

## The Effect of Conflict Management Styles on Stakeholders' Relationship Quality with the Moderating Role of Task Conflict

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### Abstract

*The main purpose of the study is to examine the effects of conflict management styles (integrating, obliging, compromising, dominating, avoiding) on stakeholders' relationship quality in construction projects of Pakistan. The study further examined the moderating role of task conflict as the gap identified the little research on the effectiveness of conflict handling styles in a high or low level of conflict. The study has considerable importance from a practical aspect as it guides the project managers to know the effective way of dealing with conflict in different situations and when arises. For this quantitative study, a survey was conducted in July 2021 in construction companies of Pakistan through paper and web-based questionnaires. The target sample for the study was 400 including both male and female internal stakeholders. The results of this study demonstrate the positive effects of two approaches integrating and obliging in most situations and the negative effect of other styles dominating and avoiding also supported. Whereas the study doesn't support the positive effect of compromising as it could involve losing the benefits and interests of stakeholders in a project. Furthermore, the study has confirmed the moderating effect of task conflict on the relationship between integrating and stakeholders' relationship quality and avoiding and stakeholders' relationship quality. The study is limited by its cross-sectional data and the data was collected only from internal stakeholders so the feedback of the study was restricted to only one party of a project. For further research on a similar line, it has been recommended that future studies should be conducted by incorporating the longitudinal research design and the responses should also be recorded by involving both internal and external stakeholders of the project. Also, the study recommended examining the effect of different combinations of conflict management styles on relationship quality.*

**Keywords:** Conflict Management Styles, Relationship Quality, Task Conflict, Stakeholder's Relationship, Construction Projects, Dispute Resolution

### 1. Introduction

Construction projects in the present day are considered complex in nature. The lengthy and multifarious practices of construction projects can be highlighted by the conflicts that are ensured, especially when multidisciplinary comes into play (To et al., 2021; Iyiola & Rjoub, 2020; Lu & Wang, 2017). In today's environment where conflicts keep rising, the construction industry tries hard to find methods to their fair and economical resolution (Meng & Boyd, 2017). Dispute management must come to be a part of normal project management during project operation because conflicts in construction projects are not unusual and they need to be resolved instantaneously on the project site (Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020).

For any successful construction project, stakeholders play a very important role and the quality of relationship between them largely affected by conflicts related to projects (Zuo et al., 2018). Handling the relationship among stakeholders smoothly prove to be very effective for a projects' success (Iyiola & Rjoub, 2020). A study by Meng and Boyd (2017) pointed out common causes of construction disputes that are mainly associated to contractual matters, which include extension of time, administration, payment, quality of technical specification, variation, management, unrealistic client expectations and determination. Another study highlighted conflicts that are result of limited resources such as equipment, money, labor, materials or not enough time (Madalina, 2016).

The construction industry is a complicated and competitive setting in which members with diverse opinions, aptitudes and levels of understanding of the construction process work together

(Iyiola & Rjoub, 2020). In the complicated setting, participants from different occupations, with their own expectations and ambitions try to make the maximum of its benefits. Because of differences in insights among projects' participants, conflicts are unavoidable in the construction industry (Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020). Most managers devote a lot of their time to sorting out conflicts in people-related issues (To et al., 2021).

Mismanaging conflicts results in a demoralized and stressful workforce, communication errors that need to be amended, eventually resulting into wasted opportunities. It is hard to estimate the damages associated with organizational disputes. Disputes can result into hindrance of the construction project if not managed well. Conflict may result into stressful working environment and decrease the effectiveness of the joint teamwork (Iyiola & Rjoub, 2020). According to some experts, poor management of disputes could result into delays, tension, and increased expenditure and above all, it could affect personal and work relationship (Zuo et al., 2018).

Consequently, many construction stakeholders see conflict as something to be avoided for a successful construction project (Meng & Boyd, 2017). Nevertheless, there are some scholars of the viewpoint that conflict is a phenomenon that may possibly give rise not only to functional but also dysfunctional effects on people, groups and organizations (Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020). Therefore, it is important to be well aware of the causes of disputes in order to avoid the problems in the construction project and to complete it in the desired time, money, and quality. A study found that these project outcomes (cost, time, and quality and, client satisfaction) could be accomplished by good relationships among team members of a construction project (Ogbeifun, Mbohwa, & Pretorius, 2018).

Good relationships result in a productive working environment, increase efficiency, enhanced profits and also enable conflict resolutions (Littman et al., 2019; Meng & Boyd, 2017). This study will investigate the possible effect of different conflict management styles on the relationship quality among stakeholders and how it brings improvement in the quality of their relationship. It will also explore the outcome of task conflict on how it effects the relationship quality in relation to the conflict management styles from a theoretic point of view.

