ISSN: 2658-8455
Volume 6, Issue 10 (2025), pp. 364-382.

IJAFAME
International Journal of Accounting, Finance, Auditing, Management & Economics

The Impact of Labour Conflicts on Organisational Performance: Insights from a Literature Review

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Disclosure Statement :	The authors declare that they have not received any financial support that could have influenced the objectivity of this study. They take full responsibility for any potential plagiarism, the use of artificial intelligence in the writing process, as well as for the results presented in this article.
Conflict of Interest :	The authors report no conflicts of interest.
Cite this article :	BENSOUDA, A., & EL AISSAOUI, H. (2025). The Impact of Labour Conflicts on Organisational Performance: Insights from a Literature Review. *International Journal of Accounting, Finance, Auditing, Management and Economics*, *6*(10), 364–382.
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International Journal of Accounting, Finance, Auditing, Management and Economics - IJAFAME
ISSN: 2658-8455
Volume 6, Issue 10 (2025)

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Abstract:

Organisational performance is a key determinant of firms' competitiveness and sustainability, closely shaped by the quality of employment relations. In this article, labour conflicts are defined within the sphere of industrial relations, involving workers, employers, and sometimes the state. This study adopts a narrative literature review as its methodological approach, synthesising findings across diverse contexts. Most studies report negative financial and operational effects of labour conflicts, while a smaller but significant subset identifies constructive outcomes through social dialogue, institutional regulation, and organisational learning. The review highlights five major dimensions of organisational performance affected: financial, operational, employee and social outcomes, corporate image and customer satisfaction, as well as innovation and learning. Overall, findings suggest that poorly managed conflicts generate economic losses, productivity decline, and reputational damage, whereas constructive management can transform conflicts into levers of cohesion, regulation, and innovation. This synthesis underscores the heterogeneity of existing evidence, the scarcity of research in emerging contexts, and the need for integrative frameworks that link labour conflicts with multi-dimensional performance outcomes.

Keywords : Labour conflicts, Organisational performance, Financial performance, Innovation, Literature review, Industrial Relations, Human Resource Management (HRM).
Classification JEL : J53, M54, J24, L25.
Paper type : Theoretical Research

ISSN: 2658-8455
Volume 6, Issue 10 (2025), pp. 364-382.

1. Introduction

Organisational performance occupies a central place in management sciences, as it determines both the survival and competitiveness of firms in an environment shaped by globalisation, intensified competition, and market complexity (Lendelova et al., 2024). It represents a key indicator of an organisation's ability to mobilise resources, achieve strategic objectives, and meet the diverse expectations of stakeholders such as shareholders, employees, customers, and society at large. The study of performance is therefore not limited to a strictly financial dimension; it encompasses a set of operational, social, and strategic aspects that reflect the overall vitality of the organisation. In this respect, Isa and Indrayati (2023) emphasise that employee performance constitutes a fundamental component of organisational performance, as it reflects the direct contribution of human resources to the competitiveness and sustainability of firms.

Within this framework, labour conflicts emerge as an unavoidable reality of industrial relations. Far from being marginal or accidental phenomena, they reflect the inherent tensions of the employment relationship, where interests are sometimes convergent but often divergent between employers and employees. They manifest in various forms—strikes, protests, work slowdowns, or legal disputes—and may have profound consequences for organisational dynamics. While some approaches regard conflict as a dysfunction, others view it as a legitimate expression of social relations and a potential driver of change. In all cases, their role and impact cannot be overlooked when addressing organisational performance in its entirety.

Labour conflicts, far from being mere episodic disruptions, constitute an inherent reality of industrial relations. The literature nevertheless shows that their effects on organisational performance remain ambivalent. On one hand, numerous studies highlight the negative impacts: financial losses, decreased productivity, employee demotivation, reputational damage, and barriers to innovation. On the other hand, some research points to potentially positive outcomes, where conflict serves as an opportunity for dialogue, social regulation, and organisational transformation.

The central research question guiding this review is therefore as follows: ***How do labour conflicts influence the different dimensions of organisational performance, and to what extent can their effects be detrimental or constructive?.***

This issue underscores the lack of scientific consensus regarding the nature and extent of the effects of labour conflicts. It justifies the need for a literature review aimed at confronting existing studies, identifying points of convergence and divergence, and providing conceptual clarification of the complex interplay between labour conflicts and organisational performance.

Given this lack of consensus and the difficulty of approaching the impact of labour conflicts on performance in a unified manner, it appears necessary to undertake an integrative analysis of the existing body of work. From a scientific standpoint, research remains fragmented, mobilising theoretical frameworks from human resource management, industrial relations, economics, and the sociology of work. While this diversity enriches the understanding of the phenomenon, it also contributes to persistent divergences in the interpretation of the nature and scope of the identified effects.

From a practical perspective, this reflection is particularly relevant in the current context, marked by intensifying social tensions and the rapid transformation of organisational environments. Firms must simultaneously preserve their competitiveness and ensure a social climate conducive to employee motivation and engagement. Labour conflicts affect multiple dimensions of performance and therefore represent a strategic challenge for managers and HR professionals alike.

