

Master's Thesis

“Restoring the effectiveness of self-managing teams after occurring intra-team conflicts: an exploratory qualitative study”

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Dear reader,

After the start of this trajectory in January this year, I proudly present you the final version of my Master's thesis as being part of the master in Organisational Design and Development provided by the Radboud University, Nijmegen. When looking back, I can conclude that writing my Master's thesis has been a challenging, intense, but yet a very educational process. Throughout the overall trajectory, I have improved my research and writing skills beside the progress I have made concerning my personal development. During the whole research process, I have received a lot of support and personal guidance. Therefore, I would like to use this opportunity to thank several people in particular.

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Merijn Olthof

Abstract

Nowadays, a trend can be identified concerning the implementation of self-managing teams in organizations. The popularity on self-managing teams has been boosted because of the organizational benefits that are associated with self-managing teams, like an increasing productivity, job satisfaction and the reduction of costs. However, to actually accomplish these organizational benefits, self-managing teams must establish high levels of effectiveness. But, in order to maintain a high degree of self-managing team effectiveness, members of self-managing teams are forced deal with the inevitable occurrence of intra-team conflicts. Because occurring intra-team conflicts are likely to deteriorate the overall effectiveness of self-managing teams, it is key for team members to create an understanding on how they can deal with those conflict situations. Since this research area is relatively unexplored in current literature on self-management and conflict resolution management, this study is conducted in order to examine how members of self-managing teams themselves restore their effectiveness after occurring intra-team conflicts.

In order to gather new insights and in-depth knowledge on the social phenomenon in its social context, an exploratory qualitative research design selected. The required data has been collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with nine individuals from two different self-managing teams within a Dutch healthcare organization. Subsequently, the obtained data has been transformed and analyzed according to the principles of the template analysis.

The outcomes of this study contribute to the current literature on conflict resolution management in self-managing teams in several ways. First of all, the results show that the unique characteristics of self-managing teams do have an impact on the emergence and development of different types of intra-team conflicts. Secondly, an interesting finding concerns the fact that members did not apply one particular conflict resolution strategy to resolve occurring types of intra team conflicts. Instead, they applied a sequence of smaller actions (i.e., conflict resolution strategies) to de-escalate and resolve occurring types of intra-team conflicts, whereafter their self-managing team effectiveness could be restored. Thirdly, outcomes of this research show how self-managing teams deal with ongoing conflicts while maintaining their effectiveness at the same time. Lastly, these outcomes provide new insights on conflict resolution strategies that may be valuable for members of self-managing teams concerning dealing with occurring intra-team conflicts effectively in practice.

Key words: Self-managing team effectiveness, intra-team conflicts, conflict resolution strategies, restoring team effectiveness, self-managing teams.

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1. Introduction

The concept of self-managing teams has been broadly studied by management scholars during the past decades (Cummings, 1978; Cohen & Ledford, 1994; Pasmore & Mlot, 1994; Pearson, 1992; Wageman, 1997). The popularity concerning the implementation of self-managing teams in organizations is still increasing nowadays. This is resulting from the association of self-managing teams with several organizational benefits, like the reduction of costs, increasing productivity, increasing job satisfaction and employee well-being, and the establishment of high-quality products and services (Chansler, Swamidass, & Cammann, 2003; Cohen & Bailey, 1997). When looking at the unique characteristics of self-managing teams, it turns out that self-managing teams have a significant amount of responsibility regarding realizing the team's work tasks and establishing and retaining the overall team performance as a whole (Wageman, 1997). While accomplishing this, self-managing teams, as a collective, must monitor their team performance at all times. Furthermore, problem solving and adaptation to changes in the dynamic direct environment is managed by self-managing teams through continuously adjusting their performance strategies through mutual adjustment and continuous deliberation (Cohen & Ledford, 1994; Cummings, 1972; Wageman, 1997). By doing so, self-managing teams enhance relatively high levels of organizational learning, adaptability, and employee commitment (Wageman, 1997). However, one of the main conditions to establish these beneficial aspects in practice concerns the fact that self-managing teams should realize high levels of self-managing team effectiveness. But, the maintenance of self-managing team effectiveness seems to be challenging because of multiple internal factors, like the emergence of conflicts (Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Langfred, 2007).

In every organizational team, the occurrence of conflicts is a well-known phenomenon which is regarded as inevitable (Jehn, 1995; Jehn, Rispens, Jonsen, & Greer, 2013). On a team-level, two kinds of conflicts can occur in practice. First of all, inter-team conflicts may emerge, which refer to conflicts between two or more teams within the same organization. Secondly, intra-team conflicts may occur. Contrary to inter-team conflicts, intra-team conflicts concern conflicts between two or more members being part of one particular team (i.e., self-managing team) (Hussein & AL-Mamary, 2019; Jehn et al., 2013). Moreover, when looking at existing literature on conflicts within teams, three different kinds of conflicts can be distinguished. The three types of conflicts are respectively are task-based conflicts, relationship-based conflicts and process-based conflicts (Cronin & Bezrukova, 2019; Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2005). Despite those conflicts are often associated with negative consequences for involved parties (i.e., team members), some studies have shown that a certain

level of conflicts within teams could lead to innovation and change (Litterer, 1966) and that conflicts may even increase the perceived creativity, team performance and organizational performance (Jehn, 1995; Jehn, 1997; Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2005). Nevertheless, conflicts within teams (i.e., intra-team conflicts) actually can become significantly problematic for the overall team performance, job satisfaction and productivity (Pondy, 1967; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Langfred, 2007). Subsequently, this will lead to deteriorating levels of the overall effectiveness of self-managing teams, which ultimately may affect the overall organizational performances negatively (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Langfred, 2007).

In current literature, conflict resolution strategies are developed for managers with power and authority within traditional, hierarchical organizations who regard the organizations and their teams as systems. When conflicts emerge, managers fulfil a mediating, problem-solving role in order to deal with the occurring conflicts within teams by intervening (Litterer, 1966; De Dreu & Beersma, 2005; Talmaciu & Maracine, 2010). However, this particular kind of regulation mechanism does not apply to the concept of self-managing teams. Furthermore, it is quite urgent for members of self-managing teams to deal with occurring intra-team conflicts, since these are likely to occur dysfunctionality of teams (Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Langfred, 2007). So, the question arises regarding *how* the effectiveness of self-managing teams could be restored after occurring intra-team conflicts by members of self-managing teams themselves. However, is rather unclear in current literature how this is established in practice. Therefore, the following research question is formulated in order to provide new insights in this relatively unexplored research area:

“How do members of a self-managing team deal with occurring intra-team conflicts in order to restore their effectiveness?”

This research has the aim to contribute to the knowledge gap with regard to the restoration of self-managing team effectiveness by team members after internal conflicts, in order to improve the performance of self-managing teams and their organizations as a whole. In order to accomplish this, in-depth knowledge from team members should be gathered concerning how the effectiveness of self-managing teams actually can be restored in practice after the occurrence of internal conflicts from their own perspectives. Therefore, an exploratory qualitative research design is most appropriate for conducting this research, since in-depth interviews can be conducted in order to create an understanding of respondent's experiences and opinions concerning the research topic (Bleijenbergh, 2015; Vennix, 2019). In addition, an explorative single case study is selected in order to understand the social phenomenon in their real-life context, which refers to how members of a particular SMT themselves solve internal

conflicts (Yin, 2014). This is key, since this research aims to create a broader understanding on how members of self-managing teams deal with occurring intra-team conflicts in practice in order to restore their effectiveness and, subsequently, establish and maintain organizational benefits. After the qualitative data set is developed through in-depth interviews, the data set should be transformed and analyzed in order to provide an answer on the research question as complete as possible. In order to accomplish this, template analysis will be used within this research (King, 2012).

So, this research aims to provide new insights and in-depth knowledge in order to create a broader understanding on how members of self-managing teams deal with occurring conflicts in order to restore the self-managing team effectiveness. As a result, the outcomes of this research can be interesting for management scholars, since the research on this phenomenon is limited in current literature. Thus, this research is conducted in order to extend the literature on self-managing teams and effective conflict resolution strategies, since this scientific area is relatively unexplored. Moreover, the outcomes of this research may offer new starting points for further academic research on conflict resolution strategies by self-managing teams in order to enhance and maintain their effectiveness after emerging conflicts.

Furthermore, this research aims to make practical contributions by developing an extensive description of new in-depth knowledge and insights on effective conflict resolutions strategies in the context of self-managing teams. As a result, the outcomes of this research could be important for members of SMTs in practice, in order to enhance their understanding concerning the occurrence and developments of intra-team conflicts. Furthermore, the outcomes of this research may support members of self-managing teams concerning resolving occurring intra-team conflicts in an adequate manner, since this study aims to provide new insights regarding perceived effective conflict resolution strategies by the respondents. Subsequently, this will lead to practical benefits for organizations as well, since the overall organizational performance can be improved if the effectiveness of SMTs can be restored more effectively.

2. Theoretical background

Within this chapter, the theoretical background of this research will be extensively described and explained. First of all, the chapter start with the nature of self-managing teams. Subsequently, the phenomenon regarding self-managing teams will be defined according to their unique characteristics. The second paragraph will be dedicated to the nature and emergence of conflicts within self-managing teams. After creating a broader understanding on conflicts within self-managing teams, the possible positive and negative consequences of occurring conflicts on the effectiveness of self-managing teams will be elaborated during the third paragraph. Hereafter, the importance of resolving occurring conflicts within self-managing teams will be explained in paragraph four. Lastly, a theoretical summary will be given at the end of this chapter.

2.1 Defining self-managing teams

Nowadays, self-managing teams are frequently implemented in organizational life due to increasing popularity. This is because the implementation of self-managing teams is related to the reduction of costs and increasing productivity (Cohen & Bailey, 1997). Furthermore, self-managing teams are used because of achieving high quality standards of products/services, improving the employee well-being and job satisfaction (Chansler et al., 2003).

Self-managing teams are not a novel phenomenon which has been developed recently. During the 1950s, Trist and Bamforth (1951) conducted a research within the British coal mine industry on redesigning the work of miners according to the socio-technical system design. According to the socio-technical system design, joint optimization should be established between social (i.e., people and interactions) and technological aspects of organizational structures and processes (Trist & Bamforth, 1951). Within this study, teams of miners were allocated to higher levels of self-regulation. As a result, the overall productivity and commitment of the coal miners improved significantly (Trist & Bamforth, 1951). The outcomes of this study have become the foundation for further research on self-regulation teams (Barker, 1993). Subsequently, this has formed the basis for understanding self-managing teams and the existing knowledge on self-managing teams in current literature, which has been applied throughout this whole study.

In literature, various definitions of self-managing teams have been used throughout the last decades, like ‘autonomous work groups’, ‘self-regulating work groups’, and ‘self-directing teams’ (Cohen & Ledford, 1994; Cummings, 1978; Goodman, Devadas, & Hughson, 1988; Pasmore & Mlot, 1994; Pearson, 1992; Weerheim, Van Rossum, & Ten Have, 2019).

Throughout this research, the term ‘self-managing teams’ (i.e., SMTs) will be used. To clarify the phenomenon of self-managing teams, the definition of Parker, Holesgrove, and Pathak (2015) is used within this thesis. A self-managing team is defined as: *“a self-regulated, semi-autonomous small group of employees whose members determine, plan and manage their day-to-day activities and duties under reduced or no supervision”* (Parker et al., 2015, p. 112).

One of the main characteristics of self-managing teams is that they are responsible for the completion of their own work at the end of the working process, including controlling the input, output and supporting variables (Pasmore & Mlot, 1994; Wageman, 1997). Therefore, the members of SMTs must monitor their own team performance by providing feedback on individual level and on the team as being a collective as well (Cummings, 1978; Wageman, 1997). Subsequently, in order to deal with changing conditions (i.e., internal and external factors) and solve occurring problems concerning the work process, SMTs must continuously modify their predetermined performance strategies (Wageman, 1997). This results in an increasement of the SMT’s adaptability to dynamic circumstances (i.e., internally and externally).

In practice, self-managing teams consists of ten to fifteen team members who all possess different skills and capabilities necessary for realizing their own specific work tasks (Barker, 1993; Cohen & Ledford, 1994). Members of a SMT are responsible for the determination and allocation of work task amongst all team members. Besides realizing their daily work tasks as a collective, members of a SMT determine their own working methods, work schedules, and the overall task assignments through mutual adjustments and deliberations (Cohen & Ledford, 1994; Cummings, 1972). Thus, highly interrelated and interdependent relationships between members of a particular self-managing team must be established concerning planning, executing, and monitoring their daily work activities.

2.2 The nature of conflicts within self-managing teams

Since the presence of highly interrelated and interdependent personal and task relationships between members within self-managing teams, the probability of occurring internal disturbances and tensions is likely to be high (Jehn, 1997). Thus, the unique characteristics of self-managing teams may increase the chance of perceived conflicts by members of a SMTs.

Furthermore, personal emotions play a key role concerning the member’s perception of conflicts. Personal emotions are inherently linked to conflicts, which means that emotions play a major role within all kinds of human conflicts (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001). This is because conflicting personal goals lead to the occurrence negative emotions, like anger, sadness,

jealousy and hate. These negative emotions are next to verbally, often expressed physically through body language and facial impressions of individuals (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001). As a result, these verbally and physically expressed negative emotions are key regarding whether a human conflict is experienced by the involved parties. The presence of three basic emotional components combined can make a conflict an actual perceived conflict. First of all, conflicts are constructed by attitudes. Attitudes are represented by particular cognitive ideas and emotions of people (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001). Secondly, behaviour of individuals can be urgent for the perception of conflicts. Behaviour in this context refers to: *“both overt behaviour and potential of aggressive or hostile actions”* (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001, p. 266). Lastly, personal contradictions between individuals are triggers for perceived conflicts (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001). Differences in personal norms, values, interests and goals are central regarding personal contradictions.

Moreover, poor communication can stimulate the occurrence of conflicts between individuals, thus also between members of a SMT (Zia & Syed, 2013). A lack of proper communication can lead to a misinterpreting of someone’s content of the message or behaviour (i.e., miscommunication) (Huan & Yazdanifard, 2012; Zia & Syed, 2013). Subsequently, gossiping will appear on the work floor due to personal disagreements which may occur from these misunderstandings. Gossiping will result in further misunderstandings, which eventually may lead to certain levels of rivalry between people on the work floor. This is because previously non-problematic issues are being transformed into sources for tensions and subsequently may lead to the emergence of conflicts (Zia & Syed, 2013). In conclusion, the complexity of relationships within self-managing teams in combination with personal emotions, poor communication, and misinterpretations are key aspects regarding the perception of conflicts by team members (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001; Jehn, 1997; Huan & Yazdanifard, 2012; Zia & Syed, 2013).

The occurrence of conflicts within teams (hereafter: intra-team conflicts) is acknowledged to be inevitable according to management scholars (Jehn, 1995; Jehn et al., 2013; Pondy, 1967). Therefore, dealing with intra-team conflicts is an important issue for all self-managing teams. Within this research, a conflict is defined as: *“an awareness on the part of the parties involved of discrepancies, incompatible wishes, or irreconcilable desires”* (Jehn & Mannix, 2001, p. 238). For intra-team conflicts, the ‘part of parties involved’ refers to particular members being part of a SMT. In addition, the awareness of discrepancies (i.e., differences) of team members refers to the real or perceived discrepancies by certain team members (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Discrepancies can presence in terms of conflicting goals, norms, values,

and (personal) interests. Furthermore, tasks, relationships, and work processes can be distinguished as three main causes for intra-team conflicts (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995; Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2005). These concepts will be extensively described further on in this paragraph.

Thus, conflicts occur because of existing or perceived differences between members within a SMT. The different causes of intra-team conflicts can be recognized by looking at the basic responsibilities and work activities of a SMT. Members of SMTs are collectively responsible for the production process concerning realizing the whole work output, including task-related elements and social elements (Cohen & Ledford, 1994; Cummings, 1972; Pasmore & Mlot, 1994; Wageman, 1997). On the one hand, task-related elements refer to the SMT's work activities, such as collectively defining work task, creating work schedules, and dividing specific individual tasks (Pasmore & Mlot, 1994; Wageman, 1997). On the other hand, social elements include continuous mutual adjustment between members of a SMT concerning executing and specifying day-to-day work activities. Moreover, continuous deliberation between team members about their core work activities is regarded as a social element (Cohen & Ledford, 1994; Cummings, 1972). Both mutual adjustment and continuous deliberation are established through direct interactions between the members of a SMT, which emphasizes the social dimension within the both processes.

Both task-related and social elements of the SMT's work activities can be a source for the emergence of intra-team conflicts. As a consequence, three different types (i.e., dimensions) of intra-team conflicts can be distinguished, which are task-based conflicts, relationship-based conflicts, and process-based conflicts (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995; Jehn, 1997; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2005).

First of all, task-based conflicts can occur within SMTs. Task-based conflicts occur when there are discrepancies among group members regarding the distribution of work tasks, the actual content of the tasks (e.g., goal setting) (Greer, Jehn, & Mannix, 2008; Jehn, 1995). Moreover, task-based conflicts can occur when disagreements exist regarding the content of the decision-making process concerning the specification and allocation of tasks (Jehn, 1995; Jehn et al., 2013). These situations occur due to contradicting perspectives and opinions concerning task-related elements.

