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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE PROJECT AND OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF OIL AND GAS COMPANIES

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INTRODUCTION. The need for a project-based approach in the petroleum industry is driven by the high complexity and capital intensity of operations, as well as the impact of numerous external factors, which requires optimisation of resources, clear division of responsibilities and coordination of project participants. At the same time, given the complexity of project implementation and multi-level stakeholder interaction, conflict management is an important tool for ensuring the successful completion of projects, as conflicts can significantly affect their effectiveness.

THE HYPOTHESIS OF THE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH. Conflicts in petroleum company projects are caused by managerial and communication dysfunctions and can be reduced through the implementation of a comprehensive conflict management system based on specific principles.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY. The purpose of the article is to study the specifics and main problems of conflict management in petroleum company operations projects and to develop principles of effective conflict management based on the identified empirical data.

THE METHODOLOGY OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH. To achieve this goal, a set of interrelated methods was used: analysis, synthesis, induction, comparison, generalisation, as well as a questionnaire survey, expert evaluation, observation, and the Thomas-Kilman methodology for analysing behaviour in conflict situations.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH. In petroleum company projects, there is a predominance of destructive behavior patterns in conflict situations, which complicates the effective implementation of project tasks. Conflicts are caused by managerial and communication dysfunctions, with key contributing factors including leadership style, low awareness among project participants, an imperfect documentation system, and the specifics of project tasks. Effective resolution of these problems requires the implementation of a comprehensive conflict management system based on the principles of systematicity, prevention, transparency, participation, adaptive leadership, and open communication. Prospects for further research relate to the development of applied mechanisms for implementing such a system and assessing its effectiveness in the complex and dynamic environment of the oil and gas industry.

KEYWORDS: conflict; project; conflict management; project management; operational activities; petroleum company.

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УПРАВЛІННЯ КОНФЛІКТАМИ В ПРОЕКТНІЙ ТА ОПЕРАЦІЙНІЙ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ НАФТОГАЗОВИХ КОМПАНІЙ

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ВСТУП. Необхідність проєктно-орієнтованого підходу в нафтогазовій галузі зумовлена високою складністю та капіталомісткістю операцій, а також впливом численних зовнішніх чинників, що вимагає оптимізації ресурсів, чіткого розподілу відповідальності та координації учасників проєктів. Водночас, з огляду на складність реалізації проєктів і багаторівневу взаємодію зацікавлених сторін, управління конфліктами є важливим інструментом для забезпечення успішного завершення проєктів, оскільки конфлікти можуть суттєво впливати на їхню ефективність.

ГІПОТЕЗА НАУКОВОГО ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ. Конфлікти в проєктах нафтової компанії зумовлені управлінськими та комунікаційними дисфункціями й можуть бути зменшені шляхом впровадження комплексної системи управління конфліктами, заснованої на певних принципах.

МЕТА ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ. Метою статті є дослідження специфіки та основних проблем управління конфліктами в проєктах операційної діяльності нафтової компанії та розробка принципів ефективного управління конфліктами на основі виявлених емпіричних даних.

МЕТОДОЛОГІЯ НАУКОВОГО ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ. Для досягнення цієї мети було використано комплекс взаємопов'язаних методів: аналіз, синтез, індукцію, порівняння, узагальнення, а також анкетне опитування, експертне оцінювання, спостереження та методику Томаса-Кілмана для аналізу поведінки у конфліктних ситуаціях.

ВИСНОВКИ ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ПОДАЛЬШИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕНЬ. У проєктах нафтової компанії спостерігається переважання деструктивних моделей поведінки в конфліктних ситуаціях, що ускладнює ефективну реалізацію завдань. Конфлікти зумовлені управлінськими та комунікаційними дисфункціями, серед яких визначальними є стиль лідерства, низький рівень обізнаності учасників, недосконаліть документаційної системи та специфіка проєктних завдань. Ефективне вирішення цих проблем потребує впровадження комплексної системи управління конфліктами, що базується на принципах системності, превентивності, прозорості, участі, адаптивного лідерства та відкритості комунікацій. Перспективи подальших досліджень полягають у розробці прикладних механізмів реалізації такої системи та оцінці її ефективності в умовах складного та динамічного середовища нафтогазової галузі.

КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА: конфлікт; проект; управління конфліктами; управління проектами; операційна діяльність; нафтогазова компанія.

Introduction. The study of the phenomenon and typology of modern conflicts, various forms of course and features of the environment is devoted to the works of A. Kocherha & O. Bondar-Pidhurska (2023), N.O. Yevtushenko & O.V. Kovalchuk (2023), Ye. Lisenyi & A. Lisenaia (2022), N.S. Kutsai (2021), O.M. Ovcharuk (2021), Z.P. Dvulit & Ya.Yu. Petrova (2021), V.V. Rovenska & N.M. Yelanska (2020) and many others.

In particular, the theoretical and experimental substantiation of the conflict nature of the social environment in the Luhansk region (within the framework of the EU Project) is the subject of a study by Academician of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine V.S. Kurylo and Professor O.L. Karaman (2021). Professor Z.P. Dvulit and Ya.Yu. Petrova (2021) conducted a study of the types of staff conflicts (by areas of activity) and ways to resolve them in the activities of the enterprise by forming a matrix of ways to resolve conflicts (using mediation). The study by A.Kocherha and O. Bondar-Pidhurska (2023) formed an integrated author's classification of conflicts as a tool for effective management at industrial enterprises. N.O. Yevtushenko and O.V. Kovalchuk (2023) theoretically studied the typology of conflicts according to the basic classification criteria for further analysis of the causes of conflicts in the enterprise from the standpoint of system and process approaches. The work of N.S. Kutsai (2021) discusses the main causes and features of the conflict, the characteristics of factors (external and internal) that affect the level of conflict situations in the enterprise. Scientists (Lisenyi & Lisenaia, 2022) comprehensively consider the features of conflicts, the main features, functions and causes of conflict situations at RostRetail.

V.V. Rovenska and N.M. Yelanska (2020) presented the main sources of conflict at domestic enterprises; developed a conflict management mechanism in the context of a competency-based approach to the development of the enterprise's personnel. According to the results of the study by O.M. Ovcharuk (2021), a review of specific causes and basic components of organizational conflicts was carried out, and preventive procedures within the organizational environment were proposed to reduce the level of conflict in modern organizations. The study by N.I. Chernenko (2021) notes the practical benefits of understanding the main aspects of conflict (typology, structure, dynamics, functions) in the context of the manifestation of conflict in the communication space. The issues of studying the main causes of conflicts in the context of digitalization, which have an impact on the effectiveness of organizations, were studied by Yu.V. Bohoiavlenska, A.V. Shestakova & H.V. Antipova (2020). Increasing the scientific validity of conflict management technology is also addressed by the works of V. Purtov & L. Halchenko, (2020) and O. Polinkevych (2022).

As the analysis showed, domestic scientists have made a significant contribution to the study of the essence of conflict, identifying the causes of conflicts, and developing effective methods and principles for managing them. However, issues related to the peculiarities of conflicts in project management in the context of modern challenges and effective tools for their prevention require further research.

Recent scientific publications in the field of project management demonstrate a significant revival of researchers' attention to these issues both in Ukraine and abroad. In particular, scientists M. Hrinchenko, O. Ponomarov, O. Lobach & A. Kharchenko (2022), in their study of the features of conflicts in project management, clarified the essence, causes of conflicts in the process of project implementation and their impact on the nature of interpersonal relationships between project team members and other stakeholders.