In this perspective, the objective of this article is to provide an integrative analysis of the literature to better understand how labour conflicts influence the various dimensions of

organisational performance. The ambition is twofold: first, to clarify the conceptual and theoretical framework of these two notions, and second, to examine existing empirical findings to identify the convergences and divergences that characterise this field of research.
The expected contribution is both scientific and practical. At the academic level, the article enriches literature by offering a critical synthesis that highlights areas of agreement as well as gaps in understanding the impact of labour conflicts on performance. At the managerial level, it provides decision-makers and HR managers with insights to guide the design of more effective practices for preventing and managing labour conflicts.
The structure of the article is organised into three main parts: the first develops the conceptual framework of labour conflicts and organisational performance; the second presents a thematic review of the main impacts of labour conflicts on the different dimensions of performance (financial, operational, social, innovation and learning, as well as customer satisfaction); and finally, the general conclusion highlights the main contributions of the literature, points out the limitations of existing studies, and proposes future research avenues as well as practical implications for organisations.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Labour Conflicts: Diversity of Definitions and Disciplinary Perspectives

The concept of labour conflicts has attracted the attention of numerous scholars across diverse disciplines, which explains both the plurality of existing definitions and the difficulty of reaching a unified conception. This diversity reflects the richness of the phenomenon as well as its inherent complexity.
From a historical perspective, Marx (1867) viewed labour conflicts as the expression of class struggle between the bourgeoisie, who controlled the means of production, and the proletariat, who were compelled to sell their labour power. In this view, conflict is perceived as inevitable and constitutes the driving force of fundamental social transformations. Durkheim (1893), on the other hand, did not directly associate the division of labour with conflict; instead, he considered tensions to emerge from a situation of anomie, that is, a disequilibrium of social and moral norms. Labour conflict, in this sense, results from a pathological or forced division of labour, reflecting a dysfunction in the social order. For Dahrendorf (1959), conflict arises primarily from the unequal distribution of authority within organisations, opposing those who command to those who obey. In this perspective, conflict is not accidental but inherent to social structures and a vector of change.
Within the field of industrial relations, Hameed (1982) defines labour conflicts as a pluralist social process in which different interest groups pursue divergent objectives and reach compromise through institutionalised mechanisms such as collective bargaining. In the same vein, Adams (1983) considers conflict as a constitutive dimension of the employment relationship, involving workers, employers, and the state, and reflecting the inevitability of divergent interests within wage relations.
More recent research in management and human resource management offers an approach more focused on the organisational and psychosocial dimensions of conflict. Budd, Colvin, and Pohler (2017) define conflict as a manifest or latent opposition between two or more parties, stemming from real or perceived differences. This definition highlights the role of perceptions and emotions in the genesis of conflicts. Complementarily, Teratai and Iskandar (2024) identify labour conflicts as divergences of opinions, values, or objectives within the organisation. For these authors, conflict management is decisive: when poorly handled, it leads to productivity losses and decreased employee satisfaction; when well managed, it can stimulate innovation and enhance collective decision-making.

In summary, sociological approaches emphasise structural and macro-social determinants of conflict, highlighting its inevitability and role in social transformation. Industrial relations perspectives focus on institutional mechanisms and collective bargaining as means of regulation. Management and HRM perspectives, by contrast, stress the psychosocial and organisational dimensions of conflict, underlining its ambivalent effects on motivation, innovation, and performance. Taken together, these approaches provide complementary insights that justify an integrative framework linking labour conflicts to multiple dimensions of organisational performance.

Based on this analysis, labour conflicts can be defined as inherent situations of opposition within the employment relationship, resulting from divergences of interests, objectives, or perceptions among the parties involved. They cannot be reduced to mere organisational dysfunctions: depending on how they are managed, they may undermine cohesion and performance or open avenues for change and improvement.

2.1.1 Historical Evolution of Labour Conflicts

After presenting the definitions and main disciplinary approaches to labour conflicts, it is now necessary to situate them within a historical perspective. Labour conflicts are not merely contemporary organisational phenomena; they are embedded in a long trajectory shaped by transformations in productive systems, social structures, and regulatory frameworks. Their evolution reflects the emergence of new forms of work organisation, the reconfiguration of capital–labour relations, and the gradual adaptation of legal and institutional mechanisms. Analysing this historical trajectory makes it possible to capture the continuities and ruptures that have shaped industrial relations over time. Within this framework, the major stages of the evolution of labour conflicts will be examined, from the workers' struggles of the nineteenth century to the new forms of contestation characterising the globalised and digital economy of the twenty-first century.

- ✓ ***The Nineteenth Century: Industrialisation and Early Workers' Mobilisations:***

The nineteenth century, marked by industrialisation, profoundly transformed labour relations and saw the emergence of conflicts as a central feature of modern societies. Mechanisation, the centralisation of production, and the generalisation of wage labour led to a deterioration of living and working conditions, prompting early workers' resistance, often spontaneous and fragmented.

Marx (1867, cited in Chan, 2023) analysed this process as a form of alienation, in which workers, reduced to executors of repetitive tasks, were dispossessed of their autonomy and their production. Chan (2023) highlights the cumulative psychological effects of these practices on workers, which fuelled discontent. These fragmented mobilisations nonetheless contributed to the emergence of an embryonic class consciousness. Silver (2003) emphasises that they fostered durable solidarity, while Atzeni and Sacchetto (2023) underline the role of early local trade union organisations in transforming scattered revolts into more structured struggles.

