RESEARCH ARTICLE

Informal Organizations and Their Relationship with Organizational Conflict: A Field Study in Djelfa Municipality

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Abstract

Informal organizations play a dual role within institutions. On one hand, they contribute positively by strengthening social cohesion and providing psychological support to employees. On the other hand, they may also become a source of organizational tensions that negatively impact workflow, particularly when their orientations conflict with the formal structure's objectives. This necessitates the implementation of effective conflict management mechanisms that maximize the positive aspects of these groups while mitigating their negative repercussions. The study relied on a sample of 150 workers, including both permanent and contract employees in the municipality of Djelfa.

Main Hypothesis: There is a correlational relationship between informal groups and the occurrence of organizational conflict in municipal institutions in Djelfa.

Sub-Hypotheses: The formation of informal groups is influenced by multiple factors, including demographic, professional, and social characteristics.

The intensity of organizational conflict is directly proportional to the degree of misalignment between the objectives of the formal organization and those of informal groups.

Introduction:

The phenomenon of organization constitutes one of the fundamental characteristics shaping contemporary societies, with its manifestations evident across social, economic, and political spheres. The profound transformations in modern societal structures—particularly in social and economic dimensions—have contributed to expansive organizational growth, giving rise to complex interactional patterns between formal and informal structures within institutions.

Informal organization, as an emergent and spontaneous organizational entity, arises from the daily interactions among individuals within an organization. It forms a network of autonomous rules, norms, and practices that regulate member behavior while serving as a conduit for articulating and transmitting their demands to management. Furthermore, this organizational form functions as an expressive space, enabling individuals to exchange perspectives on occupational challenges and, when its objectives converge with formal institutional goals, enhancing organizational efficacy. However, its parallel existence alongside the formal structure—which may not always align with the aspirations of these groups—generates competitive dynamics. This prompts individuals bound by personal or social ties to coalesce into informal factions in pursuit of their interests, potentially undermining the institution's structural cohesion.[1]

This interplay engenders what is termed organizational conflict, a manifestation of complex human behavior rooted in divergent viewpoints, competition over scarce resources (financial, human, informational), or attempts by one faction to monopolize such resources. Conflict, in its essence, cannot be categorically deemed an entirely negative phenomenon, as it may yield constructive outcomes—stimulating innovation and prompting policy reassessment—provided it is managed through rational mechanisms that reconcile individual interests with institutional objectives while upholding objective, evidence-based perspectives[2].

This dialectical relationship between formal and informal organization—and the resultant synergies or tensions—underscores the necessity of a deeper comprehension of mechanisms that balance organizational adaptability with adherence to structural frameworks. Such an equilibrium ensures the realization of institutional strategic objectives without disregarding the human dimension within the workplace environment.

2. Study Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Analyze the extent to which informal organization influences the emergence of organizational conflict within the institution.

- Identify the obstacles that hinder the formal organization from achieving its organizational goals.

- Emphasize the pivotal role of informal organization in enhancing the effectiveness of formal structures and its contribution to achieving objectives.

- Explore the significance of organizational conflict as a factor influencing organizational behavior within the institution.

- Understand the nature of prevailing social relationships within the institution by diagnosing informal organizational structures.

4. Research Problem

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[1] Amhamed, Kessna.p145
[2] Zarwati, Rachid. *P88*

Various forms of organizational interactions arise due to professional pressures and the work environment, leading individuals to form informal groups that differ in their objectives, purposes, and members' desires. This type of social formation is referred to in the scientific literature as the "informal organization[3].

The informal organization is one of the influential factors in the work environment, as it helps alleviate feelings of boredom and fatigue among employees, reinforces their sense of autonomy and self-worth, and enhances job security and psychological reassurance. It also facilitates social interactions and supports conflict resolution among colleagues or with management, thereby reducing organizational tensions[4].

