



Kardan Journal of Economics and Management Sciences (KJEMS)

ISSN: 2616-3950 (P) 2959-0493 (O), Journal homepage: kjems.kardan.edu.af

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To cite this article: Ghaus, M. G., Obaid, N & Mohammad, K. (2024). Effect of individuals task conflict on employees creativity in private medical hospitals of Nangarhar, Afghanistan. *Kardan Journal of Economics and Management Sciences*, 7 (2), 1-12.

DOI: [10.31841/KJEMS.2024.159](https://doi.org/10.31841/KJEMS.2024.159)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.31841/KJEMS.2024.159>



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Published online: 30 June 2024



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Kardan Journal of Economics and Management Sciences 7 (2) 1–12

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Kardan Publications

Kabul, Afghanistan

DOI: 10.31841/KJEMS.2024.159

<https://kardan.edu.af/Research/CurrentIssue.aspx?j=>

KJEMS

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Received: 27 Mar 24
Revised: 30 Apr 24
Accepted: 25 May 24
Published: 30 Jun 24

Abstract

The concept of individual task conflict has been a buzzing topic in the field of management sciences and has been considered an integral part of the organization; recent studies have shown that it is crucial for the creativity of employees. Therefore, this research study aims to determine the effect of individual task conflict on employees' creativity in private medical hospitals in Nangarhar, Afghanistan. The data was collected from a sample selected from the population using a stratified random sampling technique, and adopted questionnaires were used to collect the data. Statistical analysis, including descriptive statistics, correlation matrix, and regression analysis, was used to determine the effect of individuals' task conflict on employees' creativity. The results showed a strong and positive association between individual task conflict and employees' creativity. Besides, regression analysis showed that employees' creativity depends on a task-relevant conflict.

On the other hand, individual task conflict affects employees' creativity. This study's findings suggest that task conflict is a key factor in promoting employee creativity, consistent with previous research in this area. The results have implications for organizations seeking to promote employee creativity and innovation, highlighting the importance of task conflict in fostering creative thinking and problem-solving.

Keywords: Conflict, Task Conflict, Employees' Creativity, Private Hospitals, Nangarhar

1. Introduction

Conflict is an integral part of organizational life and can be found in most occupations and jobs. Task conflict is defined as disagreements among group members about the content of their job tasks, while relationship conflict concerns interpersonal incompatibilities (e.g., tension or annoyance) among the group members (Jehn, 1995). While relationship conflict has no potential to boost creative processes, task conflict has been found to enhance employees' creative behaviours (De Dreu, 2006). Task conflict emphasizes alternative cognitive perspectives, enhancing divergent thinking and creativity by illustrating the different means to the same goal. Organizations that want to excel and flourish do not simply seek ways to eliminate conflict. Instead, they try to make the best of conflict and use its potential for learning and improvement (Luthans, Rubach,

& Marsnik, 1995). Both practitioners (Carnevale, 2014) and scholars (Zhang, Gong, & Zhou, 2017) suggest that when conflict is not personal but concerns the job or the task at hand, it can be a creative force for change.

Creativity is the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that help solve problems, communicate, and entertain ourselves and others. (Robert, 1993, p396). According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997, 28), creativity is any act, idea, or product that changes or transforms an existing domain into a new one.

However, the literature on task conflict and creativity is characterized by several ambiguities that need to be addressed to increase our understanding of the relationship between the two. First, the most significant part of existing evidence around the link between conflict and creativity concerns team-level rather than individual-level creativity. This does not increase our understanding of conflict and creativity in its totality. Although individual creativity is a requirement for team creativity (Taggar, 2002), team members do not necessarily contribute to team performance equally (Mathieu, Tannenbaum, Donsbach, & Alliger, 2014). Thus, organizations must know how to boost the creativity of specific team members or enhance individual creativity (e.g., if organizational outputs depend more on individual rather than team projects). Second, there seems to be a consensus that task conflict should neither be too high nor too low to boost creativity. This implies that the link between task conflict and creativity is best seen as nonlinear (e.g., De Dreu, 2006; Farh, Lee, & Farh, 2010).

