

Exploring the Moderating Effect of Proactive Personality in Conflict-Handling Styles and Employees' Performance- A Conceptual Approach

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Abstract

The primary focus of this study is to investigate the moderating effect of proactive personality on the relationship between conflict-handling styles and employee performance. In pursuit of this objective, the study employs a systematic literature review approach, providing a rigorous analysis of existing research rather than relying on primary data collection. Avalanche of prior studies reviewed shows an inconsistency in the relationship between conflict handling styles and employees' performance. Similarly, based on the literature reviewed, there is ample evidence that suggest that proactive personality has a significant positive impact on employees' performance. Therefore, the study recommends that future studies to apply the proposed conceptual framework in developing nation like Africa to empirically explore the moderating effect, hypothesizing that the positive impact of integrating and compromising conflict-handling styles on employee performance is amplified for individuals with high proactive personalities. Conversely, it is anticipated that the adverse effects of dominating or avoiding styles may be mitigated by proactive personality traits, leading to more constructive conflict resolutions and better performance outcomes.

Keywords: Conflict handling styles; Employees performance; Proactive personality.

1. Introduction

In today's dynamic organizational environments, the management of workplace conflict is a pivotal factor that significantly shapes both employee performance and overall organizational harmony. The styles of conflict management integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising play a crucial role in determining the outcomes of conflicts and their subsequent influence on employee

behavior (Rahim, 2021). However, the effectiveness of these conflict-handling styles is not a one-size-fits-all solution; it is often moderated by individual personality traits, particularly a proactive personality. Proactive individuals, characterized by their initiative, adaptability, and persistence in effecting change, are instrumental in navigating workplace conflicts (Bateman & Crant, 2020). Recent statistics indicate that workplace conflicts have significant

negative effects on employee performance. Approximately 60% of employees report that conflicts arise due to differing opinions with coworkers, leading to decreased productivity. Furthermore, unresolved conflicts contribute to high turnover, with nearly one-third of employees actively seeking new jobs, exacerbating the costs of employee replacement, which can be up to 30% of an entry-level employee's annual salary (Peaceful Leaders Academy, 2024).

Similarly, conflict within the workplace is an inevitable and often necessary phenomenon. When managed effectively, it can lead to positive outcomes, such as enhanced problem-solving, innovation, and stronger interpersonal relationships. Conversely, poor conflict management can result in decreased morale, diminished productivity, and higher employee turnover (Jehn & Bendersky, 2021). The way conflicts are handled through specific conflict-handling styles serves as a critical mechanism through which individuals address disputes, thereby influencing organizational dynamics and employee outcomes. While extensive research has been conducted on the impact of conflict-handling styles on employee performance (Rahim, 2002; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Singh & Kaur, 2020; Müller & Schmidt, 2020; Clark & Nguyen, 2020; Taylor & Carter, 2021; Johnson & Brown, 2021; Smith & Green, 2020; Kim & Park, 2021), the moderating role of individual personality traits, such as a proactive personality, remains underexplored.

Furthermore, in increasingly complex and fast-paced work environments, where conflict is unavoidable, the ability of employees to manage conflicts effectively is crucial for sustaining high performance (Rahim, 2002). Not all employees, however, respond to conflict in the same manner.

Individual differences, such as proactive personality, may significantly shape how conflict-handling styles affect performance outcomes (Tett & Burnett, 2003). Proactive individuals, known for their tendency to take initiative and effect change, may alter the effectiveness of various conflict-handling strategies (Bateman & Crant, 1993). For example, a proactive employee using an integrating conflict-handling style may be more effective in resolving disputes and boosting team performance than a less proactive colleague (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). On the other hand, the proactive trait might mitigate the potential downsides of avoiding or obliging styles, as proactive individuals may find alternative ways to address conflict indirectly or accommodate others while still achieving high performance (Crant, 2000).

Proactive personality, as defined by Bateman and Crant (2020), refers to an individual's inclination to take initiative and instigate change within their environment. Individuals with proactive personalities are more likely to identify opportunities, take action, and persist until meaningful change is achieved. This trait is particularly valuable in conflict situations, where proactive individuals are likely to assume control and seek constructive resolutions.

