

# THE MODERN CHALLENGES OF TEAMWORK IN KINDERGARTEN

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**Abstract** The article discusses teamwork as an important segment of quality educational work in kindergartens. In modern society, full of everyday challenges and many innovations, team (co)operation with the aim of quality educational work is essential. The theoretical part presents teamwork and tandem work in all dimensions, i.e., how they are formed, the problems that occur within the above, and members' roles. The study on teamwork was conducted among educators and assistant educators in kindergartens in Pomurje and Austrian Styria. The authors investigated the factors that lead to team formation, the frequency of various causes of team inefficiency or inefficiency in the implementation of activities within the teamwork, as well as possible conflicts and reasons for their emergence. The authors were interested in how a team is formed and the possible problems in its operation, with an emphasis on the comparison between the work in Slovenia and the work in Austria. The study showed that the differences between Pomurje and Austrian Styria lie mainly in the concept of the tandem itself and the reasons for forming a team.

**Keywords:**

teamwork,  
the role of the  
individual,  
inefficient  
implementation,  
conflicts,  
the quality of the  
educational  
process



## 1 Introduction

In everyday life, connections between kindergarten staff, who have a significant impact on children, can also be forged through teamwork and tandem work. Both are ways of interacting based primarily on constructive cooperation and problem solving. For success within teamwork and tandem work it is essential to build good relationships that affect all team members and consequently the children within the department. However, we must not ignore the emergence of conflicts in mutual relations, which must be resolved in an ongoing basis. When resolving conflicts, the responsibility is often transferred to another member or the mistake is not acknowledged, which makes the conflict more difficult to resolve. Problems in teamwork include not only the above-mentioned causes, but also the incorrect and inappropriate distribution of roles among members in tandem and teamwork, which causes additional failure.

## 2 Definition of Team and Teamwork

Different definitions of teamwork can be found in the literature, some of which are presented in more general terms, while others mainly relate to different areas of teamwork in practice. Planning educational work can be equated with planning a whole life in kindergarten. The educator, with the support of an assistant educator, plans educational work on the basis of theoretical knowledge and observations of the developmental characteristics of the preschool child, so professional training is extremely important for quality educational work and the individual's optimal development (White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia, 2011). In the pedagogical encyclopaedia, teamwork in education is defined as a way or form of activity performed by a group, i.e., two or more pedagogical experts who cooperate directly and equally with each other and have a common goal (Polak, 2012). However, other, slightly different notions and definitions of teamwork are also emerging. A team is also presented as an organizational formation, which, however, consists of goals within which tasks are designed. These tasks are aimed at team members. Team members interact on the basis of communication and the mutual exchange of information, knowledge and experience (Lepičnik et al., 2015).

Bečaj (1995, p. 27) defines a team as: "Any number of people connected by an effort to achieve a certain common goal. In order to be successful, they need to communicate with each other, create different roles and related tasks, appropriate

rules of conduct that are general and apply to all team members.” Everard and Morris (1996) say that a team is: “A group of people who can successfully solve any task they undertake. Successfully means in the time available and with economically used internal and external available resources.” Poljak (1980) is of the opinion that teamwork is primarily the involvement of employees who are experts in the work of the school community in terms of skills and knowledge, and that this is an integral part of schoolwork; hence, the very need for joint preparation for work, including joint work division, joint management and analysis.

In foreign professional literature, the definition of teamwork and teaching is based on Schaplin, who says that teamwork is a type of lesson organization that presupposes staff and associated students, leaving the team with joint responsibility for all or part of the activities (Polak, 2009). Work, which is understood as teamwork, is a way in which we seek and develop educational phenomena in kindergartens; where we consolidate forms of knowledge and values, both personal and social, which arise as a result of successful and effective teamwork (Stevanovič, 2001). The definitions of teamwork differ over time, but they still have similarities and common features, the most prominent of which are, defining a team as a group of people, the goals and desire of which are successful implementation and planning. However, the success of implementation can be understood in various ways, in our case from the point of view of society or from the point of view of the individual.