However, the informal organization imposes regulatory norms and standards for social behavior within the institution. Violators face informal sanctions, such as ridicule or social isolation, while compliant members are rewarded with elevated social status. Nevertheless,

these informal structures may impose restrictions on production or performance levels to align with their self-interests, potentially creating a conflict with the formal objectives of the institution. Each party seeks to advance its own interests, leading to escalating transgressions by the informal organization, while management enforces policies to curb them. This dynamic reinforces the cohesion of informal groups and exacerbates organizational conflict[5].

Main Research Question

What is the nature of the relationship between informal organization and organizational conflict in the municipal offices of Djelfa Province?

Research Questions:

What are the factors influencing the formation of informal organizations within the municipal departments of Djelfa Province?

Does the conflict between the objectives of the formal organization and those of the informal organization lead to an escalation of organizational conflict in the municipal departments of Djelfa?

Research Hypotheses:

General Hypothesis:

There is a relationship between informal work groups and the phenomenon of organizational conflict in the municipal departments of Djelfa.

Sub-Hypotheses:

Informal work groups are formed based on demographic, professional, and social factors in the municipal departments of Djelfa.

The greater the conflict between the objectives of the formal organization and those of the informal organization, the more intense the organizational conflict within the municipal departments of Djelfa becomes.

Conceptual Framework of the Study :

Definition of a Group:

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[3] Zarwati, Rachid. *P120*
[4] Arefa, Ahmed, and Shalabi, Somaya.p101
[5] Al-Jilani, Hassan.p155

The term "group" refers to an assembly of two or more individuals characterized by social interaction among its members, where each individual relies on the others, and each contributes specific roles to achieve common interests or collective goals.

Operational Definitions of a Group

Krech & Crutchfield's Definition:

A group is an assembly of two or more individuals connected by a positive and clear psychological relationship, where the behavior and characteristics of the members influence one another.

Gibb's Definition:

A group is an entity consisting of two or more individuals who interact to achieve a common goal, with this interaction fulfilling the needs of its members.

Cattell's Definition:

A group is a collection of individuals who depend on each other's presence to fulfill certain needs for each member.

Informal Organization: Definition and Concepts :

The informal organization is defined as those organizational structures that emerge spontaneously alongside formal frameworks, resulting from the natural interactions among employees in various social and professional contexts. In this regard, Hanson defines this phenomenon as a network of personal relationships that form within the organizational framework, influencing—positively or negatively—the performance of the formal group, whether by opposing or abandoning its principles.

The Conceptual Definition of Organizational Conflict :

Coser addresses the concept of organizational conflict as a struggle over values, social status, and the pursuit of influence and control over limited resources, where conflicting parties seek to neutralize or eliminate their opponents. Conflict can also be defined as a behavioral pattern that clashes with the interests or orientations of other parties within the organization. This concept is closely related to the idea of disputes and crises, though with fundamental differences. While conflict represents a clash of wills and opposing interests, it does not necessarily reach the level of intensity and destruction characteristic of crises. Additionally, the contours of conflict are clearly defined in terms of parties and objectives, unlike crises, which are marked by ambiguous information and lack of clarity[6].

The Operational Definition of Organizational Conflict :

Operationally, organizational conflict is defined as a form of substantive interaction among an institution's components, whether administrative, service-related, or production-related, which negatively impacts decision-making processes. This conflict may also arise due to cultural or perceptual differences between workers and management, or among workers themselves, regarding the vision of the organization's goals and the means to achieve them.

The Sociological Approach to Conflict: Dahrendorf's Perspective

Dahrendorf begins his analysis of conflict within a theoretical framework inspired by Marx's ideas, while considering the structural transformations witnessed in the capitalist system—particularly those related to the unification of the capitalist class and the anticipated revolutionary role of the working class. Dahrendorf points to the possibility of adopting a radical Marxist interpretation of this phenomenon, where the duality of (ownership/control) has replaced class unity, leading to the emergence of two distinct groups with differing positions, roles, and perspectives.

Time Frame: From 03/11/2024 to 05/12/2024

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[6] Al-Hadhami, Majid Al-Salam, and Mohammed, Jasim.p148

Spatial Scope: The study was conducted in the municipal offices of the city of Djelfa.