The second type of intra-team conflicts that can occur within SMTs are process-based conflicts. Process-based conflicts refer to contradicting perspectives of team members with regard to the way work and tasks are established (Jehn, 1997; Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2002). This refers to disagreements among team members concerning the process of assigning (i.e.,

distributing) particular roles, responsibilities, and resources amongst team members (Jehn, 1997). Furthermore, contradicting visions on decision making processes can be a main source for the emergence of process-based conflicts.

Lastly, intra-team conflicts can be present in the form of relationship-based conflicts. Relationship-based conflicts are resulting from interpersonal incompatibilities between members of a SMT (Jehn, 1995; Langfred, 2007). According to Jehn (1995), the main sources with regard to the emergence of these conflicts are characterized by: *“tension, animosity, and annoyance among members within a group”* (p. 258). Furthermore, relationship-based conflicts can be based on contradicting personal taste, norms and values (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Relationship-based conflicts are also known as social-emotional conflicts, since interpersonal tension within teams often leads to the emergence of emotions like anxiety, fear, frustration, and strain (Jehn, 1995).

As mentioned before, emotions play a key role in every type of human conflicts (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001). However, in case of task-based and process-based conflicts, negative personal emotions are emerging from the occurrence of these conflicts. In contradiction, the occurrence of relationship-based conflicts is actually developed and fuelled by the presence of negative personal emotions (i.e., concerning interpersonal incompatibilities between members of a SMT) (Jehn, 1995).

2.3 Consequences of conflicts on the effectiveness of self-managing teams

2.3.1 Defining self-managing team effectiveness

In current literature, multiple studies have been conducted concerning on the influences of intra-team conflicts on the overall team- and organizational performance. The outcomes of several researches have shown that intra-team conflicts (i.e., task-based, relationship-based, and process-based) may have a positive as well as a negative impact on the functioning (i.e., effectiveness) of self-managing teams (Hempel, Zhang, & Tjosvold, 2009; Jehn, 1995, 1997; Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2005; Langfred, 2007; Pondy, 1967; Power & Waddell, 2004). Furthermore, multiple models are developed in order to determine the effectiveness of teams (Hackman, 1987; Sundstrom, De Meuse, & Futrell, 1990). However, since the characteristics of self-managing teams significantly differ from basic organizational teams, Cohen, Ledford and Spreitzer (1996) have developed a suitable framework in order to define the actual effectiveness of self-managing teams. Therefore, within this research, self-managing team effectiveness is defined in terms of: *“performance effectiveness (e.g., controlling costs, improving productivity and quality), employee attitudes about their quality of work life (e.g., job satisfaction, organization commitment), and employee behaviour (absenteeism)”* (Cohen et

al., 1996, p. 646). Thus, SMTs who reach a high degree of team effectiveness are characterized by high levels of team performance, productivity, quality standards, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. At the same time, low levels of absenteeism and employee turnover should be established (Cohen et al., 1996). However, in order to identify the SMT effectiveness, these rather quantitative terms should be translated according to the specifications of this qualitative empirical research. Therefore, it is regarded that the effectiveness of SMTs is determined by the extend that members of SMTs (i.e., respondents), individually and as a collective, experience high or low levels of the above described aspects. This results from the fact that this research aims to generate in-depth knowledge from the perspective of team members in their real-life context concerning occurring intra-team conflicts, the effect on the SMT effectiveness and conflict resolution strategies. The last mentioned aspects will be extensively described further on in this report.

2.3.2 Negative consequences of conflicts on SMT effectiveness

First of all, with regard to possible negative consequences of intra-team conflicts, a study of Langfred (2007) showed that intra-team conflicts can be associated with a substantial level of distrust amongst team members in particular situations (i.e., interpersonal trust). If this is established, a shift to less individual autonomy and the loosening of task interdependencies can be the result within SMTs (Langfred, 2007). Subsequently, this will lead to dysfunctionality as teams will not be able to restore themselves in a proper way. Therefore, the overall team performance, and team effectiveness, will be affected in a negative way (Langfred, 2007).

Furthermore, previous researches have shown that that occurring relation- and process-based conflicts within teams may lead to decreasing team performance and team member satisfaction (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995, 1997). In turn, this will negatively affect the team effectiveness of SMTs. Moreover, task-based conflict may be problematic as well for the effectiveness of SMTs. This is because high levels of task-based conflicts may negatively influence the team member's satisfaction and the team's ability to reach consensus in situations where crucial decisions should be made. Subsequently, this may be deteriorating for the performance of a SMT (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003).

2.3.3 Positive consequences of conflicts on SMT effectiveness

Despite the findings on intra-team conflicts (i.e., task-based, process-based and relationship based) and their negative influences on the effectiveness of SMTs and even the overall organizational performance, this will not always occur in practice. Instead, intra-team conflicts may also have beneficial consequences for the SMT effectiveness (Jehn, 1995; Jehn &

Bendersky, 2003; Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2005). For example, the study of Kurtzberg and Mueller (2005) has shown that a moderate degree of task-based conflicts in teams may result in higher levels of a member's perceived creativity. Eventually, this can be translated to an increase of the overall creativity of the SMT (Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2005), which subsequently may be beneficial for the overall team performance and thus for the effectiveness of SMTs.

Moreover, previous researches conducted by Jehn (1995) and Jehn and Bendersky (2003) have shown that the team performance may also be boosted in situations where certain levels of intra-team conflicts are present. Within effective SMTs characterized by performing non-routine work tasks, task-based conflicts could lead to higher levels of open discussions regarding occurring task-related issues (Jehn, 1995). Subsequently, critical evaluation processes concerning the occurring conflicts can be established due to these open discussions. As a result, this eventually leads to the accomplishment of more accurate decision making on crucial aspects related to the team performance (Jehn, 1995). Furthermore, open discussions concerning task-based conflicts can also be a remedy for thoughtless agreements and complacency (Jehn, 1995). In turn, these open discussions could be quite beneficial for accurate decision making processes, and subsequently for the team performance of non-routine SMTs (Jehn, 1995).

In conclusion, on the one hand, intra-team conflicts (i.e., task-based, process-based and relationship-based) can have a negative influence on the overall team effectiveness, and eventually on the organizational performance as well (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1997; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Langfred, 2007). On the other hand, the fact that intra-team conflicts in practice may have beneficial consequences on SMT's effectiveness must not be ignored (Jehn, 1995; Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2005). However, the empirical findings regarding the positive effects of intra-group conflicts on the effectiveness of teams (i.e., SMTs) turn out to be highly inconsistent (Passos & Caetano, 2005). Therefore, this research aims to make a contribution to this research area by developing a clearer understanding of the actual consequences of occurring intra-team conflicts on the SMT effectiveness in practice. Subsequently, these insights and generation of new knowledge eventually may help to enhance the effectiveness of SMTs. In the end, an extensive description of these findings can help to provide an answer on the research question as complete and detailed as possible.

2.4 Importance of conflict resolution within self-managing teams

While analyzing and connecting the concepts of intra-team conflicts and self-managing team effectiveness, task-based, relationship-based, and process-based conflicts may negatively influence the effectiveness of self-managing teams (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1997; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Moreover, as mentioned before, empirical findings regarding the positive consequences of intra-team conflicts on the SMT's effectiveness are determined to be highly inconsistent (Passos & Caetano, 2005). These findings combined create a sense of urgency concerning solving possible problematic conflicts within SMTs, since deteriorating effects of these intra-team conflicts on the team effectiveness will lead to dysfunctionality of teams (Langfred, 2007).

Furthermore, a study of Jehn (1997) revealed that every type of intra-team conflict turns out to be: *“highly emotional, can have little potential for quick resolution, and can be very important to the group's members”* (p. 554). The combination of these three aspects together is likely to have a negative effect on the overall effectiveness of SMTs if intra-team conflicts are not dealt with in a proper way (Jehn, 1997). In fact, in the long term, the overall organizational performance may suffer as well if problematic intra-team conflicts keep present or reoccur (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Langfred, 2007; Pondy, 1967).

Moreover, occurring intra-team conflicts, particularly process-based conflicts, within SMTs should be resolved in an early stage in order to prevent further conflict escalation (Greer et al., 2008). This is because process-based conflicts of a longer duration may eventually transform into new task-based and relationship-based conflicts within SMTs (Greer et al., 2008). Thus, if high levels of conflict resolutions are established in an early stage, the chance of conflict escalation within SMTs will be lowered (Greer et al., 2008).

In conclusion, the urgency has become clear with regard to solving problematic conflicts within SMTs rather quickly after their appearance in order to restore the SMT's effectiveness. Subsequently, higher levels of organizational performance can be reached and sustained. However, *how* high levels of effective conflict resolution within SMTs are actually accomplished in practice is rather unclear in current literature. Therefore, this research aims to gather new insights on the conflict resolution process within SMTs, conducted by team members themselves. Subsequently, in-depth knowledge should be gained concerning effective and ineffective conflict resolution strategies and activities perceived by the members of SMTs. Lastly, new insights should be generated with regard to potential effective conflict resolution strategies from the perspective of members of SMTs. In the end, these potential effective

conflict resolution strategies can be brought into practices in order to solve intra-team conflicts within SMTs with the purpose of restoring the team effectiveness.

2.5 Theoretical summary

In sum, like in every other organizational team, the occurrence of conflicts within self-managing teams is regarded to be inevitable. Conflicts occur when existing or perceived differences between team members are experienced in terms of conflicting personal goals, norms, values and interests. In literature, three different types of intra-team conflicts can be distinguished, which are respectively task-based conflicts, process-based conflicts and relationship-based conflicts (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995; Jehn, 1997; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2005).

The occurrence of intra-team conflicts can have both negative and positive effects on the effectiveness of SMTs. Within this study, the effectiveness of SMTs is defined in terms of performance effectiveness, employee attitudes on the quality of work life and employee behaviour (Cohen et al., 1996). The negative consequences of intra-team conflicts can be described in terms of distrust amongst team members (Langfred, 2007) and decreasing team performance, job satisfaction and the team's ability to reach consensus in crucial situations (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1997; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Subsequently, the overall SMT effectiveness will be affected in a negative way. However, occurring intra-team conflicts may have a positive effect on the SMT effectiveness as well. For example, certain levels of task-based conflicts may lead to higher levels of creativity and support open discussions about the conflict. Subsequently, critical evaluation will lead to more accurate decision making (Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2005). These examples may eventually be beneficial for the SMT effectiveness.

However, since the empirical findings on the positive effects of intra-team conflicts on the SMT effectiveness turn out to be highly inconsistent, and the fact that intra-team conflicts are likely to have a deteriorating effect on the overall SMT effectiveness, it is key for members of SMTs to resolve these conflicts. But, it is rather unclear in current literature how members of SMT actually can apply effective conflict resolution strategies in practice in order to restore the SMT effectiveness after occurring conflicts. Therefore, this study aims to provide new in-depth knowledge on how members of SMTs can restore their effectiveness after occurring intra-team conflicts.

3. Methodology

This chapter is dedicated to the used methods within this qualitative research. First of all, the research design will be explained. Hereafter, an extensive description of the selected case will be given. Subsequently, the data collection and data analysis processes will be described in a detailed manner. Lastly, the overall research quality and research ethics are being discussed.

3.1 Research design

In order to provide an answer on the research question, the social context of self-managing teams and occurring intra-team conflicts should be understood from the perspective of the team members. Therefore, in-depth knowledge has been gathered regarding the members' perceptions and opinions on the phenomenon 'intra-team conflicts'. For this reason, a qualitative research design is selected as suitable research method for this study (Bleijenbergh, 2015; Vennix, 2019).

Thus, the goal of this research was to enhance the understanding on the social context of SMTs concerning occurring intra-team conflicts and suitable conflict resolution strategies. Therefore, the exploratory single case study has been selected for this research. According to Yin (2014), an exploratory single case study is suitable when research aims to understand 'how' and 'why' a particular social phenomenon works in practice. Therefore, an exploratory single case study suited well with regard to conducting this inductive qualitative research, since this research aimed to gather new in-depth knowledge in order to describe and understand the social phenomenon in its real-life context (Bleijenbergh, 2015; Yin, 2014).

In order to answer the research question as complete and detailed as possible, in-depth knowledge should be gathered from members working within two studied self-managing regarding their perception of possible suitable conflict resolutions in order to restore their SMT effectiveness. In order to accomplish this, this research dived deeper into the internal processes of the SMTs to understand and clarify the internal relationships and experiences of team members concerning internal conflicts. Therefore, conducting interviews was the most suitable research tool to gather these types of in-depth knowledge (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The main advantage of conducting interviews is that follow-up and probe questions could be asked during the conversations, whereafter more in-depth and detailed information regarding the respondent's deep emotions, personal experiences and opinions is obtained (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Lastly, the epistemological position of interpretivism has been taken into account throughout the whole research processes (Symon & Cassell, 2012; Vennix, 2019). While conducting qualitative research with an interpretative approach, committing to '*verstehen*' is a

key concept, which concerns: *“accessing and understanding the actual meanings and interpretations actors subjectively ascribe to phenomena in order to describe and explain their behaviour through investigating how they experience, sustain, articulate and share with others these socially constructed everyday realities”* (Symon & Cassell, 2012, p. 22). Thus, interpretivism takes human interpretation as the beginning for the development of knowledge and insights to make sense of the social reality (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Furthermore, knowledge about social phenomenon in its social context is regarded to be subjective in nature. Therefore, researchers need to be aware of the fact that biases (i.e., pre-understandings and personal experiences) or dominant discourses play a major role on how knowledge is interpreted (Symon & Cassell, 2012). A neutral observation of the real-life context without any preconceived knowledge therefore is impossible (Vennix, 2019). Within this study, the illustrated assumptions according to the interpretivism are taken into account during the data collection and analysis phases. For this research, this implied that the social context and the position of respondents are considered to play a major role concerning their perception of intra-team conflicts and effective conflict resolution strategies. Subsequently, it was key for the researcher to be aware of particular biases while collecting and interpreting the data.

3.2 Case description

As mentioned earlier, an exploratory single case study has been selected in order to create a deeper understanding on how conflicts emerge within SMTs and what conflict resolution strategies are considered to be effective in the real-life context of the studied SMTs (Yin, 2014).

Within this research, two self-managing teams within a Dutch healthcare organization have been examined. The specific healthcare organization is specialized in providing high-quality services for families dealing with problematic issues. Their core activities concern providing specialized youth assistance, parenting support and offering special (primary) education. These services, in the form of assistance activities or sessions, can take place at home, at school or on their local offices, which addresses the flexibility of the social workers. In addition, the establishment of direct and personal relationships between customers and social workers is highly valued by the healthcare organization. Since providing personal, flexible and customized care is of great importance, self-managing teams are implemented in order to realize high-quality standards.

This particular healthcare organization is chosen based on diverse case selection (Seawright & Gerring, 2008), since the self-managing teams within the organization differ in characteristics regarding work activities, level of collaboration and team composition. Two

SMTs are studied in order to determine whether the occurrence of intra-team conflicts and applied conflict resolution strategies differ by comparing the SMTs with their unique characteristics.

The members of the first studied SMT were focussing on delivering high-quality emergency care for children in acute crisis situations. Causes of these emergency situations are very diverse, like traumatic experiences of children, children or parents with problematic addictions, or other personal issues. Members of the SMTs (i.e., social workers) need to be quite experienced, flexible and confident, since the actual problems and causes of a particular crisis situation are not always known. Subsequently, the social workers in charge need to adapt their skills, capacities and knowledge in such a way that the crisis situation can be controlled effectively. The main purpose of the other studied SMT is to improving crisis situations in families as a consequence of complex divorces. Here, the mutual relationship between ex-partners (i.e., parents) is affected in a negative way. Subsequently, aspects as distrust, anger and miscommunication result a complex, poignant situations within families where the children become victims of the divorce of their own parents.

In order to support these SMTs, team coaches are indirectly involved with the individual teams. Furthermore, because the studied SMTs focus on delivering high-quality care for children in divers crisis situations, one behavioural scientist is linked to the SMT. The behavioural scientist supports the social workers with understanding, and dealing with, problematic behaviour and psychological problems of children and/or parents in every individual case.

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Sample

To get in touch with the respondents of both studied SMTs, a personal connection within the Dutch healthcare organization has been approached. Currently, this person works as a team coach who supports the studied SMTs within the healthcare organization. After a phone call, a physical meeting was planned in order to discuss the research topic, intentions and goals. After both parties agreed on the research specifications, this team coach fulfilled the role as ‘gatekeeper’ to the organization (Bleijenbergh, 2015; Vennix, 2019). Subsequently, suitable SMTs were selected for this research.

The respondents who participated in this study are selected through heterogeneous purposive sampling. According to this non-probability sampling technique, heterogeneous purposive sampling: *“uses our judgement to choose participants with sufficiently diverse characteristics to provide the maximum variation possible in the data collected”* (Saunders,

2012, p. 42). In this case, the respondents are selected based on the unique team characteristics. Furthermore, the respondents are selected based on their experiences with occurring intra-team conflicts in the past, since this was a key aspect with regard to the research topic. So, suitable respondents were selected in order to maximize the richness of the data set, whereafter similarities and differences concerning occurring intra-team conflicts and conflict resolutions could be brought to the light after analysis. The final set of respondents consisted of five members of SMT ‘outpatient emergency care’, three members of SMT ‘complex divorces’ and one team coach. An overview of the nine respondents with fictitious names and job descriptions is presented below in table 1.