The preschool teacher is one of the team members who takes care of all or part of the activities. Within the team, the educator’s work requires bettering their competencies in various areas of knowledge, which every educator should master. As a result, their superiors’ expectations, as well as those of the children’s parents, are very high. However, we must not forget our colleagues, i.e., other professionals who in their own way demand constant development of one’s professional personality. Among the various factors that affect teamwork in kindergarten, there are those that emphasize the individual and their attitude to improving, analysing and critically evaluating themselves and their work. This requires an ongoing review of one’s own work and a willingness to discuss critical issues. Successful teamwork in kindergarten also requires the field of communication (Golčer, 2014). A team is therefore a group of members who are either experts or closely related members who connect with each other and work closely together. The educator within the team performs at least three roles in their profession, namely the role of a person, the role of a civil servant, and the role of an expert. In the role of a person, they have

different expectations and ideas about what they want to achieve through education. It is especially important that they are able to function in relation to others, i.e., not only in relation to students, but also in relation to colleagues and parents. In the role of a civil servant, they receive a certain payment, for which they must fulfil certain tasks and follow rules. In carrying out their work, the educator is also committed to the profession. As an expert, they must work in the field of education as well as the education of students. It is their duty to build their own educational concept so that they will be able to plan educational work because parents and children have the right to know which educational concept is being used (Peček Čuk, 2009). The equation of teamwork and tandem as a concept appears often, which is inadequate in theory and practice. A tandem consists of two people, an educator and an assistant educator, or two educators who intertwine their roles in an equal way, work in a coordinated manner, plan educational work as a team, and thus carry out and evaluate activities, and they affect each other in a professional manner. The members of the tandem must cooperate in the kindergarten in providing an adequate amount of time for explanation, conversation, description, storytelling, etc. In this way, they provide the child with a stimulating learning environment for their holistic development (Polak, 2007). In addition, we should not ignore the fact that, regardless of whether we are talking about a team in a department (two people) or a team between departments and a kindergarten (several people) or a team between other institutions and kindergartens, they are united by common characteristics (Lepičnik Vodopivec, 1996).

## **2.1 Team Building**

According to Maček (2014), the process of team building is crucial. The beginning of forming teams goes back to the basic sources of motivation for teamwork; this is related to the psychological needs that the individual must meet. We have the need for security, the need for acceptance, the need for self-actualization, and the need for confirmation and recognition. In addition, the formation of a team cannot take place without the cooperative attitude of the members.

Team building appears in different ways in different literature, wherein similarities and differences can be noted. Most often, experts refer to the American psychologist Barry W. Tuckman, who worked intensively on the definition of four important stages in team development. He believed that all teams must go through four stages of development in order to be successful. These stages follow each other in a certain

order, but the duration itself is not predetermined, as it can vary between teams. Tuckman defines four stages, namely the stage of forming, the stage of storming, the stage of norming, and the performance itself. Within this, it is important to note that the stages are focused on the development of relationships between individuals, and not so much on tasks and content, so that it is possible to form a successful, long-term team (Polak, 2009).

The basic resource for team building is also related to the psychological needs of each of the individuals. Polak (2009) cites the following psychological needs intended for team building:

- The need for security: compliance with the rules ensures security in the team, but if one's needs are not met, one feels threatened. These needs are the need for dependence, stability, order, freedom from fear, etc.
- The need for self-actualization: it is the need of a greater order that directs one to realize and become that which is possible.
- The need for acceptance: the very feeling of acceptance is important for dealing with problems and conflicts that are part of teamwork. An individual feels rejected when a need is unmet.
- The need for confirmation and recognition: these are the needs for self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, and freedom. Meeting these needs leads to a sense of self-confidence and ability.

However, we should not ignore the fact that it is not only members and their motivations or desires for teamwork are important for team building, but it is also the behaviour of team members. Bales, a sociologist, studied the behaviour of group members. He listed six problem areas that include both directions of behaviour, i.e., positive and negative (Polak, 2007):

- the area of integration (showing solidarity or also expressing opposition to other members);
- the area of supervision and management (making proposals or also expressing needs for ideas);
- the area of orientation (directing members or also the need for guidance);
- the area of tension in relationships (showing tension or also releasing tension in the team itself); and
- the area of evaluation (evaluation, expression of the need for evaluation).

