The impact of interpersonal conflict on employee burnout and task performance, and the role of conflict management styles

Lynn Geerlings (6817637)

Master Social, Health & Organisation Psychology 2023-2024

Work and Organisation track

First reviewer: Prof. Dr. Toon Taris

Second reviewer: Dr. Lisanne Versteegt

UU-SER 24-0321

Word count: 8851

June 20, 2024

Abstract

Research has shown that interpersonal conflict is inevitable and has far-reaching consequences for a multitude of outcomes. At the workplace, interpersonal conflict can be distinguished into task, process, and relational conflict, which have been linked to a variety of outcome variables, including burnout and task performance. The question is no longer if conflicts can be prevented, but rather how conflicts can be managed effectively to prevent their hazardous consequences. Conflict management styles could potentially be the key but have thus far been neglected as a research topic. Therefore, this study investigated the extent to which interpersonal conflicts at work influence burnout and task performance, and what the effect of conflict management styles is. Results were obtained from 114 employees in the Netherlands who completed an online questionnaire. The data was analysed by performing a multiple linear regression analysis. The results suggested that there is a significant association between relational conflict and burnout and between interpersonal conflict and burnout. No evidence was found for the association between any of the types of interpersonal conflict and task performance. The strength or direction of these associations did not change after the addition of conflict management styles as a moderator. However, a direct effect was found between the passive and active conflict management style and burnout. These results confirm that interpersonal conflict is indeed a strong predictor of burnout and that the way individuals handle conflicts might be more important than the type of conflicts they experience. However, more extensive research is needed to establish a deeper understanding of the exact role of conflict management styles.

Key words: interpersonal conflict, work, burnout, task performance, conflict management style

Introduction

So many people, so many opinions. Any time people interact with each other, there is significant chance of conflict to arise (Rispens & Jehn, 2012). The existence of conflict itself does not present an immediate threat, but it could have catastrophic consequences for individuals and organisations on the long term (DeChurch & Marks, 2001).

As humans are inherently social creatures, they engage in interpersonal relationships in all sorts of social settings (Frone, 2000), one of which is the workplace (Rispens & Jehn, 2012). These interpersonal relationships are not merely the result of an inherent human urge but are also stimulated by the development that most people fundamentally perform their work in teams (de Dreu & Weingart, 2003). There is a high information dependency and a need to work and coordinate together due to increased specialization and complexity of internal and external relations (De Dreu, Van Dierendonck & Dijkstra, 2004). If people work together effectively, benefits such as improved quality, speed and innovation may arise (Ayoko, Callan & Härtel, 2003). However, human interaction comes with the significant risk of conflict, potentially decreasing the benefits or even creating difficulties (Rispens & Jehn, 2012). The risk of conflict is even increased by the development that bureaucratic regulations and rules are increasingly replaced with self-managed teams and empowered employees, leading to the need for employees to negotiate their rights, responsibilities, and duties on a daily basis (De Dreu et al., 2004). In addition, the growing diversity of the workforce, together with heterogeneous values and belief systems, expands the risk of misunderstanding and disrespect (De Dreu et al., 2004).

Research found that interpersonal conflict is indeed a common phenomenon in the workplace (González-Navarro et al, 2017; Rispens & Jehn, 2012). A nation-wide survey on working conditions discovered that 26 percent of the Dutch employees had engaged in one or more interpersonal conflicts at work in 2021 (Van den Heuvel et al., 2022). As the quality of interpersonal relationships significantly shapes an individual's thoughts, emotions and behaviors, interpersonal conflicts could have major impact on individuals (Beitler, Scherer & Zapf, 2018; Frone, 2000; Van Dierendonck et al., 2001). Interpersonal conflicts at work have been linked to a significant decrease in employee well-being, with burnout being a particular important topic of research due to its far-reaching consequences and the lack of knowledge on how to reduce the impact of conflict on burnout (De Dreu et al., 2004). Furthermore, interpersonal conflicts at work could be detrimental for the organisation's operations due to the impact on performance and the rise of considerable costs (DeChurch & Marks, 2001; De

Dreu et al., 2004). Managers spend an average of 20 percent of their working hours trying to resolve conflicts (Schalk, Schouten, Paulen & Ament, 2004), and approximately 90.000 sick days were the direct result of interpersonal conflict in 2021 in the Netherlands (Van den Heuvel et al., 2022). Not to mention the indirect consequences, such as through burnout (De Dreu et al., 2004).

As research has agreed that conflict is inevitable (de Dreu & Weingart, 2003), the question is no longer if conflicts can be prevented, but rather how to manage conflict effectively and prevent its hazardous consequences. A factor that could potentially be of importance is the individual's conflict management style (DeChurch & Marks, 2001; De Dreu et al., 2004). However, there is relatively little known about this relation and the existing literature is inconclusive due to methodological inconsistencies in all constructs, which distorts the perception. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate whether interpersonal conflicts at work have an effect on burnout and task performance, and if conflict management styles moderate these associations, The research question is: 'To what extent is interpersonal conflict at work related to burnout and task performance in employees in the Netherlands, and what is the effect of employee conflict management styles?'

Theoretical framework

Interpersonal conflict at work

Due to increased complexity of work, working in teams has become progressively important in organisations (De Dreu, 2004; Rispens & Jehn, 2012). One difficulty that most teams face in their work is interpersonal conflict, because conflict is inevitable when people interact and work interdependently (Rispens & Jehn, 2012). Research identified that interpersonal conflict is not related to the work itself, but rather results from tension between colleagues because of real or perceived differences between them (de Dreu & Weingart, 2003). De Dreu (2008) defined interpersonal conflict as a situation in which two or more people have different or opposing opinions, interests, needs, perspectives, or expectations. Interpersonal conflict does not have to be evident to be perceived, and it is not necessary for the other person to be aware of the conflict.

Regarding the workplace, conflicts can be distinguished in three types: *task conflict*, *process conflict* and *relational conflict* (Lehmann-Willenbrock, Grohmann & Kauffeld, 2011; González-Navarro, 2017; Rispens & Jehn, 2012).

Task conflict includes disagreement about the content of the work being performed. It involves differences between individuals regarding the task itself, such as how the

work is done, what goals to achieve and what strategy is best to use. Task conflict can originate from different expertise, experiences, or interpretations of information.

Process conflict arises from disagreement about the logistical processes around the performance of the tasks. It involves differences between individuals on how the work, resources and responsibilities should be divided. Process conflicts can arise due to overlapping or unclear roles and responsibilities.

Relational conflict refers to differences between individuals regarding personal matters. These matters are not related to the task or work carried out. These conflicts arise because of for example personality clashes, different values and emotional disagreements and are often characterized by frustration, tension, and hostility.

Interpersonal conflict is one of the most troubling and pervasive daily stressors and is considered a major threat to individual well-being through a wide range of emotional, psychological, and physiological outcomes (de Dreu, 2007; Wickham et al., 2016). In addition, interpersonal conflict could harm organisations, because it has been linked to, amongst others, decreased performance, lower organisational commitment, increased counterproductive behaviour, and higher turnover rates (Ilies, Johnson, Judge & Keeney, 2010; Rispens & Jehn, 2012). Interestingly, research also found that task conflict could have a positive effect on task performance by stimulating discussion, creative solutions and innovation (Barki & Hartwick, 2004; Todorova, Bear, & Weingart, 2014). This link was not found for relational conflict, which was found to have a negative impact, and process conflict was not subject of the studies. In this study, two central outcomes of interpersonal conflict are examined. *Burnout* is included as the representative of the connection to well-being and stress and *task performance* is included as the representative of the output of work and the direct consequence for the organisation.

This study contributes to the current understanding of interpersonal conflict at work by distinguishing between task, process, and relational conflict to establish an understanding of potential differences. Most studies are inconsistent regarding the types or operationalisation of interpersonal conflict at work. Generally, process conflict is not included in research due to, amongst others, funding purposes, while it could significantly add to a deeper understanding (De Dreu, 2001). Therefore, this study aims to provide more clarity and create a foundation for future research to build on.