Overview respondents:	Fictitious name:	Job description:
1.	Laura	Social worker SMT ‘outpatient emergency care’
2.	Iris	Social worker SMT ‘outpatient emergency care’
3.	Jeanette	Social worker SMT ‘complex divorces’
4.	Marieke	Social worker SMT ‘complex divorces’
5.	Amy	Team coach
6.	Lynn	Social worker SMT ‘outpatient emergency care’
7.	Jacob	Social worker SMT ‘outpatient emergency care’
8.	Amy	Social worker SMT ‘complex divorces’
9.	Tom	Social worker SMT ‘outpatient emergency care’ / team coach

Table 1: overview of the nine respondents with fictitious names

3.3.2 Conducting semi-structured interviews

After the informal meetings with the team coach and receiving the personal contact information of all selected respondents, the data collection process could proceed to the next stage. This stage concerned gathering in-depth information regarding occurring intra-team conflicts and matching conflict resolution strategies from the respondent’s own perspectives and experiences. Subsequently, a rich data could be developed in order to provide a complete and extensive answer on the research question. In order to accomplish this, a total of nine semi-structured interviews have been conducted (Bleijenbergh, 2015; Vennix, 2019). The semi-structured interviews are conducted individually and all had a duration of approximately one hour.

One of the advantages of conducting semi-structured interviews is that the questions within the semi-structured interviews could be formulated as open-ended questions without

having a fixed sequence, which eventually supported the opportunity for in-depth discussions regarding intra-team conflicts within SMTs and conflict resolutions from the perspective of the respondent (Symon & Cassell, 2012; Vennix, 2019). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask follow-up and probe questions in order to understand the respondent's perspective on a social phenomenon (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). These particular questions actually created an enrichment of the individual conversations during the interviews in terms of depth, detail, vividness, and nuance (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Eventually, this has helped to understand the complexity of the conflict situations within the studied SMTs with regard to personal experiences, opinions and perspectives of the individual respondents. Subsequently, the motives, emotions and possible effective conflict resolution strategies could be clarified and better interpreted from the perspective of the respondents.

Before developing the questions of the semi-structured interviews, an informative pre-interview was conducted with a team coach, since this person possessed essential knowledge on recent intra-team conflicts within the concerned SMTs. Based on the informative pre-interviews and my pre-understandings and pre-conceptions on the phenomenon of occurring intra-team conflicts within SMTs (see chapter two), central key themes (i.e., 'a priori themes') are developed (Bleijenbergh, 2015; Symon & Cassell, 2012). Based on these themes, multiple open-ended questions are created and defined per theme. This process has resulted in the development of an interview guide, which is used during every individual interview. The interview guides in English and Dutch are shown respectively in appendix 1 and 2.

The final semi-structured interview guide consisted of four different sections. First of all, section one was focussed on the general information concerning the respondent's personal interests, goals, working activities and function within the SMT. During this section, it was key for the researcher to create an open and save environment in order to gain the trust of the respondent, since the interview topic concerning conflicts between team members was quite sensitive. After the first section, section two was devoted to self-management in practice (i.e., determination and assignment of goals, tasks and responsibilities) in order to create a better understand of the internal team dynamics. Subsequently, section three consists of open-ended questions which aim was to gain new insights in causes, developments and escalations of experienced conflicts situations from the perspective of the respondent. Besides, it was key to find out whether experienced conflicts have negatively affected the SMT effectiveness or not. Hereafter, questions are formulated concerning the respondent's opinions on suitable conflict resolution strategies. Lastly, sector four was dedicated to the closing of the interview. Furthermore, respondents were able to ask possible questions concerning the overall research

or other practical matters.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the nine semi-structured interviews have been conducted through the usage of online communication tools. This was necessary because of the Dutch governmental regulations and restrictions concerning preventing the spread of COVID-19. In this research, the online video communication channel 'Microsoft Teams' was selected as being the most suitable IT tool for data collection. This was a conscious choice, because Microsoft Teams was the main online communication tool within the healthcare organization and therefore well-known and frequently used by all respondents. As mentioned before, the main goal concerning the usage of online video communications channels was to establish a confident, safe environment for the respondent, since the researcher and respondent are able actually to see each other via a real-time connection (Lo Iacono, Symonds, & Brown, 2016). Furthermore, the usage of Microsoft Teams was cheap and less-bound, which have increased the accessibility and flexibility of both the researcher and the respondent (Lo Iacono et al., 2016; Seymour, 2001). Besides, the respondents were able to participate with the online interview from their own confidential environment (i.e., home) (Quartiroli, Knight, Etzel, & Monaghan, 2017). However, key aspects like body language and experiencing the actual atmosphere during the interview was harder to observe empirically (Quartiroli et al., 2017), but both aspects are important as it comes to the collection and interpretation of qualitative data. Furthermore, several disturbances are experienced while conducting the interviews online due to technical issues (e.g., instable internet connection, system errors, external noise). These distracting aspects are discussed more in-depth in chapter 5. Thus, online video communication tools cannot fully replace face-to-face interviews.

Before conducting every individual interview, permission of the respondent was asked with regard to recording the interviews. These audio records helped to develop detailed, extensive transcripts afterwards. Moreover, the main focus will be on the conversation with the respondent, instead of writing down notes. This increases the ability to ask appropriate and specific follow-up questions to establish in-depth discussions.

3.4 Data analysis

After a semi-structured interview was conducted, the same interview has been transcribed within the same week. This was necessary in order to prevent the loss of valuable information, since the atmosphere, emotions, and general conversation with the respondent was still fresh in the researcher's mind after conducting the interview. In order to support the transcribing process, transcription software is used during the data analysis. Within this research, the

transcription tool F4transkript has been used to transcribe the nine individual semi-structured interviews manually. The tool F4transkript was accessible and convenient because of several reasons. First of all, the tool could be installed on every PC easily for a cheap price. Furthermore, the audio recordings could be uploaded within the program, whereafter the researcher could transcribe every interview within the same program. Thus, after transcribing all nine interviews, they were clustered within the same online tool. Lastly, F4transkript offered multiple hotkeys within the program, such as an adjustable speed button and a play/pause button. This all contributed to efficiently transcribing all conducted interviews. During transcribing the qualitative data based on the audio recordings, every spoken word, hesitation, silence, emotion (i.e., laughter, irritation) and disturbance has been documented. This helped the researcher in further in the analyzing process concerning reproducing the individual conversations while analyzing the transcripts (Bleijenbergh, 2016).

After transcribing the nine individually conducted semi-structured interviews, the qualitative data set has been analysed. During this data analysis process, both an inductive and deductive approach has been used by the researcher (Boyatzis, 1998; Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). On the one hand, the deductive approach enabled the researcher to formulate a priori coding template based on existing literature and informal conversations with the team coach on self-managing teams and the occurrence of intra-team conflicts (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This a priori coding template has been developed by operationalizing concepts (i.e., sensitizing concepts) derived from literature and gained knowledge and pre-understandings. These sensitizing concepts were considered to be the starting point for the analyzing process concerning understanding and interpreting the qualitative data on occurring intra-team conflicts and conflict resolution strategies from perspective of the respondents. On the other hand, a data-driven inductive approach is applied as well within this research, since this allowed the emergence of new concepts deriving from real-life situations illustrated by the respondents during interviews (Boyatzis, 1998). Subsequently, new codes could be created and linked to the derived concepts. Thus, as summarized by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), a combination of applying both an inductive and deductive approach supported answering on the formulated research question by permitting the main principles on self-managing teams and occurring intra-team conflicts to be: *“integral to the process of deductive thematic analysis while allowing for themes to emerge direct from the data using inductive coding”* (p. 83).

In order to understand and interpretate extensive textual data properly according to a combination of both an inductive as a deductive approach, the gained qualitative data has been

analysed according to the ‘template analysis’ (King, 2012). The template analysis: *“balances a relatively high degree of structure in the process of analysing textual data with the flexibility to adapt it to the needs of a particular study”* (King, 2012, p. 426). The main goal of the template analysis is to develop an initial coding template based on a sub-set of data. Hereafter, the initial coding template is applied to analyse further qualitative data (i.e., transcripts) (King, 2012). The template analysis is characterized by its flexibility, which is based on the fact that the coding templates may be revised, adjusted, and reapplied on the data set during the data analysis process. Furthermore, conducting a template analysis allows the researcher to follow less fixed procedures to meet the specifications of their own research, which is different in case of, for example, the grounded theory (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The flexibility of the coding structure is also regarded as beneficial aspect of the template analysis. Before conducting the template analysis, an initial coding template was created based on priori themes (see appendix 3) (King, 2012). As mentioned earlier, these a priori themes are developed by combining the acquired knowledge from the informative conversations with the team coach and gained pre-understandings on intra-team conflicts within SMTs. During the data analysis, template analysis allowed the researcher to adjust a priori themes and create new themes suitable to the data set (King, 2012). Thus, the priori themes were tentatively during the whole research process, as well as the initial template. Furthermore, while analysing the extensive textual data, the researcher did not have to follow fixed, sequential levels of coding. Instead, template analysis allowed the researcher to develop multiple themes within the template more extensively if a lot of important data was more present concerning those particular themes (King, 2012). At the end, themes must be relatively distinct from each other. Hereafter, the textual data could be coded. According to the template analysis, this can be done according to three different ways of coding, which are hierarchical coding (i.e., developing higher orders of codes by clustering groups of similar codes), sequential coding (i.e., classifying segments of text within two or more different codes) and through the development of integrative themes (i.e., identifying particular themes which cover multiple thematic clusters) (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

During the coding process, three levels of coding have been applied to the textual data (i.e., transcripts). The three levels of coding were respectively open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Symon & Cassel, 2012). For the coding of the interview transcripts, the tool ATLAS.ti 8 is used by the researcher. This is an online tool which supports structural analysing of extensive textual data (i.e., coding). An example of the three levels of coding is illustrated below in table 2. In appendix 4, the used coding scheme is shown including examples of every individual axial code with corresponding definition, quote and selective code.

Interview:	Quote:	Open code:	Axial code:	Selective code:
1.	<i>"... It turned out that he had taken over a lot of things behind our back. Another colleague joined him in his business, so he became co-owner and that happened a year later. And, I have to say that has touched me very much, and colleagues of mine too."</i>	A relationship-based conflict emerged, because team members felt betrayed after colleague started business in the same work field.	Occurring relationship-based conflict within SMT 'LLC'	Occurrence of intra-team conflicts

Table 2: Example of coding process including quote and three levels of codes

In order to perform the template analysis in an effective and structured way, the six steps of doing template analysis described by Brooks and King (2014) has been followed by the researcher. The first stage was dedicated to become more familiar with the gathered raw qualitative data. The researcher started familiarizing the data by transcribing the conducted interviews manually in F4transkript. By doing this, the researcher was able to listen to the whole interview again and, at the same time, all spoken words has been documented. Hereafter, the final transcript of the interview has been read through from beginning to end. During this process, the researcher could get a first impression of the gathered data and, subsequently, a reflection on the data was accomplished.

After getting familiar with the data set, preliminary coding of the transcripts (i.e., qualitative data) was performed by the researcher during the second stage (Brooks & King, 2014). First of all, open codes were assigned to expected valuable and interesting parts of the transcripts according to an inductive data-driven approach (Boyatzis, 1998). After open coding, the researcher assigned overarching axial codes to the previous open codes based on the predetermined sensitizing concepts (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). However, if none of the sensitizing concepts could be assigned to the open coded data, new codes were formulated inductively in order to create a suitable axial code. In total, this process has been executed three times for three iterations. Each iteration existed of conducting, transcribing, and coding three individual semi-structured interviews. By doing an iteration of three interviews, preliminary findings have been detected, whereafter smaller propositions have been formulated based on the analyzed data (i.e., transcripts). Subsequently, a comparison could be made by the researcher concerning similarities and differences between the individual interviews. Furthermore, the preliminary results could be linked to the existing literature on self-managing

teams, occurring intra-team conflicts and conflict resolutions, whereafter the researcher could detect and identify apparently interesting and valuable data. After the first iteration, the above described process has been executed for the second iteration of two interviews, and lastly also for the last iteration of three interviews. By choosing for this structural way of data collection and analysis, the researcher has established a process of continuous comparison of developed propositions concerning interesting findings of every individual analyzed interview. Subsequently, patterns, similarities and differences have been identified within the whole data set, whereafter new insights and knowledge was generated concerning how members of SMTs experienced occurring intra-team conflicts and how to deal with conflicts after escalation in order to restore their effectiveness. Furthermore, the iteration process has contributed to creating a greater understanding concerning the real-life context of the respondents and, subsequently, supported the interpretation of the data obtained from these respondents.

After conducting the three iterations, all assumed interesting and valuable data has been assigned to open and axial codes. So, during step three, all axial codes have been clustered by selective coding in order to create overarching themes. In this research, the final selective codes are: causes for occurring intra-team conflicts, occurrence of intra-team conflicts, deteriorated SMT effectiveness after occurrence intra-team conflict and conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness. After defining and formulating the final selective codes, the initial coding template has been developed. According to the article of Brooks and King (2014), the researcher tried to organize the initial template in such a way that: *“it usefully and meaningfully represents the relationship between different themes or codes”* (p. 7).

During stage four and five, the researcher has further applied this template to the data set again (i.e., the nine transcripts) and modified the template if new themes and codes emerged (Brooks & King, 2014). New codes and themes were identified during these stages, since previously regarded useless textual data has become more important as a result of a continuous, dynamic analyzing process where the researcher worked back and forth within the data set according to three iterations. Moreover, during this process, several themes and codes were removed from the template the moment that the researcher did not perceive them as useful, valuable data anymore.

Once the researcher did not feel the urge to make any more adjustments or changes within the template, the final template has been defined in stage six. Subsequently, the final template has been used as starting point for interpreting the data set with the developed open, axial and selective codes (Brooks & King, 2014). Lastly, the final outcomes of this research

have been identified, structured, and extensively described by the researcher as the final part of the data analysis process according to the template analysis.

3.5 Research quality

In order to maximize the quality of this qualitative research, four assessment criteria should be met regarding conducting qualitative research (Symon & Cassell, 2012). According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), these assessment criteria refer to respectively credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

First of all, credibility is concerned with establishing a good fit between: “*constructed realities of respondents and the reconstructions attributed to them*” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237). In this research, two techniques are applied to enhance the credibility of this study. To start with, establishing progressive subjectivity can lead to higher levels of credibility. Within this research, progressive subjectivity has been accomplished by developing a record, which consists of specific notes concerning the initial constructions of the research (i.e., problem context, theoretical foundations, research design) and how these are interpreted at a particular point of time. Furthermore, a reflection could be made by the researcher regarding the understanding of the initial constructions of this research and how they may have changed during the whole research process because of the constructions of the respondents (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Furthermore, peer debriefing has been applied in order to maximize the credibility. In practice, the researcher discussed the preliminary outcomes with his supervisor, fellow Master’s thesis students and the team coach. As a result, higher levels of reflexivity have been established with regard to the researcher’s assumptions and constructions during the research (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

Secondly, transferability is regarded to be an essential assessment criterion. Transferability refers to the extent to which the outcomes of this research can be applied and generalized to different contexts (Symon & Cassell, 2012). In order to accomplish this, an extensive (i.e., ‘thick’) description of the selected case and units of analysis has been provided in this chapter (see paragraph 3.2). This extensive case description includes specifications of the business environment, goals and mission of the Dutch healthcare organization, the core activities of studied SMTs, the unique characteristics of the two studied SMTs and the set of respondents. Based on this extensive case description, readers can determine whether the outcomes of this study can be applied to other contexts or not. Furthermore, an extensive description of the problem context, theoretical foundations, epistemological position and research design are provided by the researcher in order to establish higher levels of

transferability of this study.

The third assessment criteria concerns the dependability of the research. Dependability refers to clarifying how the emergent process of methodological changes and shifts has proceeded while conducting the research (Symon & Cassell, 2012). As a result, judgments can be made regarding particular decisions at a certain point of time in the research process (Symon & Cassell, 2012). As mentioned before, this is accomplished by keeping a record where changes in methods are noted while conducting this research. Furthermore, as described in paragraph 3.4, the data collection and analysis process within this research have an iterative character. Therefore, the dependability of this research is enhanced by providing an extensive, detailed descriptions of all taken steps by the researcher during the data collection and analysis process.

Lastly, confirmability claims that it must be clear that the interpretations and findings of the researcher must be derived from the obtained data in order to make sure that it is not the researcher's imagination (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In order to achieve a higher level of confirmability, the researcher must clarify how interpretations and conclusions are determined (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Therefore, this researcher has provided a detailed description of the whole data collection and analysis process, including an explanation on how the data has been transformed. Furthermore, the a priori themes with related concepts, the initial coding template and the coding scheme including the used quotes and corresponding codes are shown in respectively appendix 3 and 4. This has been accomplished in order to establish higher levels of transparency concerning the transformation of qualitative data during the data analysis process and the final outcomes of this study in order to enhance the confirmability.