With the described problem areas, it is possible to identify or study the processes in a group and not only the content of group work this way.

## 2.2 Creating Rules in a Team

For the successful and efficient implementation of tasks and duties in teamwork and for successful education within teamwork, certain rules are required, the observance of which leads to the interconnectedness of members and ensures successful education. The rules that guide and regulate the work of team members are designed considering all the specifics of each team, and a consensus is reached by all its members (Bečaj, 1997). In each group, it is necessary to create rules for teamwork among team members. It is the formulation of teamwork rules that leads to long-term useful work. Rules within a team cannot and should not be created from the outside but should be designed considering all the specifics and characteristics of the team members (Polak, 1999).

Based on Polak (2007), team rules are divided into the following four categories:

- rules relating to the work of the group; not complying with or adhering to the rules affects the achievement of the common goal;
- rules setting out views and beliefs; the correctness of beliefs is usually judged more by coherence;
- rules that determine the way of group interaction; they ensure the fair distribution of benefits and prevent conflicts; and
- rules that determine the hairstyle, dress and other aspects of appearance; allow a clear identity.

We find that the rules in a team are formed in the very process of social interaction. Some rules are co-created by the individuals within the team, while others are already in place and are only respected and followed by team members. Full satisfaction of the members' individual needs cannot be achieved, as the goals differ depending on the individual (Polak, 2007).

Group rules can thus be formulated in the following ways (Polak, 2007):

- by agreement between the members of the group;
- by adopting pre-established rules of conduct;

- spontaneously;
- from similar personal views and interests without any special arrangement;
- and
- by mutual rapprochement and influence.

Rules within a team can also be divided into formal and informal rules, which are related to the formal and informal roles of members and are intertwined. They can be written or unwritten. For formal groups, where formal rules apply, these are clearly defined by obligations and duties, and penalties are set in advance for non-compliance (Bečaj, 1997; Havelka, 1980). Rules within a team determine the special experience of teamwork, as it is a process of creating an internal rule of behaviour in the team, which with the topicality of the entire content (e.g., facing expectations, attitudes, problems focusing and in orientation, different norms) provides a large set of cognitive, motivational, emotional and communication processes (Polak, 1999). Thus, we find that every rule is a kind of restriction. We are willing to stick to every rule as long as it brings us certain benefits and desirable goals. If we disregard and do not comply to the rules, we violate them. By doing so, we can achieve an unpleasant psychological state, condemnation, and even hostility from other people, etc.

### **3 Teamwork in Kindergarten**

The curriculum for kindergartens largely emphasizes the autonomy of kindergartens, educators and assistant educators. The document follows modern curricula in the world and thus emphasizes the professional responsibility and at the same time the autonomy of educators and assistant educators and cooperation between them (Dolar Bahovec & Golobič, 2004). The Curriculum for Kindergartens from 1999 is a Slovenian national document that covers the basis of preschool education in kindergartens. It covers the objectives of the curriculum for kindergartens as well as the principle of team implementation and the planning of preschool education. In addition, it also covers the principle of the professional development of professional staff in the department, between departments and within the kindergarten, etc. The Curriculum for Kindergartens (1999) focuses on the role of adults, i.e., educators, assistant educators, and other professionals (counselling and management staff in kindergartens). Throughout history, the role of the assistant educator has also changed; the assistant educator not only looks after children at work, as was once the case, but also participates in the educational process and its implementation.

They also cover and focus on team planning and implementation, which envisages cooperation between professionals. With the proper implementation of teamwork, it is possible to effectively develop the ability to understand oneself and others, the ability to consider diversity and participate in groups, recognize emotions, transfer knowledge from different fields, regardless of the team members' interests, develop independence, develop imagination, etc. (Kindergarten Act, 1996). Teamwork runs from the planned activities to the end result. The result can be achieved through mutual work in tandem, which contributes to the conditions for the development and learning of the individual, the ease of presenting content, the appropriate content, the time, space organization and professional development, reducing the likelihood of failure and errors, etc. (Zore, 2008).