Burnout

The concept of burnout was introduced in the 1970s by Herbert Freudenberger who observed gradual emotional depletion and loss of motivation among volunteers of aid organisations (Demerouti, Bakker, Peeters & Breevaart, 2021). Initially, it was believed that burnout was a response to chronic emotional and social stressors at work in the human services sector, but this view expanded to include employees in all occupations from the 1990s. Despite more than 50 years of considerable social and scientific interest, the exact magnitude of this problem is still unknown (Demerouti et al., 2021; Schaufeli, Desart & De Witte, 2020).

The relevance of burnout research is highlighted by its prevalence and impact on both individual and organisational levels. For individuals, burnout can lead to long-term health issues such as higher rates of cardiovascular- and mental health problems (Ahola Toppinen-Tanner & Seppanen, 2017). For organisations, burnout can reduce effectiveness, commitment and job satisfaction and increase absenteeism (Demerouti et al., 2021).

One of the prominent theories explaining the causes of burnout is the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). According to the JD-R model, burnout results from two independent processes: a health impairment process and a motivational process. The health impairment process involves job demands such as high workload, long work hours and interpersonal conflict, which require considerable effort and can lead to physical or psychological costs. On the other side, the motivational process involves job resources, which are aspects of work that are energizing, facilitate goal achievement and enable personal development such as social support, developmental opportunities, and task variety (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). When the job demands are high and the job resources are low, the chance of burnout increases.

Burnout is defined as a psychological state of work-related *exhaustion* that employees experience, characterized by extreme fatigue, *mental distancing*, and diminished ability to manage *cognitive and emotional processes* (Demerouti et al., 2021; Schaufeli et al., 2020).

> *Exhaustion* is the most fundamental aspect of burnout and signifies severe and serious depletion of both physical and psychological resources. It is characterized by the persistent lack of energy and severe tiredness, even after adequate rest. Individuals are no longer able to engage in work or other activities with the usual level of effectiveness or enthusiasm.

Mental distancing is characterized by psychological detachment and withdrawal from work and the people associated with work. A cynical attitude and a sense of indifference towards work tasks, outcomes, and needs and feelings of others develops. Although this can be a coping strategy to avoid further exhaustion, it is counterproductive as it increases stress.

Cognitive impairment refers to the negative effects on the individual's cognitive functions. It involves experiencing difficulty focusing on tasks, sustaining attention and challenges in remembering vital information. It is also closely related to impaired judgement and issues in decision making, which could lead to mistakes and decreased effectiveness.

Emotional impairment involves a diminished and disturbed ability to regulate emotions, characterized by increased frustration, irritability, and mood swings. Managing emotions becomes difficult, leading to overreactions to minor issues. In addition, it comes with decreased empathy, making it difficult to understand and connect with emotions of others, which could result in deteriorated relationships.

According to research, all types of interpersonal conflicts at work increase the probability of negative outcomes for individuals, such as burnout (Danauskė, Raišienė, & Korsakienė, 2023). The more interpersonal conflicts employees have at work, the more burnout they experience consequently (De Dreu, 2007).

H1: Task conflict is positively associated with burnout.

H2: Process conflict is positively associated with burnout.

H3: Relational conflict is positively associated with burnout.

Task Performance

In essence, task performance is the fundamental basis on which the entire economy is built. Without individual task performance, there is no team performance, no unit performance, no organisation performance, no sector performance, and no gross domestic product (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015). As task performance is of utmost importance, it has been the subject of many research projects for a long period of time (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015; Koopmans, Bernaards, Hildebrandt, de Vet & van der Beek, 2014). Initially, research concentrated on identifying the ultimate performance indicators. However, it became clear that such comprehensive and generalizable indicators do not exist as the indicators are job

specific and differ from job to job (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015; Van Zyl et al., 2019). Once this insight was obtained, a consensus emerged that individual job performance should involve the actions and behaviours of individuals that are relevant to the organisation's objectives. Koopmans et al. (2014) defined task performance as the individual's competence in performing core work tasks, including behaviours such as planning and organising work, and working result-oriented and efficient. The behaviour must be within control of the individual, thus excluding behaviours determined by the environment such as technical problems (Koopmans et al., 2014). Therefore, performance is different from results, as results are a product of both performance and other factors that are not within control of the individual (Motowildo, Borman & Schmit, 1997). In addition, task performance is approached from the perspective of the individual, which means that the conceptualization is subjective and based on the individual's perception of the own task performance (Koopmans et al., 2014).

Task performance has been linked to all sorts of indicators in research, such as interpersonal conflict at work. Fundamentally, interpersonal conflict is negatively related to task performance, meaning that an increase in interpersonal conflict leads to a decrease in task performance. In more specific research, *relational* conflict was found to have a negative correlation with task performance (de Dreu & Weingart, 2003; de Wit, Jehn & Scheepers, 2013), because these conflicts require time and resources that can no longer be spend on performing the tasks (De Dreu, 2007). In addition, it distracts employees from their tasks, as these conflicts are stressful and keep their thoughts occupied. The impact of process conflict on task performance is not exclusively studied yet but is assumed to have a negative impact due to the same reasons. Conversely, task conflict has been identified as a potential reinforcer of task performance under specific circumstances (Ayoko et al., 2003; deChurch & Marks, 2001; De Dreu et al., 2004). As individuals share their different perspectives, it encourages them to participate in discussion and think outside of their comfort zone, leading to more creativity, solutions, and innovation, thereby improving outcomes such as task performance (Barki & Hartwick, 2004; Todorova et al., 2014).

H4: Task conflict is positively associated with task performance.

H5: Process conflict is negatively associated with task performance.

H6: Relational conflict is negatively associated with task performance.

As mentioned above, task performance can lead to improved performance only under specific circumstances. DeChurch & Marks (2001) suggested that the style individuals use to manage their interpersonal conflict at work could be of significance. Even on an overarching basis, also for other outcomes as burnout, research indicated that the consequences of interpersonal conflict at work could be contained by the conflict management style individuals use (De Dreu et al., 2004).

Conflict management styles

Conflict management styles refer to the behavioural responses to the experience of interpersonal conflicts, including both intended and actual actions taken (Elgoibar, Euwema & Munduate, 2017). Research has indicated that conflict management styles are relatively solid because individual's personalities are considered to be stable over time and their response is often primary and unconscious (Elgoibar et al., 2017). In addition, the circumstances of the workplace tend to remain relatively stable over time (De Dreu et al., 2001). Employees do the same kind of work for a longer period, interact with the same co-workers and incentive structures do not change overnight. Employees working within the same team or department tend to influence one another, creating their own social environment with rather stable preferences for dealing with conflict. As a result, this conflict handling culture has long-term consequences for both individuals and organisations (De Dreu et al., 2004).

It is the practice of the effective conflict management style that could foster a positive conflict handling culture and that could contain the negative consequences of interpersonal conflict, such as increased risk of burnout and reduced task performance (De Dreu et al., 2004). Therefore, it could be considered a crucial skill requirement for almost any profession involving social interactions (Beitler et al., 2018). The key to this effectiveness is the awareness of one's natural and unconscious conflict tendencies and the ability to adapt the style to what the context needs (Elgoibar et al., 2017).

Before the effectiveness can be investigated, it is necessary to define the conflict management styles. The Dual-Concern model states that individuals' conflict management styles are determined by the interplay of their assertiveness and cooperativeness (De Dreu et al., 2001; Janssen & Van de Vliert, 1996). Assertiveness is the concern for the self and refers to the degree to which individuals attempt to satisfy their own needs during a conflict. The more assertive individuals are, the more individuals express ideas and desires, stand up for their own rights and strive to achieve their own goals. Cooperativeness is the concern for the other and refers to the extent to which individuals attempt to satisfy the needs of others during

conflict. The more cooperative individuals are, the more individuals consider the ideas and desires of others, strive to maintain a positive relationship and are willing to find a solution. The interplay of these two factors results in five conflict management styles: *forcing*, *avoiding*, *problem solving*, *yielding,* and *compromising* (De Dreu et al., 2004; Rahim, 2017). These styles are linked to specific behaviours and strategies as displayed below (Elgoibar et al., 2017).