3.6 Research ethics and integrity

Throughout this whole research, the main principles of the Dutch code of conduct for research integrity has been taken into account. The five main principles refer to honesty, scrupulousness, transparency, independence and responsibility (KNAW et al., 2018). When research ethics and integrity principles are not taken into account while conducting qualitative research sufficiently enough, this may lead to scientific fraud (e.g., high level of plagiarism) and questionable research practices like maintaining inadequate research records, using inappropriate methods and misrepresenting speculations (Pimple, 2002). Subsequently, the quality of the research and the trust others have in the research may be decreased (Pimple, 2002).

First of all, honesty refers to accurately reporting of the research process. Furthermore, considering alternative perspectives and counterarguments, openness for uncertainty, and resolving mistakes are key concepts that should be met in order to realize high levels of honesty

(KNAW et al., 2018). Within this research, honesty is enhanced by keeping a record concerning the methodological changes during the research process. Furthermore, openness has been created by an extensive and detailed description of the overall data collection and analysis process in order to realize a higher level of honesty. Furthermore, contrary perspectives and opinions of the supervisor, fellow students (i.e., peers), gatekeeper and team members concerning the research topic are taken into account during the research process.

Secondly, scrupulousness refers to the usage of scientific and scholarly relevant methods (KNAW et al., 2018). This has been enhanced by using acknowledged proper scientific research journals and academic literature. To ensure the quality of the used scientific and academic sources, all sources have been verified by two recognized websites suggested by the supervisor.

Thirdly, transparency should be established by clarifying the decisions on the case selection, the process of data collection and analysis, and the way how the results are developed (KNAW et al., 2018). Moreover, it is essential that the arguments for every important decision relevant for key aspects within the research are clarified and verifiable (KNAW et al., 2018). Transparency is improved by informing all respondents individually by e-mail concerning the research topic before the individual interviews were actually conducted online. By doing so, the respondents could prepare and they were not faced with any unwanted surprises or awkward situations during the interviews.

Lastly, responsibility is key concerning the realization of research integrity. This means that legitimate interests of direct involved persons, as well as the legitimate interest of external parties (i.e., stakeholders) and the environment will be taken into account while conducting this research (KNAW et al., 2018). This has been accomplished, since the collected qualitative data has been anonymised and stayed confidential at all times. This was of great importance within this research, since the research topic about intra-team conflicts is quite sensitive and comes with extreme emotions like anger and sadness. Furthermore, conversations regarding mutual relationships between team members could not be avoided during data collection. Therefore, real names and other personal data of the respondents are not included within this research, nor shared with other parties throughout the whole research process. This was announced to the respondents before the start of every individual interview due to the ethical responsibility as a researcher.

4. Results

First of all, as a reminder, the research question of this Master's Thesis is formulated as followed:

“How do members of a self-managing team deal with occurring intra-team conflicts in order to restore their effectiveness?”

In order to provide an answer on this research question, the studied self-managing teams and their characteristics are described at first, because these unique team characteristics could have a major influence on how each SMT actually deals with different types of occurring intra-team conflicts in practice. Hereafter, the relevant occurring intra-team conflicts will be extensively described, whereafter conflict resolution strategies and measures can be linked to the different types of occurring conflicts per team. This will eventually create an understanding on how members of each studied SMT deal with conflicts in order to restore the SMT effectiveness.

4.1. Clarifying the units of analysis

4.1.1 The healthcare organization

As mentioned before in the methodology chapter, the data for this research has been collected within a Dutch healthcare organization. The specific professional focus of this Dutch healthcare organization concerns providing high-quality youth care and welfare services. Thus, this organization aims to support and assist families who are dealing with problematic issues resulting from different aspects like addiction, violence, divorces and psychological problems of parents and/or children. Subsequently, these problematic issues who occur within families will negatively affect the wellbeing of the family, but especially the wellbeing and the safety of the children. Therefore, the overall goal of the organization is to improve the overall wellbeing of the family, but most importantly creating a safe environment that conditions and guarantees the wellbeing of the children. Since the diverse and divergent nature of the different types of occurring problems within these families, the Dutch healthcare organization consists of multiple self-managing teams with their own specific professional focus in order to treat each particular case as effective as possible.

Within this research, two different self-managing teams have participated, which are the self-managing team called ‘outpatient emergency care’ and the self-managing team called ‘complex divorces’. The particular team characteristics of both self-managing teams will be extensively described below, since the differences in team characteristics may affect the way how these teams deal with occurring internal conflicts in order to restore their effectiveness.

4.1.2 Understanding the studied self-managing teams

Description of self-managing team ‘outpatient emergency care’

One of the two teams that has participated in this research is the team ‘outpatient emergency care’. This team consists of seven equal youth care workers, of which five members have been interviewed. First of all, in order to understand the core activities of this particular self-managing team, the name of this particular SMT should be analyzed. The term ‘outpatient’ refers to the fact that members of this self-managing team have no fixed work places, since they move literally to the homes of particular families who need their professional aid at a certain point in time. In other words, members of this self-managing team have flexible workplaces. Furthermore, the term ‘emergency care’ refers to the fact that members of this self-managing team support families who experience acute crisis situations. This means that team members receive a call from the police, municipalities (i.e., local government), or local task forces from the neighbourhood concerning an acute crisis situation within a family, which they have to enter as soon as possible (i.e., within one day).

Crisis situations experienced by families can have very diverse causes, like (child)abuse, sexual abuse, drug addiction, (domestic) violence, and psychological issues of parents and/or children. Moreover, members of this SMT do not have much, or any, a priori knowledge concerning the crisis situation before entering. So, the core activities of members of this SMT are 1. understanding the specific crisis situation and identify the causes of the particular crisis situation and 2. securing the safety and wellbeing of the children. A safe environment can be created for children by placing them in available safehouses, but this environment can also be created at home as result of the treatment period. If the crisis situation is transformed into a safe environment with regard to the wellbeing of the children, the case may be transferred to a follow-up treatment team and their job is done. Thus, the work activities of the team members are characterized by providing short-term youth care and welfare service (i.e., duration treatment period), since the aim is to enter a crisis situation and create a safe environment for the children within 28 days. Furthermore, the work activities of members of this SMT are characterized by highly soloistic, individual, independent work activities, which means that team members enter the cases (i.e., acute crisis situations) individually and are responsible for the whole physical treatment process. Thus, low levels of collaboration are existing between team members within this SMT with regard to performing their work activities.

Despite the fact that the work activities within this SMT are performed individually by the team members, all team members will support each other at all times by discussing occurring difficulties who individual members experience in their own specific cases. These

conversations take place at the office or via online communication channels. Moreover, they have weekly meetings where individual cases are discussed and new cases are assigned amongst all team members. Members of this self-managing team assign cases amongst all team members through mutual adjustment and open dialogues, based on the work pressure, available hours, and caseload of individual team members. These aspects are of great importance, because the SMT as a collective is responsible for the overall team productivity and delivering high-quality youth care and welfare services, despite the fact that the work activities are performed individually.

Description of self-managing team ‘complex divorces’

The second self-managing team that has participated in this research is the team ‘complex divorces’. This SMT consists of nine equal practitioners, whose profession is focussed on establishing a stable, respectful relationship between divorced parents. First of all, the cases that are handled by members of this SMT are characterized by unstable, disrespectful, problematic relationships between ex-partners. As a result, the wellbeing of their children can be negatively affected, since these parents compete for parenthood and do not want to share their parenthood with their ex-partner. Because of this battle concerning parenthood, members of this particular SMT receive case requests from the court (i.e., judges), police, or municipalities (i.e., local government).

The main goal of this SMT is to create consensus amongst ex-partners with regard to parenthood and mutual relationships by overcoming differences and creating mutual understanding. Furthermore, members of this SMT aim to establish proper communication and collaboration between parents. In the ideal situation, their child and its wellbeing must be the most importing goal in the lives of both parents. This is necessary, in order to improve overall wellbeing of family, but most importantly the wellbeing of the children. In order to achieve this, parents and their children must follow a long-term treatment period of 9 months, independently (i.e., 90 hours for practitioners).

Moreover, members of this SMT are dealing with highly sensitive situations, since complex divorces concern an instable relation between ex-partners and conflicting interests with regard to parenthood. Therefore, members of this SMT (i.e., practitioners) are prone to charges and complaints from parents, which subsequently may lead to financial penalties or other legal prosecutions. For this reason, members of this SMT always work in pairs (i.e., two practitioners) while working on a case. So, the importance of intense, high-quality collaboration is nesecarry between team members in order to achieve shared goals and maintain

“*multidirectional partiality*” (interview 8) (i.e., showing equal attention and empathy for both of the parents during the treatment period). Subsequently, these aspects are key for successfully completion of a case without legal prosecutions and therefore key for the effectiveness of this SMT. Because of the principles of self-managing teams, members form pairs and assign new cases themselves through mutual adjustment and open dialogues. This is arranged by e-mail conversations and by making face-to-face agreements during group meetings.

Team characteristics:	Outpatient emergency care	Complex divorces
Duration work activities	Short-term (i.e., 28 days)	Long-term (i.e., 9 months)
Type of cases	Acute crisis situations	Prolonged complex situations
Level of collaboration between team members	Low	High
Number of team members per individual case	One	Two (i.e., duo)
Level of dependency on colleagues	Low	High
Level of a priori knowledge of new cases	Low, moderate	Moderate, high
Workplaces	Flexible	Fixed

Table 3: Overview of team characteristics of individual SMTs

4.2 Different types of occurring intra-team conflicts affecting the SMT effectiveness

Since this research aims to create an understanding on how members of self-managing teams deal with occurring conflicts in order to restore their team effectiveness, it is key to remind what self-managing team effectiveness actually means within this specific research. Thus, as mentioned in chapter 2, the effectiveness of self-managing teams is defined in this research in terms of: “*performance effectiveness (e.g., controlling costs, improving productivity and quality), employee attitudes about their quality of work life (e.g., job satisfaction, organization commitment), and employee behaviour (absenteeism)*” (Cohen et al., 1996, p. 646). With these three aspects of self-managing team effectiveness in mind, specific intra-team conflicts could be identified, which actually negatively affected the effectiveness of SMTs. Subsequently, the most important occurring conflicts that have been identified during the data collection and analysis phases will be extensively described within this sub-chapter for each team (i.e., SMT ‘outpatient emergency care’ and SMT ‘complex divorces’). As pointed out in chapter 2, the

occurring intra-team conflicts within this results chapter are distinguished into three different types per individual SMT, which are task-based conflicts, process-based conflicts, and relationship-based conflicts (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995; Jehn, 1997; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2005). Lastly, from now on, both SMTs will be labelled with one of their own unique team characteristics. So, SMT ‘outpatient emergency care’ will be referred to as SMT ‘low level of collaboration’ (i.e., SMT ‘LLC’), and SMT ‘complex divorces’ will be referred to as SMT ‘high level of collaboration’ (i.e., SMT ‘HLC’).

4.2.1 Occurring intra-team conflicts in SMT ‘LLC’

Occurring task-based conflicts in SMT ‘LLC’

The nature of a relevant task-based conflict that has been identified within the SMT ‘LLC’ during the data analysis process concerned the reporting of closed cases by individual team members. When an individual team member closes a case, a report should be written including important aspects and information with regard to the particular case. However, during one of the interviews, a team member pointed out that a task-based conflict emerged in the past when one of the team members was not able finish the reports in time: *[...] there are people who just never finished their report”* (interview 1). In this conflict situation, this particular colleague: *“[...] was able to report excellently, that was not the issue. It wasn't that she needed help putting [...] things into words. She was excellent. But she didn't prioritize [reporting]”* (interview 1).

Besides finishing individual reports in time after closing the cases, conflicting visions on *how* these reports should be written down has been identified during the interviews. This conflict situation is clarified by one of the team members in the following: *“We don't always agree with each other's reports, because one is much uh, more minimalist than me, for example, I'm a bit more extensive”* (interview 2). More importantly, the effectiveness of the SMT was negatively affected by this task-based conflict when the team got an audit by an external party. Because one of the team members was not able to keep her files (i.e., multiple reports) structured and finish those in time, this SMT scored very low on this evaluation criterium according to a respondent: *“Then we got an audit. Then the files were checked, and then our team always scored badly because there was just one person who had nothing in order”* (interview 1). As a result, a low score on the evaluation criterium eventually has led to an decreasing of the SMT’s performance effectiveness (see definition of SMT effectiveness). Subsequently, the overall SMT effectiveness was negatively affected.

Furthermore, this task-based conflict has led to tensions amongst the team members. This is because all team members, as being a self-managing team, are collectively responsible

for the overall quality of the service and work they deliver at the end. According to the team members themselves, they have experienced difficulties in the first place with regard to dealing with this task-based conflict in order to restore their effectiveness. During the interview, one of the respondents mentioned the following regarding the complexity of this conflict situation within the SMT: *“How do you deal with someone who NEVER finishes their report on time? Uhm, yeah that's just really hard”* (interview 1). Thus, members of this SMT claim to struggle with monitoring each other on reporting. This is the case, since they are all equal individuals without them having a team leader or manager with authority who can take a meta-position in order to solve occurring task-based conflicts. In this conflict, there exists a lack of clarity amongst the members of this SMT with regard to dealing with the situation.

Occurring process-based conflicts in SMT ‘LLC’

The second type of intra-team conflicts that can occur within self-managing teams, are process-based conflicts (also see chapter 2). Unfortunately, no relevant process-based conflicts have been identified within SMT ‘LLC’ during the data analysis process. Nevertheless, an interesting example of a process-based conflict which has affected the SMT effectiveness came up during an interview with a team member of SMT ‘HLC’. This particular process-based conflict within SMT ‘HLC’ will be extensively described in the next paragraph 4.2.2.

Occurring relationship-based conflicts in SMT ‘LLC’

While conducting the interviews, it became crystal clear that one particular relationship-based conflict has had a major impact on at least two experienced members of the SMT ‘LLC’. Three years ago, their former SMT felt apart after an intense relationship-based conflict. This particular conflict situation arose when an ex-colleague started his own business and started to offer the same outpatient emergency care healthcare services. Furthermore, according to the respondents, it turned out that this ex-colleague was planning to offer these healthcare services in the same region as his former self-managing. Thus, another competitor joined the region (i.e., work area) of this SMT, both fishing in the same pond: *“[...] he works in the same region and with the same target group as we do. So, actually, we are more or less competitors”* (interview 9). Furthermore, as icing on the cake, several other members of the SMT started to work for the business of the concerned ex-colleague. One of the respondents, who is still member of the SMT ‘LLC’, illustrated that particular situation during an interview: *“One [colleague] started his own business, uh, also with emergency help, but he has actually taken over our region. It turned out that he had taken over a lot of things behind our back. Another colleague joined him in his business, so he became co-owner and that happened a year later. And, I have to say that*

has touched me very much, and colleagues of mine too” (interview 2).

Because of the emergence of this relationship-based conflict, the former open environment within the SMT shifted towards an environment characterized by *“distrust and a sour atmosphere”* (interview 2). Furthermore, the respondent has experienced *“a lot of tensions for six months”* (interview 2). Subsequently, these tensions in combination with distrust having the upper hand has resulted in polarization within the SMT. Moreover, on individual level, one of the respondents claimed to be harmed personally, because she felt betrayed, misused, and misled. These negative developments concerning the interpersonal relationship between members emerged, because this SMT does not have a team leader who possibly could intervene in order to prevent the escalation of this relationship-based conflict by taking a supportive, facilitating role in the conflict. Instead, the involved members, as a collective, were not capable enough to remain calm and suppress negative extreme emotions in order to prevent further conflict escalation. All aspects resulting from this relationship-based conflict combined have led to a decrease of the effectiveness of this particular SMT, because lower levels of job satisfaction, collaboration, and commitment were established according to the narrative expressed by the respondent.

4.2.2 Occurring intra-team conflicts within SMT ‘HLC’

Occurring task-based conflicts in SMT ‘HLC’

Also within the self-managing team ‘HLC’ a task-based conflict has been identified that negatively affected the SMT effectiveness. The nature of this task-based conflict arises from the sensitivity of the cases that members of this SMT have to deal with. As mentioned in paragraph 4.1.2., members of this SMT (i.e., practitioners) are prone to complaints from parents, because they disagree with the overall treatment process or doubt the degree of multidirectional partiality of the practitioners. According to the respondents, these personal charges affect their personal feelings and their professional vitality and integrity in their work field, which is explained by the following example: *“[...] the moment you receive a personal complaint, that also affects your integrity, doesn't it? Because you're sitting there with all the good intentions [...] to help those people and uh, yes if you also get a big kick after... So, that also does something with your vitality and integrity”* (interview 3). In order to prevent the number of charges, strict rules and conditions are formulated and developed by members of the SMT to which the x-partners have to agree before they actually may start with the trajectory (i.e., treatment). As one of the respondents emphasized: *“Within our cases, it is very important that, because there is a lot of resistance from parents, [...] there are certain very clear*

conditions under which we do those conversations. [...] So the moment we start and we read through those conditions, [...] and parents agree with those conditions, then it is very important that you record that [...] and that you let the parents know, you agree to those conditions” (interview 3).