### **3.1 The Role of Team Members and Mutual Communication**

Team members take on different tasks in a team. At the level of the different tasks assigned by the team itself, we can talk about the diverse roles of the members. These roles are linked to their job, to their professional competencies, and at the same time to the type of education. However, each professional in a team can perform several different tasks at once. When different roles are combined, some are more pronounced and others less so. Thus, the basic condition for the successful operation of a team is primarily related to the clear division of roles and tasks to be accepted and implemented by team members. If each of the prescribed roles is represented, teamwork can be successful (Baumgart, 1997). Depending on the level of the task, a team member can be one of the following (Polak, 2007):

- an initiator, who initiates events, provides further incentives;
- a summary or conclusion designer, who selects, combines, and connects ideas;
- a clarifier, who determines what members actually think, their understanding of others, and who explains the incomprehensible; and
- an information seeker or mediator, who gives and seeks information in various ways that help to realize the task.

We find that the tasks of team members are interconnected and complementary, which ultimately leads to successful teamwork. By connecting ideas and encouraging, certain understandings and conclusions are formed between individual members, which contribute to success in achieving the set goal.



Members can also perform different tasks in different teams. Praper (2001) lists three types of teams:

- interdisciplinary teams (characterized by cooperation between team members, close connection and communication, and creativity);
- multidisciplinary teams (members perform demanding work and extensive tasks, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, members do not work closely with each other); and
- transdisciplinary teams (close connections, individuals maintain their individual side and specific differences).

The basic conditions for the successful operation of a team are the clear division of roles between team members, wherein members should accept and feel comfortable and safe, as well as clear goals that make sense to the individual, and open, honest communication and democratic leadership (Eichhorn et al., 1998). Based on different levels of support activities, team members can express themselves as those who express their emotions within the team, perceiving team mood, positive and negative emotions and relationships, and helping members articulate their emotions. A team member can also express himself as a communication facilitator. In this case, all members have the opportunity to express their opinion. As a facilitator, a member of the team can be friendly, warm and responsible to others, while actively listening to and accepting the opinions of others. Last but not least, a team member can be a maintainer of harmony, directing members to express and resolve inconsistencies and conflicts within the team. We find that the success of teamwork in the distribution of roles among team members is based on flexibility and by achieving balance (Polak, 2007).

### **3.2 Team Efficiency and Inefficiency**

Good communication is the fundamental basis of successful teamwork. Each member of the team is responsible for efficiency, so it is important that team members agree on a type of communication (Polak, 1999). Often, precisely communication itself is ineffective, which affects the inefficiency of the team. According to Marjanovič Umek and Fekonja Peklaj (2008), an inefficient team is characterised by competitive communication, disobedience, and non-recognition of the ideas of others, while an effective team utilises communication characterized by harmonious action, based on active listening and the desire to understand. In

accordance with the formation of the team, we must follow the team behaviour that proves to be effective in practice and for which we are almost certain that the end result will be an effective team. An individual's personal readiness is the key to successful teamwork. All negative expectations, feelings and thoughts lead to the inhibition of communication, which may result from an individual's negative experience with other teamwork or their personal unwillingness to work in a team.

Brajša (1993) distinguishes three basic types of teams, according to their effectiveness:

- *successful teams*: team members work together more successfully and better, developing common new, different and better solutions and results;
- *unsuccessful teams*: within these teams, members have poorer joint work, they work as if they were working individually, teamwork limits them and prevents them from exploiting their potential; and
- *average teams*: team members do not work more successfully and better than they would if working individually, and they do not develop their own team creativity.

In general, we can also distinguish between highly efficient and inefficient teams. Highly effective teams are also considered to have special characteristics, such as genuine and open communication, clear and positive goals, a well-designed way of monitoring, controlling and also solving problems, motivating all members, and also emotional security and creativity. On the other hand, there are ineffective teams. They are not characterized by the characteristics we identified in an effective team. Quite the opposite. They are characterized by unclearly distributed roles, unclear goals and intentions, inappropriate decision-making and poor management, overlooking the needs of other members, the lack of necessary feedback, etc. (Polak, 2009).