> *Forcing* is characterized by high assertiveness and low cooperativeness. It involves imposing a solution to achieve one's goals, with little regard for the other party's interests or the relationship. Persuasive arguments, positional commitments, threats, and bluffs are commonly used. This style is suitable when quick decision making is necessary or when outcomes are crucial for one party, but insignificant to the opponent. This style is inappropriate when both parties have equal power, when issues are complex or when there is time for a joint decision-making process. When used ineffectively, this style can lead to workplace bullying and harm relationships.

> *Avoiding* is characterized by low assertiveness and low cooperativeness. It entails reducing the importance of conflicts, supressing thoughts about conflicts and ultimately staying out of conflict. This behaviour discourages efforts to compromise, negotiate or pursue personal gains and the issues of the conflicts are often neglected because the avoiding individual believes that nothing can be gained from engaging in the conflicts. This style is appropriate when conflicts are minor, when there are no viable solutions available, when more time is needed or when the benefits of resolving the conflicts do not justify the confrontations. This style is unsuitable when issues are important or when immediate action is necessary due to time pressure.

> *Problem solving* is characterized by high assertiveness and high cooperativeness. It aims for a win-win outcome by finding creative solutions and reaching agreements that are satisfactory for both parties. Involves showing insights, exchange of information about priorities and preferences and making trade-offs between unimportant and important issues. Problem solving is particularly effective for complex issues as it enables both parties to share skills, information, and resources to redefine the problems and develop alternative solutions. This style is not appropriate for simple or trivial conflicts or when time is limited. In addition, this style can be challenging when the other party lacks experience in problem solving or if both parties are untroubled by the outcome.

Yielding is characterized by low assertiveness and high cooperativeness. It involves incorporating and accepting the wishes, ideas and needs of the other party which is displayed by offering help, unconditional promises, and concessions. This behaviour often emerges from a sensitivity to the other party's needs and a strong desire for harmony. This style is useful when the other party is right, when conflicts are significantly more important to the other party or when the long-term relationship is priority. Yielding is ineffective when conflicts are of major importance, when the conflicts lead to frustration or when it could accommodate exploitation.

Compromising is characterized by intermediate assertiveness and intermediate cooperativeness. It entails seeking a middle ground that considers both one's own interests and those of the other party. The idea is that both parties make concessions which results in a mutually acceptable, yet moderately satisfying, agreement. This style is also known to lead to the so-called democratic outcome. Compromising is suitable when the interests of both parties are mutually exclusive or when the powers of both parties are balanced. This style is inappropriate in situations where the stakes are high and both parties experience great loss. In addition, this style can prevent the expansion of available resources before they are divided and hinder the discovery of more creative solutions.

Figure 1

Display of the conflict management styles according to the Dual-Concern Theory, as described by Janssen & Van de Vliert (1996)
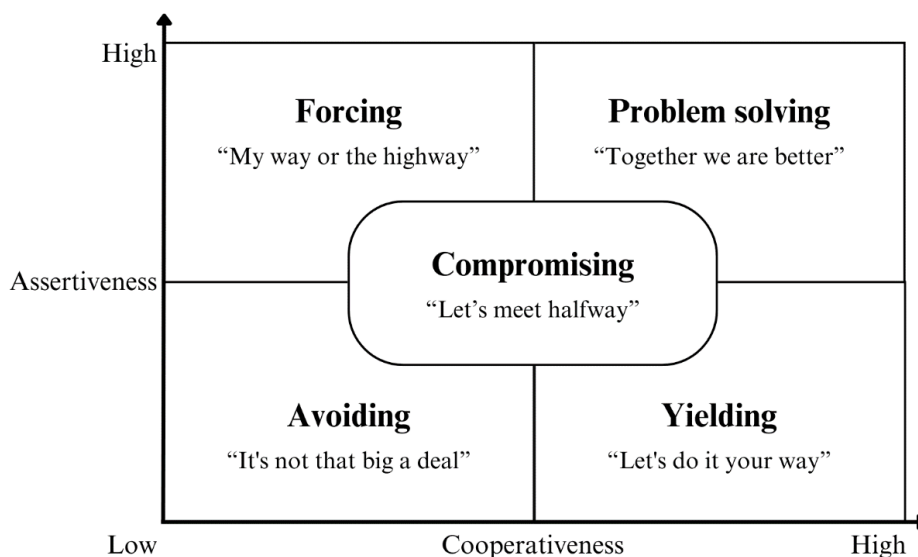
Research is limited and inconsistent regarding the influence of conflict management styles on the association between interpersonal conflict and outcomes, such as burnout and task performance. Some studies indicate that styles with a high concern for others are more likely to lead to positive outcomes (Chen, Wu & Bian, 2014; Janssen & Van de Vliert, 1996; Rahim, 2017), while other studies suggest that the styles with a high concern for self are more likely to lead to positive outcomes (Chung-Yan & Moeller, 2010; De Dreu, 2001; De Dreu et al., 2004), and yet other studies are not explicit about the influence (Elgoibar et al., 2017; Weider-Hatfield & Hatfield, 1995). Therefore, an exploratory framework is designed to help gain a better understanding.

H7a: The association between task conflict and burnout is moderated by the type of conflict management style.

H7b: The association between process conflict and burnout is moderated by the type of conflict management style.

H7c: The association between relational conflict and burnout is moderated by the type of conflict management style.

H7d: The association between task conflict and task performance is moderated by the type of conflict management style.

H7e: The association between process conflict and task performance is moderated by the type of conflict management style.

H7f: The association between relational conflict and task performance is moderated by the type of conflict management style.
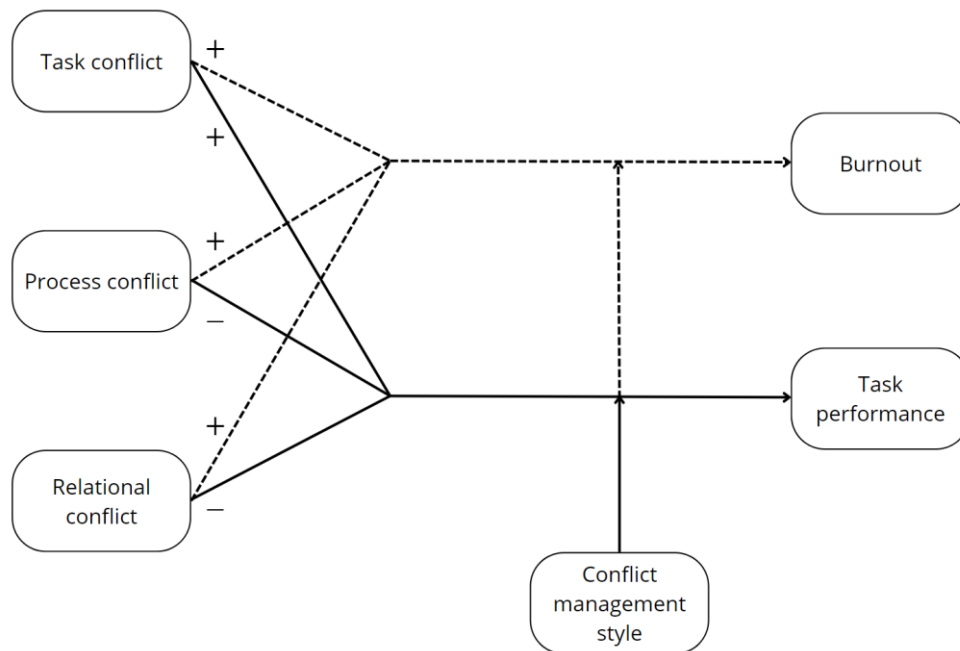
The hypothesized relationships between interpersonal conflict, burnout, task performance and conflict management styles are visualised in the research model in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Display of the proposed research model

Methods

Design and procedure

A correlational study with quantitative data collection was conducted. Correlational research was appropriate for this study because it allows for examination of the strengths of an association between variables without manipulating the variables (Curtis, Comiskey & Dempsey, 2016). However, the disadvantages of correlational research are that it is not possible to prove causality and that it is not possible to determine whether variable A affects variable B or vice versa (Curtis et al., 2016). This study was approved by the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Utrecht University, filed under number 24-0321.