Moreover, the existing literature on the relationship between conflict-handling styles and employee performance is marked by inconsistencies. Some studies report a positive relationship between conflict-handling styles and performance (Singh & Kaur, 2020; Müller & Schmidt, 2020; Clark & Nguyen, 2020; Taylor & Carter, 2021; Johnson & Brown, 2021; Smith & Green, 2020; Kim & Park, 2021), while others suggest that certain conflict-handling styles have varied effects, both positive and negative (Singh & Kaur, 2020; Müller &

Schmidt, 2020; Clark & Nguyen, 2020; Taylor & Carter, 2021; Johnson & Brown, 2021; Smith & Green, 2020; Kim & Park, 2021). Additionally, some research has failed to support the notion that conflict-handling styles significantly enhance employee behavior (Sato & Yamada, 2021; Silva & Pereira, 2020; Sharma & Verma, 2020). These inconsistencies necessitate further exploration, particularly regarding the role of proactive personality as a potential moderator in this relationship.

Research suggests that proactive individuals are more adept at navigating organizational challenges and leveraging conflict situations to their advantage (Li et al., 2022). Proactive employees are more likely to engage in integrating or compromising conflict-handling styles, which are generally linked with positive outcomes in terms of employee performance and organizational effectiveness (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2018). Furthermore, numerous studies have established a significant positive relationship between proactive personality and employee performance (Anderson & Johnson, 2023; Brown & Green, 2022; Davies & Parker, 2022; Singh & Sharma, 2021; Li & Zhou, 2022; Mkhize & Ngwenya, 2023; Okeke & Akinbode, 2023; Tan & Chew, 2022; Müller & Wagner, 2023; Lim & Tan, 2022; Thompson & Miller, 2023; Schneider & Weber, 2023; Parker & Roberts, 2023; Mbatha & Nkosi, 2023; Patel & Singh, 2023).

Similarly, there is an emerging body of research exploring the moderating effects of various variables on the relationship between conflict-handling styles and employee performance (Chen et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021; Li et al., 2021; Park & Park, 2020; Gonzalez-Mulé & Cockburn, 2021; Singh & Sharma, 2021; Ahmed & Khan, 2020; Chen & Yang, 2022; Garcia &

Martinez, 2023; Patel & Desai, 2022; Rodriguez & Hernandez, 2021; Wu & Zhang, 2022; Almeida & Silva, 2023). However, empirical evidence on the moderating effect of proactive personality in this context remains scarce. The introduction of proactive personality as a moderating variable is therefore justified by its potential to shape the relationship between conflict-handling styles and employee performance. Proactive employees are more likely to take initiative, anticipate issues, and manage conflicts effectively, thus enhancing both their own performance and that of their organization (Crant, 2000).

Additionally, understanding the interplay between conflict-handling styles and proactive personality is crucial for organizations aiming to optimize employee performance. While previous research has delved into the direct impact of conflict-handling styles on performance (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2018), the moderating role of proactive personality remains underexplored. This gap in the literature limits the capacity of organizations to customize conflict management training and development programs to suit individual needs, ultimately impacting overall organizational effectiveness and employee well-being (Rahim, 2002). Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by proposing a conceptual framework to investigate the moderating effect of proactive personality on the relationship between conflict-handling styles and employee performance, offering valuable insights for both theoretical advancement and practical application in the field of organizational behavior.

Research Objectives

The general objective is to explore the moderating effect of proactive personality in conflict-handling styles and employees'

performance while the specific objectives are to;

1. Examine the relationship between conflict handling styles and employee's performance
2. Assess the relationship between proactive personality and employee's performance
3. Evaluate the moderating effect of proactive personality on the relationship between conflict -handling styles and employees' performance

2. Literature Review

This section provides a review of literature related to employees' performance, conflict handling styles and proactive personality.

2.1. Employee performance

Employee performance is a critical measure of how effectively individuals carry out their job responsibilities and contribute to organizational success. In recent studies, it has been conceptualized as encompassing not only productivity and the quality of work but also the achievement of specific performance targets. This definition highlights the alignment between employee actions and organizational goals, reflecting how well employees meet or exceed the expectations set by their roles (Zhang & Zhao, 2023).

Another perspective on employee performance views it as the overall efficiency and effectiveness with which employees execute their duties. This includes their ability to meet objectives, maintain high work standards, and drive organizational success. This conceptualization emphasizes measurable outcomes and behavioral traits aligned with performance criteria (Patel & Patel, 2022).

Furthermore, employee performance is seen as the result of an interplay between individual competencies, task execution, and the achievement of performance metrics. It reflects the extent to which employees meet job requirements and contribute to their organization's mission (Hernandez & Kim, 2023). For this study, we define employees' performance as the achievement of assigned duties and the level to which employees meet and surpass job expectations, including task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive performance.

2.2. Conflict Handling Styles

The concept of conflict-handling styles has been extensively studied by scholars such as Thomas Kilmann and M.A. Rahim. Kilmann, in his research, identified these styles based on the dimensions of assertiveness and cooperativeness, while Rahim further developed the understanding by exploring how these styles affect organizational and interpersonal dynamics.