### **1.1.Statement of the Problem**

Conflict management styles are the essential forerunners of the quality of construction project among different stakeholders. Positive dealing of conflict can improve relationship quality and vice versa. As per Jelodar, Yiu and Wilkinson (2015), conflict and relationship quality of stakeholders form a vicious cycle because of mishandling of conflict occurred during projects. Remembering this, it is consider important to examine the impact of conflict management styles on relationship quality (To et al., 2021). Because of the complex nature of construction projects, the conflicts arises between the different stakeholders of project cannot be avoided as it can have an adverse effect on project outcomes and its performance (Iyiola & Rjoub, 2020).

In view of Chandolia and Anastasiou (2020), and with reference to the contingency theory, the emphasis is given on managing the conflict successfully when arises to guarantee positive project outcomes. According to Iyiola and Rjoub (2020), just by working on these lines, a better relationship between the project stakeholders can be formed which will help in getting success in a project. The problem that has identified through the previous literature is how the different style of conflict management influence the relationship quality of project stakeholders within and outside the organization (Ogbeifun, Mbohwa, & Pretorius, 2018).

Although there are many research studies on conflict management styles but on the specific aspect of quality of relationship between stakeholders and the effect of management styles on it, there is little to no research (Zuo et al., 2018). Current studies demonstrate that the effectiveness

of conflict handling style varies with increasing or decreasing the level of conflict (Littman et al., 2019). In addition, the impact of conflict might be in favour of an organization or negative contingent upon the level of task conflict and the style use for controlling the conflict (Lu & Guo, 2019). Moreover, with the implementation of suitable conflict management style and a proper level of task conflict, an efficiency in a project and good relationship with stakeholders can be attained (Mu et al., 2021; Lu & Wang, 2017).

This study is hence conducted to bridge the knowledge gap by investigating which conflict handling style could be used to predict the relationship quality among stakeholders of construction project and the role of task conflict when adopted lead to significantly good interpersonal relations between stakeholders in construction industry of Pakistan.

### **1.2. Objectives of the Study**

Due to the shortfalls and a lack of potential studies on this topic, the study is intended to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the effect of conflict management styles (integrating, obliging, compromising, dominating, avoiding) on stakeholders' relationship quality.
2. To investigate the moderating effect of task conflict between the relationship of conflict management styles (integrating, obliging, compromising, dominating, avoiding) and stakeholders' relationship quality.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Stakeholders' Relationship Quality (SRQ)**

Stakeholders of any project can be defined as those individuals and organizations who are involved in the project actively or caring out any activity or those whose interests may be affected positively or negatively as result of project execution or project completion (Ogbeifun, Mbohwa, & Pretorius, 2018). They include project managers, users, clients, suppliers, contractors and community at large.

Iyiola and Rjoub (2020) have explained that project success is also dependent on efficient management of project stakeholders and their relationship with the project. Everyday contact has to be maintained by the project manager with important stakeholders to be well informed about the developments in a project and to satisfy their concerns (Ogbeifun, Mbohwa, & Pretorius, 2018). For this purpose, there needs to be a thorough analysis of stakeholders, their interests and behavior as these things are important to the current organization (Zuo et al., 2018). Especially those stakeholders need to be identified who have a significant role in the survival of the organization and fulfilling its needs and expectations (Lu & Guo, 2019). The presence of various stakeholders means that different relationships are present in a construction project.

Both positive and negative outcomes of the project are associated with how the stakeholders perceive the project value and their relations with members of the project team. This study identifies the direct relationship between the project and its stakeholders and the successful handling of this relationship between them (Lu & Guo, 2019). The success and failure of any construction project depend upon how the stakeholders perceive it and what are their expectations and how project managers deal with these issues (Iyiola & Rjoub, 2020).

Based on the relationship quality concept developed in marketing research the systematic framework of relationship quality for construction is developed (Ogbeifun, Mbohwa, & Pretorius, 2018). The current systematic framework is based on conflict and dispute as to the antecedent of relationship quality and the layers of this systematic framework are defined and conceptualized, nevertheless research is needed to provide all of the concepts which may fit in these layers. Perhaps empirical research can give indications on how these concepts affect each other and also the

relationship quality of construction parties throughout different projects or even in between and after the completion of multiple construction projects (Williams, Ashill, Naumann & Jackson, 2015).

## **2.2. Conflict Management Styles (CMSs)**

Conflict means a certain kind of friction, difference, or disharmony rising amid peoples or inside a group of people when the principles and actions of some of the individuals of the group are not supported or denounced by other members of a different group (Madalina, 2016). Conflict refers to the differing beliefs and actions of diverse individuals, therefore ensuing an aggressive state (Iyiola & Rjoub, 2020). Conflict management styles have been described as “specific behavioral patterns that individuals prefer to employ when dealing with conflict” (Lu & Wang, 2017). This study has adopted the dual concern model of Rahim (2017). Five types of conflict management styles are integrating, obliging, compromising, dominating, and avoiding. For a positive outcome, the organizer must use an effective conflict management style which may differ according to situations. The best conflict management style is the one which result in satisfaction different stakeholders and improved project quality.