- ✓ ***The Twentieth Century: Institutionalisation and Legal Regulation of Conflicts:***

The twentieth century was characterised by the institutionalisation of labour conflicts, increasingly framed by law and collective bargaining mechanisms. In the United States, the Wagner Act of 1935 enshrined the right to unionise and bargain collectively, establishing procedures for the peaceful resolution of disputes. Brandl and Traxler (2010) view this legislation as foundational, as it stabilised industrial relations within a state-centred framework. At the same time, the Fordist model, based on mass production and collective agreements, fostered an apparent stability in labour relations. Chan (2023), however, notes that this model exacerbated certain internal divisions within the working class. Moreover, Silver (2003) points to the limitations of such institutionalisation: the growing dependence of trade unions on the state sometimes curtailed their autonomy, particularly in the face of new forms of precarious employment that fell outside the classic frameworks of collective bargaining.

✓ ***The 1980s–2000s: Globalisation, Fragmentation, and Precarisation:***

From the 1980s onwards, globalisation deeply transformed labour relations, intensifying both fragmentation and precarisation. The relocation of production to low-wage regions weakened union power and reduced workers' capacity for collective organisation (Atzeni & Sacchetto, 2023).

Chan (2023) highlights the impact of migratory flows on the recomposition of working classes and on tensions linked to labour market segmentation. Silver (2003), in turn, stresses the rise of informal and temporary jobs, which increased precariousness, widened inequalities, and undermined the influence of traditional unions.

✓ ***The Twenty-First Century: Digital Economy and New Forms of Conflict:***

In the twenty-first century, the digital economy has given rise to new forms of labour conflicts, often outside traditional union frameworks. Platform workers, such as couriers and drivers, have developed informal network-based mobilisations to defend their rights (Atzeni & Sacchetto, 2023). These struggles reflect an adaptive response to the flexibility and precarity characteristic of this economic model.

Furthermore, Silver (2003) observes the emergence of transnational solidarities, notably within large multinationals such as Amazon, illustrating the need for coordinated struggles on a global scale. Finally, Chan (2023) notes that these mobilisations, though fragmented, represent new forms of collective resistance adapted to contemporary transformations of work.

This analysis demonstrates that the evolution of labour conflicts reflects an ongoing transformation of capital–labour relations. Each historical period has been characterised by specific forms of mobilisation and by regulatory mechanisms shaped in response to economic and social change.

2.1.2. Typology of Labour Conflicts

The analysis of labour conflicts requires distinguishing their main forms in order to better understand the dynamics that shape industrial relations. In the literature, a fundamental distinction is made between *rights conflicts*, which concern the application of existing regulations, and *interest conflicts*, which stem from divergences in objectives, values, or resources.

✓ ***Rights Conflicts: Disputes Concerning the Application of Norms***

Rights conflicts arise when a disagreement relates to the interpretation or application of legal, contractual, or collectively agreed provisions. Unlike interest conflicts, they concern established rights whose exercise is contested.

At the international level, these disputes take various forms. In France, they often involve unfair contract terminations and the reclassification of precarious employment (Morgan, 1993). In China, the juridification of labour relations has been accompanied by disputes over unpaid wages and unfair dismissals (Chen & Tang, 2013). These examples highlight the crucial role of legal and institutional frameworks in regulating social tensions.

✓ ***Interest Conflicts: Divergences over Objectives, Resources, and Values***

Interest conflicts occur when the parties involved pursue incompatible objectives or beliefs. They reflect a confrontation between economic, organisational, and psychosocial logics.

- ***Conflicts related to remuneration and working conditions:*** Zuleta and Andonova (2006), drawing on efficiency wage theory, demonstrate that wages above the market

ISSN: 2658-8455
Volume 6, Issue 10 (2025), pp. 364-382.

level can reduce conflict by aligning the interests of employees and the organisation. Conversely, low wages are likely to generate demotivation and tensions, whereas internal redistribution mechanisms foster cohesion and mitigate perceptions of injustice.

- ***Conflicts related to work organisation and managerial decisions:*** Restructuring, downsizing, and strategic reforms represent significant sources of tension. Preuss and Lautsch (2002) stress that the resulting job insecurity negatively affects the social climate, fuelling distrust and resistance towards managerial decisions.
- ***Conflicts related to strategic orientations:*** These arise when employees and management diverge on organisational priorities. Egerová and Rotenbornová (2021) emphasise that such disagreements can undermine productivity in the absence of transparent communication, while Tinuoye (2016) describes these tensions as vertical conflicts, reflecting hierarchical confrontation over strategic control.
- ***Conflicts related to differences in values, beliefs, and cultures:*** Such conflicts stem from contrasting visions of performance, equity, or respect. Mayer and Louw (2012) highlight that these divergences are socially constructed and amplified in multicultural contexts. Tavakoli (2015) underscores the importance of inclusive and participatory environments in reducing such tensions, while Maj (2023) demonstrates that an inclusive organisational culture can enhance satisfaction and collective performance.

Thus, conflicts arising from divergences in values or conceptions of work do not necessarily constitute a threat to organisational cohesion. When recognised, managed, and integrated into a well-structured inclusion policy, these differences can be transformed into strategic assets, fostering collective resilience, stimulating creativity, and strengthening team stability.