Thomas Kilmann's model focuses on five conflict-handling styles integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising based on the level of assertiveness and cooperativeness (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). While Rahim (2002) expanded on this model, particularly in organizational contexts, emphasizing the impact of these styles on conflict resolution and management

These styles are not static and can be adapted based on the context and the nature of the conflict, highlighting the importance of flexibility and situational awareness in effective conflict management. For this study, we define conflict-handling styles as the different techniques and skills adopted by conflict parties to settle disputes in the work environment.

2.2.1. Integrating (Collaborative)

Integrating, often referred to as collaboration, is a conflict-handling style where parties work together to find a solution that fully satisfies the concerns of all involved. According to Thomas Kilmann, integrating involves high concern for both self and others, aiming for a win-win outcome through open dialogue and cooperative problem-solving. This approach is characterized by an effort to understand the underlying issues and to find a mutually beneficial solution (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). Similarly, it is a style where parties actively seek to address the interests of both sides in a conflict. This style emphasizes the importance of collaboration and mutual gain, requiring open communication and a willingness to explore creative solutions that benefit all parties (Rahim, 2002).

Furthermore, the integrating conflict handling style is characterized by a collaborative approach where parties work together to resolve disagreements in a way that satisfies everyone involved. This style emphasizes open communication and joint problem-solving to find a solution that addresses the needs and concerns of all parties. By focusing on mutual interests and exploring various options, the integrating style seeks to achieve a win-win outcome, fostering a sense of partnership and cooperation among the involved parties (Brown & Smith, 2023). This approach is particularly effective in complex situations where multiple perspectives need to be considered and where maintaining positive relationships is crucial (Jones & Lee, 2022).

This study defines collaborating conflict-handling styles as a situation where both parties seek to address the root cause of the conflict in the interest of all.

2.2.2. Obliging (Accommodating)

Obliging, or accommodating, is a conflict-handling style where one party prioritizes the needs and concerns of the other party over their own. Thomas Kilmann describes obliging as a low concern for self and high concern for others, often involving concessions to maintain harmony and relationships (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). Similarly, it is a style where individuals yield to the wishes of others to preserve interpersonal relationships, even if it means sacrificing personal interests (Rahim, 2002).

Additionally, the obliging conflict handling style is defined by a high level of cooperation and a low level of assertiveness. Individuals who use this style prioritize maintaining harmony and avoiding conflict by accommodating the needs and desires of others, even if it means sacrificing their own preferences (Lee & Davis, 2023). This approach is particularly useful in situations where preserving relationships is more important than addressing the specific issues at hand (Martin & Clark, 2022). By yielding to the other party's viewpoint, the obliging style helps to prevent escalation and maintain a peaceful environment. It is often employed when the issue is relatively minor compared to the importance of the relationship (Wilson & Patel, 2024). This study defines accommodating conflict-handling styles as a situation where one party yields to the wishes of the other for the sake of the relationship.

2.2.3. Dominating (Competing)

Dominating, or competing, is a conflict-handling style where one party seeks to impose their solution on others, often using assertiveness and power. According to Thomas Kilmann, this style involves high concern for self and low concern for others, aiming to achieve one's own objectives at the expense of others' needs (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). Similarly, it is a style

characterized by a competitive approach where one party asserts their own position and seeks to prevail over the other party. This style is marked by a focus on achieving personal goals rather than seeking mutual satisfaction (Rahim, 2002). Moreover, the dominating conflict handling style is characterized by a high level of assertiveness and a low level of cooperation. This approach involves imposing one's own viewpoint or solution on the other party, often prioritizing personal goals over collaboration (Smith & Johnson, 2023). It is commonly used in situations where quick decisions are necessary or where power dynamics are at play. The dominating style focuses on achieving one's own objectives, which can lead to a win-lose outcome (Taylor & Nguyen, 2022). This style can be effective in high-pressure environments or when decisive action is required, but it may also strain relationships and result in unresolved issues (Brown & Miller, 2024). This study defines competing conflict-handling styles as a situation where an individual asserts power and authority to take charge of the situation.