Different research studies indicate that when facing dispute or conflict, individuals with integrating and compromising styles are preferred. One of the most effective conflicts management styles is the integrating style (Wallenstein, 2018). According to the background study of these styles of handling conflicts, it is found by many researchers that integrating and compromising styles are possibly be used more (Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020). Likewise, the personality traits of an individual can also impact the handling of disputes as Wallenstein (2018) have found that in integrating style, openness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness were significant predictors. It is recommended that integrating is consistently linked to the interpersonal relationship positively and compromising has no significant effect on the interpersonal relationship (Iyiola & Rjoub, 2020). While integrating style or compromising style are shown to be helpful in managing conflict, dominating styles have overall a detrimental effect on the project. In any conflict management style, the agreeableness of the scale deeply effect conflict resolution and improved relationship quality. The more agreeable the scale is, the more positive effect it has on conflict resolution (Lu & Wang, 2017).

## **2.3.Task Conflict (TC)**

As defined in contingency theory, task conflict involves disagreement on ideas, decisions, and opinions by project team members about tasks being performed (Littman et al., 2019). The effectiveness of the conflicts handling styles and their usage is accurately determined by the level of task conflict (Mu et al., 2021). Research on the stakeholder’s disputes in a project environment or particularly in a construction industry demonstrates that the success of the project and its performance will increase or decrease with the high or low level of task conflict (McMillan, Chen, Richard & Bhuian, 2012). This study with the description given by Littman et al. (2019) focuses on the level of task conflict among the project stakeholders that effects the relationship between them.

The study conducted in Hong Kong and Japan has found that the increase in the task conflict level will decrease the effect of integrating and compromising on project outcomes (Mu et al., 2021). Various studies on this topic have concluded that among all kinds of conflict management styles, the integrating style for interpersonal relations has more impact at a high level of task conflict. The other conflict management styles, compromising also have a positive impact at a high

level but negative impact on the interpersonal relationship at a low level of task conflict, the same is true for avoiding style of conflict handling (Lu & Wang, 2017).

The positive effect of task conflict on the performance of teams is described by Lu and Guo (2019) which is supported by Littman et al. (2019) as under specific conditions, the task conflict can be beneficial for the project and among teams. According to McMillan et al. (2012), previous studies uncover that when pre discussions between teams were not in agreement then they think of better choices and in turn settle on good decisions. The tendency of team members in a project increases for the delivery of better results and information through the level of task conflict (Mu et al., 2021). As per Lu and Guo (2019), the shortcomings are also attached to the task conflict. When issues linked to the tasks are considered, the conflict can be seen as an emotional experience that has an adverse effect on satisfaction. On the other hand, the connection of task conflict with the relationship conflict can be the main disadvantage (Littman et al., 2019).

## **2.4. Relationship Between Study Variables**

### ***2.4.1. The Influence of Conflict Management Styles on Stakeholders' Relationship Quality***

The relationship quality of project stakeholders will be greatly affected by conflict management styles (Ogbeifun, Mbohwa, & Pretorius, 2018). Integrating as one of the styles of conflict handling is considered a win-win because it involves others and the self. Researchers have found the integrating style as most affective and beneficial for improving the quality of stakeholder's relationship because initially the real issue or reason of conflict has identified and then handle the conflict accordingly (Lu & Wang, 2017). In this style, the pressure on conflicting teams has been reduced which can increase the satisfaction, performance and commitment of internal and external stakeholders to the project.

Rahim (2017) described the obliging style in conflict management demonstrates less concern for the self and more concerns for others. It further highlights meeting the needs of the other conflicting party at the expense of the needs of the self. According to To et al., (2021), it could be in favour of improving the relationship quality as it involves self-sacrifice, being faithful to others, and giving concessions. The compromising style in conflict management cannot attain a win-win situation because it gives up less than the above mentioned two styles (Iyiola & Rjoub, 2020). In addition, both conflicting groups will lose if they adopt compromising style concerning their interests but the level of agreeableness is more in compromising style other than the dominating style in conflict handling (Sunindijo & Hadikusumo, 2014). Likewise it might be hard for lowering down the conflict because of the linkage of compromising to practical and useless outcomes and along these lines it might not prompt additional changes (Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020).

A strong rivalry can be seen among the interests of project stakeholders. Consequently, in compromising, stakeholders could be willing to ransom a few of their interests to be in the center for reducing the conflict so as suggested by Ogbeifun, Mbohwa and Pretorius (2018), for settling the conflicts, comporting might be considered an ideal choice. The relationship between stakeholders will be affected by the disappointment that arise after the scarification of interest (Meng & Boyd, 2017). Dominating and avoiding are those styles in conflict management that show less concern for others. In dominating style, while leading to a win-lose state, one group commanding or forcing their views and perspectives on the other group and by this means, one wins at the expense of the other's losses. Significantly, the avoiding style by overlooking the concerns of other groups earns a negative impression (Prieto-Remón et al., 2015). The quality

relationship cannot be built and improve by the usage of avoiding and dominating styles (Rahim, 2017). The following hypothesis are proposed on the basis of the above discussion:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Integrating has a significant and positive effect on Stakeholders' relationship quality.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: Obliging has a significant and positive effect on Stakeholders' relationship quality.*