#### **4 Conflicts and Problems in Teamwork**

As in life itself, problems arise in kindergarten that need to be accepted and solved. Ineffective communication and problems occur in the case of disrespect, threats, commanding in a negative way without explanation, criticism without a proposed solution, and derision, among others. Organizational barriers are also a big problem, as the activity in the kindergarten is not properly regulated. In the case of vaguely defined roles in a team, and therefore also roles in a tandem, there is a mixing of

roles or exclusion of certain individuals and thus dissatisfaction with work, which leads to conflict within the tandem and consequently within the team. In addition to all the reasons we have listed, we must not neglect individuals' personal reasons for not wanting to find a solution or get involved in teamwork, such as the distrust of others, personal introversion, the perception of fear, fear, and personal threat. The most common problem in teamwork occurs in the relationship between the educator and the assistant educator. Reasons can vary, but it is important to mention the difference in personality, flexibility, need for control or sympathy. Fear is also a common occurrence in teamwork. This can stem from fear of failure or embarrassment stemming from pedagogical errors (Polak, 2007).

However, sometimes, for various reasons, conflicts and problems in the team are not resolved. This makes the work and fulfilment of tasks in the team difficult. Interpersonal contacts are worse because individuals do not understand each other, do not support each other, and do not help each other. This can have a very negative effect on the children present if the conflicting behaviour is noticeable. If conflicts within the team are resolved, some specifics of the team situation must be considered. All conflicts must be resolved within the team, and all those involved in the conflict must be present while resolving the conflict (Polak, 1999). Owing to unresolved conflicts, work within the team is difficult, which in turn leads to failure at work. This also worsens the quality of interpersonal relationships; individuals do not understand each other at work, do not support each other and do not help each other. There is tension, which leads to feelings of doubt and fear. Conflicts must therefore be resolved within the team in the presence of all members, otherwise the team members' trust may be jeopardized (Polak, 2007).

Marjanovič Umek, Fekonja Peklaj and Bajc (2005) emphasize the importance of conflict resolution. In resolving conflicts, the method of cooperation must be followed, since in this method, the team members confront each other, process the conflict, talk openly, and then find the best way to a solution together. To resolve conflicts in a team, we need to include the following steps:

- clarifying the characteristics of the conflict and finding the causes;
- analysing the impact of the conflict on other areas, such as joint work;
- expressing understanding for the resolution of the conflict;
- involving external people to help resolve the conflict (e.g., a counsellor);
- explaining the expected changes; and

- identifying the changes and the benefits that they will bring.

Team members can resolve conflicts in a variety of ways. Jovan (1987) cites negative ways of resolving, such as avoiding conflict, forming a coalition, invoking authority, leaving the team, overcoming and pressuring, persuading people to make decisions, compromising members so that they abandon their positions. Brajša (1993) lists the methods by which we resolve conflicts: the method of compromise, the method of cooperation, the method of adaptation, the method of competence, and the method of avoidance. Brajša understands the method of cooperation as the only possible way of real conflict resolution in a team. The bottom line is that team members should face conflict, talk openly about it, and then find the best solution.

## 5 Methodology

### *Objectives and research questions*

The study identified differences and similarities in the understanding of the importance of teamwork and tandem work among professionals in kindergartens in Pomurje and Austrian Styria.

The following research questions guided the study:

- What factors (causes) lead to team building?
- What is the frequency of reasons for the inefficiency of the team, i.e., teamwork?
- How often do conflicts occur within a team and what are the reasons for them?

### *Research sample*

The study covered 109 educators and assistant educators from the Pomurje region and the neighbouring country of Austria. Of these, 50.5% were staff members from Slovenia and 49.5% from Austria. According to the professional structure, 56% of the sample were educators, 31.2% were assistant educators, and 12.8% were other professionals. 33% of respondents were aged under 30, 31.2% of respondents were aged between 31 to 39, 31.2% of respondents were aged between 40 to 49, and 9.2% of respondents were aged 50 and over.