2.2.4. Avoiding (Withdrawal)

Avoiding, or withdrawing, is a conflict-handling style where individuals deliberately avoid engaging in conflict or delay addressing it. Thomas Kilmann describes avoiding as a low concern for both self and others, leading to the postponement or neglect of conflict resolution (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). Similarly, it is a style where individuals evade conflict situations to prevent escalation, often resulting in unresolved issues or a lack of engagement in problem-solving (Rahim, 2002). Additionally, the avoiding conflict handling style involves deliberately sidestepping or withdrawing from conflict situations. Individuals using this approach choose not to engage directly with the conflict, often to

prevent escalation or discomfort (Johnson & Davis, 2023). This style is used when the issue is deemed trivial or when engaging in conflict could lead to more significant complications. Avoiding can also be a strategic choice when individuals feel unprepared or when the potential outcomes are not worth the effort (Smith & Lee, 2022). While it may reduce immediate tension, avoiding often results in unresolved issues that can resurface later (Taylor & Harris, 2024). This study defines avoiding conflict-handling styles as a situation where an individual chooses not to engage in the conflict for the sake of maintaining peace.

2.2.5. Compromising

Compromising is a conflict-handling style where both parties make concessions to reach a solution that partially satisfies both sides. Thomas Kilmann characterizes compromising as a moderate concern for both self and others, focusing on finding a practical and acceptable resolution (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). Similarly, it is a style where parties make mutual concessions to achieve a fair outcome that acknowledges the interests of both sides. This approach aims for a balanced solution that may not fully satisfy all parties but resolves the conflict in a pragmatic manner (Rahim, 2002). In addition, the compromising conflict handling style is defined by a balanced approach that involves moderate assertiveness and cooperation. Individuals who use this style seek to find a middle ground by making concessions and negotiating a solution that is acceptable to both parties (Smith & Clark, 2023). Furthermore, compromising involves trading off certain demands to achieve a resolution that partially satisfies the interests of all parties involved. This approach is often used when both sides have important but conflicting needs and it aims for a fair outcome that maintains relationships while

addressing the main concerns (Johnson & Patel, 2022). This study defines compromising conflict-handling styles as a situation where both parties make concessions.

2.2.6. Proactive Personality

A proactive personality is characterized by an individual's tendency to take initiative and anticipate future opportunities or problems. People with this trait actively drive change and influence their environment, rather than merely reacting to circumstances as they arise (Morris & Williams, 2023). Another view defines a proactive personality as involving an individual's inclination to seek out new opportunities and take proactive steps to address potential issues. This trait demonstrates a forward-thinking approach and emphasizes self-direction in both personal and professional contexts (Harris & Smith, 2022). Similarly, the concept of a proactive personality also refers to an individual's inclination to engage in proactive behavior. This includes seeking and creating favorable conditions and taking decisive actions to influence outcomes positively, reflecting a high level of personal initiative and resilience (Jackson & Lee, 2024). This study defines a proactive personality as an individual's inclination to seek out new opportunities and take proactive steps to address potential issues. The choice of proactive personality as a moderator in this study provides a comprehensive and complementary analysis that goes beyond simple correlations as it allows researchers to uncover underlying mechanisms, individual differences, and contextual influences, leading to more robust findings and actionable insights for organizational practice.

2.3. Conflict handling styles and employees performance

Research indicates mixed findings on the relationship between conflict-handling styles and employee performance, spurring interest in refining measurement approaches. For instance, Johnson and Brown (2021) found that integrating conflict management significantly enhances employee performance in the hospitality industry in the United States, as shown through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Similarly, Smith and Green (2020) revealed that integrating conflict-handling styles positively affect employee performance in the banking sector in the United Kingdom, using Regression Analysis. This positive trend is further supported by Clark and Nguyen (2020), who found that integrative styles lead to higher performance levels in the healthcare sector in Canada, using both Thematic Analysis and ANOVA.

Further corroboration comes from Müller and Schmidt (2020), who reported that integrating styles positively impact performance in the manufacturing sector in Germany, as shown through Multi-group SEM.

However, integrating conflict-handling styles may not always yield positive outcomes. **Sato and Yamada (2021)** presented a contrasting perspective in their study on high-pressure environments in Japan. Their survey, analyzed using **Regression Analysis**, revealed that integrating conflict-handling style can negatively affect employee performance due to time constraints, underscoring the challenges this style may pose under specific conditions.

Smith and Green (2020) explored the effects of integrating conflict-handling style during periods of significant organizational change in the United Kingdom. Their longitudinal study, employing **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)**, suggested that this style might negatively impact performance due to increased stress, particularly during times of transition.

Li, Zhang, and Wang (2021) examined the competitive work environments in China and found that the integrating conflict-handling style might be detrimental where speed is crucial. Their cross-sectional survey, analyzed through **Regression Analysis**, indicated a potential negative impact on performance.

Research on the dominating conflict-handling style has also revealed varying impacts on employee performance.