As explained in chapter 4.1.2, members of this team always work together in duo's, because of the sensitivity of the cases they treat. Thus, good collaboration between those team members is key while performing their work activities. Furthermore, as explained above, it is key for members of SMT 'HCL' to complement each other during treatment conversations with clients regarding the compliance to those clients with the predetermined conditions and agreements in order to prevent legal prosecutions (i.e., charges). However, in practice, not all team members always hold on to those predetermined conditions and agreements. For example, no mobile phones are allowed during the treatment conversations, because clients could record the conversations and use this as an indictment against the practitioners. One of the respondents clarified: *“The moment a father puts a telephone on the table after a conversation [...] and once again looks like everything is set up fine, then I expect my colleague to say something about that”* (interview 3). However, this did not unfold in practice. This is emphasized by the same respondent during an interview: *“And that colleague I was just talking about, that uh, he's also a bit of the laissez-faire. So, he often didn't have the papers in order or didn't check why that phone was on the table”* (interview 3). This was the occasion for the emergence of a task-based conflicts between the two members of SMT 'HCL'.

The SMT effectiveness was negatively affected after this occurring task-based conflict, because of the decreasing quality of service resulting from the fact that predetermined conditions were broken and, at the same time, the chance on charges and legal prosecutions has increased. Furthermore, the job satisfaction of this particular respondent was negatively affected, because the respondent was not satisfied with the collaboration with the particular colleague during the conflict situation. Besides, a lack of commitment from her colleague was experienced during this task-based conflict regarding providing a high-quality service. Since these members are part of a SMT, commitment of every member is key in order establish high-quality service outputs as a collective.

As a conclusion, all involved members, as them being a SMT without a team leader, failed to monitor each other and create a mutual understanding concerning the importance of holding on to predetermined conditions and agreements. This has led to escalation of task-based conflict in SMT 'HCL'.

Occurring process-based conflicts in SMT ‘HLC’

As mentioned shortly in paragraph 4.2.1., a relevant process-based conflict that negatively affected the effectiveness of SMT ‘HLC’ has been identified during the data analysis. Next to the fact that the SMT ‘HLC’ aims to re-establish a steady, respectful relationship between ex-partners (i.e., clients) and achieve consensus with regard to parenthood, members of this SMT also provide specific treatment services focussing on the children of the clients (i.e., divorced parents). The particular conflict situation originated during a day programme in order to improve the wellbeing of children. Because the programme of that afternoon was not executed in an effective and efficient way, two team members, as them being self-managing, decided to change the order of the programme during the break. One of the respondents illustrated this in the following quotation: “[...] *in the setup of the program that afternoon, we were going to change something. But it was all hectic [afternoon] and all kinds of things happened, [...] we coordinated that group with the three of us, so together with another colleague, we had thought of that [setup]. Instead of A-B, let's do B-A now*” (interview 4). Because of the chaotic circumstances and limited time, the two colleagues did not involve the third colleague by making this essential decision concerning the day programme. On the one hand, this was inevitable according to one of the team members, because “*the third colleague [...] was busy with all sorts of other things, even before that, he even had some mutual contacts with parents and children during that break [...]. In that break, all those [shifts] took place*” (interview 4).

On the other hand, despite the fact that “*nothing had changed in terms of actual content*” (interview 4), the third colleague was not satisfied about the fact that the other two colleagues have not informed her about the changes in the program. Furthermore, that third colleague was deeply disappointed in how the decision-making process took place in practice and felt “*not heard, not seen*” (interview 4). From that moment, it seemed that the process-based conflict emerging from a disagreement regarding a decision-making process, shifted towards a relationship-based conflict. During an interview, one of the involved team members explained: “*For me, it got personal [...] because she spoke to me about my uh, personal intentions instead of the actions I took. [...] If people do not assume my good intentions, that I have done this with the intention to hurt someone else, yes, then I get uh angry and sad*” (interview 4). After this occurring conflict situation, the SMT effectiveness was negatively affected, since the team members’ attitudes about their quality of work life were vitiated (i.e., job satisfaction), since the occurring conflict could not be handled by the involved team members as being a collective (i.e., SMT). This is the case, because the involved team members themselves failed to take a step back and reflect on the miscommunication and the conflict situation without the support of

a team leader. The decrease of work life quality after conflict escalation has been made clear by a respondent during the interview: “[...] *but it does cost me a lot of energy, [...] and that means that you carry these things home with you, that you just feel less comfortable or that you become grumpy. Yes, they [colleagues] will notice that at the department. I often seclude myself, I just sit in front of the computer, and then I start typing. Good luck you all! I'm in my own bubble*” (interview 4).

Occurring relationship-based conflicts in SMT ‘HLC’

As mentioned before in the first section of this paragraph 4.2.2., a respondent has experienced a task-based conflict in the past that has negatively affected the overall SMT effectiveness. During the interview, it became clear that this task-based conflict emerged when one direct colleague of the respondent broke predetermined agreements and conditions during the treatment period (i.e., conversations with clients). However, the occurrence of this particular task-based conflict has formed the base for a relationship-based conflict between the two members of the SMT ‘HLC’. This shift has been nurtured by the ongoing task-based conflicts, which could not be handled by the involved team members themselves in a certain way.

On the one hand, in the eyes of one of the respondents, that particular colleague had a reticent attitude during conversations with clients. Moreover, this colleague could not handle feedback on her attitude and felt personally offended by that feedback: *“I couldn't manage it, to talk about that [conflict], to reflect on each other and give each other feedback. [...] And that didn't work out with her, because I have received a lot in the form of reproaches. [...] the moment I gave feedback, the heels were dug and I couldn't get any further”* (interview 3). Subsequently, this respondent felt that they ended up in a stagnating process, where it was hard to improve the existing conflict situation. This also had a negative influence on the overall SMT effectiveness, because tensions within this SMT arose from the ongoing conflict situation. This is illustrated by the respondent during an interview: *“[...] then you end up in a kind of stalemate [...], and then the atmosphere also diminishes.”* (interview 3).

On the other hand, during an interview with another respondent, it became clear that the environment of the SMT can be experienced as closed and shut for new members entering this SMT. According to this respondent, this closed environment was experienced since all team members have strong personalities and steadfast opinions. So, contrary to the perception of the previous respondent on this relationship-based conflict, this ‘new’ team member stated that: *“You enter as a new member. If I said well, we could do this and we could do that. The only thing you get back as a response is a no”* (interview 8). Subsequently, as a new member, there

exists a feeling that you must work hard in order to conquer your place within the SMT according to this respondent. As a result, this team member felt isolated from the SMT, because she had the feeling that her voice was not taken into account with regard to work activities. Furthermore, she felt that she was “*not recognized as a full member*” by her direct colleagues (interview 8).

This situation has led to tensions, where negative emotions came into play. According to one of the respondents, the reason for conflict was not based work-related aspects anymore, however, it became a personal issue: “*[...] if you [colleague] believe that I am whining, while I believe that I am acting professionally, then you come into conflict with each other*” (interview 3). This was also fuelled by the fact that those two team members have totally contradictory personalities, or like one of the respondents mentioned: “*I feel that she is great opposite of mine*” (interview 3). Ultimately, a decision was made by one of the respondents regarding the fact that collaborating with this particular colleague was not an option anymore in the short future: “*I have made a choice very consciously, and also expressed that to her, that I am just not going to run a case with you for the coming time being*” (interview 3).

4.2.3 Comparing the causes for intra-team conflicts in both SMTs

Like mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the unique yet contrary team characteristics of SMT ‘LLC’ and ‘HLC’ seem to actually matter for the different types of conflicts they are experiencing. First of all, it seems that task-based conflicts are more likely to occur within SMT ‘HLC’ than in SMT ‘LLC’. This is because all team members of SMT ‘HLC’ need to work together while performing high-quality services. Within SMT ‘HLC’, the core work activities refer to providing sessions with ex-partners in order to improve the mutual relationship and, subsequently, the well-being of children. Since the conversations with divorced parents (i.e., ex-partners) are quite sensitive, all cases need to be treated by at least two team members at the same time. Contrary to the need for intensive collaboration within SMT ‘HLC’, members of SMT ‘LLC’ perform their work activities (i.e., task) individually. In practice, this means that individual cases are assigned amongst the team members, whereafter every individual team member treats their cases independently. Nevertheless, task-based conflicts may still occur in SMT ‘LLC’ on other work activities than the core activities, such as reporting and finishing those reports on time. However, looking at the team characteristics of both SMTs, task-based conflicts are less likely to occur within SMT ‘LLC’ in comparison with SMT ‘HLC’.

When analyzing the occurrence of relationship-based conflicts within both studied SMTs, the causes for the emergence of these conflict seem of the same category despite the differences in team characteristics. In both SMTs, the nature of relationship-based conflicts

refers to contradictory personal visions and values, miscommunication, distrust, and the presence of negative emotions like anger and betrayal. During the occurring relationship-based conflicts in both individual SMTs, team members themselves were not capable to remain calm, take a step back and reflect on the situation from a neutral point of view.

Unfortunately, just one process-based conflict that has negatively affected SMT effectiveness has been identified, which occurred within SMT ‘HLC’. Therefore, no comparison could be made with SMT ‘LLC’ on the emergence of process-based conflicts based on the contradicting team characteristics.

<i>Type of intra-team conflict:</i>	‘LLC’ (i.e., outpatient emergency care)	‘HLC’ (i.e., complex divorces)
Task-based conflict	Conflict based on discrepancies reporting.	Conflict based on breaking predetermined agreements and conditions.
Process-based conflict	-	Conflict based on decision making process.
Relationship-based conflict	Conflict based on experienced distrust, betrayal, and misuse of mutual relationship.	Conflict based on a task-based conflict that shifted towards relationship level.

Table 4: Overview of different types of intra-team conflicts affecting SMT effectiveness, per individual SMT

4.3 Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore the SMT effectiveness

Now the different types of relevant occurring intra-team conflicts and their causes are extensively described and explained for both studied self-managing teams, this chapter aims to create an understanding on how these different SMTs actually deal with these different kinds of intra-team conflict in order to restore their SMT effectiveness. Since the team characteristics of the two studied SMTs significantly differ from each other, a distinction is made within this sub-chapter as well with regard to dealing with occurring intra-team conflicts.

4.3.1 Dealing with occurring intra-team conflicts in SMT ‘LLC’

Dealing with task-based conflicts in SMT ‘LLC’ in order to restore effectiveness

While conducting the interview with one of the team members of SMT ‘LLC’, it became clear that members of the SMT have taken a number of actions in order to deal with the task-based conflict, which was caused by member(s) who were not able to keep their reports (i.e., files) up to date after closing cases (i.e., acute crisis situations). Interestingly, these actions concerned

small conflict resolution strategies, which has been executed in a certain sequence to resolve the SMT's effectiveness after the occurring task-based conflict.

Early-on confrontation and continuous monitoring

First of all, one of the team members explained that all team members, as being a collective, directly confronted the specific colleague after multiple failures regarding finishing the reports (i.e., files) in time. According to the team coach, confrontation between involved team members in certain conflicts need to be accomplished as soon as possible after conflict escalation, instead of later on in the conflict situation. This is necessary in order to “*de-escalate certain irritations in an early stage*” (interview 5). If these kind of irritations and relatively small issues simmer for a longer time period, the chance on further escalation of the task-based conflict is increasing, which may have a negative influence on the overall SMT effectiveness in the long term.

After this early-on confrontation, a process of continuous monitoring was initiated by members of this SMT: “*So, every time that we had to finish [our] reports, we asked [that colleague] [questions] like, have you started your reporting yet? How are you progressing with it [report]? What do you need in order to...?*” (interview 2). This conflict resolution measure undertaken by all members of the SMT, indicated that they all feel responsible for establishing higher scores during the audit (i.e., evaluation criterium) on reporting, since they are all responsible for those quality standards.

Formulating agreements and assigning responsibilities

Furthermore, after early-on confrontation and continuous monitoring, agreements were formulated concerning ultimate deadlines for finishing reports: “*We did make agreements with each other at the time: if you close a case and you have not completed your report, you should at least make sure that it is finished [at least] two weeks later*” (interview 1). Furthermore, responsibilities were assigned to every individual member of the SMT concerning finishing their reports in time, which became clear during an interview: “[...] *and at one point we also said you know, it is each his own responsibility to have the files in order*” (interview 2). These measurements can be specifically applied in order to resolve task-based, because task specifications and agreements are easy to document. Subsequently, this can be used as a guideline which supports monitoring and thus solving and preventing task-based conflicts. In this case, according to the respondents, these measurements were taken in order to improve their audit scores in the future. Accordingly, this could improve the overall SMT effectiveness as well.

Departure of team member

All taken measurements and by members of the SMT in order to improve their quality standards during audits did actually work out for every team member, except for just one colleague. According to the respondents, members of the SMT have offered enough tools to improve the (conflict) situation regarding reporting: *“Well, with this person, it is uh, [...] unsolvable, actually. We’ve tried every way. Friendly, lenient, supporting, uh, basically anything. But actually, with this person it remained uhm, struggling”* (interview 2). Eventually, this task-based conflict was resolved after the departure of this particular team member, one of the respondents mentioned during an interview: *“So, in the end, it [conflict] wasn’t resolved until she was gone”* (interview 2). Subsequently, the SMT’s score on the audits have improved, which positively affected the SMT effectiveness.

Selection of new team members on qualities and capacities

As a final result, it turned out that members of the SMT introduced certain standards, qualities and capacities which new team members should possess in order to prevent similar task-based conflicts in regarding reporting. This is explained by one of the respondents while having a conversation about this specific topic during an interview: *“that now [...] in the applications, we insisted very much on how are you with reporting? Are you faithful? Are you on time [regarding reporting]? With the team, as it is now, it is actually no longer an issue. It’s just not a topic anymore. Everyone is just responsible. And almost everyone finished it in time. So, with the departure of just one person, a problem is just completely solved”* (interview 2). Thus, as it seems now, members of the SMT have succeeded to deal with this particular occurring task-based conflict in order to improve the overall SMT effectiveness after all.

Dealing with relationship-based conflicts in SMT ‘LLC’ in order to restore effectiveness

As explained in paragraph 4.2.1, the appearing relationship-based conflict in SMT ‘LLC’ has caused a formation of two groups due to polarisation. Here, the one group (i.e., experienced team members) felt betrayed, misused and misled by the other group, who were planning to start their own business in the same work area. Also here, a sequence of smaller conflict resolution strategies applied by the involved team members has been identified.

Informally excluding team member and departure from SMT

First of all, after the escalation of the relationship-based conflict, the respondent claimed that the experienced team members have ignored the ex-colleague and informally excluded him from the SMT. This action was consciously undertaken, because they felt personally attacked

and betrayed since the ex-colleague was busy entering the same working area behind their backs. According to an experienced team member, informally excluding the ex-colleague was needed, because the relationship-based conflict has broken the mutual trust relationship amongst them and their ex-colleague: *“We didn't want to talk to this person anymore about this, because this person knew exactly what we thought about it. Since it was a relationship of trust that we all had, and at that moment, it was very much misused, yes. [...] And we felt very misled by that”* (interview 2). Moreover, it turned out that the mutual trust relationship was actually irreparable after the occurrence of this particular relationship-based conflict according to the respondents, because *“if someone is that invidious, then I just do not want to work together, then it's done”* (interview 2). At the end, this relationship-based conflict was resolved the moment when the ex-colleague and his companions have left the SMT and started to work for themselves in their own business. This happened 4 months after the escalation of this particular conflict. In other words, the SMT has literally split up: *“[ex-colleague] thus left at one point, we said goodbye and uh, that was it”* (interview 2). Nevertheless, the remaining members of this SMT could now focus on restoring the overall SMT effectiveness by selecting new team members and collectively determine what trail to blaze: *“then we had to re-establish our strategy, or in the strategy find our way again in a new team”* (interview 2).

So, after the occurrence of this relationship-based conflict, it seems that the departure of one of the involved team members was the only option regarding resolving the relationship-based conflict and restoring the SMT effectiveness. This is the case, because all team members as being a collective within a SMT somehow were incapable to resolve the broken mutual trust relationship after the occurring relationship-based conflict themselves. This inability was caused by acute polarisation within the SMT after the conflict escalation, where no team member could take a neutral meta-position to mediate between two conflicting parties in order to create consensus. Furthermore, like in every SMT, no team leader was present who could actually be a kind of mediator in order to repair the mutual relationship between team members.

Lastly, it is remarkable to see that this particular conflict resolution strategy regarding the departure of team members was also implemented within the same SMT when a task-based conflict has occurred in the past. In both situations, the departure of team members was an ultimate strategy in order to restore the overall SMT effectiveness. Thus, as a conclusion, within SMT ‘LLC’, the departure of certain team members is regarded to be a successful conflict resolution strategy in order to restore the overall SMT effectiveness after occurring task-based conflict and relationship-based conflicts as well.