The results (Cheng et al., 2020) confirm that both interteam dialectical problem solving and interteam trust serve as antecedents of interteam cooperation effectiveness. To deal with conflicts more efficiently, a novel conflict-relationship-based clustering method is designed by R.-X. Ding, R.-X. Cheng, M.-N. Li, G.-R. Yang & E. Herrera-Viedma (2023). Conflict Management Model (Curcija et al., 2019) provides stakeholders with a tool to address conflict, thereby improving the outcomes of Community based tourism (CBT). Practically, the findings (Zhang et al., 2024) provide practitioners with guidance regarding the selection of an appropriate conflict management approach with the aim of improving parties' satisfaction with conflict resolution outcomes.

Contribution to the body of knowledge is by M.S. Dashti, M. RezaZadeh, M. Khanzadi & H. Taghaddos (2021) proposing an integrated system that automatically detects, evaluates, and resolves time-space conflicts and modifies the project's schedule. Result of the study (Oyedele et al., 2020) presents a Conceptual framework for effective management of human resource in relation to conflict prevention among project teams.

The study by O.A. Smetaniuk & A.V. Bondarchuk (2021) summarized a number of features of IT projects that affect the formation of an effective management system. O. Harafonova, D. Kozlovskyi & V. Sharov (2022) focused on identifying the features and specific characteristics of conflicts in the process of project management of entrepreneurial structures (in particular, due to existing conflicts and problems in tax legislation) in modern conditions. The work by O.I. Kovalchuk & O.B. Zachko (2022) detailed a project approach to describing the life cycle of complex security-oriented systems, taking into account the features of the internal and external project environment.

Given the diversity of approaches to understanding the problem of conflict in oil and gas companies' projects, this issue requires a detailed study. Y. Kowszyk, F. Vanclay & R. Maher (2022) found that the conflict management style being

used did not incorporate understandings from political ecology or environmental justice. They consider these perspectives could improve conflict management in the extractive industries, which would reduce the environmental and social impacts experienced by host communities, the cost of conflict borne by companies and communities, and would increase the social licence to operate of companies and their operations. Peculiarities of development of unconventional hydrocarbon deposits at each stage of management – discovery, evaluation, development, production and closure of the project are determined by O. Ovetska, S. Oveckiy & O. Vytyaz (2021). The research presented in (Dreyer et al., 2025) has identified a range of potential instruments for dealing with existing and potential future social conflict in the energy sector.

Therefore, the purpose of the article is to study the specifics and key issues of conflict management in the project activities of an oil and gas company, as well as to substantiate and develop principles of effective conflict management based on the identified empirical results. To achieve this goal, the following tasks should be solved: study the nature and causes of conflicts in oil and gas company projects, assessing the components of the internal environment of projects as sources of conflicts, developing principles for managing conflicts in oil and gas company projects.

Materials and Methods. The study used various methods of scientific cognition, which ensured the getting of objective results and conclusions. In particular, the empirical method was used to collect the necessary data and to analyse specific observations. The theoretical method, which is based on the study and comprehension of existing theories, concepts and models, was used to formulate new hypotheses and determine the prospects for further research. The analytical method allowed us to structure complex problems into separate components for a deeper understanding and disclosure of the essence of conflicts in projects. The study also used graphical and tabular methods to visualize the statistical material, visualize the theoretical and practical findings, including determining of the level of conflict in the company, the frequency of conflict and stressful situations, an assessment of the possibility of resolving conflict situations, the results of an employee survey using the Thomas-Kilman methodology, and identifying of the components of the internal environment of projects as sources of conflict in a gas and oil company.

To determine the peculiarities of conflicts in the performance of current operational tasks and in the project activities of the studied enterprise, the empirical research method used was a questionnaire survey. The respondents filled out the questionnaire independently and anonymously. As part of the study, a choice was made in favour of a group correspondence survey. 25 employees (managers; key personnel – specialists; auxiliary (technical) personnel) participated in the survey. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

(TKI), a questionnaire-test consisting of 30 pairs of statements, was also used to study the behaviour of employees in conflict situations. The respondents chose one of two options in each question, which allowed them to determine their preferred style of behaviour in conflicts.