For the data collection, a standardized questionnaire was conducted among employees in the Netherlands and a convenience sampling method was used during the recruitment of the participants (Morling et al., 2017). The advantages of this method were low costs, the possibility to achieve the largest sample possible and that it was not required to build a list of occupations to determine the exact population, as is the case with random sampling (Acharya et al., 2013). However, a disadvantage was that these findings may not be generalizable to other target groups.

The participants were reached through an open invitation which was sent via WhatsApp and posted on LinkedIn and Instagram (Appendix A). The invitation contained an URL through which participants had online access to the questionnaire, allowing participants to choose a convenient time and location to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire started with a brief introduction to the study which explained the purpose of the study and stressed that the study was completely anonymous and voluntary (Appendix B). Participants could stop the questionnaire or withdraw their participation at any time. At the end of the introduction, the participants had to read and accept the informed consent before they could continue to the questions (Appendix C). The questionnaire consisted of demographic questions to verify whether participants met the stated requirements and to measure control variables, followed by the instruments listed under measurement instruments (Appendix D). The question within the instruments were presented in a random order to prevent question order bias. The participants could only complete the questionnaire if all questions had been answered, and all participants that decided not to complete the questionnaire were removed from the dataset. In case of comments or questions about the study, participants were given the opportunity to send an e-mail to the researcher or supervisor. The questionnaire ended with a message to thank the participants for their effort. The questionnaire was conducted between April 15, 2024, and May 5, 2024.

Participants

To ensure internal validity, participants had to meet three requirements. The participants had to work, their age had to be 18 years or older and they had to work with colleagues. In total, 151 individuals responded to the questionnaire. However, 37 individuals were excluded from the sample because they did not fully complete the questionnaire. Therefore, a total of 114 participants were included in this study. In Table 1, the frequencies (N), percentages (%), means (M), standard deviations (SD) and scale range of the control variables are illustrated. The sample was predominantly female, with 61.4% of the participants identifying as female and 28.6% as male. The average age of the participants was 44.10 years ($SD = 13.66$; Min = 19; Max = 68). The participants worked on average 32.99 hours per week ($SD = 10.32$; Min = 6; Max = 72) and the average tenure at their employer was 9.30 years ($SD = 11.26$; Min = 0; Max = 40). The majority of the participants completed an HBO-education. Participants came from various industries, with the largest group working in healthcare and well-being (36.0%). 28.1% of participants had managerial responsibilities, while the majority of 71.9% did not. Most participants (72.8%) reported daily contact with

colleagues. Conflicts with colleagues varied but were not prominent with only 7.0% of the participants reporting daily conflicts. Participants reported a moderate level of workload ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.75$) and a solid level of autonomy ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.75$) in their jobs.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of control variables (N=114)

	N	%	M	SD	Scale range
Gender					
Male	44	38.6			
Female	70	61.4			
Age			44.10	13.66	19-68
Weekly working hours			32.99	10.32	6-72
Years working for company			9.30	11.26	0-40
Education level					
High school	5	4.4			
MBO	31	27.2			
HBO	50	43.8			
WO	28	24.6			
Industry					
Healthcare & well-being	41	36.0			
Trade & service	9	7.9			
ICT	13	11.4			
Justice, security & public administration	4	3.5			
Media & communication	3	2.6			
Education, culture & science	11	9.6			
Engineering, manufacturing & construction	12	10.5			
Tourism, entertainment & hospitality	6	5.3			
Transportation & logistics	2	1.8			
Other	13	11.4			
Managerial responsibility					
Yes	32	28.1			
No	82	71.9			
Contact with colleagues					
Daily	83	72.8			
Several times per week	27	23.7			
Once per week	4	3.5			
Conflict with colleagues					
Daily	8	7.0			
Several times per week	26	22.6			
Once per week	6	5.3			
Several times per month	19	16.7			
Once per month	16	14.0			
Less than once per month	39	34.2			
Workload			3.02	.75	1.20-5.00
Autonomy			3.84	.75	1.75-5.00

Measurement instruments

The questionnaire was created with the Qualtrics survey tool. Both the invitation and the questionnaire were distributed in Dutch. After the introduction and informed consent, the questionnaire started with questions regarding gender (1 = male, 2 = female, 3 = other), age (in years), weekly working hours (in hours), tenure at employer (in years), educational level (1 = elementary school, 2 = high school, 3 = MBO, 4 = HBO, 5 = WO), occupational industry (e.g. healthcare & well-being, ICT, and education, culture & science), managerial responsibility ("Do you directly supervise others?", 1 = yes, 2 = no), frequency of contact with colleagues (in times per week-month), frequency of conflict with colleagues (in times per week-month), workload (Van Veldhoven et al., 1997, e.g. "Do you have to work under high time pressure?", ranging from '1 = Never' to '5 = Always', $\alpha = .82$) and autonomy (Van Veldhoven et al., 1997, e.g. "Are you able to decide when you perform a task yourself?", ranging from '1 = Never' to '5 = Always', $\alpha = .83$). These data were used as control variables to limit possible alternative explanations for the results of this study. Afterwards the following constructs were measured:

Interpersonal conflict at work

Interpersonal conflict at work was measured with a shortened and translated version of the Intragroup Conflict Scale, based on research of Jehn (1995). The scale consisted of nine items, divided in three items for task conflict, three items for process conflict and three items for relational conflict. Participants were asked how often they encountered specific conflicts in the course of their work. Examples of the specific conflicts were "conflicts about ideas" for task conflict, "conflicts over responsibilities" for process conflict and "conflicts of interest" for relational conflict. The questions were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale and the answer options ranged from 'Never' to 'Very often'.

To investigate if the nine items indeed represented these three types of conflict, a principal component factor analysis with Oblimin rotation was conducted. Inspection of the Eigenvalues showed that the analysis yielded one factor, explaining 46.16% of the variance. This means that one general factor accounts sufficiently for the variation in the items of the three types of interpersonal conflict, instead of three separate factors. However, separating interpersonal conflict into task, process and relational conflict is an important part of this study and an addition for this field of research. Therefore, to comply with the factor analysis as well as to address the theoretical interest, the decision was made to perform two independent analyses. The initial analysis was performed with task, process, and relational

conflict as three separate factors, and afterwards a post hoc analysis was performed with interpersonal conflict as one factor. This design gave the opportunity for further exploration and a deeper understanding of interpersonal conflict. The reliability analysis was conducted, indicating $\alpha = .78$ for task conflict, $\alpha = .57$ for process conflict, $\alpha = .62$ for relational conflict and $\alpha = .85$ for interpersonal conflict was a combined scale.

Conflict management styles

Conflict management styles were measured with the Dutch Test for Conflict Handling (DUTCH) by De Dreu et al. (2001). The scale consisted of twenty questions, divided in four question per conflict management style: *forcing*, *avoiding*, *problem solving*, *yielding,* and *compromising*. The participants were asked to what extent the statements described their behaviour during conflicts. Examples are "I fight for a good outcome for myself", "I avoid confrontation about our differences", "I stand for my own and other's goals and interests", "I try to accommodate the other party" and "I insist that we both give in a little", respectively. The statements were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale and answer options ranged from 'Does not describe me' to 'Describes me extremely well'.