However, some research suggests that task conflict has a positive linear relationship with creativity (e.g., Yong, Sauer, & Mannix, 2014). Third, the literature has started acknowledging that several moderating factors may apply to the linear link (Zhang et al., 2017) and the nonlinear link (Farh et al., 2010; Li, Yang, & Ma, 2018) between task conflict and creativity. However, these moderating factors are not consistent and not fully understood yet. They rarely tell us precisely what employees do to exploit the creative potential of task conflict. Last but not least, although the literature recognizes that translating conflict to creative solutions is a dynamic rather than a static phenomenon (Farh et al., 2010), the majority of studies only address the link cross-sectionally (e.g., De Dreu, 2006; Farh et al., 2010; Xie, Wang, & Luan, 2014).

The present paper aims to make distinct research contributions in response to these open questions in the literature. We translate the previously found link between moderate task conflict and team creativity to the individual level of analysis to better understand the implications of conflict for individual employees rather than for teams. We further address and refine the link between task conflict and creativity by zooming in on the proactive behaviours (i.e., job crafting) employees undertake to increase the chances that task conflict is linked to creativity. The result of this research work is used to increase the scientific information regarding individuals' task conflict and employees' creativity. It will also increase the knowledge regarding individual task conflict and employees' creativity in private hospitals of Nangarhar, Afghanistan.

Besides, the findings of this research study will provide guidelines and directions for policy implications in private hospitals of Nangarhar province. It can also provide a ground-breaking platform for further research on individuals' task conflict and employees' creativity.

2. Literature Review

Conflict is a disagreement between individuals or groups in the organization due to the need to share scarce resources, engage in interdependent work activities, or have differences in status or culture (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). It may be between individual members of the same organization arising out of differences in goals and values within a group, team or department, between groups or across the organization.

Conflict is very important for any manager. It is rooted primarily in business, sociology, and psychology but not communication or education. It is complicated to define conflict as it is challenging to come to a consensus concerning the definition of this term (Borisoff and Victor, 1998). The easiest way to understand "conflict" is to divide conflict theories into functional, situational and interactive. The followers of the functional approach think that a conflict serves a social function, and those who view a conflict as situational suggest that conflict is an expression under certain situations. The third theory views conflict as interactive. Functionalists usually ask, "Why is there conflict? What purpose does it serve?" while situationalists ask: When do we have conflict? Under what circumstances does it occur?" Interactionalists are: "How is there conflict? What methods and mechanisms are used to express it?"

There are three main types of conflict present in every organization. The first interpersonal conflict is the conflict between members of an organization, which occurs because of differences in goals and values. It may be between two managers competing for limited capital and manpower resources and, worse when the scarce resource cannot be shared and must be obtained; therefore, the two managers will begin to conflict over who will take the scarce resource (Zhou & George, 2003). The second one is procedural conflicts, which include disagreements about meeting dates and times, individual task assignments, group organization and leadership, and, curiously, methods of resolving disagreements. While unresolved procedural conflicts can prevent work on collaborative projects from getting started, discussing different procedural approaches can lead to a mutually acceptable compromise for the collaborators and be productive for their decision-making (Lovelace et al., 2001). The third one is task conflict, which entails different opinions, thoughts and viewpoints. It refers to conflict based on the divergent views apprehended by different organization segments. It is a candid fact that disagreements are fundamental to forming and continuing organizational life. Task Conflict results from disagreement about the allocation of funds, implementation of policies, decisions about procedure, modalities of assignments and interpretation of facts (De Dreu et al., 2003). Task conflict is when team members disagree about the contents of the assignment being entrusted to them. Task Conflict is associated with group decisions. The internationalist view holds that some conflict is inevitable and necessary for organizational health. It encourages conflict because a harmonious, peaceful, tranquil and cooperative group is prone to becoming static, apathetic and non-responsive to change and innovation needs.

Simon and Peterson (2000) referred to the conflict as a breakdown in the standard decision-making mechanism so that an individual or group experiences difficulty selecting an alternative. It is inevitable where alternatives are present, and decisions are to be made. Role conflict is commonly considered a source of less-than-satisfactory performance in organizations. It arises from several causes, but generally, there are three classes of conflict: individual conflict, organizational conflict and inter-organizational conflict.

Theories and ideas about creativity stem from far back in history, unsurprising, as Ryhammer & Brolin (1999) point out, given that the development of new ideas and original products is a particularly human characteristic. The notion of 'inspiration' or 'getting an idea' (Ryhammer & Brolin, 1999, 260) is found in the Greek, Judaic, Christian and Muslim traditions and is founded on the belief that a higher power produces it. During the Romantic era in Europe, the source of inspiration and its artistic expression was seen as being the human being. During this era, originality, insight, creative genius and the subjectivity of feeling were highly valued. People began investigating what fostered creativity at the end of the nineteenth century. According to Rhyhammer and Brolin (1999), the word creativity is the process of creating something new and valuable, which has been quoted as "exceptional human capacity for thought and creation."