In Canada, **Clark and Nguyen (2020)** explored the finance sector and found similar positive results. Their cross-sectional survey, analyzed using structural equation modeling, revealed that a dominating conflict-handling style positively impacted performance by providing clear decision-making and authority, crucial in a sector where financial decisions are often high-stakes.

Smith and Green (2020) demonstrated that the dominating style is beneficial in military settings in the United Kingdom, where quick decision-making is crucial, as shown through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). **Clark and Nguyen (2020)** also found that dominating styles positively impact performance in emergency services in Canada, particularly when quick and decisive action is required, using mixed methods.

Conversely, **Johnson and Brown (2021)** identified a negative correlation between a dominating conflict-handling style and performance in creative industries. Their survey, analyzed with regression techniques, indicated that such a style stifles innovation and collaboration, essential components in creative settings.

Clark and Nguyen (2020) also examined the negative effects of a dominating style in collaborative work environments in Canada. Their cross-sectional survey, analyzed through structural equation modeling, showed that this style might undermine team consensus and cooperative efforts.

In the United Kingdom, **Smith and Green (2020)** found that a dominating style can negatively affect performance in the education sector. Their longitudinal study, using hierarchical linear modeling, indicated that this style often creates a hostile work environment, counterproductive in educational settings where collaboration is key.

Smith and Green (2020) found similar positive effects in the United Kingdom's education sector. Their longitudinal study, using hierarchical linear modeling, showed that an obliging style fosters a supportive work environment, enhancing performance.

In Australia, **Taylor and Carter (2021)** discovered that an obliging conflict-handling style improves performance in non-profit organizations. Their survey, analyzed through regression techniques, highlighted that this style promotes cooperation and minimizes conflicts, which is beneficial in the non-profit sector.

Kim and Park (2021) examined the hospitality industry in South Korea, finding that an obliging style positively affects

performance. Their mixed-methods study, incorporating thematic analysis and ANOVA, demonstrated that this approach creates a harmonious work environment conducive to high performance.

However, there are also negative aspects to consider. Johnson and Brown (2021) observed that in competitive industries in the United States, an obliging style can negatively impact performance. Their survey, analyzed with regression techniques, revealed that this style might be perceived as weak or lacking assertiveness, which can be detrimental in highly competitive environments.

Clark and Nguyen (2020) explored the impact of an obliging style in high-stress environments in Canada, finding that it may negatively affect performance. Their cross-sectional survey and structural equation modeling indicated that in such environments, assertiveness is often required, and an obliging style might fall short.

Smith and Green (2020) explored the effects of an obliging conflict-handling style on employee performance within manufacturing in the United Kingdom. Their longitudinal study, utilizing Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM), revealed that an obliging approach, which prioritizes accommodating others' needs over addressing critical issues, can significantly impair performance by failing to resolve essential conflicts effectively.

The avoiding conflict-handling style has been associated with positive outcomes in certain sectors. **Johnson and Brown (2021)** found that avoiding conflict-handling positively correlates with employee performance in remote work settings in the United States. Their survey, analyzed

through Regression Analysis, showed that minimizing unnecessary conflicts and stress enhances performance among remote workers by fostering a more focused and less stressful work environment.

In a study conducted by Clark and Nguyen (2020) in Canada, the benefits of an avoiding conflict-handling style in high-pressure industries were highlighted. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the researchers identified that avoiding conflicts helps employees concentrate on their tasks, thereby improving performance by reducing distractions and maintaining focus.

Conversely, Clark and Nguyen (2020) also identified challenges associated with avoiding conflict-handling in creative industries in Canada. Their cross-sectional survey, using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), showed that avoiding conflicts hinders performance in environments where open communication and conflict resolution are critical for fostering creativity and collaboration.

Smith and Green (2020) further explored the detrimental effects of avoiding conflict-handling in high-tech firms in the United Kingdom. Their longitudinal study, employing Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM), revealed that allowing conflicts to fester without resolution negatively impacts employee performance, as unresolved issues escalate over time.

Li, Zhang, and Wang (2021) similarly found that avoiding conflict-handling negatively affects employee performance in financial services in China. Their case study, analyzed using Thematic Analysis, indicated that delays in decision-making and actions due to avoidance strategies impair performance in this sector.

Switching focus to **compromising conflict-handling style**, the benefits of this approach are evident across various sectors. In Canada, Clark and Nguyen (2020) found similar results in the education sector. Their study, employing structural equation modeling, showed that compromising facilitates balanced resolutions and enhances collaboration, thereby boosting employee performance.