2.2 Organisational Performance.

Organisational performance has emerged as a key concept for assessing the vitality and competitiveness of firms. It extends beyond the purely financial dimension to encompass the overall results that reflect an organisation's ability to operate efficiently, mobilise its resources, and meet stakeholder expectations. Its complexity lies in the fact that it covers several interdependent dimensions, reflecting both internal efficiency and adaptation to external pressures. This plurality makes it a central object of analysis in management sciences and explains the extensive attention it has received in academic literature.

2.2.1. The Concept of Organisational Performance.

Organisational performance is a central concept in management sciences, but it remains marked by diverse approaches and the absence of consensus on a single definition. Various scholars, from different theoretical backgrounds, have proposed conceptualisations that underscore its complexity and multidimensional character.

According to Madella, Bayle, and Tome (2005), organisational performance refers to an organisation's capacity to effectively mobilise and transform its human, financial, and material resources to achieve its objectives. It therefore combines dimensions of *effectiveness* (the attainment of established goals) and *efficiency* (the ratio between resources mobilised and results obtained). In a complementary perspective, Winand et al. (2010) propose a broader definition, viewing performance as the acquisition and efficient utilisation of resources within organisational processes, not only to achieve goals but also to ensure a high level of stakeholder satisfaction.

Other scholars emphasise economic outcomes. Hamann and Schiemann (2021) define organisational performance as the set of financial results derived from the interaction between the organisation's internal characteristics, its strategic actions, and its external environment. A related approach is developed by Dogadailo and Sukonna (2020), who conceptualise

performance as a category reflecting the overall success of the firm, indicating the degree of goal attainment and relevance of objectives, while simultaneously minimising costs and errors. The role of stakeholders also occupies a prominent place in more recent conceptualisations. Jenatabadi (2015) argues that organisational performance corresponds to the evaluation of a company's ability to satisfy stakeholder aspirations by mobilising criteria of efficiency, effectiveness, and social benchmarks. Similarly, Santos and Brito (2012) define performance as a subset of organisational effectiveness, integrating financial and operational results, but also growth, customer and employee satisfaction, as well as social and environmental outcomes.
Recent research has also highlighted the importance of human resource development practices for organisational performance. Irfan, Khurshid, Khurshid, and Khokhar (2023) show that training, skill enhancement, and employee behaviour exert a positive and significant effect on the performance of manufacturing firms, confirming that investment in human capital constitutes a key lever of competitiveness and sustainability.
Finally, a major contribution to the understanding of this concept comes from Chelladurai (1987), who approached performance through the lens of *effectiveness* and emphasised its multidimensional nature. He distinguished several models: the goal model (attainment of objectives), the resource model (capacity to acquire and mobilise resources), the process model (internal operational coherence), and the multiple stakeholder model (consideration of the satisfaction of different actors).
Taken together, these definitions indicate that organisational performance is at once an indicator of results achieved, a reflection of resource mobilisation, and a criterion of stakeholder satisfaction. This diversity of approaches highlights its multidimensional character, encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions, and confirms that it cannot be reduced to a single indicator of organisational success.

2.2.2. Dimensions of Organisational Performance.

The evaluation of organisational performance cannot be confined to a single approach. It rests on a set of complementary dimensions that allow a more nuanced understanding of firms' effectiveness and sustainability. These dimensions highlight the diversity of criteria through which an organisation is assessed, both internally and externally. The following analysis presents the main components identified in the literature and provides an essential basis for understanding how labour conflicts may influence them.

- ***Financial Performance :***

This dimension is crucial in assessing the economic health of an organisation. It encompasses several key indicators such as profitability, which measures the firm's ability to generate profit relative to its costs; revenue growth, which indicates the increase in sales over a given period and reflects the organisation's capacity to adapt to market dynamics; and return on investment (ROI), which evaluates investment efficiency by comparing the profit generated with the initial investment cost (Ait Jillali & Belkasseh, 2022). Together, these indicators provide a comprehensive overview of financial performance, often considered the primary barometer of an organisation's health and overall success. A thorough analysis of these elements can also reveal trends and opportunities for improvement.

- ***Operational Performance :***

This concept refers to the efficiency with which an organisation manages its internal processes to deliver quality products or services (Thürer et al., 2018). Measures of operational performance may include indicators such as productivity rates, which assess the quantity of goods or services produced per unit of labour; product quality, which evaluates compliance with established standards and customer satisfaction; and the management of operating costs, which examines expenditures related to the firm's daily activities (Gomes et al., 2007).

ISSN: 2658-8455
Volume 6, Issue 10 (2025), pp. 364-382.

Optimised operational performance not only reduces costs but also enhances customer satisfaction, which is essential for sustaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

- ***Employee Performance:***

Employee performance is a determining factor in the long-term success of an organisation. This dimension encompasses several key aspects, such as employee satisfaction, which measures well-being and morale within the team; engagement, which assesses the level of motivation and involvement of employees in their work; turnover rates, which indicate the organisation's ability to retain its talent; and individual productivity, which measures the efficiency and contribution of each employee to organisational objectives (Andrianarizaka et al., 2022).