Ribot (1906), in his classic work, *The Creative Imagination*, stated that man is creative, or able to create, because of (a) the motor activities produced by appetites, tendencies and desires and (b) the possibilities of a spontaneous revival of images that become grouped in the new combinations. Wertheimer (1945) similarly proposed that creative thinking is the successful transposition of a member from one configuration to another. Stein, for example (in Taylor, 1964), also wrote that "a process is creative when it results in a novel work that is accepted as tenable or useful or satisfying to a group at some point in time." Others have argued that consideration must be given not only to social but also to individual creativeness, the creativeness of the individual who makes for himself something that others, unknown to him, have made before, as well as the individual. Rossman (1931) has proposed that invention is merely the combination of old elements into new arrangements, and inventors differ from non-inventors in their originality only in terms of their psychological reactions to deficiencies in man's handiwork. He also stated that background knowledge in a particular field has become increasingly important in creative work.

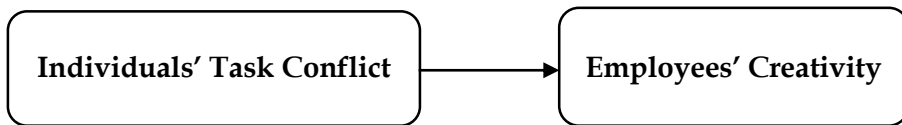
Creativity has even been defined by contrasting it with another concept, like conformity. However, it is clear that no single definition has been derived that is agreeable to all researchers. Not even all researchers in the same field agree on one single definition. In order to move ahead with needed research on this problem area, Taylor (1964) has urged researchers to choose a tentative definition or to develop a definition of their own. He proposes the following definition, which may be general enough to apply to a typical classroom situation: "Creativity is the ability and initiative to create new ideas and/or things by restructuring or redefining past experiences into new forms."

Employee creativity has been defined as the generation of novel and valuable ideas by employees (Amabile et al., 1996; Tierney, Farmer, & Graen, 1999), which is also the conceptualization we follow in the present paper. Because creativity involves novel solutions to existing problems (Shalley, 1991), it is legitimate to expect that a 'moderate' level of constraints or challenging situations have the potential to boost creative processes (Roskes, 2015, p. 200). Based on the study of Khan et al. (2020), task conflict is usually seen to be beneficial to team creativity, but the relationship is still unclear because of the mixed results. This research investigated why task conflicts resulted in positive outcomes regarding team creativity. The results indicated that task conflict increases team reflexivity, facilitating team creativity; thus, task conflict positively influences team creativity via team reflexivity. This study's theoretical and practical implications and future directions are further discussed.

Although there is some evidence that task conflict may have a positive and linear link with creativity (Pelled et al., 1999), there is considerable and more consistent evidence (De Dreu, 2006; Farh et al., 2010; Xie et al., 2014) that this link can best be understood nonlinearly. The reason for this is that when task conflict becomes excessive, it may lead to arguments between people (VanDyne, Jehn, & Cummings, 2002), hinder collaboration and communication processes within teams, and lead to information overload (De Dreu, 2006) and even frustrations (Farh et al., 2010). Therefore, too much conflict should naturally eliminate employees' ability to reach creative solutions. Reversely, task conflict should not be too low to boost creativity. Too many like-minded people may lead to groupthink an inability to challenge established assumptions. This state can limit creativity since challenging established ways of doing things is the landmark of creativity. The same holds true for individual creativity. When employees are not exposed to different ways of thinking, they find it hard to attain divergent thinking and, thus, creativity (Perry-Smith, 2006). This line of reasoning has led a considerable number of researchers to test and find a nonlinear (i.e., inverted U-shaped) link between task conflict and creativity, with the highest levels of creativity at average levels of task conflict (De Dreu, 2006; Farh et al., 2010; Xie et al., 2014).

As we have already pointed out, however, most previous research is at the team level, and we cannot automatically assume that the same findings will apply at the individual level. Individual members may vary in their perception of task and relationship conflicts (Pelled, 1996), and averaging their perceptions does not consider such variations within a team. Thus, research at the individual level is needed before the differentiated effects of task and relationship conflicts are discounted. In addition, as is theorized at the team level, we posit that a distinction between varying task types at the individual level may also help clarify the exact relationship between conflict type and performance.