To investigate the reliability of the five conflict management styles, a principal component factor analysis with Oblimin rotation was conducted. The analysis identified five potential factors with Eigenvalues > 1.00, of which the last two added little to the explained variance. The five identified factors were different from the five factors that were expected theoretically, and the results indicated that yielding and avoiding potentially formed one factor together and that problem solving and compromising potentially formed one factor together. Therefore, the analysis was performed again with only three factors. The results yielded three factors that nearly aligned with theory: a *passive style* (including yielding and avoiding), an *active style* (including problem solving and compromising), and a *forcing style* (including forcing), see Table 2. These three factors together explained 52.30% of the variance. All individual items of the conflict management styles loaded on these specific (combination of) factors, with exception of the items "I stand for my own and other's goals and interests" (Problem solving item 2) and "I try to make differences seem less severe" (Avoiding item 3). These items loaded strongly on two factors simultaneously and were deleted from the factor analysis and scales. A reliability analysis was conducted, indicating $\alpha = .90$ for the passive stye, $\alpha = .78$ for the active style and $\alpha = .49$ for the forcing style.

Table 2

Factor loadings of the Conflict Management Styles

	Factor		
	1 Passive style	2 Active style	3 Forcing style
I give in to the wishes of the other party (Yielding 1)	.84		
I examine issues until I find a solution that really satisfies me and the other party (Problem solving 1)		.62	
I emphasize that we have to find a compromise solution (Compromising 1)	.37	.66	
I avoid confrontation about our differences (Avoiding 1)	.80		
I push my own point of view (Forcing 1)			.52
I concur with the other party (Yielding 2)	.68		
I try to realize a middle-of-the-road solution (Compromising 2)		.67	
I avoid differences of opinion as much as possible (Avoiding 2)	.77	.30	
I search for gains (Forcing 2)			.55
I try to accommodate the other party (Yielding 3)	.76	.35	
I examine ideas from both sides to find a mutually optimal solution (Problem Solving 3)		.66	
I insist that we both give in a little (Compromising 3)		.58	.44
I fight for a good outcome for myself (Forcing 3)			.62
I adapt to the parties' goals and interests (Yielding 4)	.84		
I work out a solution that serves my own and the other's interests as well as possible (Problem solving 4)		.63	
I strive whenever possible toward a 50-50 compromise (Compromising 4)	.42	.75	
I try to avoid a confrontation with the other (Avoiding 4)	.81		
I do everything to win (Forcing 4)			.78

Note. Extraction method; principle component analysis; Rotation method; Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization. Loadings below .30 were removed.

Task performance

Task performance was measured with the Task Performance scale from the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) by Koopmans et al. (2014). The scale consisted of five items which were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 'Never' to 'Always'.

One of the included items was "In the last three months I managed to schedule my work in a way that ensured the work was finished on time". A principal component factor analysis with Oblimin rotation was conducted and yielded one factor that explained 45.49% of the variance. Afterwards, the reliability analysis was performed indicating $\alpha = .70$.

Burnout

Burnout was measured with the Burnout Assessment Tool, which was designed by Schaufeli et al. (2020). The scale consisted of twenty-three items: eight items for exhaustion, five items for mental distance, five items for cognitive impairment and five items for emotional impairment. Examples of questions were "After a day at work, I find it hard to recover my energy", "I feel a strong aversion towards my job", "At work I struggle to think clearly" and "I get upset or sad at work without knowing why". The items were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 'Never' to 'Always'. Also for burnout, a principal component factor analysis with Oblimin rotation was performed, which yielded one factor that explained 41.34% of the variance in the items. A reliability analysis was conducted indicating $\alpha = .93$.

Data analysis

For the analysis, the collected data was exported from Qualtrics to SPSS 29. The first step was to identify and remove participants with missing data due to incomplete response to the questionnaire. All items were coded in the same direction, meaning that it was not necessary to recode any items. The second step was to perform a factor analysis and to investigate the reliability of the scales by computing the Cronbach's alphas (α). The third step was to examine the descriptive statistics like frequencies, means and standard deviations of the control variables. In addition, the descriptive statistics, and the Pearson's correlations of the variables under study were computed. Lastly, a total of four multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to investigate the association between interpersonal conflict at work and burnout and task performance, and to identify the effect of the conflict management styles. Before the results were interpreted, assumptions were verified. There was a linear relationship between the dependent variables and the independent variables. Homoscedasticity and normality were assessed and confirmed using a plot and visual inspection. To test for multicollinearity, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was included in the multiple regression analysis. All VIF scores were below 4, except for the interaction terms and variables that were combined in the interaction terms in model 4 of all four analysis. This is due to the overlap between the separate variables and the interaction terms and is common

in moderation analyses. Therefore, there was no indication of violation of the assumption. The multiple linear regression analyses included both the variables under study and control variables. Although the control variables were not of theoretical interest, they could influence the outcomes. The inclusion of control variables added to the internal validity of this study by limiting the effect of alternative explanations. Hence, the correlation between variables under study could be demonstrated with more certainty (Kaliyadan & Kulkarni, 2019).

Results

Preliminary analyses

Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations of the variables under study, along with the results of a Pearson correlation analysis to measure the correlation between the variables. The average means of the majority of the constructs were relatively low. Only for task performance and the active conflict management style, relatively moderate levels were found. The analysis showed that both interpersonal conflict (r (113) = .33, $p < .01$) as one construct, and task (r (113) = .34, $p < .01$), process (r (113) = .27, $p < .01$) and relational (r (113) = .26, $p < .01$) conflict as separate constructs had a significant positive association with burnout. The passive conflict management style had a significant positive association to burnout (r (113) = .28, $p < .01$). All types of interpersonal conflict were negatively associated to task performance, but these correlations were weak and not significant. The active and passive conflict management styles showed a significant positive correlation (r (113) = .40, $p < .01$). Lastly, burnout and task performance were significantly negatively correlated (r (113) = -.24, $p < .01$).

Table 3

Descriptive statistics and Pearson's Correlation analysis Study Variables (N = 114)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Interpersonal conflict	2.13	.57	1								
2. Task conflict	2.39	.70	.89**	1							
3. Process conflict	2.17	.62	.90**	.72**	1						
4. Relational conflict	1.82	.63	.84**	.58**	.63**	1					
5. Passive conflict management style	2.52	.86	.08	.12	.08	.00	1				
6. Active conflict management style	3.09	.66	.19*	.14	.24**	.11	.40**	1			
7. Forcing conflict management style	1.98	.66	.23*	.22*	.21*	.17	-.07	.16	1		
8. Task Performance	3.50	.61	-.11	-.14	-.04	-.10	-.16	.05	.12	1	
9. Burnout	1.90	.53	.33**	.34**	.27**	.26**	.28**	-.08	.03	-.24**	1

Note: * $p < .05$ (2-tailed); ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

Hypothesis testing

Two multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to study the associations between task, process, and relational conflict and the two main outcome variables, burnout and task performance, respectively. In addition, the moderation effects of conflict management styles on these associations were investigated. The analyses consisted of four models, incorporating the control variables (Model 1), interpersonal conflict (Model 2), the conflict management styles (Model 3), and the interaction terms of interpersonal conflict and the conflict management styles (Model 4).

Task, process and relational conflict and burnout

It was hypothesized that an increase in task (H1), process (H2), and relational (H3) conflict would be associated with an increase in burnout, and that this association would be moderated by the passive, active and forcing conflict management styles (H7a, H7b and H7c). The results presented in Table 4 showed that Model 3 provided the best explanation of burnout with 37% of the variance explained, because both the model and the additional explained variance (R square change) were significant. Model 3 indicated that for the control variables, an increase in age was significantly associated with a decrease in burnout (β = -.36 $p < .01$) and an increase in workload was significantly associated with an increase in burnout (β = .20, $p < .05$). Task conflict and process conflict were not significant predictors of burnout, which means that H1 and H2 were not supported. Relational conflict had a significant positive association with burnout (β = .27, $p < .05$), providing support for H3.