To analyse conflictogenes (factors that can cause conflict) in the projects, an expert assessment method was used. We selected 15 people from among the employees of the studied enterprise who hold managerial positions, have experience in conflict management, and experience in project activities.

Results and Discussion. The Ukrainian-British joint venture Poltava Petroleum Company (founded by the British petroleum company JP Kenny Exploration & Production Ltd. and Ukrainian enterprises Poltavagazprom and Poltavaneftegazgeologiya) is a leading non-state company in the oil and gas production industry. The operational activities of JV PPC include prospecting, exploration, production and processing of oil and gas. The war in Ukraine and the increase in the tax burden (due to higher rent payments for gas production) have had a negative impact on the implementation of the company's approved Capital Investment Plan. In the difficult conditions of martial law, PPC's main objectives were to preserve assets, minimize production losses and maintain hydrocarbon production at the highest possible level. However, despite these circumstances, the company managed to successfully implement a number of projects within the plan in the following areas:

– capital construction and modernization (an additional compressor unit (K4000) was purchased to increase the efficiency of natural gas extraction from wells at the Yelyzavetivske field);

– exploration and seismic surveys (in 2022, the Company started work on updating the 3D geological model of the Novomykolayivske field group using Petrel software), which includes revision of geophysical survey data in wells, reinterpretation of 3D seismic data and updating hydrodynamic models of the Ignativske and Movchanivske fields, taking into account the results of drilling and workovers. Based on the results of the work, it is expected to identify promising areas for further detailing of the geological structure and drilling of exploration wells);

– automation of the control and driving system (data transmission from the manifolds to the Ignativske Production separators was automated and the list of wells from which data is transmitted in automatic mode was expanded; an automated process control system was introduced for the V-110 and V-100 separators and the gas lift control system), etc.

Based on the results of the study of the specifics of conflicts in the performance of current operational tasks and in the project activities of JV Poltava Petroleum Company, the results are shown in Figures 1–4.

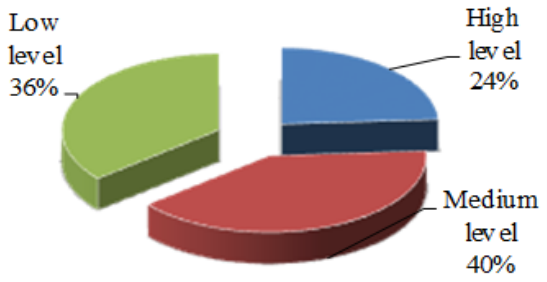

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Figure 1. **Employee assessment of the level of conflict in the company**

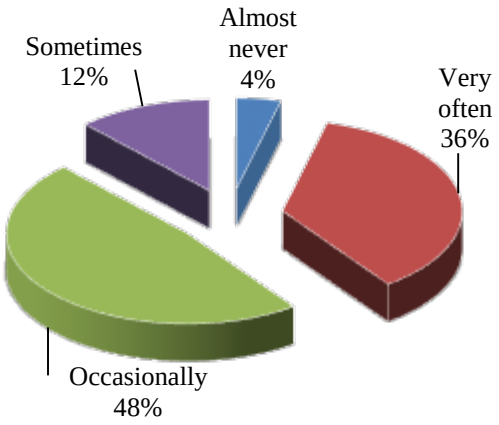

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Figure 2. **Assessment of the frequency of conflict and stressful situations in the company**