*Data collection procedures*

Data were collected in the 2018/19 school year. Data were collected with the help of questionnaires, which were distributed among the participants in the study. First, a sounding survey was conducted, using a questionnaire to correct errors and omissions in the structure of this form of question. This was followed by the preparation of a questionnaire in Slovene and German, which included closed-ended questions on various aspects of teamwork. The authors examined the factors of team formation, motivation for teamwork, reasons for team inefficiency, and the causes of conflict within a team.

*Data processing procedures*

The collected data were processed using SPSS statistical software. The statistical methods of descriptive statistics and selected non-parametric tests were used to analyse the rating scales.

## 6 Results, Interpretation, and Discussion

The authors first present data on the reasons for forming a team.

**Table 1: Team formation factors**

Team formation factors	Respondents			
		Slovenia	Austria	Total
Easier implementation of activities	f	13	14	27
	f %	23.6	25.9	24.8
Professional complementarity	f	38	0	38
	f %	69.1	0,0	34.9
Interest in joint work	f	0	34	34
	f %	0.0	63.0	31.2
Friendly relations	f	4	6	10
	f %	7.3	11.1	9.2
Total	f	55	54	109
	f %	100.0	100.0	100.0

There is a statistically significant difference between respondents on the factors that cause the formation of a team by country ( $\chi^2 = 8.474$ ,  $P = .004$ ). The results show that when answering the question about the factor reason for forming a team, only

23.6% of respondents from Slovenia and only 25.9% of respondents from Austria answered that easier implementation of activities was a factor in the reason for forming a team (*Table 1*). As many as 69.1% of respondents from Slovenia believed that professional complementarity was a factor in forming a team, while no respondent from Austria were of the opinion that this was the reason for forming a team. As many as 63% of respondents from Austria expressed interest in working together as a factor that was the reason for forming a team. Furthermore, only 7.3% of respondents from Slovenia and 11.1% of respondents from Austria answered that the reason for forming a team was friendly relations.

The difference in factors for the cause of team building is not necessarily present only in different countries, it can be present in different kindergartens since individuals' views on the importance of the cause for team building will vary.

In the continuation data on the importance of the psychological needs of team members in their motivation for teamwork and the differences in this by country is presented.

**Table 2: Assessment of the importance of the team member's psychological needs in their motivation for teamwork**

	Average rank
The importance of the need for security	2.75
The importance of the need for self-actualization	2.58
The importance of the need for acceptance	2.75
The importance of the need for confirmation and recognition	1.91

In analysing the participants' assessment concerning the importance of psychological needs for teamwork shows that the most common are the need for acceptance and the need for security as psychological needs, which are most important for the participant in teamwork. The authors believe that the acceptance of other people is an important value and that individuals should accept other people, because only in doing so can one be included in and embraced by society. These needs are followed by the need for self-actualization. The need for confirmation and recognition is the least common psychological need, which is surprising, as it is often noticeable in practice that recognition and confirmation of the success of a particular activity is an extremely important motivator for further teamwork (*Table 2*).

The results in the *Table 3* show that when asked about the greatest importance of psychological needs in relation to the country, only 18.2% of respondents from Slovenia and 29.6% of respondents from Austria chose the psychological need for self-actualization, while 41.8% of respondents from Slovenia and 37% of respondents from Austria chose the psychological need for acceptance. Following this, 27.3% of respondents from Slovenia and 26.4% of respondents from Austria chose the importance of the need for security. The need for confirmation and recognition was of the least importance to the participants from both countries.

Between the need for self-actualization and the need for acceptance, we can talk about statistically significant differences regarding the maximum value of psychological needs of an individual in a team according to the country ( $\chi^2 = 3.853$ ,  $P = .048$  in  $\chi^2 = 3.671$ ,  $P = .009$ ).