A direct effect was found for the passive conflict management style which was significantly associated with higher levels of burnout (β = .25, $p < .01$) and for the active conflict management style which was significantly associated with lower levels of burnout (β = -.35, $p < .001$). However, the associations between task, process and relational conflict and burnout were not significantly moderated by the passive, active and forcing conflict management styles (these were included in Model 4, which did not significantly add to the explanation of the variance in burnout compared to Model 3), which means that H7a, H7b and H7c were not supported.

Table 4

Multiple Linear Regression analysis Task, Process and Relational Conflict and Burnout (β)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Gender	-.14	-.12	-.10	-.09
Age	-.25*	-.32**	-.36**	-.33**
Weekly working hours	.07	.05	-.01	.01
Years working for company	.17	.15	.13	.10
Educational level	-.09	-.07	-.06	-.11
Managerial responsibility	.02	-.02	.02	.01
Quantity contact colleagues	-.09	-.11	-.10	-.09
Workload	.27**	.21*	.20*	.17
Autonomy	-.12	-.08	-.01	.02
Task conflict		.17	.13	-.37
Process conflict		-.07	.00	.88
Relational conflict		.24	.27*	-.47
Passtive style			.28**	.60
Active style			-.35***	-.45
Forcing style			.01	-.50
Task conflict*Passive style				.49
Task conflict*Active style				.20
Task conflict*Forcing style				-.03
Process conflict*Passive style				-.05
Process conflict*Active style				-1.26
Process conflict*Forcing style				.27
Relational conflict*Passive style				-.74
Relational conflict*Active style				1.20
Relational conflict*Forcing style				.47
R square	.18**	.26***	.37***	.44***
R square change		.08*	.11***	.07

Note: * $p < .05$ (2-tailed); ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed); *** $p < .001$ (2-tailed)

Task, process and relational conflict and task performance

It was hypothesized that an increase in task conflict (H4) would be associated with an increase in task performance and that an increase in process (H5) and relational (H6) conflict would be associated with a decrease in task performance. In addition, it was expected that these associations would be moderated by the passive, active and forcing conflict management styles (H7d, H7e, H7f). The results presented in Table 5 showed that all models were significant, but that the additional explained variance (*R* square change) was not significant for Model 2, Model 3, and Model 4. Therefore, Model 1 was the best predictor of task performance and explained 20% of the variance. The results showed that the control variable workload was significantly associated with lower levels of task performance (*β* = -.26, *p* < .01) and autonomy was significantly associated with higher levels of task performance (*β* = .26, *p* < .01). Task conflict, process conflict and relational conflict were not significant predictors of task performance, which means that H4, H5 and H6 were not

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT, BURNOUT & TASK PERFORMANCE

supported. The results also showed that the passive, active and forcing conflict management styles, which were included in Model 4 that did not significantly add to the explanation of the variance in task performance, did not significantly moderate the associations between task, process and relational conflict and task performance, meaning that H7d, H7e and H7f were not supported.

Table 5

Multiple Linear Regression analysis Task, Process and Relational Conflict and Task Performance (β)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Gender	.04	.03	.01	-.04
Age	-.09	-.08	-.07	-.06
Weekly working hours	-.12	-.11	-.09	-.09
Years working for company	-.10	-.11	-.09	-.06
Educational level	-.05	-.05	-.04	-.02
Managerial responsibility	-.06	-.09	-.11	-.11
Quantity contact colleagues	.06	.07	.06	.06
Workload	-.26**	-.30**	-.29**	-.26*
Autonomy	.26**	.24*	.20	.21*
Task conflict		-.12	-.13	-.65
Process conflict		.21	.20	1.26
Relational conflict		-.01	-.02	1.01
Passtive style			-.12	.38
Active style			.08	.17
Forcing style			.04	1.00*
Task conflict*Passive style				.46
Task conflict*Active style				.53
Task conflict*Forcing style				-.11
Process conflict*Passive style				-.83
Process conflict*Active style				-.48
Process conflict*Forcing style				-.41
Relational conflict*Passive style				-.45
Relational conflict*Active style				-.29
Relational conflict*Forcing style				-.96
R square	.20**	.22*	.23*	.33*
R square change		.02	.01	.10

Note: * $p < .05$ (2-tailed); ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

Post hoc analysis: Interpersonal conflict as a compound variable

As discussed before and displayed in Table 2, the factor analysis indicated that interpersonal conflict is one variable instead of the three separate variables task, process, and relational conflict. Therefore, it was chosen to repeat the preceding analyses with interpersonal conflict as one variable for exploratory purposes.

Interpersonal conflict and burnout

The results presented in Table 6 showed that Model 3 provided the best explanation of burnout with 36% of the variance explained, because both the model and the additional explained variance (*R* square change) were significant. Model 3 indicated that an increase in

the control variable age was significantly associated with a decrease in burnout (β = -.30 p < .01). An increase in interpersonal conflict was significantly associated with an increase in burnout (β = .34, p < .001), indicating that interpersonal conflict is a significant predictor of burnout. A direct effect was found for the passive conflict management style which was significantly associated with higher levels of burnout (β = .28, p < .01) and for the active conflict management style which was significantly associated with lower levels of burnout (β = -.35, p < .001). However, there were no significant moderation effects of the passive, active and forcing conflict management styles, which were included in Model 4 and did not significantly add to the explained variance in burnout compared to Model 3. Therefore, the association between interpersonal conflict and burnout was not moderated by the conflict management styles.

Table 6

Multiple Linear Regression analysis Interpersonal Conflict and Burnout (β)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Gender	-.14	-.12	-.11	-.07
Age	-.25*	-.27**	-.30**	-.29**
Weekly working hours	.07	.06	.00	.01
Years working for company	.17	.15	.13	.09
Educational level	-.09	-.07	-.06	-.11
Managerial responsibility	.02	-.03	.02	.04
Quantity contact colleagues	-.09	-.12	-.11	-.12
Workload	.27**	.18	.19	.17
Autonomy	-.12	-.09	-.02	.00
Interpersonal conflict		.29**	.34***	.05
Passive style			.28**	.74
Active style			-.35***	-.59
Forcing style			.02	-.47
Interpersonal conflict*Passive style				-.53
Interpersonal conflict*Active style				.41
Interpersonal conflict*Forcing style				.62
R square	.18**	.25***	.36***	.39***
R square change		.07**	.11**	.03

Note: * p < .05 (2-tailed); ** p < .01 (2-tailed); *** p < .001 (2-tailed)

Interpersonal conflict and task performance

The results presented in Table 7 showed that all models were significant, but that the additional explained variance (*R* square change) was not significant for Model 2, Model 3, and Model 4. Therefore, Model 1 was the best predictor of task performance and explained 20% of the variance. The results showed that the control variable workload was significantly associated with lower levels of task performance (β = -.26, p < .01) and autonomy was significantly associated with higher levels of task performance (β = .26, p < .01).

Interpersonal conflict was not significantly associated with task performance, indicating that interpersonal conflict was not a predictor of task performance. The results also showed that the moderation effects of passive, active and forcing conflict management styles were not significant, as Model 4 which included these effects did not significantly add to the explanation of the variance in task performance. This means that the conflict management styles did not moderate the association between interpersonal conflict and task performance.

