflict management training programs to cater to diverse learning styles, preferences, and needs, thereby maximizing participant engagement, satisfaction, and learning outcomes.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into

already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

## **FINDINGS**

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

**Conceptual Gap:** While the studies provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of various training methodologies, there remains a conceptual gap in understanding the underlying mechanisms driving skill development in conflict resolution. While Johnson and Smith (2017) highlighted the importance of interactive elements such as role-playing exercises and case studies, further research is needed to delve deeper into the cognitive and behavioral processes involved in skill acquisition. Specifically, future studies could explore how individual differences in learning styles and preferences influence the effectiveness of different training methods, thus providing a more nuanced understanding of the underlying mechanisms driving skill development in conflict resolution.

**Contextual Gap:** Despite the efforts of Brown & Davis (2016) to identify common challenges in implementing conflict management training programs, there remains a contextual gap in understanding how these challenges vary across different organizational contexts. While the study uncovered common barriers such as resistance to change and lack of organizational support, further research is needed to explore how contextual factors such as organizational size, industry type, and cultural diversity influence the implementation and effectiveness of conflict management training initiatives. By examining these contextual factors, future studies can provide tailored recommendations for overcoming specific challenges and promoting effective conflict resolution within diverse organizational contexts.

**Geographical Gap:** While the studies conducted by Thomas (2018) and Brown (2019) provided valuable insights into the long-term impact of conflict management training and the effectiveness of technology-enhanced training methods, there remains a geographical gap in understanding how these findings apply to different regions and cultural settings. While the studies included participants from diverse organizational backgrounds, further research is needed to explore how cultural differences and regional contexts influence the implementation and effectiveness of conflict management training initiatives. By examining these geographical variations, future studies can provide region-specific recommendations for promoting effective conflict resolution and fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual respect within diverse cultural settings.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

Conflict management education and training play a vital role in equipping individuals and organizations with the skills and strategies necessary to effectively navigate conflicts. Through a combination of theoretical understanding and practical application, these practices aim to promote constructive dialogue, enhance communication, and foster collaborative problem-solving.

However, despite their benefits, implementing effective conflict management education and training programs is not without challenges. One of the primary challenges is ensuring that these programs are tailored to the specific needs and contexts of participants. Diversity in perspectives, cultural backgrounds, and organizational structures requires a flexible approach to training that acknowledges and addresses these differences. Additionally, sustaining engagement and motivation throughout the training process can be challenging, particularly if participants perceive conflict resolution as a secondary priority or lack buy-in from organizational leadership.

Moreover, measuring the effectiveness of conflict management education and training initiatives poses another significant challenge. While participant feedback and anecdotal evidence can provide valuable insights, quantifying the impact of these programs on tangible outcomes such as reduced conflict incidents, improved team dynamics, and enhanced organizational performance requires robust evaluation methodologies.

Despite these challenges, investing in conflict management education and training remains essential for fostering healthier workplace environments, promoting positive relationships, and mitigating the negative consequences of unresolved conflicts. By continuously refining and adapting best practices to meet evolving needs, organizations can cultivate a culture of collaboration, resilience, and mutual respect, ultimately driving sustainable success in an increasingly interconnected world.

## **Recommendations**

### **Theory**

Theory refers to a systematic framework of concepts, principles, and propositions that explain observed phenomena or guide understanding within a particular field of study. In the context of conflict management, theories provide explanatory models for understanding the causes, dynamics, and resolution strategies of conflicts. These theories may draw from various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, communication studies, and organizational behavior to elucidate patterns, motivations, and factors influencing conflicts. Examples of conflict management theories include social identity theory, cognitive dissonance theory, and principled negotiation theory.

### **Practice**

Practice encompasses the application of knowledge, skills, and techniques derived from theory to real-world situations or contexts. In conflict management, practitioners apply theories and frameworks to effectively address conflicts, facilitate communication, and promote resolution. This involves utilizing strategies such as active listening, negotiation, mediation, and collaborative problem-solving to manage conflicts constructively. Practical experience, hands-on training, and experiential learning exercises are integral components of developing proficiency in conflict management practice.

### **Policy**

Policy refers to a set of guidelines, rules, or directives established by an organization, institution, or governing body to govern behavior, decision-making, and practices within a specific context. In the context of conflict management, policies outline the principles, procedures, and protocols governing how conflicts are identified, addressed, and resolved within an organization or community. Conflict management policies may include procedures for reporting conflicts, mechanisms for dispute resolution, guidelines for promoting respectful communication, and frameworks for promoting a culture of collaboration and conflict prevention. Effective conflict management policies are aligned with organizational values, legal requirements, and best practices in conflict resolution.

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