- ***Customer Satisfaction :***

Customer satisfaction is an essential element in assessing organisational performance. It reflects how customers perceive the quality of the products or services offered, as well as their overall experience with the brand (Mukherjee, 2019). Several indicators are commonly used to measure this crucial dimension. Among them are customer retention rates, which show the ability of a company to maintain its clientele over the long term; net promoter scores (NPS), a valuable tool for evaluating the likelihood that customers will recommend the firm to others (Krivobokova, 2009); and satisfaction surveys, which directly capture customer feedback on various aspects of their experience, providing detailed and actionable insights. By analysing these data, organisations can identify areas requiring improvement and adjust their strategies to better meet client needs and expectations, thereby strengthening their position in the marketplace.

- ***Innovation and Learning :***

This dimension underscores the crucial importance of innovation and continuous learning within organisations. In an ever-changing environment, a firm's ability to innovate is decisive for its sustainability and competitiveness (Tamayo-Torres et al., 2016). This includes not only the development of new products and services but also the improvement of existing processes to meet evolving customer expectations. Innovation is not limited to creating new offerings; it also involves the implementation of advanced technologies and agile working methods that enhance operational efficiency. In addition, organisational learning plays a key role in this dynamic. It refers to the capacity of a firm to draw lessons from its experiences, share knowledge within teams, and adapt rapidly to new market trends. Effective knowledge management enables firms to leverage employee skills and expertise, thereby fostering an environment of innovation and collaboration that drives the organisation forward (Schulz, 2002). By integrating these elements, companies can not only survive but also thrive in an increasingly complex business landscape.

2.2.3. Influencing Factors.

Organisational performance does not result solely from strategic choices or internal practices; it is also shaped by a set of determinants operating at different levels. The literature generally distinguishes between two broad categories of factors: internal factors, related to organisational structure, resources, and management practices; and external factors, linked to the dynamics of the economic, social, and institutional environment. Analysing these two complementary dimensions provides a deeper understanding of the conditions under which organisational performance is built and evolves.

Internal Factors :

- ***Leadership and Management:*** Leadership style and its effectiveness are crucial elements that shape not only organisational culture but also overall performance. Inspiring and visionary leadership can motivate teams, foster innovation, and create a positive work environment (Popa, 2012). Conversely, ineffective leadership may generate conflicts, reduce employee engagement, and harm productivity. Understanding leadership dynamics is therefore essential to establishing an organisational culture that values collaboration, autonomy, and personal development (Albert, 2023).

- ***Organisational Structure:*** The design of organisational structure plays a fundamental role in how information flows, how teams collaborate, and how decisions are made (Valeri, 2021). A well-designed structure can streamline communication processes, encourage teamwork, and enable swift and effective decision-making (Bu et al., 2008). Conversely, a rigid or poorly adapted structure may create silos, slow down the flow of information, and hinder organisational agility. It is therefore imperative to regularly assess the organisational structure to ensure that it supports both strategic and operational objectives.
- ***Resource Management:*** The judicious allocation and effective utilisation of financial, human, and physical resources are key levers for improving an organisation's performance outcomes (Pollitt, 2001). Proactive resource management not only optimises costs but also ensures that talent is appropriately mobilised and that infrastructures are used to their full potential (Chi et al., 2004). Moreover, a strategic approach to resource management can foster innovation and responsiveness to market changes, thereby safeguarding the organisation's competitiveness.
- ***Culture and Values :*** The beliefs, norms, and practices shared within an organisation play a central role in shaping how employees interact with one another and with external stakeholders (Kasemsap, 2017). A strong organisational culture, rooted in clear values, influences not only employee behaviour but also their engagement and job satisfaction (Rich & Mero, 2015). A positive culture encourages cooperation, stimulates creativity, and strengthens employee loyalty, whereas a toxic culture may lead to high turnover and diminished motivation (Bhat & Patni, 2023). It is therefore crucial for leaders to cultivate and promote a culture that reflects the organisation's values and supports its long-term objectives.

External Factors :

- ***Market Conditions:*** Economic, social, and competitive market dynamics play a crucial role in shaping organisational performance. Economic fluctuations—such as changes in consumer demand, interest rates, and business cycles—can directly influence company revenues and profitability (Ibrahim & Primiana, 2015). In addition, social factors, such as demographic trends and shifts in consumer behaviour, may also redefine market expectations. Furthermore, increasing competition, whether local or international, compels firms to innovate continuously and improve their offerings in order to remain relevant (Rahma et al., 2024).
- ***Regulatory Environment:*** The legal and regulatory framework in which organisations operate is a determining factor that can impose constraints but also provide opportunities. Compliance with national and international laws is essential to avoid sanctions and ensure business sustainability (Sanclemente Arciniegas, 2019). However, regulation can also foster innovation, for instance, through tax incentives for companies that adopt sustainable practices or invest in green technologies. Moreover, shifts in public policy—such as the introduction of new safety standards or data protection requirements—can create challenges but also opportunities for firms to differentiate themselves in the market by adopting a proactive approach ("Government Regulations as an Opportunity to Foster the Creation and Application of Innovations in the Context

ISSN: 2658-8455
Volume 6, Issue 10 (2025), pp. 364-382.

of Green Organisations: The Case of Lithuania," 2023).