Table 7

Multiple Linear Regression analysis Interpersonal Conflict and Task Performance (β)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Gender	.04	.05	.03	-.02
Age	-.09	-.09	-.09	-.10
Weekly working hours	-.12	-.16	-.11	-.11
Years working for company	-.10	-.11	-.10	-.07
Educational level	-.05	-.05	-.04	-.03
Managerial responsibility	-.06	-.07	-.09	-.10
Quantity contact colleagues	.06	.06	.05	.06
Workload	-.26**	-.28**	-.27*	-.24*
Autonomy	.26**	.26**	.23*	.212*
Interpersonal conflict		.07	.05	1.18*
Passive style			-.13	.24
Active style			.10	.13
Forcing style			.02	1.05**
Interpersonal conflict*Passive style				-.62
Interpersonal conflict*Active style				-.05
Interpersonal conflict*Forcing style				-1.45**
R square	.20**	.20**	.22*	.29**
R square change		.00	.02	.07

Note: $* p < .05$ (2-tailed); $** p < .01$ (2-tailed)

Discussion

Working in teams has become increasingly important in contemporary work, but comes with the significant risk of interpersonal conflict (Rispens & Jehn, 2012). After all, so many people have so many opinions and interpersonal conflict arises when the differences between individuals collide (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Interpersonal conflict has been identified as one of the most troubling and pervasive daily stressors and is connected to a wide range of outcomes, such as burnout and task performance (de Dreu, 2007; Ilies et al., 2010; Wickham et al., 2016). The aim of this study was to examine the association between interpersonal conflict at work and burnout and task performance. Furthermore, the impact of conflict management styles as a moderator was explored. The present research among 114 employees in the Netherlands showed that the majority of the hypothesized model was not supported (Figure 2). In the following section, the three main findings will be discussed.

Interpersonal conflict and burnout

It was expected that task, process, and relational conflict were associated with higher levels burnout. However, the results showed that only relational conflict had a significant positive association with burnout, indicating that H3 was supported. This is in line with research from amongst others Jehn (1995) and de Wit, Jehn & Scheepers (2013), which suggested that relational conflict is the most detrimental type of conflict. Relational conflict affects both the emotional and social aspects of an individual's work life, creating a pervasive sense of stress and dissatisfaction that is difficult to escape, thereby significantly contributing to feelings of burnout (Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2005). For task and process conflict, there was no significant association with burnout, which means that H1 and H2 were not supported.

There are several alternative explanations for these findings. The first possible explanation is that the results were influenced by a methodological limitation, that is the measurement of task, process and relational conflict as separate constructs. The factor analysis showed that interpersonal conflict is, and should be analysed as, one construct. This limitation was addressed by repeating the analysis with interpersonal conflict as one construct, which identified that interpersonal conflict was indeed significantly associated with burnout. More extensive and large-scale research is needed to create a deeper understanding and to determine the accuracy of these findings. The second feasible alternative explanation is that task and process conflicts fundamentally differ from relational conflict, because they are centred around professional issues rather than personal ones (Behfar, Peterson, Mannix & Trochim, 2008; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). It could be that the participants of this study were less likely to take task and process conflicts personally because they are viewed as part of the job rather than personal attacks, and therefore do not lead to stress and feelings of burnout (Behfar et al., 2008). The third possible alternative explanation is that the association between task and process conflict and burnout was moderated by the degree to which the participants considered task and process conflicts to be constructive. Task and process conflicts could stimulate critical thinking, foster innovation, and improve group outcomes (Jehn, 1995). These advantages could prevent long-term persistence and accumulation of stress, which is crucial to avoid feelings of burnout (Amason, 1996; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003).

Interpersonal conflict and task performance

It was expected that task conflict would be associated with higher levels of task performance and that process and relational conflict would be associated with lower levels of task performance. The results showed that there was no significant association between task, process and relational conflict and task performance, meaning that H4, H5 and H6 were not supported. Also, the additional analysis with interpersonal conflict as one construct found no significant associations. This finding suggests that it did not matter if the participants experienced any kind of interpersonal conflict for the performance of their tasks. A feasible alternative explanation for this finding is that the participants of this study were not significantly impacted by their interpersonal conflicts in their daily activities, allowing them to focus on executing their roles and responsibilities effectively regardless (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; De Wit, Greer & Jehn, 2012). Especially in professional work environments where task completion is prioritized, this type of emotional separation is commonly encountered (De Wit et al., 2012). Another possible alternative explanation is that the questionnaire used to measure task performance came with methodological limitations. The Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) by Koopmans et al. (2014) is a subjective measurement, as the perception of the participant's own task performance is investigated. This comes with the risk of distorted results, for example if the participant had difficulties remembering their performance or had underreported or overstated their performance due to obscured judgement (Conway & Lance, 2020; Podsakoff et al., 2003).

The effects of passive, active and forcing conflict management styles

It was hypothesized that the conflict management styles would moderate the associations between interpersonal conflict and burnout and task performance. The results showed that the conflict management styles did not moderate the associations for both outcome variables, which means that H7a-H7f were not supported. However, this study did find a direct effect of the passive and active conflict management style and burnout. The passive conflict management style was associated with higher levels of burnout, indicating that moving away from the conflict could lead to unresolved issues and ongoing stress, ultimately leading to more feelings of burnout. The active conflict management style was associated with lower levels of burnout, suggesting that adequate and direct addressing of conflicts can prevent the build-up of stress and therefore mitigate burnout. These findings are in line with research of Tjosvold (2007), suggesting that it is the way conflicts are managed, rather than the kind of conflict, that determines the outcomes such as burnout. A possible

alternative explanation for these findings is that the participants used different conflict management styles, based on the situation and the other party involved in the conflict (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008). Such variability could complicate the establishment of a consistent moderation effect. Another alternative explanation for these findings is that there were other confounder variables, which were not included in this study design, that had a significant impact on the influence of conflict management styles.

Strengths and limitations

This study contributes to the understanding of interpersonal conflict, its influence on burnout and task performance and the effect of conflict management styles. The results confirm the significant impact of interpersonal conflict on burnout and offer new insights into the influence of the conflict management styles. In addition, this study addresses a gap in current literature, by providing more clarity regarding the conceptualization of interpersonal conflict and conflict management styles. It has become apparent that both constructs may not have been properly operationalized in previous research, which potentially could have influenced the results.

Despite the insightful findings, several limitations should be acknowledged in addition to the possible methodological limitations mentioned above. First, the study utilized a convenience sampling method, which may limit the generalizability of the results. As noted by Acharya et al. (2013), convenience sampling can introduce bias and affect the external validity of the findings. Second, the correlational design of the study, while useful for identifying associations, limits the ability to draw causal inferences between the variables (Curtis et al., 2016). Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data could introduce self-biases, such as social desirability bias, which might have affected the accuracy of the reported levels of conflict, burnout, and task performance (Conway & Lance, 2010). Lastly, a possible limitation is that the sample of this study was not extensive enough, leading to limited power.

Future research and practical recommendations

As this study is only a singular correlational study, future research should further investigate the impact of interpersonal conflict and conflict management styles on important outcome variables that impact the individual and the organisation, such as burnout and task performance. It is advised to thoroughly investigate the conceptualisation and operationalisation of both interpersonal conflict and the conflict management styles as discussed in this study, to establish a solid foundation for subsequent research to build on. In addition, future research could address the limitations of this study by using a mixed method

approach adding qualitative data collection, because that could help understand the context, underlying reasons and motivations of behaviour and add depth and nuance to the numbers of the quantitative data. Furthermore, longitudinal or (quasi)experimental designs could be beneficial to understand the causal relationship and a more diverse and representative sample could potentially enhance the generalizability of the findings. Lastly, future studies could explore the role of other moderating variables that might influence the relationship between interpersonal conflict and conflict management styles, and employee outcomes. For example, organisational culture could be a moderator as it is critical in shaping how interpersonal conflicts are perceived, managed, and resolved within a workplace (Jehn, 1995).

In addition, the findings of this study have practical implications for organisations, as they can have a significant impact. Organisations could implement practical measures such as implementing anonymous feedback mechanisms, providing mental health support, and designing clear policies and procedures for addressing workplace conflicts to create a more supportive and harmonious work environment, ultimately reducing the impact of interpersonal conflicts on employee well-being. In addition, as the way conflicts are handled are of major importance, organisations could encourage and train employees to engage in active conflict management, by for example training programs focused on communication skills, negotiation, and conflict resolution (Tjosvold, 2007).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provided valuable insights into the association between interpersonal conflict, burnout, task performance and conflict management styles. The results imply that interpersonal conflict and conflict management styles were relatively strong predictors of burnout, and that the *way* conflicts are managed might be of more relevance than the *type* of conflict. For task performance, it was found that interpersonal conflict did not impact the individuals in any way. Therefore, it is advised to focus on individual well-being, rather than organisational objectives such as performance, when addressing interpersonal conflict in future research and in organisation policy.