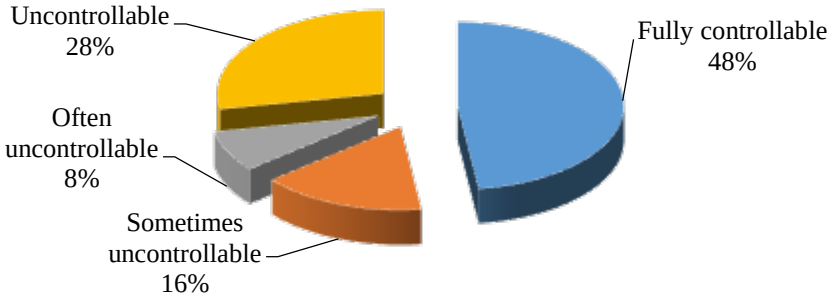

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Figure 3. **Employees' assessment of the ability to manage conflict and stressful situations, number of people**

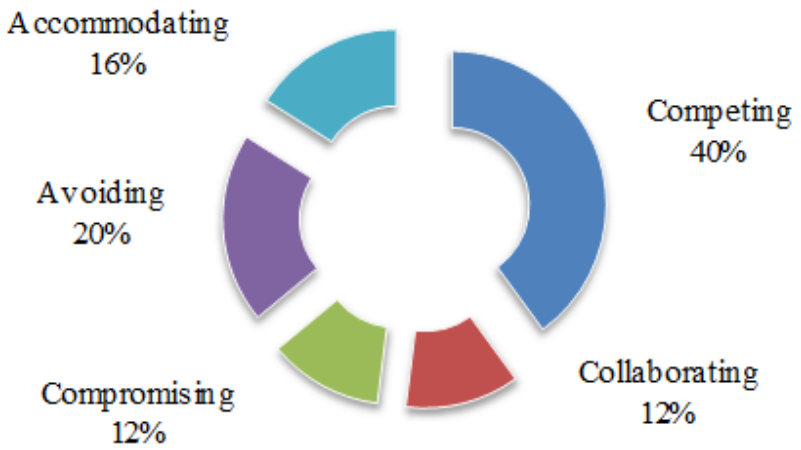

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Figure 4. Results of the Thomas-Kilman employee survey

Less than half of the employees (36%) rate the company as having a low level of conflict and a generally favourable psychological climate and low stress. However, almost a third of the surveyed employees (24%) rate it as a company with a high degree of conflict (Fig. 1). Despite the fact that the majority of employees (40%) consider the level of conflict to be low, the data obtained cannot be called positive, as they indicate a certain social tension in the team.

The following answers were received to the question 'How often do conflicts and stressful situations arise in your company?' (Fig. 2).

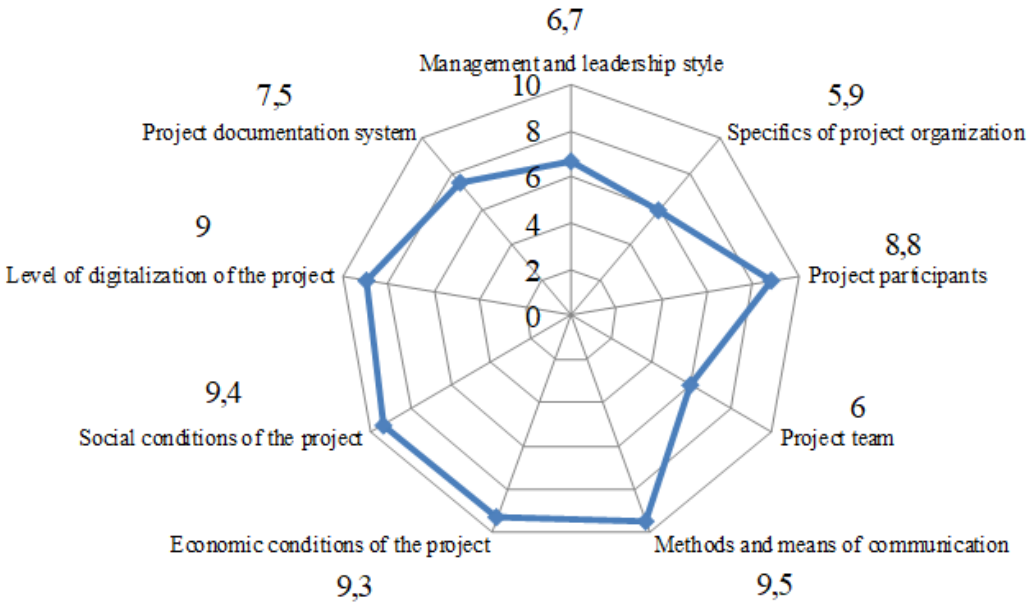
Thus, the survey showed that conflict situations in the company occur quite often. It should be noted that this is the opinion of employees holding different positions, but to a lesser extent, this is the opinion of technical staff. The management of conflicts and stressful situations in the company was assessed as follows (Fig. 3).