- ***Technological Progress:*** The integration of new technologies into operational processes represents a major lever for enhancing efficiency and stimulating innovation within organisations. The adoption of advanced technological solutions—such as artificial intelligence, process automation, and data analytics—not only optimises daily operations but also generates valuable insights for strategic decision-making (Yaşar, 2024). Moreover, technological innovation can open new markets and transform traditional business models, thereby providing a significant competitive advantage. By embracing such technological developments, firms can not only improve productivity but also strengthen their ability to anticipate and respond to changing consumer needs.

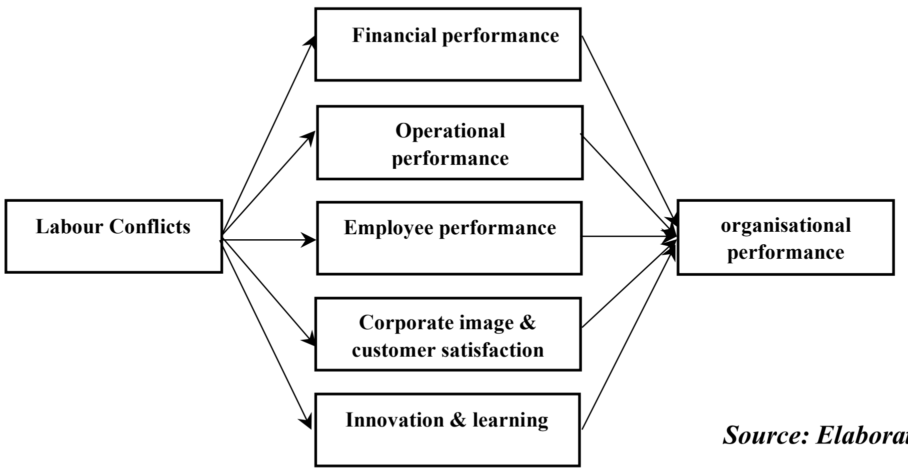
2.2.4. Interrelations between Dimensions and Factors

The conceptual framework underscores the crucial importance of the interdependence between the multiple dimensions of organisational performance and the various factors that influence them. For instance, effective leadership does not merely guide teams toward the attainment of objectives; it also plays a decisive role in enhancing individual employee performance. Such improvement often translates into increased engagement and motivation among staff, which, in turn, can positively affect customer satisfaction. Indeed, motivated and high-performing employees are more likely to deliver quality service, thereby strengthening customer loyalty and, consequently, the organisation's financial results.

Moreover, a strong and well-established organisational culture constitutes fertile ground for innovation. By fostering an environment in which new ideas are valued and risk-taking is encouraged, such a culture stimulates creativity and agility within teams. This innovation dynamic has a direct impact on operational performance, as it enables the organisation to adapt quickly to market developments and respond to changing customer needs. Thus, the interconnection between a robust organisational culture, innovation, and operational performance creates a virtuous cycle, in which each element reinforces and enhances the others, thereby contributing to the overall effectiveness of the organisation.

In summary, organisational performance is conceived as a multidimensional construct comprising financial, operational, employee-related, reputational, and innovation outcomes. Labour conflicts, as defined in Section 2.1, influence these dimensions in both detrimental and potentially constructive ways. To synthesise these insights, Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework guiding this review. It illustrates the links between labour conflicts and the five dimensions of organisational performance, which together constitute overall performance. This framework serves as the organising basis for the literature review presented in the next section.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework linking labour conflicts to the dimensions of organisational performance



Source: Elaborated by the author.

3. Literature Review

After clarifying the conceptual framework of labour conflicts and organisational performance, it is now essential to examine how such conflicts influence the different dimensions of performance. The existing literature highlights multiple impacts, affecting not only the financial and operational spheres but also social aspects, innovation, and stakeholder satisfaction. This section presents a thematic review of these studies, distinguishing the main dimensions of organisational performance affected by labour conflicts.

3.1. Impact of Labour Conflicts on Financial Performance

The impact of labour conflicts on financial performance is a central concern for scholars in management and industrial relations. The literature indicates that these conflicts, by affecting productivity, investment, and social relations within organisations, generate significant economic costs and undermine firms' competitiveness.

Choutagunta (2019), examining the case of the manufacturing sector in India, demonstrates that labour disputes and industrial conflicts significantly reduce firms' productivity and output. This decline in operational efficiency results in slower economic growth and weaker financial performance, illustrating the direct effect of social tensions on organisational profitability.

In the same vein, Ukokhe and Florah (2022) emphasise that labour conflicts not only lead to direct economic losses for companies but also deteriorate the quality of employer–employee relations. These disruptions, by weakening the social climate, adversely affect overall performance and the financial stability of organisations.

Sector-specific research further confirms these trends. In the healthcare sector, Monyei et al. (2023) identify labour conflicts as sources of organisational stress that compromise performance. They foster distrust and disorganisation, reduce employee productivity, and raise personnel management costs, which directly weaken financial performance.

Finally, a macroeconomic perspective is provided by Besley and Burgess (2002), who analyse the effects of labour regulations in India. Their study shows that legislative amendments favourable to workers, although intended to strengthen their protection, resulted in reduced investment, employment, productivity, and manufacturing output. These structural constraints slowed growth and limited poverty reduction, revealing that unbalanced regulations may increase economic costs and compromise firms' financial performance.