*H<sub>3</sub>: Compromising has a significant and positive effect on Stakeholders' relationship quality.*

*H<sub>4</sub>: Dominating has a significant and negative effect on Stakeholders' relationship quality.*

*H<sub>5</sub>: Avoiding has a significant and negative effect on Stakeholders' relationship quality.*

#### **2.4.2. The Moderating Effect of Task Conflict on Relationship Between Conflict Management Styles and Stakeholders' Relationship Quality**

The level of task conflict can increase or decrease the effect of conflict management styles on improving the relationship quality of stakeholders. With an increase in the task conflict level, the positive impact of integrating can be reduced on relationship quality because time and efforts are the requirements of this style. Therefore, when conflict comes out to be stronger than it would be tough to handle through the use of integrating (Mu et al., 2021). It implies that the decrease in relationship quality could be the outcome of not resolving task conflict in an effective way. As opposed to integrating style, obliging only shows its favor for one group while ignoring the concern and interest of other groups in a conflict. In case if one party demonstrates its respect for the other parties then with the extension of task conflict level, the results could be in courtesy of one party and overlook the needs and interest of other party (Sunindijo & Hadikusumo, 2014). In view of To et al. (2021), this is not helpful for the development of practical negotiations which in turn is not helpful for solving conflict and will reduce relationship quality.

Liu and Liu (2008) said compromising demands from both parties to give up some interests for reaching an agreement that incorporates the needs of both parties involved in a conflict. In addition to this, there is no win-loss situation because the results of compromising give some level of fulfillment and satisfaction (Meng & Boyd, 2017). If the level of task conflict increases in a situation of strong competition in the interests of conflicting parties, the scarification of both parties can be helpful in the reduction of conflict and to reach a reasonable way out. In this case, the quality of the relationship can be increased. Dominating is clearly a win-lose style as explained by Rahim (2017) in which one party repeatedly practice its authority to gain its own interests while disregarding the other party needs, expectations and interest. This style causes more friction among the parties when the level of task conflict increases and even respond back in the attack which can easily lead to relationship conflict and can turn out to be harmful (Meng & Boyd, 2017). According to Littman et al. (2019), avoiding style in conflict management will give negative results with respect to task conflict than facing the problem. The results of various researches have established that in maximum cases, avoiding has produced negative effects on project performance (Lu & Guo, 2019; Izogo, 2016). The following hypotheses are proposed on the basis of above arguments:

*H<sub>6</sub>: The positive effect of integrating on stakeholders' relationship quality will be weakened as the level of task conflict increases.*

*H<sub>7</sub>: The positive effect of obliging on stakeholders' relationship quality will be weakened as the level of task conflict increases.*

*H<sub>8</sub>: The positive effect of compromising on stakeholders' relationship quality will be weakened as the level of task conflict increases.*

*H<sub>9</sub>: The negative effect of dominating on stakeholders' relationship quality will be enhanced as the level of task conflict increases.*

*H<sub>10</sub>: The negative effect of avoiding on stakeholders' relationship quality will be enhanced as the level of task conflict increases.*

## 2.5. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical model of this study is based on Rahim's (2017) conflict management styles expresses the hypothesized relationships between the study variables (To et al. 2021, Littman et al., 2019; Zuo et al., 2018). This model is also supported by normative decision theory proposed by Fishburn (1988) which involves the strategies for taking right decisions in case of uncertainty and normative stakeholder theory given by Donaldson and Preston in 1995 which states that managers should pay more attention to the relationship of key stakeholders and importance should be given while taking decisions (Ogbeifun, Mbohwa, & Pretorius, 2018). Furthermore, the framework is supported by contingency theory of task conflict as it explains the effectiveness of different styles at certain level of conflict. The five styles of conflict management (Integrating, obliging, compromising, dominating, avoiding) as an independent variables displayed in figure 1, stakeholders' relationship quality as dependent variable and task conflict as moderator.