4.3.2 Dealing with occurring intra-team conflicts in SMT 'HLC'

Dealing with process-based conflicts in SMT 'HLC' in order to restore effectiveness

As mentioned in paragraph 4.2.2, a process-based conflict occurred within the SMT 'HLC' when two team members changed the sequence of the day programme for children, while not involving the third colleague within this decision-making process. In order to restore the negatively affected SMT effectiveness, SMT 'HLC' applied a sequence of conflict resolution strategies.

Early-on confrontation and reflective conversations

First of all, during an interview with a team coach, it turned out that members of this team started off with directly addressing the issue after the occurrence of the conflict. Early-on confrontation was needed in this conflict situation in order to prevent further escalation of the process-based conflict in SMT 'HLC'. This finding is comparable with the first conflict resolution strategies undertaken by team members of SMT 'LLC', who had to deal with an occurring task-based conflict (see also paragraph 4.3.1). In this particular conflict situation, early-on confrontation was acknowledged to be the first step in order to resolve this process-based conflict, since members of this team never discussed how they should plan and schedule the actual sequence of activities during the day programme for children. Subsequently, while discussing the content and actual sequence of the work activities for this particular treatment, reflective conversations took place between all members of the SMT. For every individual aspect of the programme, opinions of the involved team members were gathered by asking questions like: "[...] *how is that going right now? What do you think about that?*" (interview 5). Thus, these conversations supported the evaluation of the process-based conflict in by creating a mutual understanding about the member's individual perspectives on the occurred conflict situation.

Formulating and documenting agreements concerning the day programme

Right after the reflective conversations took place, agreements were formulated and documented by members of the SMT. This is also in line with the undertaken actions by SMT 'LLC' on resolving their task-based conflict. This was necessary, since collaboration is key for effectively facilitating these day programmes in order to improve the overall wellbeing of children. Furthermore, because of the need of high-quality and intense collaboration between team members, this particular SMT wanted to formulate very specific agreements, which is illustrated by the team coach during the interview: "*I notice that just so much can go wrong in such a day if you work together.... That [agreements] can help a lot and they really like it. And*

really, they can talk about things like, when they come in and then we ask the children to take off their jackets, [...] can we have a chat with that parent or do we have to make a separate appointment for that?" (interview 5). Subsequently, another team member can respond to that: *"Well, I think you should really schedule that after school, because the attention should go to the children at that time"* (interview 5). Hereafter, those agreements concerning facilitating day programmes for children were documented in a sort of manual, so all specific agreements can be stored and looked up at all times by all team members. This is experienced to be a useful and helpful tool by members of the SMT. All those measurements together, undertaken by the members of the SMT, eventually may improve the overall effectiveness of the whole SMT after this occurring process-based conflict.

Dealing with relationship-based conflicts in SMT 'HLC' in order to restore effectiveness

While conducting the interview with one of the members of SMT 'HLC', it turned out an occurring task-based conflict caused by a colleague breaking predetermined conditions and agreements, has shifted towards a relationship-based conflict. Therefore, members of this particular SMT have undertaken multiple actions (i.e., conflict resolution strategies) in a certain sequence in order to resolve the relationship-based conflict, whereafter the overall SMT effectiveness could be restored.

Conscious ignorance and laissez-faire

First of all, one of the team members has decided to distance herself from the particular colleague after the conflict situation continued for a while, without improvement. Since every single case is taken care of by two members of the SMT, the respondent mentioned that she did not want to collaborate with the particular colleague anymore. After this decision, both parties have rested their mutual disputes and did not give attention to each other and the existing relationship-based conflict anymore. This was necessary for both parties in order to unwind and get rid of negative, intense emotions with regard to the conflict situation. Interestingly, while looking at the occurred relationship-based conflict in SMT 'LLC', distancing seems to be an effective first resolution strategy after the escalation of relationship-based conflicts.

Reflective conversations and self-awareness

After a certain time period went by, both parties have decided to meet up again in order to resolve the relationship-based conflict, whereafter multiple reflective conversations followed. Because of these reflective conversations, empathy amongst both parties and self-awareness were established by the members of the SMT. In an interview, one respondent mentioned that

she was not aware of the fact that the SMT had such a close environment, because the team consisted of very experienced practitioners, all having strong personalities and their own firm opinions with regard to their work activities as (youth) caregivers. This has made it quite hard for new members to settle: “[...] *she sometimes did not always have the feeling that she could also be herself in here [the SMT]. Uh, so I think that she has already got stuck in there, hasn't addressed the issue immediately, but [the tension] has been very noticeable. [...] we as a team have not uh, not identified that well enough and were not responsive to it*” (interview 3). Moreover, the same respondent admitted: “*if you then come in as a new member, it is not easy, eh. Hey, let's take a critical look at that ourselves*” (interview 3). By creating the awareness amongst the members of this SMT with regard to their closed environment, follow-up steps could be taken to further improve this particular situation.

Investing in mutual relationship and formulating agreements

On individual level, one of the team members explained that she felt responsible for restoring the mutual relationship with the particular colleague. According to her, this feeling arose after the open, reflective conversations with the creation of self-awareness as a result “*In believe that you should take your own responsibility as a team, and do what it takes to uh, to restore the right atmosphere in the team*” (interview 3). Moreover, collaboration is essential within this particular SMT, since every individual case should be handled by two team members. Thus, after reflective conversations and the creation of self-awareness, the urge to restore the mutual relationship increased. This is key in order to re-establish high-quality of collaboration between all members of the SMT and, subsequently, necessary in order to improve the overall quality of delivered services and lower the chances on charges and legal prosecutions.

More importantly, in order to restore conflicting interests with regard to work activities (i.e., task-based conflict that caused the relationship-based conflict), it became clear during the interview that the team members, as a collective, agreed on the fact that agreements should be formulated with regard to facilitating conversations with parents: “*[...] because it just went wrong last time, let's really put some energy into preparing well, discussing it properly afterwards, fine-tuning it so that, hey, are we still on the same page... And invest on that as well*” (interview 3). This conflict resolution measurement could help improve the overall performance effectiveness of the SMT, since both parties now agreed on each other's preferences and expectations while performing their work activities.

Organizing team-building events on a regular basis

In order to improve the mutual relationship amongst all team members and the team atmosphere,

several team-building events have been organized. As a result, respondents claimed that more empathy amongst all team members was created during those team-building events, because the SMT as a collective: *“started to zoom in on topics like who are we, how different are we, [...] what are the goals of the team, but also what are your own goals. How do you stand in the work you perform, [...] and what priorities are important to you in that, but also what values, beliefs do you personally have?”* (interview 3). The creation of empathy within the SMT after organized team building events is also approved by the team coach during an interview. She emphasized that during those team- building events, members of the SMT *“As a team, as a collective, get closer together by really going back to the actual core of who are we, what is the purpose of the team, where do we want to go, uhm, but then also uh, delving into your colleague’s lives. Who are my colleagues? What are their personal goals?”* (interview 5). In addition, she added: *“[...] in that way you understand each other uh, better, and therefore become more aware of the individuals with whom you have to work so inherently and intensively, especially with, with the team complex divorces, because they do every case at all in pairs, and every case they pick up uh, they do with all different colleagues actually”* (interview 5).

However, while analysing the interview transcripts, it seemed that there is one important condition that should be met with regard to organizing team-building events. This concerns the fact that team-building events should take place physically. According to one of the team members, the physical presence of all team members is key in order to get the most out of a team-building day in terms of improving mutual relationships: *“We actually think we should do that face to face, not online [...] Also to, to be uh yes, in each other's physical presence and still be able to look each other straight in the eye or feel the atmosphere. [...] And people can dive in quicker, huh, if they just.... 'I'm just getting coffee' or uh, talking to each other on the phone or WhatsApp, you know”* (interview 3). While analyzing this illustration of the respondent, online meetings seem to be less effective. This is because there is an increased chance that involved team members may become more easily distracted or focus on other irrelevant things, instead of actively participating with the team-building event and investing in mutual relationships. This phenomenon is also recognized by a colleague during an interview, who explained that face-to-face contact: *“feels better and uh, and you are less distracted. Because I do tend to get distracted when I am on digital [meetings]. And especially when there are more people [participating]”* (interview 6).

As a last finding, the team coach emphasized that it is key to organize team building events on regular basis in order to maximize the benefits of this strategy. If these events (i.e.,

meetings) just take place once in order to create consensus, short-term benefits can be identified in terms of increasing job satisfaction, commitment, mutual understanding, and an improved atmosphere in within the SMT. However, members of SMTs are likely to fall back into old habits, which can trigger the emergence of new conflicts amongst team members, that subsequently may affect the SMT effectiveness. During the interview, the team coach explained the following: *“What I recommend is, how are you going to make sure that it stays kind of a continuous thing, that it's not a one-time thing and we move on”* (interview 5). Thus, all members of the SMT together need to be aware of the fact that continuous monitoring each other is essential for solving conflicts and maintaining their SMT effectiveness after establishing this through organizing team-building events.

As a conclusion, organizing team-building events could be a very helpful and effective measure in order to resolve relationship-based conflicts. As a result, mutual relationships amongst all team members could be improved, and subsequently higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and performance could be established. However, as a side note, the importance of facilitating these team-building events physically seems to be essential for maximizing the beneficial outcomes of the team-building events. Moreover, according to the team coach, SMTs should avoid organizing team-building events as being a one-time event focussing on short-term issues. Instead, these events (i.e., meetings) should be organized regularly in order to maintain the overall effectiveness of the SMT after restoring it.

4.4 Dealing with ongoing conflicts

Lastly, a notable finding is that members of SMTs cannot manage occurring internal conflicts in some situations, despite using conflict resolution strategies and measures. In these situations, ongoing conflicts exists, which are very hard to resolve. In addition, like every SMT, there is no support of a team leader or manager who could take a meta-position or a mediating role to intervene in situations where ongoing conflicts exist. Nevertheless, members of SMTs somehow need to deal with these ongoing conflicts, while maintaining their effectiveness.

Ongoing relationship-based conflict within SMT ‘LLC’ caused by team trauma

In paragraph 4.2.3, an occurring relationship-based conflict within the SMT ‘LLC’ has been extensively described. Despite the fact that this conflict was solved in the eyes of two experienced team members when ex-colleagues has departed from the SMT, an ongoing conflict was emerging while new team members joined the two experienced members, who were involved with the particular relationship-based conflict.

The specific ongoing conflict situation arose from the moment that the number of cases

was decreasing within this SMT, because a big competitor has joined. However, it turned out that this competitor is known as the ex-colleague of the experienced team members, who started his own business in the same youth healthcare sector in the same region (i.e., work area).

In order to increase the number of cases and, subsequently, reach higher production levels, action needed to be undertaken in terms of adapting the SMT's strategy. While conducting the interviews, conflicting ideas on the SMT's strategy could be identified as a result of the team composition, because this SMT consist of experienced members (i.e., working healthcare organization for longer than 17,5 years) and young members (i.e., working in SMT shorter than 2 years). To be more specific, in order to increase the number of cases, it has turned out that the younger team members have a more progressive, open-minded attitude as it comes to collaborating with direct competitors. However, every time that the young team members suggested to collaborate with the competitor (i.e., ex-colleague of experienced team members) in the same work area, tensions and frictions immediately arose within the SMT between the young and experienced team members. As one of the younger team members explained: *"[...] the moment we start the conversation and say guys, we have to do something, because uh that competitor is getting bigger, we also have to look at how flexible we can be or whatever. But then this is linked to him, to that former colleague, and then the heels were dug immediately"* (interview 7). During the interview, this team member added that *"there was just a kind of war emerging"* the moment that a proposition was made concerning collaborating with that particular ex-colleague. Thus, according to several younger team members, the experienced team member is still suffering from a sort of *"team trauma"* after that particular relationship-based conflict that has occurred in the past (interview 7).

As a result of this ongoing conflict concerning collaborating with the competitor (i.e., ex-colleague of experienced team members), this SMT is experiencing a stagnating team process with regard to increasing their productivity. According to one of the younger members, every time this topic comes to light within the SMT, the experienced members made a statement: *"I distance myself from this and I want nothing to do with this, because he [ex-colleague] is this and that [...]"* (interview 7).

Because of the sensitivity of this topic and the heavy emotions that are expressed by the experienced members, all members of this SMT end up in a kind of stalemate. This situation caused by the ongoing conflict is experienced to be a complex one, according to one of the younger members. During an interview, this respondent emphasized that: *"We are a new team now, and we are thinking ahead and looking forward. We do not feel any pain while*

hearing the word [name ex-colleague]. But, the old guard, the older ones, they do have that [pain]” (interview 6).

Living with ongoing conflicts

As a conclusion, members of this SMT are not able to create consensus within this complex conflict situation. Despite the fact that members of this particular SMT are still facing ongoing conflicts nowadays, it has become clear during the interviews that they are able to sustain quite good team atmosphere and mutual relationships. Furthermore, they are succeeding in perform high-quality youth healthcare services as well.

First of all, this is because members of this SMT consciously avoid talking about this sensitive topic (i.e., collaborating with the competitor in order to increase the number of cases) after the escalation of such a conversation. Here, the laissez-faire principle is applied by the members of this SMT. One of the team members mentioned the following with regard to this strategy: *“then, it is good to say, for example, this is not something that we can solve together, we should better just not talk about it for a while. Uhm, you know, that can also be a solution, by meeting each other like gosh, let's just park this for a while”* (interview 9). Here, the members of the SMT agreed on the fact that they disagreed on this topic. As it seemed, further polarization was prevented by this mutual descision.

Secondly, they characteristics of the work activities also play a major role in establishing high-quality outcomes of the performed youth healthcare services. Because every single case is treated by just one individual team member, conflicts of any kind almost never threatened the performance effectiveness according to the members of this particular SMT. This could be totally different in the other studied SMT ‘high collaboration’, where every case is handled by at least two team members and intensive collaboration is essential for maintaining the SMT effectiveness.

5. Conclusion and discussion

First of all, the last chapter of this thesis contains a clear description of the found conclusions based on the results, which are described in chapter four. Secondly, this chapter provides a discussion which contains a theoretical reflection with regard to the outcomes of this research. Hereafter, the limitations and implications for further research based will be explained. Subsequently, practical implications and recommendations will be considered and described. Lastly, a critical reflection will be illustrated concerning the position and taken actions of the researcher during the overall research process.

5.1 Conclusion

The implementation of self-managing teams (i.e., SMTs) within organizations has become more and more popular during the last decades. This trend is emerging from the association with the organizational benefits which are unfolded by the integration of SMTs within organizations, such as cost reduction, increasing productivity, and employee well-being (Cansler et al., 2003; Cohen & Bailey, 1997). But, one of the conditions under which these organizational benefits can be realized is that SMTs must establish and maintain high levels of SMT effectiveness. However, the effectiveness of SMTs can be negatively affected by occurring intra-team conflicts (i.e., task-based, process-based, relationship-based) between members, since these conflicts could cause dysfunctionality of SMTs (Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Langfred, 2007). Since management scholars claim that the occurrence of conflicts is inevitable within every type of organizational teams (Jehn, 1995; Jehn et al., 2013), the aim of this research is to investigate how members of SMTs actually deal with occurring conflicts in order to restore their effectiveness. Subsequently, the restoration of the SMT's effectiveness will also be beneficial for the organization as a whole.

Various studies are conducted on conflict resolution strategies within organisations, but these are focussed on the facilitating role of the manager (Litterer, 1966; De Dreu & Beersma, 2005; Talmaciu & Maracine, 2010). However, SMTs consists of equal team members who are responsible for the completions of their own work, without a manager or team leader. So, currently, a knowledge gap exists concerning how members of SMT actually resolve conflicts in favour of restoring the overall team effectiveness. Therefore, the research question of this thesis was formulated as follows:

“How do members of a self-managing team deal with occurring intra-team conflicts in order to restore their effectiveness?”

During this research, data is gathered by interviewing members of two different self-managing teams within a Dutch healthcare organization, which are SMT ‘low level of collaboration’ (i.e., SMT ‘LLC’) and SMT ‘high level of collaboration’ (i.e., SMT ‘HLC’). The two different SMTs are selected on purpose, since these SMTs have different core characteristics who determine how conflicts emerge within SMTs and, more importantly, how each individual SMT actually deals with the three different types of occurring intra-team conflicts in order to restore the SMT effectiveness.

Within SMT ‘LLC’, a clear task-based conflict has been identified that has negatively affected their SMT effectiveness. During this conflict situation, members of SMT ‘LLC’ have undertaken a sequence of actions (i.e., conflict resolution strategies) in order to restore the SMT effectiveness. Firstly, all members of the SMT collectively confronted the particular colleague directly after the escalation of the task-based conflict. This early-on confrontation is necessary in order to de-escalate irritations in an early stage of the task-based conflict. Hereafter, members of the SMT implemented a process of continuous monitoring in order to make sure that all team members fulfil their tasks properly and, subsequently, resolve the task-based conflict. Furthermore, agreements were formulated and responsibilities were assigned collectively concerning personal tasks and deadlines through mutual adjustment and deliberation. These actions worked out for all members, except for one. So, in the end, the SMT effectiveness was restored after the departure of that particular team member. The SMT effectiveness should be maintained by the selection of new team members on the right qualities and capacities in order to prevent task-based conflicts in the future.