Sample and Selection Method:

The sample is defined as the study population from which field data is collected. It represents an integral part of the whole, meaning a selected group of individuals from the population is taken to be representative of the entire community, and the study is conducted on them. Thus, the sample is a specific portion or percentage of the original population, and the study results are then generalized to the entire population[7].

The importance of using sampling in research can be summarized as follows:

- It facilitates the study of large populations when examining the entire population is impossible.

2-1 Study Population Sample:

Original population: 1,200 workers Sample percentage: 10%   Our population consists of two categories Permanent contract workers 420 and Temporary contract workers 780 .

We take 10% of the total research population: Permanent contracts 42 workers

Temporary contracts: 78 workers (10% from each category, distributed by rank).

3- Study Methodology: Descriptive approach

4- Data Collection Tools:

5- Questionnaire:

5-1 Questionnaire Design:

Statistical Processing Methods:

Presentation and Analysis of Field Data:

1. Presentation and Analysis of Field Data:

The majority of respondents reside in close proximity to one another, which facilitates daily interaction both during and after work. This proximity is a significant factor in fostering social relationships, as it eases communication due to their geographical closeness. Residential adjacency is considered one of the key factors contributing to the formation of informal groups in the workplace, enabling members to pursue shared goals and interests while freely carrying out their functions.

As for those who do not have colleagues from the same residential area, this can be attributed to the limited job market and the lack of employment opportunities in their hometowns, as well as the difficulty of securing housing in the city of Djelfa due to the high real estate prices.

Table 1 : Distribution of Colleagues from the Same Kinship Origin by Type of Employment Contract.

Type of employment / Same kinship	Permanent Contract	Temporary contract workers	total

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[7] Amhamed, Kessna. *P189*

yes	8.33 %	43.33 %	51.66 %
No	26.66 %	21.66 %	48.34 %
total	42	78	100 %

From this table, we conclude that 51.66% of employees share familial tieswithin this institution. This percentage is distributed according to employment contract type, with 43.33% being temporary contractors. This can be explained by the fact that recruitment is based on social connections, meaning that pre-employment contracts and integration do not require professional competence or academic qualifications, as these positions are not subject to legal or financial oversight (public service and financial control). This was confirmed by employees of the institution[8].

Conversely, 8.33% of permanent contract workers were hired due to familial relations through personal connections. Meanwhile, 48.34% of workers have no familial ties, as they were recruited through national competitive examinations based on merit and academic qualifications under strict supervision or were hired via employment agencies[9].

What can be concluded is that despite the modern bureaucratic framework based on contemporary regulations, bureaucratic organization in Algeria remains influenced by prevailing social relations within both society and the institution itself.

Table 2: Sense of Belonging to a Work Group and Its Relationship with Employment Contract Type .

Type of employment Contact / Sense of Belonging to the Work Group		Permanent Contract	Temporary contract workers	Total
Yes	Same kinship origin	6.66%	4.16%	10.83%
	Residing in the same area	10 %	25%	35%
	Adjacent in the workplace	15%	30.83%	45.83%
No		3.34%	5%	8.34%
Total		42%	78%	8.33%

Statistical data indicate a high degree of individual affiliation with workgroups, which can be attributed to multiple factors, such as spatial proximity in the workplace or residential settings, or the existence of kinship ties among workers, facilitating the formation of strong social relationships. In this regard, Durkheim supports this phenomenon by asserting that "man is inherently a social being," as daily interaction among individuals strengthens and reinforces these social bonds.

Moreover, affiliation with workgroups serves as a motivating factor for cooperation among workers, particularly in confronting emergent circumstances, whether related to managerial arbitrariness, increased workloads, or other

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[8] Zarwati, Rachid. *P91*
[9] Al-Omayan, Mahmoud Salman. *P79*

professional challenges. A sense of belonging provides individuals with social support that enhances their psychological well-being and job stability, resulting from a positive organizational climate that helps them achieve their goals and aspirations.

Conversely, the reluctance of some individuals to affiliate with workgroups can be explained by their unwillingness to engage with such groups, particularly if they cause disruptions or tensions—especially when group objectives conflict with those of the organization. This conflict may lead to organizational disputes that could result in disciplinary actions such as termination or reassignment to undesirable positions.