2.1 Conceptual Framework



2.2 Research hypothesis

H₀: Individuals' task conflict has an insignificant effect on employees' creativity.

H₁: Individuals' task conflict has a significant effect on employees' creativity.

3. Research Design and Strategy

Since the research objective is to determine the effect of individual task conflict on employees' creativity in private hospitals in Nangarhar Province, the study is descriptive and based on deductive analysis. This means a quantitative descriptive research design has been followed to achieve the research objectives. As descriptive research design has various strategies that can enable a researcher to achieve the stated research objective, here, as per the nature of the study, the survey research strategy is preferred where the data would have been collected by questionnaire in the relevant field of study.

3.1 Population of the study

This study's population consists of administrative employees working in private hospitals in Nangarhar province. The population of this study was 362 employees working in private hospitals in Nangarhar province.

3.2 Sample and Sampling of the Study

As per the population of the study, 50% of the total population is considered a sample of the study, which become 181 sampling units of the study. The mentioned population for the research was selected using a probability-stratification method. The questionnaires were distributed to 181 employees, and the 176 questionnaires were filled out and returned for analysis.

4. Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis is an essential tool for the survey data description. This study used mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values to describe the data. The correlation matrix shows that the relationship between the variables under the study uses a correlation coefficient. Finally, regression analysis was used to show the dependency of the dependent variable on the independent variable. In other words, the change in the dependent variable is due to a change in the independent variable; in this research, a simple regression analysis is used to show the variation in employees' creativity due to individual task conflicts. The following is the regression model developed for this study.

$$EC = \alpha + \beta (ITC) + E$$

EC = Employees' Creativity

ITC = Individuals' Task Conflict

α = Constant

β = Coefficient of Determination

E= Error Terms

4.1 Demographic Statistics

Table 1: Demographics

Demographic features of the respondents		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	170	96.6
	Female	06	3.4
Marital Status	Single	66	37.5
	Married	110	62.5
Age	20-30	119	67.6
	31-40	57	32.4
Education	Baccalaureate	70	39.8
	Bachler	87	49.8
	Master	19	10.8
Experience	0-3	30	17
	4-5	47	26.7
	6-7	74	42.0
	7+ Years	25	14.2
Salary	5000-20000 AFN	70	39.8
	20001-35000 AFN	92	52.3
	35001-50000AFN	14	8.0

Source: Created by the authors

The above table shows that 96.6% of the respondents were male, and the remaining 3.4% were female in the rest of the sample.

Based on marital status, there are two primary classifications in humans. The collected data regarding the demography of respondents declared that 37.5% were single, while the remaining 62.5% of the sampling units were married. According to the age of the sampling units, 67.6% of the respondents were 20-30 years old, and the remaining 32.4% were 31-40 years old. According to the above table, the study respondents were only in two ranges: the younger respondents were 20+, and the older sampling units were not over 40.

The educational background of respondents. According to statistics, 39.8% of the sampling units were 12th graduates or baccalaureate, 49.4% of them were holders of bachelor degrees, and the remaining 10.8% of the respondents were masters in the mentioned area of study. Respondents' experience has been considered an essential point of discussion in the conducted research. According to collected data, it has shown that; 17% of the sampling units have experience in the range of 0-3 years, 26.7% of them were holders of 4-6 years experience, 42% of sampling units have experience in the range of 6-7 years, and the remaining 14.2% of the respondents were holder of more than 7 years experiences.

The salary range of respondents was as follows: the salary in the range of 5000-20000 AFN was paid to 39.8% of the respondents, the salary in the range of 20001-35000 AFN was paid to 52.3% of the respondents, and the remaining 8% of the respondent were holders of 350001-50000 AFN salaries in the mention organizations.

4.2 Correlation Matrix

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

		Task Conflict	Employees Creativity
Task Conflict	Pearson Correlation	1	.731
	Sig.(2-tailed)		.000
	N	176	176
Employees Creativity	Pearson Correlation	.731	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	
	N	176	176

Source: Created by the authors

Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2- tailed)

The table's given value shows a strong positive (73.1%) or (0.731/1) relationship between individuals' task conflict and employees' creativity, while the conducted research model is significant at the 0.01 level or 99% confidence level.