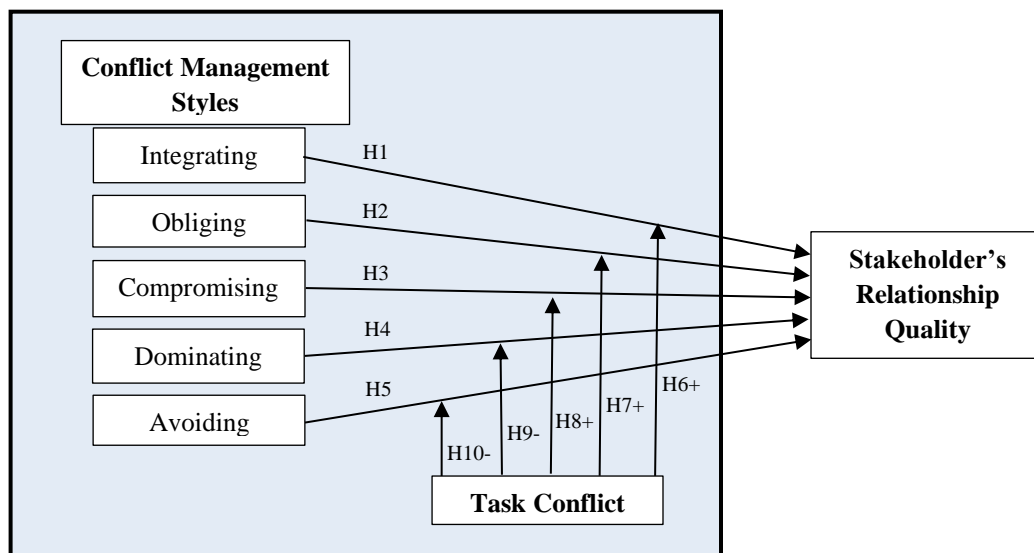


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Population of the Study

To explore the effect of conflict management styles on relationship quality with the moderating role of task conflict, the project internal stakeholders (project manager, project team, project sponsor, contractors) of construction companies of Pakistan were selected for data collection as the population for this study.

### 3.2. Sampling Size and Technique

A survey sample was used to collect the data as it was practically not possible to access the entire population for data collection. Non-probability convenience sampling technique was applied, as the selected stakeholders were unknown. The sample size chosen for the study was 400 project stakeholders working in construction companies in the capital of Pakistan i.e. Islamabad.

Using the Power Rule formula which comprises of total population, significance, and confidence level, this sample size was calculated with a 95% confidence level.

### 3.3. Instrument Development

The study has referred to the existing scales for instrument development that had already been used in various researches conducted in similar fields and constructs. The questionnaire chosen for each variable of the study is based on its relevance. The responses of participants were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire contains six items (06) on stakeholders' relationship quality used by Lu and Wang (2017), twenty-one (21) items on conflict management styles given by Rahim (2017), and four (04) items on task conflict used by Tidd et al. (2004) in their study.

### 3.4. Data Collection Procedure and Analysis Technique

Descriptive tools for analysis were used for the study. Data was collected through a web-based and a paper-based questionnaire on study variables. Different statistical tools were applied to analyze the data collected through questionnaires. The statistical tests include descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis by using Preacher and Hayes (2008) moderating approach. Statistical software that used for data analysis was IBM SPSS v.21.

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1 Result

#### 4.1.1 Demographic Analysis

The demographic analysis included five questions about the respondents' age, gender, and professional experience, education qualification, and current position in the company. Respondents were mostly male with 74.7% of the total sample, the rest of them were female 25.3%. The majority of the respondents were in the age group of 3-40 i.e. 52.5%. According to the data, 317 (79.0%) respondents were those who have below 10 years of professional experience. 53.7% of respondents were having bachelor's degree with 35.8% having master's degree or equivalent and majority were working in middle level management (61.7%).

#### 4.1.2 Reliability Analysis

For checking the reliability of all factors, Chronbach Alpha values were computed. According to table 1, Chronbach's alpha of all seven variables is greater than 0.6 which means data is reliable for this study.

**Table 1. Reliability Analysis**

S.No	Variables	No. of Items	Chronbach Alpha
1	Stakeholders' Relationship Quality	6	0.708
2	Integrating	7	0.739
3	Obliging	5	0.807
4	Compromising	3	0.745
5	Dominating	3	0.780
6	Avoiding	3	0.762
7	Task Conflict	4	0.705



### 4.1.3 Correlation Analysis

**Table 2. Correlation Analysis**

S.No.	Variables	SRQ	CMSI	CMSO	CMSC	CMSD	CMSA	TC
1	SRQ	1	0.200*	0.130*	0.122	0.064	0.121	0.180*
2	CMSI	0.200*	1	0.142	0.302**	-0.070	0.142*	0.255**
3	CMSO	0.130	0.142	1	0.357**	-0.138	0.172	0.508**
4	CMSC	0.122	0.302**	0.357**	1	-0.131	-0.033	0.369**
5	CMSD	0.064	-0.070	-0.138	-0.131	1	0.393**	-0.071
6	CMSA	0.121	0.142	0.172*	-0.033	-0.393**	1	0.162*
7	TC	0.182*	0.255**	0.408*	0.369**	-0.071*	0.162*	1

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 provides the mean value, standard deviation and, inter-correlation of all measures. As per SPSS Bivariate Correlation Analysis, all variables have a correlation of less than 0.8, so none of the variable is highly correlated.

### 4.1.4 Regression Analysis

#### 4.1.4.1 Regression Analysis for Hypothesis H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>6</sub>

In order to test the moderation of task conflict between dependent variable stakeholders' relationship quality and conflict management style integrating, Preacher and Hayes (2008) method of moderation has been used. The following results have been obtained by using the Plugin in SPSS.