Table 3: The Relationship Between the Nature of Workgroup Affiliation and Type of Employment Contract.

Type of employment Contract Mode of Affiliation	Permanent Contract	Temporary Contract	Total
Kinship Ties	5.83%	23.33%	29.16%
Same Occupational Specialization	25%	33.33%	58.34%
Same Social Class	1.66%	5%	7%
Total	42%	78%	100%

The data presented in the table indicate that employees' affiliation with workgroups is primarily centered around functional specialization—that is, similarities in tasks and professions. This can be attributed to their shared professional challenges concerning wages, task distribution, and assigned duties. Additionally, employees operate within the same organizational climate, fostering daily interactions that lead to strong social bonds resembling familial relationships, where they share professional concerns and difficulties. This continuous interaction contributes to the alignment of norms and values among them, reinforced by the prevailing organizational culture within the institution.

As for kinship-based affiliation, it reflects tribalism (or clan-based identity) and ethnic belonging. The percentages shown in the table suggest that Algerian institutions remain far from the rational bureaucratic model based on meritocracy, as informal management—or what might be described as populist management—dominates. In this system, informal workgroups, whether inside or outside the institution, rely on non-objective criteria.

The Impact of Age and Seniority on Professional Relationships :

Age and seniority play a pivotal role in shaping workplace relationships. Older employees tend to form connections with peers due to shared social values and norms, which can sometimes lead to intergenerational conflict due to cultural differences. Furthermore, long-tenured employees possess an in-depth understanding of institutional affairs, including administrative decisions and performance outcomes, making them more adaptable to the organizational environment.

Seeking Assistance in the Workplace:

The findings reveal that most employees turn to colleagues for help in addressing professional challenges, given their mutual understanding and psychological proximity. Conversely, approaching a direct supervisor is often perceived as risky, as it may result in reprimands or negative feedback. However, some employees prefer seeking assistance from supervisors due to their precise knowledge of procedures, ability to guide employees according to their capabilities, and accountability in case of errors.

Employees who independently resolve problems typically hold administrative positions granting them sufficient authority to handle challenges without external intervention. Meanwhile, those who seek

help from external groups usually do so to clarify best practices or strategies for addressing emergent issues.

The Nature of Workplace Relationships :

The data show that employees tend to establish professional relationships that facilitate task performance, problem-solving, and alleviation of monotony and routine. Additionally, these relationships serve a social function by reinforcing an individual's sense of importance within the group. However, another segment views these relationships from an instrumental perspective, leveraging them for material or symbolic gains, such as improved working conditions or promotions[10].

In contrast, a minority of employees prefer maintaining strictly collegial relationships, avoiding deeper friendships or utilitarian ties due to potential impacts on work performance or personal life. Some employees rely on kinship-based relationships, which provide psychological support, alleviate

work burdens, and serve as a protective mechanism against potential provocations from colleagues or management.

The Quality of Workplace Relationships:

The results indicate that relationships among employees are described as "ordinary" or moderate, attributed to limited interaction, whether in professional or personal matters, thus restricting the depth of these relationships.

Clarity and Implementation of Regulations:

The data suggest that institutional rules and instructions are often unclear due to organizational and technical deficiencies that hinder proper professional performance. Moreover, these regulations are not based on prior planning but rather on ad hoc problem-solving. Nevertheless, some employees perceive the rules as clear, attributing this to management's efforts in maintaining order and addressing discrepancies according to established policies.

Challenges in Enforcing Regulations:

The institution faces significant difficulties in implementing regulations, primarily due to poor communication, where complete or accurate information is not accessible to all. Additionally, some supervisors employ arbitrary methods in dealing with employees, leading to strained relationships and organizational conflicts. Furthermore, some supervisors resist updating or adapting regulations to align with institutional changes, exacerbating these challenges[11].