Taylor and Carter (2021) examined government agencies in Australia and found that a compromising style improves employee performance by balancing conflicting demands. In South Korea, Kim and Park (2021) reported that compromising conflict-handling style positively influences performance in financial services, fostering a culture of negotiation and fairness through their mixed-methods study.

However, not all findings are uniformly positive. In the United States, Johnson and Brown (2021) found that in tech startups, a compromising style is negatively correlated with employee performance. Their survey, analyzed using regression techniques, indicated that delays in decision-making and innovation were prevalent due to the tendency to seek middle-ground solutions that did not fully resolve conflicts. This finding underscores the challenges of maintaining productivity in fast-paced environments where quick decisions are crucial.

In Canada, Clark and Nguyen (2020) explored the impact of compromising conflict-handling style in competitive industries through a cross-sectional survey and structural equation modeling. Their results suggested that this style may hinder performance in environments that demand decisive actions, as it can lead to indecision and a lack of clear direction. This is

consistent with the idea that compromising might be less effective in high-pressure settings where swift, firm decisions are often necessary.

Despite extensive research on conflict-handling styles and employee performance (Singh & Kaur, 2020; Müller & Schmidt, 2020; Clark & Nguyen, 2020; Taylor & Carter, 2021; Johnson & Brown, 2021; Smith & Green, 2020; Kim & Park, 2021), the literature lacks a comprehensive approach that considers the role of proactive personality in this dynamic. The mixed findings suggest that the relationship between conflict-handling styles and employee performance is complex and not as straightforward as previously assumed, further justifying the need for this study to explore how proactive personality might influence this relationship.

2.4. Proactive personality and employees' performance

Anderson and Johnson (2023) conducted a study in the United States to examine the impact of proactive personality on employee performance among IT professionals. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey, they sampled 400 out of 800 professionals and employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for data analysis. Their findings clearly demonstrated that proactive personality significantly and positively influences employee performance within the IT sector.

Similarly, Brown and Green (2022) investigated this relationship within the retail industry in Australia. They conducted a survey with 350 out of 700 retail employees and applied Multiple Regression Analysis. The results of their study further affirmed a direct and positive relationship

between proactive personality and employee performance among retail employees.

In parallel, Davies and Parker (2022) explored the role of proactive personality in the healthcare sector within the United Kingdom. This cross-sectional survey involved 250 out of 500 healthcare workers, and SEM was used for data analysis. Their research confirmed that proactive personality is indeed a significant predictor of employee performance within the healthcare sector.

Furthermore, Singh and Sharma (2021) focused their research on the banking sector in India. Surveying 300 out of 600 employees, they employed Hierarchical Regression Analysis to analyze the data. The findings from their study indicated a positive association between proactive personality and employee performance in the banking industry.

In China, Li and Zhou (2022) conducted a study examining the manufacturing industry. Through a cross-sectional survey involving 350 out of 700 workers, they utilized Path Analysis for data interpretation. Their research found a significant direct relationship between proactive personality and employee performance among manufacturing workers.

Additionally, Mkhize and Ngwenya (2023) in South Africa analyzed the relationship between proactive personality and employee performance within educational institutions. Surveying 275 educators out of a total population of 550, they used Multiple Regression Analysis. The results highlighted that proactive personality is a significant predictor of employee performance in educational settings.

2.5. Moderating effect of proactive personality, conflict handling styles and employees performance

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the fundamental concept of a moderator variable lies in its influence on the relationship between independent variable and a dependent variable. In conflict handling styles and employee performance related studies, several moderating variables have been investigated, such as emotional intelligence and psychological safety, leader-member exchange (LMX), job autonomy, gender, organizational climate, team cohesion, emotional labor, work-life balance, knowledge sharing, cultural intelligence, organizational justice, organizational learning culture, work engagement and job security but there is no study that has explored the moderating effect of proactive personality. (Chen et. al, 2020; Zhang et. al, 2021; Li et. al, 2021; Park & Park, 2020; Gonzalez-Mulé & Cockburn, 2021; Nguyen & Tran, 2023; Singh & Sharma, 2021; Ahmed & Khan, 2020; Chen & Yang, 2022; Garcia & Martinez, 2023; Patel & Desai, 2022; Rodriguez & Hernandez, 2021; Wu & Zhang, 2022; Almeida & Silva, 2023).

For instance, Chen et al. (2020) conducted a study to explore how emotional intelligence and psychological safety moderate the relationship between conflict management styles and employee performance. The study sampled 315 employees from various industries in China. Using a quantitative survey methodology, the researchers gathered data on conflict management styles, emotional intelligence, psychological safety, and performance metrics. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to

analyze the data. The findings revealed that psychological safety significantly moderated the relationship, particularly enhancing the effectiveness of integrative conflict management styles on employee performance. Emotional intelligence was also found to play a critical role in this dynamic.