In sum, this body of research highlights that labour conflicts represent a major source of financial vulnerability for organisations. They directly undermine productivity, raise costs, and reduce competitiveness, thereby confirming their decisive role in shaping firms' economic health.

3.2. Impact of Labour Conflicts on Operational Performance

Operational performance refers to the efficiency of internal processes that enable the organisation to produce goods and services under optimal conditions of cost, quality, and timeliness. Research shows that labour conflicts exert a direct and negative effect on this dimension by disrupting productivity, destabilising the continuity of operations, and weighing on investment decisions.

McDonald and Bloch (1999) indicate that strikes and other forms of conflict disrupt company production, leading to a decline in operational efficiency. These interruptions reduce the market share of affected firms while generating spillover effects that benefit unaffected competitors, who temporarily capture a larger share of demand. Thus, the operational impact of conflicts also depends on the degree of sectoral concentration and competitive dynamics.

Nzuve and Kiilu (2013) demonstrate that industrial conflicts cause immediate work stoppages, resulting in higher fixed costs, reduced sales, and lower short-term profitability. In the longer term, they weaken corporate reputation, diminish the ability to mobilise financial resources,

and create a lasting breach of trust between employers and employees. Operational performance is therefore compromised through reduced productivity and a weakened internal organisation.
Sanyal and Menon (2005) stress that labour conflicts—measured by the number of lockouts, man-days lost, and unionisation levels—have a deterrent effect on investment decisions. By creating uncertainty and increasing operating costs, they hinder industrial expansion and reduce the attractiveness of affected regions. As a result, firms' operational performance is indirectly impacted, particularly through the slowdown of projects and investment flows.
Finally, Choutagunta (2019), studying the Indian manufacturing sector, confirms that labour disputes significantly reduce firms' productivity and output. Such disruptions lead to losses in operational efficiency and weaken competitiveness, illustrating the structural impact of social tensions on internal performance. Similarly, Jacobson, Rubin, and Donahue (2008) emphasise the importance of cooperative industrial relations in supporting operational stability. According to them, conflictual labour relations undermine productivity and exacerbate organisational dysfunctions, whereas constructive social dialogue helps consolidate operational performance.
In sum, the literature demonstrates that labour conflicts undermine operational performance through three main mechanisms: the direct disruption of production processes, the increase in fixed costs and profitability losses, and the reduction of investment and industrial attractiveness.

3.3. Impact of Labour Conflicts on Employee Performance

Employee performance is a key determinant of organisational competitiveness and is closely tied to the quality of labour relations. The literature highlights that labour conflicts, depending on their nature and mode of management, directly influence employee productivity, motivation, and engagement.
Kleiner, Leonard, and Pilarski (2002) show that conflicts such as strikes and slowdowns lead to a significant decline in employee productivity, both in relative and absolute terms. However, these effects appear temporary, as productivity generally returns to its initial level within one to four months. The authors stress that it is not unionism itself that determines performance, but rather the way in which unions and management interact on a daily basis.
In a complementary perspective, Kolawole (2019) underlines that poor management of industrial conflicts directly undermines employee performance. Ineffective conflict resolution procedures result in demotivation, reduced productivity, and deteriorated organisational commitment. Conversely, proactive management, based on sound human resource practices and effective social dialogue, can mitigate tensions and strengthen both individual and collective performance.
Ndulue and Ekechukwu (2016) also emphasise the central role of conflict management. They observe that poorly managed conflict leads to lower employee morale, reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, and the loss of skilled personnel. By contrast, when conflicts are handled constructively, through negotiation or compromise, they stimulate motivation and foster measurable improvements in employee performance.
Finally, in the hospitality sector, Nwokorie (2017) demonstrates that organisational conflicts arising from poorly defined responsibilities, inadequate reward systems, or lack of cohesion increase employee stress and undermine performance. These tensions affect job satisfaction, reduce service quality, and increase turnover, thereby further weakening collective performance.
Overall, these studies converge in showing that poorly managed labour conflicts result in decreased productivity, demotivation, and weakened engagement. However, the literature also stresses that constructive conflict management approaches can transform such situations into positive levers, enhancing motivation, cohesion, and employee performance.

3.4. Impact of Labour Conflicts on Corporate Image and Customer Satisfaction

Beyond their financial and operational consequences, labour conflicts directly affect the external image of firms and the satisfaction of their customers. The literature highlights that these tensions are not confined to internal disruptions but also translate into repercussions on reputation, stakeholder trust, and the perceived quality of products or services.

Bakare, Aziza, Uzougbo, and Oduro (2024) demonstrate that prolonged labour conflicts damage corporate reputation. Such tensions weaken investor and business partner confidence while complicating the attraction and retention of a qualified workforce. The authors show that organisational image deteriorates when firms appear frequently exposed to labour disputes, thereby compromising their long-term sustainability.

From a complementary perspective, Velanganni (2024) stresses the central role of industrial relations in preserving corporate image and customer satisfaction. Harmonious labour relations, built on trust and cooperation, foster employee motivation and contribute to higher service quality. Conversely, unresolved conflicts reduce morale, lower productivity, and undermine external perceptions, which negatively affect both corporate reputation and customer satisfaction.