1. Supervisors' Challenges and Regulatory Complexities

Supervisors face significant challenges in performing their duties due to limited authority, as their role is confined to executing directives from upper management without decision-making autonomy. Survey respondents indicated complexities in regulatory frameworks, with supervisors struggling to comprehend them, thereby hindering effective implementation. Additionally, disparities in

educational levels among workers present further obstacles to enforcing these regulations.

Conversely, workers who reported no difficulties in compliance attributed this to their accumulated practical experience and comprehensive understanding of operational mechanisms, whether through direct engagement or indirect observation of organizational policies and procedures.

2. The Role of Informal Work Groups in Supporting Individuals and Their Relationship with Employment Contracts

Findings suggest that most informal work groups within the organization do not prioritize individual performance due to administrative pressures, such as threats of dismissal, financial penalties (e.g., salary deductions), denial of promotions, or departmental transfers. These constraints diminish the groups' ability to support their members, rendering them ineffective in enhancing worker performance.

3. The Influence of Informal Groups on the Organization and Their Relationship with Employment Contracts

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[10] Amhamed, p110
[11] Al-Omayan, Mahmoud Salman. *P45*

Informal work groups primarily form on a socio-occupational basis—integrating social and professional factors—as evidenced in. These groups aim to safeguard their members' interests, potentially influencing management decisions, particularly when they represent a substantial organizational presence. They may obstruct certain policies or incite tension and organizational conflict, adversely affecting both employee stability and institutional cohesion.

When the objectives of these groups conflict with organizational goals, they may employ pressure tactics, such as filing grievances or persistent complaints, creating what Michel Crozier termed a "vicious cycle"—intensifying conflict dynamics within the organizational environment[12].

4. The Impact of Informal Groups on Information Flow

Data from the designated table reveal that informal groups significantly influence internal information dissemination, affecting its speed, distortion, or monopolization. This factor plays a pivotal role in conflict management, as it can either mitigate or exacerbate tensions depending on how information is utilized. Greater group cohesion strengthens internal communication networks, enhancing members' ability to exchange information efficiently. Consequently, they gain precise insights into organizational developments, enabling them to steer conflicts to their advantage when necessary.

2. Hypothesis Testing

2.1. Hypothesis 1: Informal Work Groups Tend to Form Based on Demographic, Professional, and Social Homogeneity

Results indicate that respondents share similar demographic and social traits, including:

Residential Proximity: 63.34% reported living in adjacent areas, facilitating informal group formation.

Kinship and Hiring Practices: shows that 51.66% work alongside relatives, highlighting the role of personal connections in recruitment.

Affiliation with Informal Groups: Membership reached 91.66% underscoring these groups' role in fulfilling psychological and social needs—alleviating monotony, enabling emotional expression, and providing problem-solving support.

Thus, the hypothesis that informal groups emerge from demographic, occupational, and social similarities is validated[13].

2.2. Hypothesis 2: Greater Alignment Between Organizational and Informal Group Goals Reduces

Organizational Conflict

The study identified several conflict-escalating factors:

Ambiguous Regulations: 61.66% cited unclear policies, while 91.66% noted the organization's rigid centralization, reducing it to a mere executor of top-down directives.

Exclusion from Decision-Making: 93.33% stated that workers are excluded from policy formulation, reflecting authoritarian leadership.

Management Pressure on Informal Groups: 60.83% perceived these groups as ineffective in supporting performance due to fear of administrative sanctions.

Group Influence on Decisions: 78.33% and 84.16% reported that informal groups disrupt decisions or heighten tensions when their goals clash with organizational objectives.

Additionally, 75.83% attributed conflict to divergent values and interests, while 43.33% linked goal misalignment to declining morale.

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[12] Al-Hassan, Jaber Awad Sayed.p122
[13] Al-Hadhami, Majid Al-Salam, and Mohammed, Jasim.167

Key Conclusion: The findings confirm the hypothesis, demonstrating that misaligned objectives between informal groups and the organization escalate conflict, undermining operational stability and performance.

Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of informal groups in shaping organizational dynamics, conflict management, and information flow. It underscores that institutional success hinges on reconciling organizational and group objectives while adopting participatory leadership to minimize friction and foster harmony.

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