The study of such an aspect as the behaviour of employees in conflict situations (using the Thomas-Kilman method) allowed us to determine the type of behaviour of employees of a gas and oil company in conflicts. The following results were obtained for the types of behaviour in the categories of rivalry, cooperation, compromise, avoidance, and adaptation (Fig. 4).

Based on the data shown in Figure 4, we can see that the majority of respondents use such a strategy of conflict behaviour as rivalry (this strategy is capable of exacerbating conflicts to the maximum). At the same time, very few employees use the most effective strategy of conflict behaviour - cooperation (only 12%). Thus, it can be concluded that the company's employees are not characterised by a constructive approach to conflict resolution, which requires them to master modern knowledge and skills to resolve emerging conflict situations.

At this stage of the study, in our opinion, it is worth highlighting the globally known framework of the American Project Management Institute (PMI), where conflict resolution is highlighted as a full-fledged project team management tool according to PMBOOK 7 (2021). The adapted model, based on the work of Ken Thomas and Ralph Kilman, already describes six ways to resolve conflicts (due to the focus on the relative distribution of power and the desire to maintain good relationships): Confronting/problem solving; Collaborating; Compromising; Smoothing/accommodating; Forcing; and Withdrawal/Avoiding. Effective project team management requires the use of a set of tools, so the next stage of the study was to analyse the specifics of conflicts within the project activities of an petroleum company. It was determined that conflicts that arise are most often caused by the insufficient level of knowledge, skills and competencies of employees in the context of specific projects, lack of expert support, lack of full understanding of their functionality within the project, communication barriers, etc.

In order to obtain the most complete information on possible conflict factors in the project activities of JV Poltava Petroleum Company, project implementers were asked to assess all components of the internal environment of the projects in terms of the likelihood of conflict (to assess them as possible conflict factors). The experts were 20 employees of the company who are directly involved in the company's project activities. The assessment was based on a ten-point system, where 1 is the worst result (a pronounced conflictogen) and 10 is the best result (does not lead to conflicts). All the data received from the survey participants were grouped, and Figure 5 shows the data in graphical form. Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the company's employees identified the management style, the specifics of project activities, as well as the documentation system and low awareness of project participants as the most significant conflict factors.



Source: developed by the authors.

Figure 5. **Evaluation of the components of the internal environment of projects as sources of conflicts (conflictogenes) in a gas and oil company**

This may indicate the existence of systemic organisational problems that impede effective teamwork and project implementation. In particular, the emphasis on leadership style indicates a lack of adaptive, flexible and communicative management, which is especially important in a project-based environment. Highlighting problems in documentation and communication indicates poor internal communication and lack of transparency in management processes, which in turn increases the risks of disorganisation, misunderstandings, and professional burnout in the team.

Such results may also indicate that the company's organisational culture is not ready for the transition to a project-oriented management model, which

requires a clearer distribution of roles, responsibilities, and prompt exchange of information between project participants.

Thus, there are currently a number of problems in the project activities of domestic petroleum companies that lead to conflicts. It should also be noted that the problematic trends are similar both in terms of solving day-to-day operational tasks and in project activities.