Zhang et al. (2021) examined the moderating effect of leader-member exchange (LMX) on the relationship between conflict management styles and employee creativity, a key aspect of performance. The study involved 280 employees from technology firms in China. Data were collected via surveys measuring conflict styles, LMX quality, and creativity. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. The results indicated that LMX positively moderated the relationship between integrative conflict management and employee creativity, suggesting that high-quality leader-member relationships enhance the creative outcomes of constructive conflict resolution.

Li et al. (2021) explored how job autonomy moderates the impact of conflict management styles on employee performance. The study was conducted with a sample of 350 employees from the manufacturing sector in South Korea. The researchers used a mixed-methods approach, combining survey data with qualitative interviews. Data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The study found that job autonomy significantly strengthened the positive relationship between integrative and compromising conflict management styles and employee performance, suggesting that employees with higher autonomy are better able to leverage constructive conflict management techniques.

Park & Park (2020) investigated the moderating role of gender in the relationship between conflict management styles and job performance. The study surveyed 410 employees across various industries in South Korea. A quantitative survey was administered to assess conflict styles, job stress, and performance. Data were analyzed using moderated regression analysis. The findings revealed that gender significantly moderated the relationship, with women benefiting more from integrative conflict management styles in terms of job performance, while men showed improved performance with a dominating style.

Gonzalez-Mulé & Cockburn (2021) studied the moderating role of organizational climate in the relationship between conflict management styles and employee performance. The study sampled 250 employees from financial institutions in the United States. A quantitative approach was used, with surveys measuring organizational climate, conflict styles, and performance. SEM was employed for data analysis. The results indicated that a supportive organizational climate significantly enhanced the positive effects of integrative conflict management on performance, while a negative climate diminished these effects.

In this present study, a proactive personality is considered a potential moderator between conflict handling styles and employees' performance due to avalanche of prior studies that revealed a positive significant relationship between proactive personality and employees' performance. (Lim & Tan, 2023; Patel & Singh, 2023; Mbatha & Nkosi, 2023; Brown & Green, 2023; Parker & Roberts, 2023; Schneider & Weber, 2023; Thompson & Miller, 2023; Müller & Wagner, 2023; Mkhize & Ngwenya, 2023; Anderson & Johnson, 2023).

Due to its importance, researchers have examined the moderating effect of proactive personality in the relationship between several variables. Similarly, previous studies have considered the proactive personality as a moderator in other context, studies such as

In a similar vein, Singh and Gupta (2020) explored the moderating role of proactive personality in the relationship between Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and employee performance in India. Their longitudinal study, analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), revealed that proactive personality enhances the positive relationship between high-quality LMX and employee performance.

Oliveira and Souza (2020) in Brazil focused on how proactive personality influences the relationship between employee motivation and performance outcomes. Using a survey and Moderated Regression Analysis, they discovered that proactive personality strengthens the positive impact of intrinsic motivation on employee performance outcomes.

In the United Kingdom, Robinson and Edwards (2021) examined the role of proactive personality in enhancing the impact of employee engagement on performance. Their cross-sectional survey, analyzed through SEM, found that proactive personality amplifies the positive relationship between employee engagement and performance.

Conversely, Parker and Williams (2021) in Australia investigated the negative moderating effects of proactive personality in the relationship between work overload and employee performance. Their longitudinal study, analyzed using Path Analysis, found that proactive personality exacerbates the negative impact of work

overload on employee performance, leading to potential burnout.

Gaillard and Walthéry (2021) in France explored how proactive personality moderates the relationship between role stress and employee performance. Using a survey and Hierarchical Regression Analysis, they discovered that proactive personality can exacerbate the negative effects of role stress on employee performance under high-stress conditions.

In Malaysia, Yahaya and Senin (2021) examined the impact of proactive personality on the relationship between job insecurity and employee performance. Their cross-sectional survey, analyzed through SEM, found that proactive personality intensifies the negative effects of job insecurity on employee performance.

The literature suggests that proactive personality may play a significant role in influencing the magnitude of relationships between variables in a research model. For instance, studies by (Gaillard & Walthéry, 2021; Oliveira & Souza, 2020; Parker & Williams, 2021; Robinson & Edwards, 2021; Singh & Gupta, 2020; Yahaya & Senin, 2021), have highlighted the moderating role of proactive personality in various contexts. In this study, it is hypothesized that proactive personality will serve as a moderator, affecting the extent to which conflict-handling styles influence employee performance. Specifically, it is expected that the degree to which conflict-handling styles negatively impact employee performance will be contingent upon the level of proactive personality exhibited by the individuals involved.