**Table 3. Moderation Analysis with CMSI and SRQ**

Model	B	t	Sig	95% CI	
				Lower Level	Upper Level
CMSO	0.1307	1.9845	0.040	-0.5557	-0.7014
TC	0.1040	0.6382	0.524	-0.4589	0.8291
H <sub>7</sub> : Int_1	0.2660	1.6363	0.104	-0.1789	0.1623

R=0.2643, R<sup>2</sup>=0.040, R<sup>2</sup> Change=0.034, F=6.664, \*\*p<0.05

CMSI-Conflict Management Style Integrating, TC-Task Conflict, SRQ-Stakeholders' relationship quality, Int\_1 CMSI x TC

According to table 3, the overall model of hypothesis has value of R<sup>2</sup> = 0.040 viewing approximately 4% variation in SRQ which was explained by the model of regression. The overall model is significant as the value of p<0.05. The beta value of CMSI (beta = 0.2000, p < 0.05) is significant as p- value is less than 0.05 and positive beta value shows positive relationship between CMSI and SRQ. The results as indicated in the table 3 depicts that H<sub>1</sub> has been accepted. In table 3, upper and lower confidence intervals for interaction term (LCI= 1.2689, UCI=1.8978 at 95%) shows that zero does not lies within the tolerable range and moderator is significant. Thus, it explains the impact of CMSI produced on SRQ in the presence of TC. The coefficient of Beta for interaction term int\_1 (β= 0.1728, p = 0.000) is showing significance through p-values for the variables lies within the tolerable range of 0.00 to 0.05 consequently. According to table 3, moderator produced 3.4% change on the relationship of CMSI and SRQ. Therefore, hypothesis H<sub>6</sub> is accepted on some solid and procedural grounds of Preacher and Hayes under SPSS 21 respectively.

4.1.4.2 Regression Analysis for Hypothesis H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>7</sub>

**Table 4. Moderation Analysis with CMSO and SRQ**

Model	B	t	Sig	95% CI	
				Lower Level	Upper Level
CMSC	0.1608	0.5814	0.121	-0.8923	5.7532
TC	0.2559	0.3641	0.532	-0.6134	1.1252
H <sub>8</sub> : Int_1	-0.0259	-0.2294	0.072	-0.2485	0.1968

R=0.1872, R<sup>2</sup>=0.017, R<sup>2</sup> Change=0.016, F=2.735, \*\*p<0.05

CMSO-Conflict Management Style Obliging, TC-Task Conflict, SRQ-Stakeholders' relationship quality, Int\_1 CMSO x TC

According to table 4, the overall model of hypothesis has value of R<sup>2</sup> = 0.017 viewing approximately 1.7% variation in SRQ which was explained by the model of regression. The overall model is significant as the value of p<0.05 which shows significance. The beta value of CMSO (beta = 0.1307, p < 0.05) is significant as p- value is less than 0.05 and positive beta value shows positive relationship between CMSO and SRQ. The results as indicated in the table 4 depicts that H<sub>2</sub> has been accepted. In table 4, upper and lower confidence intervals for interaction term (LCI=-0.1789, UCI=0.1623 at 95%) shows that zero lies within the tolerable range and moderator is insignificant. Thus, it explains the impact of CMSO produced on SRQ is not in the presence of TC. The coefficient of Beta for interaction term int\_1 (β= 0.266, p = 0.104) is showing insignificance as p>0.05. Therefore, hypothesis H<sub>7</sub> is rejected on some solid and procedural grounds of Preacher and Hayes under SPSS 21 respectively.

4.1.4.3 Regression Analysis for Hypothesis H<sub>3</sub> and H<sub>8</sub>

**Table 5. Moderation Analysis with CMSC and SRQ**

Model	B	t	Sig	95% CI	
				Lower Level	Upper Level
CMSI	0.2000	4.3636	0.000	-1.4728	-1.5464
TC	0.6558	3.3284	0.000	-1.6834	-1.6327
H <sub>6</sub> : Int_1	0.1728	2.7898	0.000	1.2689	1.8978

R=0.1908, R<sup>2</sup>=0.0370, R<sup>2</sup> Change=0.0003, F=2.0323, \*\*p<0.05

CMSC-Conflict Management Style Compromising, TC-Task Conflict, SRQ-Stakeholders' relationship quality, Int\_1 CMSC x TC

According to table 5, the overall model of hypothesis has value of R<sup>2</sup> = 0.0370 viewing approximately 3.70% variation in stakeholders' relationship quality (SRQ) which was explained by the model of regression. The overall model is insignificant as the value of p>0.05. The beta value of CMSC (beta = 0.1608, p>0.05) is insignificant as p-value is greater than 0.05 and positive beta value shows positive relationship between CMSC and SRQ. The results as indicated in the table 5 depicts that H<sub>3</sub> has been rejected. In table 5, upper and lower confidence intervals for interaction term LCI= -0.2485, UCI=0.1968 at 95%) shows that zero lies within the tolerable range and moderator is insignificant. Thus, it explains the impact of CMSC produced on SRQ is not in the presence of TC i.e. TC not act as a moderator between CMSC and SRQ. The coefficient of Beta for interaction term int\_1 (β= -0.0259, p = 0.072) is showing insignificance as p>0.05. Therefore,

hypothesis H<sub>8</sub> is rejected on some solid and procedural grounds of Preacher and Hayes (2008) under SPSS 21 respectively.