**Table 3: The importance of psychological needs by country**

The importance of psychological needs	Respondents				$\chi^2$	P
		Slovenia	Austria	Total		
The need for self-actualization	f	10	16	26	3.853	.048
	f %	18.2	29.6	23.9		
The importance of the need for acceptance	f	23	20	38	3.671	.009
	f %	41.8	37.0	39.4		
The importance of the need for security	f	15	14	29	1.101	.950
	f %	27.3	26.4	26.9		
The importance of the need for confirmation and recognition	f	5	4	9	1.546	.672
	f %	9.1	7.4	8.3		

The authors believe that all these needs are the key reasons for forming a team, because without them the individuals in the team would not be successful. Polak (2009) also cites psychological needs that are the reason for team building; the need for security that ensures security in the team, ensures compliance with the rules; the need for self-actualization that guides a person to follow and realise opportunities; the need for acceptance, which is important for dealing with problems and conflicts that are part of teamwork; and the need for confirmation and recognition, which leads to a sense of self-confidence and ability.

Table 4 presents data on the frequency among causes of inefficiency in a team i.e., teamwork.

The most common causes of inefficiency within a team and teamwork are inadequate professional education and distrust of individual members, followed by the influence of kindergarten management, the mood of the children. and parental interference in the work of professionals.

In analysing the frequency among causes of inefficiency in a team or in teamwork according to age, the authors found that respondents aged 30 and younger mostly attribute it to inadequate professional education and inadequate communication between team members (see Table 6). The least common reason is the influence of the children’s mood. Respondents aged between 31 to 39 attribute the distrust of an individual member in the performance of the entire team as the most common cause, while parental interference in the work of professionals in the team is the least chosen cause in this age group.

Respondents in the age range of between 40 to 49 see the largest common cause in the influence of the children’ mood, and the least common causes are inadequate professional education and inadequate communication between team members. Respondents aged 50 and over attribute parental interference in the work of professionals as the most common cause of team failure. However, they most rarely see inadequate communication between team members as the cause. From the stated one can conclude that ideas about the occurrence of causes of inefficiency in a team or in teamwork differ significantly depending on age. Especially in comparing the youngest and the oldest respondents, there are differences in the experience of employees according to age.

**Table 5: Frequency of causes of inefficiency of a team i.e., teamwork**

	Average rank
The influence of kindergarten management	3.40
Team members’ varying views	2.71
The influence of the children’s mood	3.29
Parental interference in the work of professionals in the team	3.12
Inadequate professional education	4.62
Distrust of a member	3.85



**Table 6: Frequency of causes of inefficiency of the team i.e., teamwork, according to age**

The importance of needs	Average rank				$\chi^2$	P
	Up to 30 years	From 31 to 39 years	From 40 to 49 years	50 years and		
The influence of kindergarten management	58.50	54.69	53.67	47.30	1.474	.688
Different views of team members	56.14	56.78	51.90	53.85	0.986	.805
The influence of the children's mood	53.63	49.03	61.31	61.95	3.730	.292
Parental interference in the work of professionals in the team	65.81	41.59	53.71	65.45	4.871	.002
Inadequate communication between team members	69.94	52.44	44.88	39.25	4.920	.001
Inadequate professional education	71.03	48.82	46.86	41.90	4.952	.001
Distrust of an individual member in the performance of the entire team	57.36	64.59	44.81	43.45	3.924	.020

There are statistically significant differences between the reasons for team inefficiency and age regarding parental intervention in the work of professionals working in a team ( $\chi^2= 4.871$ ,  $P= .002$ ), inadequate communication between team members ( $\chi^2= 4.920$ ,  $P= .001$ ), inadequate professional education ( $\chi^2= 4.952$ ,  $P= .001$ ), and in response to the distrust of an individual member in the performance of the entire team in ( $\chi^2= 3.942$ ,  $P= .020$ ). In view of the above, the authors agree with the above-mentioned answer about inadequate communication, as disobedience and disturbances in the communicative system lead to failure to carry out activities, which can also be observed in literature and in citations from various authors. Surprisingly, opinions differ statistically significantly in terms of professional education. Namely, the authors believe that all professional workers

should be sufficiently qualified to perform their work and also have the appropriate education to perform it.