Finally, Siahaya (2013) emphasises that a company's reputation is closely tied to the quality of its relations with employees. Workers act as intermediaries between the organisation and society, meaning that labour management practices perceived as unfair or inhumane can directly damage brand image. The author illustrates this phenomenon with cases of labour condition scandals involving major technology firms, which tarnished their reputation and reduced consumer trust.

Taken together, these studies converge to show that labour conflicts influence organisational image and customer satisfaction through three main mechanisms: the erosion of investor and partner confidence, the deterioration of employee motivation and service quality, and the negative reputational impact amplified by the media coverage of conflicts.

3.5. Impact of Labour Conflicts on Innovation and Organisational Learning

Innovation and organisational learning are now recognised as essential strategic levers for organisational competitiveness and adaptability. However, the literature shows that labour conflicts can act as significant barriers to these dynamics by weakening cooperation, trust, and the motivation required for collective creativity. Nevertheless, some studies also emphasise that proactive and cooperative conflict management can mitigate negative effects and even transform them into opportunities for organisational learning.

Monyei et al. (2023) argue that workplace conflicts generate a dysfunctional climate of stress that not only undermines immediate productivity but also hinders employees' capacity to learn and innovate. In an environment marked by persistent tensions, workers' energy is diverted from improvement initiatives to conflict management, thereby limiting their contribution to organisational change and development.

The importance of high-quality industrial relations in this process is highlighted by Bacon and Blyton (1999). According to these authors, cooperative contexts between unions and management foster an environment conducive to organisational learning and innovation, particularly through teamwork, versatility, and employee involvement. By contrast, relations dominated by open conflicts restrict the implementation of high-performance systems, stifle creativity, and reduce collective learning capacity.

Similarly, Addison and Teixeira (2024) show that the high frequency of conflicts and strikes is strongly correlated with a climate of distrust within organisations. Such distrust not only weakens economic performance but also diminishes employees' willingness to engage in innovation and learning initiatives. The authors, however, underline that managerial strategies centred on employee involvement can reduce the incidence of conflicts and create an environment more favourable to organisational learning.

Finally, Bensouda et al. (2025), in the Moroccan context, confirm the existence of a negative relationship between labour conflicts and employee innovation. They show that such tensions reduce motivation and engagement—two key drivers of organisational creativity. However, they also stress the role of proactive human resource management, which can mitigate these adverse effects by transforming conflicts into opportunities for collective learning and by stimulating innovation capacity.

Taken together, these studies converge in suggesting that labour conflicts exert an ambivalent influence on innovation and learning. Poorly managed, they inhibit creativity, weaken cooperation, and reduce employee engagement. Yet, when managed within a cooperative framework and supported by proactive HRM practices, they can become catalysts for organisational learning and contribute to strengthening innovation capacity.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of the literature confirms that labour conflicts are complex and multidimensional phenomena whose impact on organisational performance cannot be reduced to a single interpretation. They generally generate detrimental effects—such as productivity losses, reduced profitability, declining employee motivation, and reputational damage—when left unmanaged or poorly regulated. However, studies also underline their constructive potential when addressed proactively, notably through social dialogue, organisational transparency, and inclusive practices.

From a scientific standpoint, the review reveals persistent gaps. The literature remains fragmented across disciplines, and empirical findings are often contradictory, oscillating between emphasising the economic and social costs of conflicts and recognising their role as drivers of innovation and learning. Moreover, research continues to privilege Western and Asian contexts, leaving emerging environments—particularly African and Maghrebian—largely underexplored, despite their distinctive institutional and cultural dynamics.

This review contributes to theory by integrating insights from sociology, industrial relations, and HRM to clarify the ambivalent effects of labour conflicts on organisational performance. It highlights that conflicts cannot be reduced to dysfunctions, but must be understood as multidimensional phenomena with both detrimental and constructive potentials. By proposing a conceptual framework linking conflicts to five key performance dimensions, the study offers an integrative lens that enriches existing debates and opens new avenues for theoretical development.

These findings open important avenues for future research. Comparative analyses across national contexts are needed to better understand the influence of institutions and cultures on the relationship between conflict and performance. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable in capturing the delayed effects of conflicts on performance in the medium and long term. Finally, future research should further integrate interdisciplinary approaches, combining insights from management, law, sociology, and economics in order to build more robust and integrative models.

From a methodological perspective, the review underscores the limitations of existing studies, which remain fragmented across contexts and often limited to single-dimension indicators of performance. Future research should adopt multi-level and longitudinal designs to capture both short- and long-term effects of conflicts. Comparative studies across institutional and cultural contexts are also necessary, particularly in emerging economies, to refine our understanding of how national frameworks shape the conflict–performance relationship. Finally, greater use of mixed methods would provide richer insights by combining quantitative evidence with qualitative depth.

Ultimately, this review demonstrates that the relationship between labour conflicts and organisational performance transcends a simple binary opposition between positive and negative outcomes. It should be understood as a dynamic interaction shaped by institutional contexts, managerial practices, and regulatory strategies. In this perspective, organisations—especially in emerging economies—are encouraged to adopt proactive approaches that not only mitigate the adverse effects of conflict but also harness its potential as a catalyst for sustainable performance and long-term resilience.

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