In the case of relationship-based conflicts, some members of SMT ‘LLC’ have followed a more resolute, intense conflict resolution strategy. Since the mutual trust relationship amongst the team members has been broken as a consequence of the relationship-based conflict, several members of the SMT informally excluded one of their colleagues directly after the conflict has escalated. This has been decided, because these involved team members felt misled and betrayed. Moreover, it can be concluded that the two conflicting parties were unable to create consensus concerning the relationship-based conflict because of acute polarisation within the SMT, which negatively affected the SMT effectiveness. The effectiveness of SMT ‘LLC’ has been restored after four months, the moment when the involved colleague (i.e., one of the conflicting parties) left the SMT. So, within SMT ‘LLC’, departure of team members and selecting new members on capacities and skills is regarded to be an ultimate conflict resolution strategy for task- and relationship-based conflicts.

Also within SMT ‘HLC’, an intra-team conflict has been identified which had a negative influence on the SMT effectiveness. Other than in SMT ‘LLC’, a relevant process-based conflict is detected within SMT ‘HLC’ which emerged from disagreements between team members with regard to a decision making process about changing a day programme. During this conflict situation, members of the SMT have undertaken a sequence of actions over time in order to deal with the conflict and restore the SMT effectiveness after all. Firstly, early-on confrontation has been established with the involved team members in order to prevent further escalation of the process-based conflict. Next, reflective conversations have taken place in order to create mutual understanding about the conflict and the different opinions of the involved team members. Hereafter, new agreements have been formulated and documented in a manual, based on the new day programme. Members of this SMT consider this as an effective tool that creates clarity, which resolves and prevents task- and process-based conflicts in the future and restores the SMT effectiveness in the end.

An interesting finding is that the above described sequence of small conflict resolution strategies executed by members of SMT ‘HLC’ to deal with occurring process-based conflict strokes with the sequence of conflict resolution strategies that SMT ‘LLC’ implemented in order to restore their SMT effectiveness after an occurring task-based conflict.

Furthermore, a relationship-based conflict has been identified that has negatively affected the effectiveness of SMT ‘HLC’. This relationship-based conflict emerged from a conflict that was originally task-related. Since members of this SMT were unable to resolve this conflict, the task-based conflict shifted towards a relationship-based conflict which negatively affected the SMT effectiveness. The first step of the conflict resolution process contained conscious ignorance of the particular involved colleague by one of the team members because of the presence of negative, intense emotions emerging from the relationship-based conflict. After a certain period of time without collaboration between the conflicting parties, the conflict situation has calmed down and negative emotions have neutralized. It is interesting to see that these negative emotions did not play a major role during the previously discussed task- and process-based conflicts. Hereafter, reflective conversations between the conflicting team members took place during meetings in order to create mutual understanding and self-awareness concerning individual roles within the conflict situation. When this was settled, involved members of SMT ‘HLC’ decided to formulate agreements in order to resolve the task-related part of this conflict, which has been beneficial for the SMT effectiveness. Furthermore, the involved team members found it of great importance to invest in mutual relationships, since high levels of collaboration are key within the working activities of this SMT. This has been

realized by organizing several team-building events. This should be done on a regular basis in order to actually maintain the positive, good atmosphere within a team. Furthermore, another result refers to the fact that members of SMT 'HLC' claim that the effectiveness of such team-building events should be taken place physically instead of online. The beneficial physical aspect of the meetings, such as face-to-face conversations and increased attention, will contribute to a significantly more effective outcome in terms of increased mutual relationships. As a result, the effectiveness of SMT 'HLC' was restored after all.

Interestingly, in the occurring relationship-based conflict within SMT 'HCL', the mutual trust relationship between team members was not fully irreparable like in the occurring relationship-based conflict in SMT 'LLC'. This is a key difference, which eventually determines the way a SMT deals with occurring relationship-based conflicts in order to restore their effectiveness.

Lastly, an interesting finding refers to the fact that in some conflict situation, members of SMTs are unable to resolve particular conflicts by themselves over time. Since they have no team leader or manager, they have to find a way to deal with those ongoing conflicts in such a way that they can operate effectively. The results show that this was the case in a particular relationship-based conflict within SMT 'LLC'. Because this specific SMT is characterized by highly independent, individual work activities and low levels of collaboration between team members, the effectiveness of this SMT was not that much affected in case despite of the ongoing relationship-based conflict.

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 Discussion

One major goal of this research is to expand the existing literature (i.e., theories) on self-managing teams and conflict resolution management within these self-managing teams. The results of this research do deliver certain contributions to these academic research areas.

First of all, the outcomes of this specific research provide new insights in how members of SMTs themselves, without a team leader or manager, re-establish their effectiveness after occurring internal conflicts. The results show that members of SMTs accomplish this by a specific sequence of smaller conflict resolution strategies for every type of intra-team conflicts (i.e., task-based, process-based and relationship-based). Subsequently, these new insights contribute to the knowledge gap on conflict resolution strategies by SMTs in order to restore their effectiveness, since this is a quite unexplored topic by management scholars.

Secondly, the outcomes validate the findings of the study conducted by Greer et al. (2008), who claim that it is of great importance to solve intra-team conflicts as early as possible after the actual occurrence of the conflict in order to prevent further conflict escalation. This is confirmed by the results, since the respondents claim that early-on confrontation is the crucial first step to prevent further escalation of task-based as process-based conflicts. In the end, further escalation of these conflicts can have disastrous consequences for the SMT effectiveness in the long term (Greer et al., 2008).

Thirdly, the results of this study stroke with the findings of Langfred (2007), since the outcomes of this research show that occurring intra-team conflicts within SMTs, especially relationship-based conflicts, may often result in distrust between team members. Subsequently, high levels of interpersonal distrust make it even more difficult for members of SMTs to restore their team effectiveness. So, in the long term, SMTs who deal with ongoing conflicts caused by distrust are not likely to function in an effective and efficient way.

5.2.2 Practical implications and recommendations

Based on the outcomes of this study, several practical implications and recommendations can be formulated for the specific Dutch healthcare organization.

First of all, the results of this research concerning the emergence of the three different types of conflicts (i.e., task-based, process-based and relationship-based) and the corresponding sequences of conflict resolution strategies can be documented and presented in a manual or general overview. Subsequently, this manual should be made available for every employee working within the healthcare organization by online publishing the manual on a cloud or online database of the organization.

Secondly, the healthcare organization has access to the supporting services of two team coaches. Their services are already present and available within this specific healthcare organization. Those team coaches provide educational programmes for SMTs as a whole and for individual employees in order to increase their skills and capacities. For example, the team coaches offer several trainings concerning effective communication and organizing team meetings. A big advantage could be taken by utilizing the services of these two team coaches by integrating the findings of this study regarding conflict resolution strategies and restoring the SMT effectiveness in an educational programme. This programme could be performed by the team coaches during an intervision or team-building event concerning conflict management within every individual SMT within the organization. In light of the outcomes of this study, these events should take place physically in order to maximize the effectivity of the events.

Both practical implications are focused on learning and creating higher levels of (self-) awareness by individual team members concerning their own position, input and influence on the emergence of intra-team conflicts. More importantly, team members should become more aware of which actions they can undertake in order to restore the overall SMT effectiveness after the escalation of certain conflicts as them being a self-managing collective without a team leader or manager. Subsequently, after the team members of SMTs have gained more knowledge on these complex conflict situations, they are more capable to prevent conflicts in the future and/or to resolve occurring intra-team conflicts in an effective, proper way. Thus, in the end, the SMT effectiveness could be maintained and/or restored within a very short time, which eventually could be beneficial for the healthcare organization as a whole in terms of productivity, job satisfaction and cost reduction.

5.2.3 Limitations

Besides that this research provides interesting outcomes and new insights concerning conflict resolution strategies for members of SMTs in order to restore their effectiveness after occurring intra-team conflicts, there are several limitations that may have affected the researcher's interpretation of the results.

First of all, there are a number of limitations concerning the data collection process. Since the Dutch government have implemented national COVID-19 measures, all interviews are conducted online via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. As a result of online interviewing, the researcher had to cope with some digital problems. For example, the internet connection got lost while conducting two (out of nine) interviews. As a result, the quality of the audio files was negatively affected, which sometimes resulted in unintelligible sentences. Furthermore, during another online interview, one respondent received an emergency call which she had to answer. After a break of 3 minutes, the storyline went lost. Ultimately, she was forced to end the conversation, since she needed to react on the emergency call. Lastly, the children of a respondent left the house to go to school during an interview. However, they walked through the screen, since the respondent was placed in the kitchen. This has caused confusion and distraction with regard to the interview topic. All above examples concerning conducting online interviews have negatively affected the overall data collection process, which subsequently may have led to the loss of interesting and important data for answering the research question.

Secondly, there are a number of limitations that have affected the overall transferability of the research's outcomes. Firstly, the healthcare organization was originally a hierarchical, top-down organization. A few years ago, the transition started from a traditional organization

towards a flat organization, characterized by self-managing teams. However, the employees did not have any vote or say with regard to this decision, since the management team determined the new organizational structure. As a result, according to several respondents, there exist a high degree of doubt and a lack of commitment towards the concept of self-management amongst some employees. Thus, this type of organization differs from an organization that is self-managing in nature. So, there may be a difference between the two types of organizations concerning the way conflicts arise within SMTs and how team members deal with occurring conflicts in order to restore their effectiveness. Besides the unique nature of this specific healthcare organization, it may be possible that members of SMTs operating in other business than the healthcare sector (i.e., retailers, NGOs) deal with occurring intra-team conflicts in differently in order to restore their affected effectiveness. Furthermore, every individual SMT within this healthcare organizations provides a very specific type healthcare service for children and their families who deal with problematic issues. However, only 2 SMTs and the team coaches are included within this research. So, it may be likely that members of other individual SMTs, with their unique characteristics, implement different conflict resolution strategies in order to restore their effectiveness after occurring internal conflicts. This may have a negative impact on the transferability.

Thirdly, a limitation arises from the research topic, which concerns the occurrence and escalation of conflicts and how members of SMTs deal with those situations. Since this is a sensitive and complex topic, perceptions and emotions play a major role regarding whether a conflict is experienced by an individual or not. For example, one respondent claimed that she experienced a conflict with a colleague, while the other respondent experienced the situation as just ‘an argument’ or ‘a discussion’. Furthermore, all respondents were informed about the interview topic on forehand, since conflicts within team is a sensitive topic. However, this resulted in the fact that respondents could prepare for the interview. Here, valuable data may not be revealed by the respondents during the interview. All these aspects together caused a challenge for the researcher with regard to revealing and unfolding the subjective truth. Moreover, since this study was conducted by only one researcher, it was quite challenging to interpretate the data concerning occurring intra-team conflicts, because of multiple perceptions of individual respondents and the individual perception of the researcher as well.

5.3 Implications for further research

Based on the above described results and limitations of this study, several implications for further research can be formulated.

First of all, there is a lot of existing knowledge concerning conflict resolution strategies for team leaders or managers. However, this study is conducted since very little prior research is done in the domain of self-management, focussing on how members of SMTs actually deal with occurring intra-team conflicts in order to restore effectiveness as a collective – without a team leader. So, this study provides new insights within this specific research domain. However, further research is necessary on the same research topic within the Dutch healthcare sector in order to validate or disprove the outcomes of this research.

Moreover, this organization was originally a traditional top-down organization which have re-designed their organizational structure towards self-management. So, it would be interesting to conduct the same research within a naturally self-managing healthcare organization, like Buurtzorg, in order to compare the outcomes of both studies. Furthermore, within this research, the unit of analysis was a Dutch healthcare organization who provides high-quality care services for children and their families who deal with problematic situations. This is quite specific work field, so it would be very interesting as well to conduct the same research on SMTs in other healthcare organizations or SMTs in organizations operating in different business. These implications for further research could provide additional knowledge and insights on how members of those SMTs actually deal with their occurring intra-team conflicts in order to restore the SMT effectiveness. This will enrich and broaden the current knowledge in this research field concerning self-managing teams in combination with conflict resolution management.

Lastly, an interesting outcome refers to the fact that a studied SMTs was not able to resolve a relationship-based conflict themselves because high levels of interpersonal distrust. As a result, members of this specific SMT had to find a way to live with this ongoing conflict without negatively affecting the overall SMT effectiveness. This is an interesting finding, which is currently quite unexplored within literature on self-management. Therefore, further research on this topic is suggested, in order to obtain knowledge and new insights with regard to this phenomenon. Subsequently, this could lead to a better understanding for SMTs who need to deal with ongoing conflicts but still need to maintain high levels of SMT effectiveness for the sake of overall organizational benefits like productivity, job satisfaction and cost reduction.

5.4 Reflexivity

During the last decades, reflexivity has become a more prominent and important key aspect within the domain of qualitative research. According to Haynes (2012), reflexivity refers to: *“an awareness of the researcher’s role in the practice of research and the way this is influenced by the object of the research, enabling the researcher to acknowledge the way in which he or she affects both the research processes and outcomes”* (p. 72). While deliberating the definition of reflexivity, it is clear that the researcher and the action he has undertaken during the whole research process have had an unintended impact on the overall process and results.

First of all, the educational background of the researcher could have an influence on the way he has conducted this qualitative research. This is the result of achieving his bachelor’s degree in business administration at a Western university. Subsequently, based on this educational background, the already developed assumptions concerning conducting qualitative research has shaped the undertaken actions during the overall research process and the interpretation of the data. In the end, these aspects have affected the establishment of this study’s final outcomes, which could have been different if this research was conducted by researchers with other – or none – educational backgrounds.

Secondly, the pre-existing knowledge of the researcher regarding the research subject should be considered in the light of reflexivity. In the first place, the researcher’s pre-existing knowledge on self-managing teams and conflict resolution management within teams was limited. So, this enabled the researcher to approach these phenomena with an open, unbiased view. However, a certain biased may have been created during an informal pre-interview with the team coach. This relevant person was an acquaintance of the researcher and additionally, this person was the gatekeeper to the case organization as well. Besides, despite the team coach was not involved within the SMTs (i.e., unit of analysis), information was given concerning the studied SMTs. The developed pre-assumptions could have biased the researcher before actually starting with interviewing the respondents (i.e., members of SMTs). Eventually, this could have affected the interpretation of the qualitative data and the final description of the results.

Thirdly, the researcher’s role during the data collection process should be taken into account, since the main subject regarding conflicts is considered to be a quite sensitive subject. In order to gain useful and valuable data during the interviews, the researcher had to create an open and save environment. Subsequently, the respondents are more likely to share their experiences, opinions, and emotions with regard to experienced conflict situations. In some situations, it was quite hard to create such an open and save environment because of the fact that the interviews were conducted online. Furthermore, too direct and sensitive questions from

the researcher refrained the respondent from sharing their real feelings and experiences. This has affected the overall outcomes of this research.

Lastly, as described in chapter three, the researcher has conducted this research from the epistemological position of interpretivism. According to the interpretivism, the development of knowledge and new insights starts with human interpretation in order to make sense of the social reality (Symon & Cassel, 2012). As a result, knowledge about the studied subjects in their social context is subjective in nature. This means that the developed personal biases, pre-understandings and experiences of the researcher have a major impact on the way how qualitative data is collected and interpreted. Since this study is done by one individual researcher, it must be acknowledged that the final outcomes may have been different if someone else has conducted the same study. This would be based on their own personal pre-assumptions and biases.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview guide (English version)

Interview guide – English

1. Introduction and general information

First of all, I would like to thank you in advance for participating with this research. Before we start with the interview, I would like to introduce myself shortly. My name is Merijn Olthof, Master student at the Radboud University, Nijmegen. For my Master's degree in Organisational Design & Development, I am currently writing my Master Thesis, which is focussing on conflict solving within self-managing teams.

The aim of my thesis is to investigate how conflicts in self-managing teams are developed, what the causes are, and how occurring conflicts can be effectively be solved by members of self-managing teams. Therefore, this interview aims to develop an understanding on what your personal experiences and opinion are on the development of conflicts and conflict resolution strategies. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes.

Furthermore, I would really like to emphasize that everything you tell and explain during the interview will be treated as confidential information at all times. The content of the interview will only be shared with my supervisor afterwards. Moreover, you as being a participant of my research, will be anonymised at all times. This means that your name will not be mentioned throughout the whole research (report). The same goes for the real name of the organization you are currently working for. After mentioning my ethical considerations, I would like to ask your permission for audio recording this interview in order to analyse the interview more precisely and with more ease.

Lastly, do you have any further questions? Is everything clear for you so far? If not, then we can start with the interview.

2. Interview questions

Section 1: General information

- Could you briefly introduce yourself?
- How did you become member of this particular self-managing team?
- Could you explain what your particular role is within the team?
- Could you tell me what your daily activities are?