An inefficient team is therefore characterized by competitive communication, disobedience and non-recognition of the ideas of others. An individual's personal readiness is the key to effective teamwork (Marjanovič Umek & Fekonja Peklaj, 2008).

**Table 7: Frequency of occurrence of factors for the emergence of conflicts within the team**

	Average rank
The emergence of conflicts due to organizational barriers	3.08
The emergence of conflicts due to communication barriers between team members	2.96
The emergence of conflicts due to unprofessional connections between participants in the team	3.42
The emergence of conflicts due to the distrust of participants within the team	3.80
The emergence of conflicts due to fear and threat to participants within the team	4.11
The emergence of conflicts due to undefined roles in the team	3.62

The results show that conflicts most often occur because of fear and anxiety among participants within the team, which can also result in distrust between participants within the team. Communication barriers between team members are less of a factor for the emergence of conflicts, although in practice we often find that communication is one of the most common barriers to the emergence of conflicts between team members.

**Table 8: Frequency of occurrence of factors within the team by country**

Cause of conflicts	Average rank	
	Slovenia	Austria
The emergence of conflicts due to organizational barriers	56.87	53.09
The emergence of conflicts due to communication barriers between team members	46.25	63.90
The emergence of conflicts due to unprofessional connections between participants in the team	49.44	60.67
The emergence of conflicts due to distrust of participants within the team	48.37	61.75
The emergence of conflicts due to fear and anxiety among participants within the team	52.55	57.50
The emergence of conflicts due to undefined roles in the team	50.73	59.35

The results of the research on the frequency of factors for conflicts within the team by country (*Table 8*) show that in Slovenia, the most common factor are conflicts due to organizational barriers, while in Austria, it is the occurrence of conflicts due to distrust of participants within the team and conflicts due to communication barriers between team members. Conflicts due to communication barriers between team members are the least common in Slovenia, while in Austria, conflicts due to organizational barriers occur rarely. This indicates a complete contrast in the respondents' answers on the frequency of occurrence of factors concerning the emergence of conflicts within the team between the two countries.

Polak (2007) states the most common causes of team conflict. These are mainly interpersonal barriers, personal confinement, mistrust, unclear definitions of roles, organizational barriers, and personal barriers such as, anxieties, personal threats, fear, etc. However, the author does not define which of the needs are the most important for an individual, so it can be concluded that the frequency of factors for conflict varies from individual to individual, and consequently, from country to country.

## **7 Conclusion**

In our society, teamwork and tandem work build bridges between adults. These bridges manifest as interactions between participants, constructive cooperation, as well as problem solving. Therefore, the first point of interest was the reason for forming a team. It turned out that the most common cause among Slovenian respondents is professional complementarity, while among Austrian respondents, the interest is to work together. Although the respondents joined teams mainly for professional or work reasons, according to the results of the study, they also satisfy their psychological needs in cooperation and teamwork; the most common needs they indicated were for security and acceptance.

Building a team is a complex and time-consuming process of developing relationships between participants. The process of stabilizing a team also requires time in which, according to Rot (1983), a certain team must go through the following phases: the cohesion development phase (i.e., cohesiveness), the testing phase (interpersonal relationships are formed and roles are divided and rules set), the stability phase (interpersonal relationships are consolidated and work is done effectively and successfully), and the conflict phase.

The success of the team depends primarily on the reasons for its formation, the successful division of roles, and the work within the team. Of course, a team can also be unsuccessful. The study showed there are several reasons for this, and all of them were identified by the respondents as key factors in the study. These are mainly the influence of kindergarten management on the work of the team, differing views within the team, the influence of the children's mood, parental interference in the work of professionals in the team, inadequate professional education, and distrust of a member. All of these also increase the frequency of conflict in the team, which we must resolve if we want to ensure the existence and successful operation of the team in the future.

The study highlighted only a few factors related to the formation and operation of a team, thus the topic needs to be explored in more detail. Since a team offers both professional and psychological (personal) support to an individual and is important for both the professional and personal development of an individual, it would make sense to repeat the study from time to time to continuously monitor possible changes, and also expand it to a larger sample.

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