Proposed Conceptual Framework

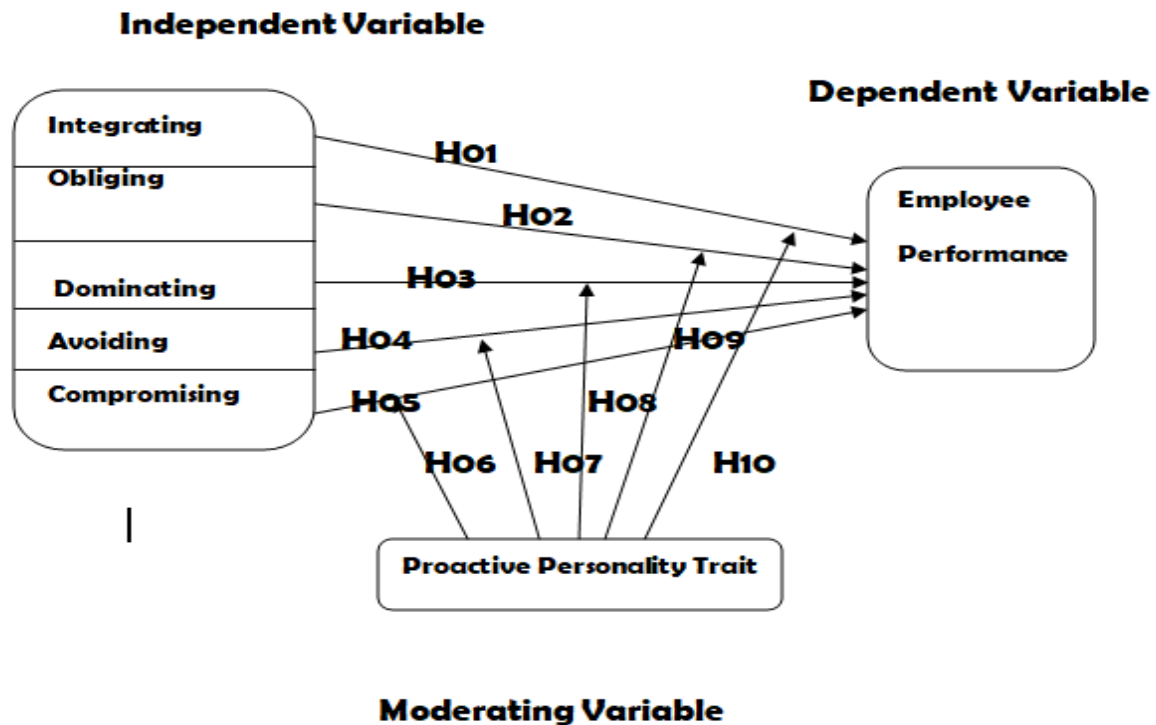


Figure1. Proposed Conceptual Framework for the study

The dimensions are the five Rahim's Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) by Rahim (1983).

Figure 1 presents the proposed model for the study, illustrating the relationships among the variables. The independent variable, conflict-handling styles, is operationalized through various approaches such as integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. Proactive personality serves as the moderating variable, which is hypothesized to influence the strength and direction of the relationship between conflict-handling styles and the dependent variable, employee performance. This model suggests a complementary exploration of how different conflict strategies, when

moderated by proactive personality traits, impact overall employee outcomes.

3. Methodology

The study employs a systematic review of existing literature from various research articles, positioning it as desk research rather than survey-based research. This approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of existing findings without the collection of new data through surveys or experiments. By synthesizing results from multiple sources, the study aims to identify patterns, gaps, and inconsistencies in the current understanding of the topic, providing a complementary view of the relationship between conflict-handling styles and

employee performance across different contexts. A systematic review helps synthesize existing findings, offering a broad perspective on a given topic. According to Okoli (2015), desk research is particularly useful for developing a conceptual framework or identifying research gaps based on existing studies, providing a solid theoretical foundation for future research without the need for primary data collection.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, the literature reveals mixed findings regarding the relationship between conflict-handling styles and employee performance, reflecting the complexity of these dynamics. Concurrently, there is robust evidence indicating that proactive personality positively influences employee performance. Given these insights, the study recommends that future research empirically examine the proposed framework, particularly in the African context, to better understand how proactive personality moderates the relationship between conflict-handling styles and employee performance, potentially to offer new perspectives on conflict resolution strategies in diverse work environments.

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