**4.1.4.4. Regression Analysis for Hypothesis H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>9</sub>**

**Table 6. Moderation Analysis with CMSD and SRQ**

Model	B	t	Sig	95% CI	
				Lower Level	Upper Level
CMSD	-0.2472	-1.9756	0.0428	-1.2148	-0.0749
TC	-0.2413	-1.0287	0.3053	-0.7048	0.2222
H <sub>9</sub> : Int_1	0.1534	1.9242	0.0661	-0.0041	0.3109

R=0.2291, R<sup>2</sup>=0.0611, R<sup>2</sup> Change=0.0220, F=3.4281, \*\*p<0.05

CMSD-Conflict Management Style Dominating, TC-Task Conflict, SRQ-Stakeholders' relationship quality, Int\_1 CMSD x TC

According to table 6, the overall model of hypothesis has value of R<sup>2</sup> = 0.0611 viewing approximately 6.11% variation in SRQ which was explained by the model of regression. The overall model is significant as the value of p<0.05. The beta value of CMSD (beta = -0.2472, p<0.05) is significant as p-value is less than 0.05 and negative beta value shows negative relationship between CMSD and SRQ. The results as indicated in the table 6 depicts that H<sub>4</sub> has been accepted. In table 6, upper and lower confidence intervals for interaction term (LCI= -0.0041, UCI=0.3109 at 95%) shows that zero lies within the tolerable range and moderator is insignificant. Thus, it explains the impact of CMSD produced on SRQ is not in the presence of TC i.e. TC not act as a moderator between CMSD and SRQ. The coefficient of Beta for interaction term int\_1 (β= 0.1534, p = 0.0661) is showing insignificance as p>0.05. Therefore, hypothesis H<sub>9</sub> is rejected on some solid and procedural grounds of Preacher and Hayes under SPSS 21 respectively.

**4.1.4.5. Regression Analysis for Hypothesis H<sub>5</sub> and H<sub>10</sub>**

**Table 7. Moderation Analysis with CMSA and SRQ**

Model	B	t	Sig	95% CI	
				Lower Level	Upper Level
CMSA	-0.9307	-2.7529	0.0066	-1.5984	-0.2629
TC	-0.5533	-2.2067	0.0288	-1.0485	-0.0581
H <sub>10</sub> : Int_1	-0.2525	-3.0060	0.0031	0.0866	0.4185

R=0.3060, R<sup>2</sup>=0.0936, R<sup>2</sup> Change=0.0518, F=5.4408, \*\*p<0.05

CMSA-Conflict Management Style Avoiding, TC-Task Conflict, SRQ-Stakeholders' relationship quality, Int\_1 CMSA x TC

According to table 7, the overall model of hypothesis has value of R<sup>2</sup> = 0.0936 viewing approximately 9.36% variation in SRQ which was explained by the model of regression. The overall model is significant as the value of p<0.05 which shows significance. The beta value of CMSA (beta = -0.9307, p < 0.05) is significant as p- value is less than 0.05 and negative beta value shows negative relationship between CMSA and SRQ. The results as indicated in the table 7 depicts that H<sub>5</sub> has been accepted. In table 7, upper and lower confidence intervals for interaction term (LCI= 0.0866, UCI= 0.4185 at 95%) shows that zero does not lies and moderator is significant. Thus, it explains the impact of CMSA produced on SRQ in the presence of TC i.e. TC acts as a

moderator between CMSA and SRQ. The coefficient of Beta for interaction term int\_1 ( $\beta = -0.2525$ ,  $p = 0.0031$ ) is showing significance through p-values for the variables lies within the tolerable range of 0.00 to 0.05 consequently. According to table 7, moderator produced 5.18% change on the relationship of CMSA and SRQ. Therefore, hypothesis H<sub>10</sub> is accepted on some solid and procedural grounds of Preacher and Hayes under SPSS 21 respectively.

#### **4.2 Discussion**

The prime focus throughout this research was to study the effect of conflict management styles on stakeholders' relationship quality. In order to further broaden this study, the moderating impact of task conflict was analyzed. The significant results for H1 and H2 of this study supported by previous studies (Iyiola & Rjoub, 2020), indicating that integrating is beneficial and can be a win-win situation with respect to building relationship quality. This conflict handling style means to find collective or mutual solutions by exploring the differences and possible reasons for conflict.