Given the problematic aspects of project activities in a petroleum company identified in the study – in particular, the conflict-generating style of leadership, unstructured internal communication, unclear division of functional responsibilities, lack of employee awareness, and organisational challenges associated with the specifics of the project management model – conflict management should be based on a number of fundamental principles.

First and foremost, conflict management should be based on the principle of systematicity, which implies its integration into the company's overall project management system as a structural and continuous process. The principle of prevention is also important, as it focuses management on the early identification of conflict triggers, assessment of the risks of interpersonal and structural tension, and implementation of measures to minimise their impact. In this context, the principle of transparency is of particular importance, which is ensured through clear regulation of functional roles, decision-making procedures, and effective document flow within project activities.

In addition, conflict management should be based on the principle of participation, which involves employees in communication and management processes, promotes trust in management, and reduces internal resistance. Given the increasing complexity of the project environment, the principle of adaptive leadership is essential, which defines the need for a flexible, communicative and emotionally stable management style that can adapt to changes and team specifics. Equally important is the principle of communication openness, which ensures the functioning of horizontal and vertical feedback channels and helps reduce information barriers.

The combination of the above principles creates the basis for the formation of a holistic, effective and adaptive conflict management system in oil and gas company projects, which can help reduce tension, increase internal staff cohesion and achieve the strategic goals of project activities.

Conclusions. The study confirmed that effective conflict management within project activities is a key factor in ensuring the efficiency and stability of petroleum companies. In particular, a number of organisational and communication problems have been identified in the activities of JV Poltava Petroleum Company that cause stressful situations and conflicts in the team. The main factors that provoke conflicts include an authoritarian leadership style, poorly regulated document flow processes, low awareness of employees about

project tasks, and a limited understanding of functional responsibilities. It has been determined that conflicts in project activities occur more often than in daily operational work, due to the novelty of approaches, lack of appropriate staff training, and insufficient management support.

The results of the analysis also point to a lack of systematic interaction between project teams, shortcomings in internal communication, staff overload, and dissatisfaction with the current system of motivation and incentives. These factors not only increase the conflict potential of the work environment but also reduce the overall level of employee engagement in project implementation. It has been established that the presence of such problems leads to a loss of trust in management, reduced teamwork productivity, and a deterioration in the psychological climate in the team. Therefore, it is advisable to consider conflicts not as threats, but as indicators of organisational weaknesses that need to be addressed systematically.

In this regard, the author substantiates the need to develop and implement a comprehensive conflict management system based on certain principles, namely, systematicity, preventive nature, transparency, participation, adaptive leadership, and communication openness. The application of these principles allows not only to identify and resolve conflicts in a timely manner, but also helps to reduce the likelihood of their occurrence. This approach ensures constructive interaction between project participants, builds trust, promotes team cohesion, and focuses on achieving common goals, which in turn contributes to the successful implementation of projects and improves the overall efficiency of the company.

A promising area for further research is the conflictual interaction between petroleum companies and local communities during the implementation of oil and gas exploration and production projects. In today's environment, social tensions arising from environmental risks, lack of transparency in decision-making, insufficient public awareness, and the absence of an effective mechanism for public participation in strategically important decision-making are among the most significant external conflict factors. In this regard, it is of scientific interest to study the social determinants of conflicts between the company and local communities, as well as to develop dialogue models based on the principles of openness, inclusiveness and trust.

Further research should be aimed at developing effective mechanisms of social partnership, which include establishing stable bilateral communication, implementing corporate social responsibility programmes, and developing tools for assessing the social impact of petroleum projects. Particular attention should be paid to the study of local contexts – the historical, economic and cultural characteristics of communities – which will allow for the adaptation of conflict mitigation approaches to specific regional conditions. This approach will not only increase the social legitimacy of companies' activities, but also create

preconditions for sustainable development of the territories in the area of petroleum projects.

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