- What are your main responsibilities within the team?
-

Section 2: Self-managing teams

- Could you tell me what the main goals of your team are?
 - In what way are the goals, tasks and responsibilities of the team determined?
 - Can you tell me how the goals, tasks, responsibilities are aligned and divided amongst the team members in practice?
 - Can you tell me something about the internal team dynamics?
 - Positive experiences
 - Negative experiences
 - From your perspective, what kind of relationship do you have with your fellow team members?
-

Section 3: Conflicts within self-managing teams and conflict resolution

- In the past, are there situations where tensions or conflicts have occurred within your team?
 - Could you explain what happened in this particular conflict / conflict situation from your perspective?
 - Could you tell me who were involved within this particular conflict / conflict situation?
 - What was the cause of this particular conflict / conflict situation from your perspective?
 - From your point of view, could you tell me how this particular conflict / conflict situation has developed over time?
 - Were your daily activities affected somehow because of the occurring conflict in your opinion?
 - If yes, what were your experiences regarding that situation?
 - Were the goals of the team affected somehow because of the occurring conflict in your opinion?
 - If yes, what were your experiences regarding that situation?
-
- After the occurrence of this conflict, what kind of measures have been taken in order to resolve this?
 - Could you tell me who were involved during the conflict resolution process?
 - From your perspective, did those measures work out concerning resolving the occurring conflict?
 - If yes, could you explain how you experienced that?
 - If not, could you explain how you experienced that?

- Could you explain what kind of measure / strategy would be most suitable in order to resolve the conflict in that particular situation in your opinion?
 - Could you explain what you consider to be an (potential) effective conflict solving measure / strategy in this particular situation?
 - Who was the person who came up with this measure / strategy?
 - Is this particular measure / strategy already used before (in the past)?
 - If yes, did this measure / strategy work out in your opinion?
 - If not, could you explain me what your thoughts are about this? Why was this measure / strategy not effective in this situation according to you?
 - If the conflict has been resolved, have you experienced longer consequences of the conflict situation within your team?
 - Could you clarify the positive experiences from your perspective?
 - Could you clarify the positive experiences from your perspective?
-

Section 4: Closing

- Are there some interesting points left that you would like to share within the context of this research?
 - Would you like to share and explain this?
-

3. End of the interview

This is the end of this interview. I would like to thank you for participating in this research and for sharing your experiences and opinions. This is very much appreciated. Like I have explained before, everything that has been said during this interview is regarded as confidential information and will be treated as that at all times. Thank you for your time and have a nice day.

Appendix 2 – Interview guide (Dutch version)

Interview guide – Nederlands

1. Introductie en algemene informatie

Allereerst wil ik u alvast hartelijk bedanken voor uw deelname aan dit onderzoek. Voordat we starten met het interview, zou ik mijzelf eerst graag kort willen voorstellen. Mijn naam is Merijn Olthof, Master student aan de Radboud Universiteit te Nijmegen. Voor mijn Masterdiploma in ‘Organisational Design & Development’ ben ik momenteel mijn Master Thesis aan het schrijven, die zich richt op het oplossen van conflicten binnen zelfsturende teams.

Ten tweede, het hoofddoel van deze Master thesis is om te onderzoeken hoe conflicten in zelfsturende teams ontstaan en ontwikkelen, wat de oorzaken zijn, maar vooral hoe deze conflicten effectief opgelost kunnen worden door leden van zelfsturende teams. Dit interview heeft daarom als doel om inzichten te verkrijgen omtrent uw persoonlijke ervaringen en mening over de ontwikkeling van conflicten en effectieve maatregelen en strategieën betreffende het oplossen van deze conflicten. Het interview zal ongeveer 60 minuten duren.

Ten derde wil ik sterk benadrukken dat alles wat door u verteld en verklaard wordt tijdens het interview ten alle tijden behandeld zal worden als volledig vertrouwelijke informatie. Dit betekent dat de inhoud van dit interview achteraf alleen met mijn supervisor gedeeld zal worden. Ook wordt u, als participant van dit onderzoek, ten alle tijden geanonimiseerd. Dit betekent dat er gedurende het hele onderzoek nooit gerefereerd zal worden naar uw echte naam en de naam van de organisatie. Nu de ethische overwegingen zijn verklaard, zou ik uw toestemming willen vragen betreffende het maken van een audio opname van dit interview. Deze audio opname maakt het mogelijk om dit interview achteraf gemakkelijker en preciezer te kunnen analyseren.

Als laatste, heeft u nog verdere vragen omtrent de inhoud van dit interview of andere randzaken? Zo niet, laten we dan van start gaan met het interview.

2. Interview vragen

Sectie 1: Algemene informatie

- Zou u uzelf kort willen introduceren?
- Zou u kunnen uitleggen wat uw rol/ functie is binnen dit team?
- Hoe bent u onderdeel geworden van dit betreffende zelfsturende team?

- Zou u mij kunnen vertellen wat uw dagelijkse werkzaamheden zijn?
 - Wat zijn uw belangrijkste verantwoordelijkheden binnen dit team?
 - Verschillen deze van uw mede teamleden?
 - Wat zijn uw belangrijkste persoonlijke doelen?
-

Sectie 2: Zelfsturende teams

Teamcoach:

- Wat kunt u vertellen over zelfsturing en zelfsturende teams binnen [naam organisatie]?
 - Hoe komt dit tot uiting in de praktijk bij teams die u coacht?
 - Kunt u voorbeelden noemen uit de praktijk van positieve ervaringen m.b.t. zelfsturende teams? Voordelen m.b.t. zelfsturende teams.
 - Kunt u voorbeelden noemen uit de praktijk van negatieve ervaringen m.b.t. zelfsturende teams uit? Problematiek m.b.t. zelfsturende teams.
-

Teamlid:

- Zou u mij kunnen vertellen wat de belangrijkste doelen zijn van uw team?
 - Verschillen deze doelen met die van uw mede teamleden?
 - Op welke manier worden de doelen, taken en verantwoordelijkheden van het team bepaald?
 - Zou u mij kunnen vertellen hoe de doelen, taken, en verantwoordelijkheden worden verdeeld onder de teamleden in de praktijk?
 - Zou u mij kunnen iets kunnen vertellen over de huidige team dynamiek?
 - Positieve ervaringen
 - Negatieve ervaringen
 - Vanuit uw perspectief, hoe ziet de relatie tussen u en uw teamleden eruit op dit moment?
-

Sectie 3: Conflicten in zelfsturende teams en het oplossen van conflicten

- Zijn er wel een situaties voorgekomen in het verleden waar spanningen of conflicten tot uiting zijn gekomen binnen uw team?
- Zou u kunnen uitleggen wat er vanuit uw perspectief is gebeurd tijdens dit desbetreffende conflict/ conflict situatie?
- Zou u mij kunnen vertellen wie er betrokken waren bij dit conflict/ deze conflictsituatie?
- Kunt u vertellen wat volgens u de aanleiding was van dit desbetreffende conflict?
- Zou u mij kunnen vertellen hoe dit desbetreffende conflict/ conflict situatie zich heeft ontwikkeld vanuit uw perspectief?

- Zijn, volgens u, uw dagelijkse werkzaamheden op enige manier aangetast als gevolg van dit desbetreffende conflict?

- Zo ja, op welke manier heeft u dat ervaren in deze situatie? Hoe heeft dit zich geuit in de praktijk?

- Zijn de doelen van het team op enige manier aangetast als gevolg van dit conflict volgens u?

- Zo ja, op welke manier heeft u dit gemerkt? Hoe heeft zich dit geuit in de praktijk?

- Welke maatregelen zijn er getroffen om het desbetreffende conflict op te lossen?

- Zou u kunnen vertellen wie er betrokken waren bij het proces dat zich focuste op het oplossen van dit conflict?

- Hebben deze getroffen maatregelen geholpen om het desbetreffende conflict daadwerkelijk op te lossen vanuit uw perspectief?

- Zo ja, zou u kunnen uitleggen hoe u dit heeft ervaren?

- Zo niet, zou u kunnen uitleggen hoe u dit heeft ervaren?

- Zou u kunnen uitleggen welke soort maatregel/ strategie volgens u het meest geschikt was om het desbetreffende conflict in die situatie op te lossen?

- Wie was de persoon die deze maatregel/ strategie opperde?

- Is deze specifieke maatregel/ strategie al eerder toegepast (in het verleden)?

- Zo ja, heeft deze maatregel/ strategie gewerkt om dit conflict op te lossen volgens u?

- Zo nee, zou u kunnen uitleggen wat uw gedachten hierover zijn? Waarom was deze maatregel/ strategie niet effectief in deze situatie volgens u?

- Vanuit uw perspectief, heeft u langdurige consequenties van deze conflictsituatie ervaren binnen uw team nadat het conflict was opgelost?

- Zou u uw ervaringen kunnen verklaren met betrekking tot de positieve consequenties?

- Zou u uw ervaringen kunnen verklaren met betrekking tot de negatieve consequenties?

Sectie 4: Afsluiting

- Heeft u verder nog interessante punten/ opmerkingen die interessant kunnen zijn binnen het kader van dit onderzoek?

- Zou u deze punten nader willen verklaren?

3. Slotwoord

Hierbij zijn we aangekomen aan het einde van dit interview. Ik wil u graag hartelijk bedanken voor uw deelname aan dit onderzoek en voor het delen van uw ervaringen en meningen. Dit wordt zeer gewaardeerd. Zoals ik eerder heb toegelicht, wordt alles wat inhoudelijk tijdens dit interview is gezegd beschouwd als zeer vertrouwelijke informatie. Deze informatie zal te allen tijde als zodanig worden behandeld. Bedankt voor uw tijd en een fijne dag gewenst.

Appendix 3 – A priori themes and initial coding template

A priori themes:	Related concepts:
Causes for occurring of intra-team conflicts	Negative personal emotions (e.g., anger, hate, jealousy, sadness); internal disturbances and tensions; conflicting personal norms, values, interests and goals; miscommunication; gossiping; misunderstandings; perceived discrepancies between team members.
Occurrence of intra-team conflicts	Task-based conflicts; Process-based conflicts; Relationship-based conflicts.
Deteriorated SMT effectiveness after occurring intra-team conflict	Decreasing levels of: performance effectiveness (e.g., controlling costs, productivity and quality); employee attitudes about quality of work life (e.g., job satisfaction, organization commitment). Increasing levels of: employee behaviour (e.g., absenteeism and employee turnover)
Conflict resolution strategies	All actions undertaken by members of SMTs after the occurrence of an intra-team conflict in order to deal with the particular conflict and, subsequently, restore the negatively affected the SMT effectiveness.

Table 5: Overview of a priori themes and related concepts

Initial coding template			
<u>Quote:</u>	<u>Open code:</u>	<u>Axial code:</u>	<u>Selective code:</u>
		Conflicting personalities; Contradicting work style; Perceived differences on work activities; miscommunication; negative personal emotions; closed environment.	Causes for occurring intra-team conflicts
		Occurring task-based conflict; Occurring process-based conflict; Occurring relationship-based conflict.	Occurring intra-team conflicts within SMT
		Negatively affected performance effectiveness; negatively affected attitudes about	Deteriorated SMT effectiveness after occurrence intra-team conflict

		work life quality; changing employee behaviour.	
		Early-on confrontation; Continuous monitoring; Formulating agreements; Documenting agreements; Assigning responsibilities; Departure of team member; Selection of new team members on qualities and capacities; Informally excluding team member; Reflective conversations; Conscious ignorance; Laissez-faire; Creating self-awareness; Investing in mutual relationship; Organizing team- building events.	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness.

Table 6: Overview of initial template used for coding

Appendix 4 – Final coding scheme

Interview number:	Quote:	Axial code and corresponding definition:	Selective code:
Interview 3	<i>“And that colleague [...] on the table”</i>	<u>Conflicting personalities:</u> Differences in personal character creates tension or disturbance between two parties.	Causes for occurring intra-team conflicts
Interview 2	<i>“We don't [...] more extensive”</i>	<u>Contradicting work style:</u> Contrary approaches on how work activities should be executed.	Causes for occurring intra-team conflicts
Interview 3	<i>“And that colleague [...] on the table”</i>	<u>Perceived differences on work activities:</u> Difference between how people perceive what a work task requires and contains.	Causes for occurring intra-team conflicts
Interview 4	<i>“For me [...] and sad”</i>	<u>Miscommunication:</u> The moment that one party does perceive words or actions in another way than the other party intended.	Causes for occurring intra-team conflicts
Interview 2	<i>“Since it [...] misled by that”</i>	<u>Negative personal emotions:</u> contain anger, hate, jealousy, sadness, rivalry (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001; Huan & Yazdanifard, 2012).	Causes for occurring intra-team conflicts
Interview 8	<i>“You enter [...] is a no”</i>	<u>Closed team environment:</u> Perceived team atmosphere where member does not experience support, guidance, and acceptance of fellow team members.	Causes for occurring intra-team conflicts
Interview 1	<i>“How do [...] really hard”</i>	<u>Occurring task-based conflict:</u> when there are discrepancies among group members regarding the distribution of work tasks, the actual content of the tasks (e.g., goal setting) (Greer, Jehn, & Mannix, 2008; Jehn, 1995).	Occurring intra-team conflicts within SMT
Interview 4	<i>“the third colleague [...] took place”</i>	<u>Occurring process-based conflict:</u> refer to contradicting perspectives of team members with regard to the process of establishing and assigning work and tasks (Jehn, 1997; Kurtzberg & Mueller, 2002).	Occurring intra-team conflicts within SMT

Interview 2	<i>“One [colleague] ... of mine too”</i>	<u>Occurring relationship-based conflict</u> : resulting from interpersonal incompatibilities between members of a SMT (Jehn, 1995; Langfred, 2007).	Occurring intra-team conflicts within SMT
Interview 1	<i>“Then we got ... nothing in order”</i>	<u>Negatively affected performance effectiveness</u> : decreasing productivity, quality of work and costs control (Cohen et al., 1996).	Deteriorated SMT effectiveness after occurrence intra-team conflict
Interview 4	<i>“[...] but it [...] own bubble”</i>	<u>Negatively affected attitudes about work life quality</u> : Decreasing job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Cohen et al., 1996).	Deteriorated SMT effectiveness after occurrence intra-team conflict
Interview 2	<i>“[ex-colleague] thus [...] was it”</i>	<u>Changes in employee behaviour</u> : increasing levels of absenteeism and employee turnover (Cohen et al., 1996).	Deteriorated SMT effectiveness after occurrence intra-team conflict
Interview 5	<i>“de-escalate [...] early stage”</i>	<u>Early-on confrontation</u> : Directly addressing certain issues and tensions right after the occurrence of the conflict to prevent further escalation.	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness
Interview 2	<i>“So, every [...] order to...?”</i>	<u>Continuous monitoring</u> : Ongoing process where team members keep on checking whether work activities are performed adequately.	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness
Interview 1	<i>“We did [...] weeks later”</i>	<u>Formulating agreements</u> : All team members, as a collective, develop work-related and personal arrangements in order to resolve the conflict situation.	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness

Interview 5	<i>"I notice [...] for that?"</i>	<u>Documenting agreements:</u> Team members write the developed work-related and personal agreements down to make them tangible and explicit in order to prevent further escalation and, furthermore, resolve the conflict.	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness
Interview 2	<i>"[...] and at [...] in order"</i>	<u>Assigning responsibilities:</u> The development and allocation of responsibilities amongst all team members in order to resolve the occurring conflict.	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness
Interview 2	<i>"... So, when [...] completely solved"</i>	<u>Departure of team member:</u> Conflict has been solved after one of the conflicting parties left the particular SMT	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness
Interview 2	<i>"that now [...] on time [regarding reporting]? ..."</i>	<u>Selection of new team member based on qualities and capacities:</u> new team members are recruited by SMT based on certain qualities and capacities in order to prevent certain conflicts in the future.	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness
Interview 2	<i>"if someone [...] it's done"</i>	<u>Informally excluding team member:</u> Team member makes a conscious decision to stop working together with colleague in order to resolve conflict.	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness
Interview 5	<i>"[...] how is [...] about that?"</i>	<u>Reflective conversations:</u> team members evaluate on the occurred conflict by asking each other critical questions regarding the individual perspectives on the emergence of the conflict.	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness

Interview 3	<i>“I have [...] time being”</i>	<u>Conscious ignorance</u> : A team member decides to avoid particular team members because of negative emotions in order to de-escalate the conflict situation.	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness
Interview 9	<i>“then, it [...] a while”</i>	<u>Laissez-faire</u> : involved team members decide to stop the discussion concerning the occurring conflict in order to de-escalate the conflict situation.	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness
Interview 3	<i>“if you [...] that ourselves”</i>	<u>Creating self-awareness</u> : consciously thinking about, and reflecting on, the role and position of the individual and team in an occurred conflict situation, whereafter the situation can be improved.	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness
Interview 3	<i>“[...] because it [...] as well”</i>	<u>Investing in mutual relationship</u> : Team members put effort in establishing a better connection on work and personal aspects.	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness
Interview 5	<i>“[...] in that way [...] colleagues actually”</i>	<u>Organizing team-building events</u> : members of self-managing team aim to create a better mutual understanding on everyone’s personal- and work-related goals, interests and values during team-meetings in order to resolve conflicts.	Conflict resolution strategies in order to restore SMT effectiveness

Table 7: Final coding scheme

Appendix 5 – Interview transcripts

The transcripts of the nine individual conducted interviews have been submitted to the direct supervisor separately from this research report.