The acceptance of hypothesis H1 indicates that if both sides choose this style for managing conflicts that it would likely improve the relationship quality among them which also help in gaining satisfaction (To et al., 2021). Whereas obliging could be in favour of improving the relationship quality as it involves self-sacrifice, being faithful to others and giving concessions. The insignificant result for H3 show that compromising has a negative effect on relationship quality. Erkutlu and Chafra (2015) explained that at both organizational and interpersonal levels, there is great competition among the internal and external stakeholders so the welfare of the organization is important.

This study tried to examine the negative effect of dominating on relationship quality and the significance of H4 indicates that as a replacement of avoiding conflict, dominating style involve taking the decisions so as supported with the findings of other studies (Lu & Guo, 2019), it is not appropriate in most of the case of conflict to adopt dominating because its authority to gain its own interests while disregarding the other party needs and expectations (Rahim, 2017). On the other hand, due to certain factors including availability, uniqueness, and time etc. the dominating may possibly harm the quality of the relationship. According to the results of the study, the significant result of H5 shows the negative effect of avoiding as the conflicts on critical factors of a project between the two parties cannot be avoided otherwise avoidance of one party gives more deterioration to quality of the relationship between internal and external stakeholders (Meng & Boyd, 2017).

The acceptance of H6 is supported by previous researches as when conflict comes out to be stronger than it would be tough to handle through the use of integrating as it requires time and effort (To et al., 2021), whereas the role of moderating effect of task conflict between other conflict management style (obliging, compromising, dominating, avoiding) and stakeholders' relationship quality was not supported via results of this study as H7 is rejected that indicates in Pakistan, the parties involve in construction projects normally try to keep better relationship for the success of project and for this purpose, they attempt to treasure a joint solution for obtaining satisfaction (Littman et al., 2019; Zuo et al., 2018). The rejection of H8 is related to the insignificance of H3 which doesn't support the positive effect of compromising on increasing quality of relationship. As the H9, the negative effect of dominating on stakeholders' relationship quality will be enhanced as the level of task conflict increases is also linked with the significance of H4 which shows the negative effect of dominating on relationship quality.

The same goes with the H10 as it associated with H5 which demonstrate the negative effect of avoiding on relationship quality among stakeholders. The findings of Littman et al. (2019) provide backing to the rejection of this hypothesis as to when the task conflict level increases then

the effectiveness of this style may be enhanced that avoid further nuisance. Moreover, working relationships greatly affects if the level of task conflict is high and competition will be strong in terms of interest so this method could be helpful for managing the conflict and improving the quality of a relationship (Iyiola & Rjoub, 2020). Hence, this study was conducted in Pakistan so the findings of this study may change from other countries or states.

## **5. Conclusion**

The whole study revolves around the effectiveness of conflict management styles for enhancing the relationship quality among stakeholders of projects undertaking in the construction industry of Pakistan. The research further examined the moderating role of task conflict as the gap identified the little research on the effectiveness of conflict handling styles in a high or low levels of conflict. This study contributed to this field of research with regard to overcoming increasing issues of project failures due to the poor management of conflict during projects. The results of this study demonstrate the positive effects of two approaches integrating into most situations and for few cases of conflict, the negative effect of other styles dominating and avoiding also supported. Whereas the results of this study doesn't supported the positive effect of compromising as it could involve losing benefits and interests of stakeholders in a project. Furthermore, this study has confirmed the moderating effect of task conflict on relationship between integrating and stakeholders' relationship quality. Also confirmed the moderating effect of task conflict on relationship of avoiding and stakeholders' relationship quality. As explained by other researchers, the significance of conflict management styles is greatly affected by the level of task conflict and it advance the understanding of their influence on stakeholders' relationship quality. The finding of this study concludes that the relationship quality among both parties and internal and external stakeholders can be enhanced if deal the conflict according to the results which would in turn help in gaining the success in a project.

## **6. Implications of the Study**

The important implications of the current study are in the management field, and especially for the project managers who are facing problems in handling the conflict that arises during project execution because there is interest competition among the internal and external stakeholders so the chances of occurrence of conflict among the two parties are more in the construction project. The findings of the study can be applied practically by project managers in constructions project by the use of most effective style which guarantees the resolution of conflict and achieves better results.

Proper management of conflict is the demand of successful construction projects and for building good quality relationship among internal and external stakeholders. In construction industry of Pakistan, dominating and comprising style mostly used to handle the conflict, though the findings of this study have provided more approaches by demonstrating the positive effect of integrating, obliging and negative effect of avoiding and dominating and didn't provide support to the positive effect of compromising so project managers should avoid using compromising for managing conflict.

## **7. Recommendations**

For the purpose of doing further research on a similar line, it has been recommended that future studies should be conducted by incorporating the longitudinal research design in order to compare the results of the respondents in different time horizons. In future, the responses should also be recorded by involving both internal and external stakeholders of the project. This study

would suggest considering the project environment and culture of country in which the similar study will be conducted. Also, the study recommended to investigate different combinations of conflict handling styles and their effect on stakeholders' relationship quality. The similar study can be conducted by incorporating the moderating role of other factors.

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