4.3 Regression Analysis

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	.731	.534	.531	.54760

Source: Created by the authors

The focus of the model summary is on the explanatory power of the regression model by R-Square, how much the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable or how much individuals' task conflict explains the employees' creativity and the remaining value shows the effect of other variables or other factors on employees' creativity.

The given value of R-Square represents that the explanatory power of this regression model is 0.534/1 or 53.4% out of 100%. This means that the regression model's dependent variable (employees' creativity) is 53.4%, explained by individuals' task conflict, while the remaining 46.6% is considered to be the effect of other variables on employees' creativity.

Besides, the adjusted R-Square shows the explanatory power of the regression model with the specific and collected data. This value always comes lower than the R-Square of the model summary. The Adjusted R-square is 0.531/1 or (53.1%) out of 100%. According to the collected data and specific research model, employees' creativity is 53.1%, explained by individuals' task conflict, and the remaining 46.9% is the effect of other factors on employees' creativity.

4.4 Coefficients

Table 4 : Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 Constant	.907	.194		4.671	.000
Task Conflict	.738	.052	.731	14.114	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employees Creativity

Source: Created by the authors

The "B" value shows the change in the dependent variable due to unit change in the independent variable, and the "t" value is concerned with hypothesis testing. The null is rejected while the "t" value comes beyond the range of (-2 & +2) or beyond the range of T tabulated values. The constant value is 0.907, which shows the level of creativity without individual task conflict. In contrast, the "B" value has shown that if a unit (1%) change or focus takes place to individuals' task conflict, it will bring 0.738% variation in employees' creativity.

Furthermore, the null hypothesis of the research is rejected. The alternate hypothesis is accepted for the conducted research because the "t" value of the regression model is

beyond the range of (-2 & +2). It shows that the null hypothesis of the conducted research is being rejected, ultimately showing the acceptance of the alternate hypothesis.

However, this table shows the significance of the regression model with the sign value of the table. As in previous tables, the model is significant with a 0.01 level or 99% confidence level, while the same is the result in the coefficient table of the regression model.

5. Conclusion

The literature review has shown the need for employees' creativity in today's organizations, where factors known as individual task conflict play a crucial role in successful creativity. Therefore, the author of the current study intended to investigate the effect of individual task conflict on employees' creativity in private hospitals of Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan. The current study was a descriptive study with a survey research strategy, where the data was collected from 176 respondents by questionnaires for quantitative analysis (correlation matrix and regression analysis). The collected data findings revealed a strong positive (0.731) association between individuals' task conflict and employees' creativity, where the correlation was significant at 0.001 level. Furthermore, in regression analysis, the explanatory power of the regression model by R-Square was 0.534, and the model was a good fit with an F value equal to 199.

In contrast, the model was significant at 0.001 level. Besides, the alpha value of the regression model was 0.907, representing the effectiveness of employees' creativity without individual task conflict. The beta value for the regression model and equation is 0.738, representing the proportion of variation in employees' creativity due to unit change in individuals' task conflict. Besides, the null hypothesis is rejected by having a T value beyond the range of (-2 & +2) or the range of T tabulated values.

As a result, it has been concluded that for successful creativity, the individuals' task conflict is crucial and an integral contributor to employees in private hospitals of Nangarhar province, Afghanistan. The findings of the current study were the same as past studies conducted by various authors in different times and areas (Lu, Zhou & Leung, 2010; Khan et al., 2020; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999; Mumford & Gustafson, 1988; De Dreu, 2006; Farh et al., 2010; Xie et al., 2014).

5.1 Recommendations

The current study was conducted to investigate the effect of individual task conflict on employees' creativity in private hospitals of Nangarhar province. Based on research findings, it has been recommended for private hospitals that if creativity is needed, it creates some individual task conflict to achieve the mission of creativity in employee performance. Besides, the following are some recommendations that other researchers have to take into consideration that are as follow:

- Others are recommended to conduct the same research in NGOs and governmental organizations. This will enable people to get generalized knowledge about individual task conflicts and employees' creativity.
- For the findings of this research, the survey research strategy was adopted using a questionnaire for data collection. Others are recommended to investigate the same research problem with different research methodologies and data collection tools to make the current knowledge more replicable and generalized.

- The current study has investigated the effect of individual task conflict on employees' creativity. As employees' creativity is needed in today's market, others are recommended to investigate the effect of other variables on employees' creativity.
- In private hospitals, studying the effect of individual task conflict on employees' creativity in other provinces and capital levels is recommended.

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