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Appendix A

Invitation questionnaire

Beste netwerk,

Het einde van mijn master Social, Health & Organisation Psychology aan de Universiteit Utrecht is in zicht en dat betekent dat ik momenteel bezig ben met mijn afstudeeronderzoek!

Hiervoor doe ik onderzoek naar conflicten op de werkvloer, hoe dit verband houdt met burnout en productiviteit en wat de invloed van conflictmanagementstijlen op deze relatie is.

Ik ben op zoek naar mensen die:
- 18 jaar of ouder zijn
- werken
- tijdens hun werk in contact komen met collega's (indien je freelancer of gedetacheerd bent mag je de collega's daar ook meerekenen)

Zouden jullie een waardevolle bijdrage aan mijn onderzoek willen doen door de vragenlijst in te vullen?

https://survey.uu.nl/jfe/form/SV_8AkCXp04uzq7mzc

Het invullen van de vragenlijst zal ongeveer 5 tot 10 minuten duren. Je krijgt er helaas niks tastbaars voor terug, wel mijn eeuwige dankbaarheid.

Alvast heel erg bedankt voor je tijd!

Appendix B

Introduction questionnaire

Beste deelnemer,

Hartelijk dank voor uw belangstelling in dit onderzoek dat wordt uitgevoerd in het kader van de afstudeerprocedure van de master Social, Health & Organisational Psychology aan de Universiteit Utrecht. Het doel van dit onderzoek is om inzicht te krijgen in conflicten op de werkvloer, hoe dit verband houdt met burn-out en productiviteit en wat de invloed van conflictmanagementstijlen op deze relatie is.

Voor uw deelname aan dit onderzoek is het van belang dat u direct samenwerkt met collega's. Let op: indien u bij meerdere werkgevers/opdrachtgevers werkzaam bent wegens freelancen en/of detachering, dan mag u ook de mensen met wie u daar samenwerkt meerekenen als collega's.

Het invullen van deze vragenlijst zal 5 tot 10 minuten duren. Achtereenvolgend zullen vragen worden gesteld over uw demografische kenmerken, uw ervaring met taak-, relatie- en procesconflicten op de werkvloer, uw conflictmanagementstijl, uw productiviteit en uw mate van burn-out klachten.

Deelname aan dit onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig. U kunt zonder opgave van reden op ieder gewenst moment besluiten om te stoppen met uw deelname aan het onderzoek. Alle verzamelde gegevens worden vertrouwelijk opgeslagen en verwerkt, waardoor de resultaten op geen enkele wijze tot u te herleiden zijn en anonimiteit gewaarborgd is.

De verzamelde gegevens zullen op de server van de Universiteit Utrecht worden opgeslagen en zullen niet met derden worden gedeeld. Bij vragen kunt u uiteraard contact opnemen met mij of mijn scriptiebegeleider via onderstaande contactgegevens.

Ik kijk met veel plezier uit naar de resultaten!

Met vriendelijke groet,

Lynn Geerlings (l.geerlings@students.uu.nl)
Onder supervisie van Prof. dr. Toon Taris (a.w.taris@uu.nl)

Appendix C

Informed consent

- Ik heb de informatie voor deelnemers gelezen en voldoende tijd gekregen om te beslissen of ik deelneem aan dit onderzoek.

 - Ik weet dat meedoen geheel vrijwillig is. Ik weet dat ik mijn toestemming kan intrekken op ieder gewenst moment en dat ik daarvoor geen reden op hoef te geven.

- Ik geef toestemming voor het verzamelen, bewaren en verwerken van mijn gegevens voor het uitvoeren van dit onderzoek.

□ Ik ga akkoord met mijn deelname aan dit onderzoek

Appendix D

Questionnaire

Demographic questions

1. Wat is uw geslacht
   - Man
   - Vrouw
   - Anders
2. Wat is uw leeftijd
3. Wat is het hoogste opleidingsniveau dat u hebt voltooid?
   - Basisonderwijs
   - Middelbare school
   - MBO
   - HBO
   - WO
4. In welke beroepssector bent u werkzaam?
   - Gezondheidszorg en -welzijn
   - Handel en dienstverlening
   - ICT
   - Justitie, veiligheid en openbaar bestuurd
   - Milieu en agrarische sector
   - Media en communicatie
   - Onderwijs, cultuur en wetenschap
   - Techniek, productie en bouw
   - Toerisme, recreatie en horeca
   - Transport en logistiek
   - Anders
5. Hoeveel uren werkt u gemiddeld per week?
6. Hoeveel jaar bent u werkzaam binnen de organisatie?
7. Geeft u direct leiding aan anderen? Indien ja, aan hoeveel mensen?
   - Nee
   - Ja
8. Hoe vaak heeft u gemiddeld contact met uw directe collega's?
   - Dagelijks
   - Enkele keren per week
   - Eén keer per week
   - Enkele keren per maand
   - Eén keer per maand
   - Minder dan één keer per maand
9. Hoe vaak ervaart u conflicten (zoals uiteenlopende of tegengestelde meningen, belangen, behoeften, zienswijzen of verwachtingen) tussen u en uw collega's?
   - Dagelijks

- Enkele keren per week
- Eén keer per week
- Enkele keren per maand
- Eén keer per maand
- Minder dan één keer per maand

Workload

Kies bij de volgende vragen het antwoord dat voor u het meeste van toepassing is:

1. Moet u heel snel werken?
2. Moet u erg veel werk doen?
3. Werkt u hard om dingen af te krijgen?
4. Moet u onder hoge tijdsdruk werken?
5. Heeft u onvoldoende tijd om uw werk af te krijgen?

1 = Nooit, 2 = Zelden, 3 = Regelmatig, 4 = Vaak, 5 = Altijd

Autonomy

Kies bij de volgende vragen het antwoord dat voor u het meeste van toepassing is:

1. Besluit u zelf hoe u uw werk uitvoert?
2. Beslist u zelf de volgorde van uw werkzaamheden?
3. Bepaalt u zelf op welk moment u een taak uitvoert?
4. Heeft u de vrijheid om problemen op het werk zelf op te lossen?

1 = Nooit, 2 = Zelden, 3 = Regelmatig, 4 = Vaak, 5 = Altijd

Interpersonal conflict at work

Onderstaande vraag gaat over conflicten op de werkvloer. Met conflicten worden situaties bedoeld waarin twee of meer mensen uiteenlopende of tegengestelde meningen, belangen, behoeften, zienswijzen of verwachtingen hebben. De andere partij hoeft zich daar niet per se bewust van te zijn.

Hoe vaak heeft u tijdens uw werk met onderstaande conflicten te maken met collega's?

(Let op: hierbij worden ook collega's bij opdrachtgevers bedoeld in geval van freelancen en/of detachering)

1. Conflicten over uitvoering van taken
2. Conflicten over ideeën
3. Conflicten over werkwijzen
4. Relationele spanningen
5. Belangenconflicten
6. Conflicten over niet-werk gerelateerde zaken
7. Conflicten over verdeling van beschikbare middelen
8. Conflicten over verdeling van werkzaamheden
9. Conflicten over verantwoordelijkheden

1 = Nooit, 2 = Zelden, 3 = Regelmatig, 4 = Vaak, 5 = Heel vaak

Dutch Test for Conflict Handling (DUTCH)

Geef hieronder aan in hoeverre onderstaande uitspraken van toepassing zijn op de manier waarop u omgaat met conflicten op uw werk:

1. Ik gaf toe aan de wensen van de andere partij
2. Ik onderzocht de kwestie net zolang tot ik een oplossing vond waar ik en de ander beide echt tevreden mee waren
3. Ik probeerde er een compromis uit te slepen
4. Ik vermeed een confrontatie over onze tegenstellingen
5. Ik duwde mijn eigen standpunt erdoor
6. Ik gaf de ander gelijk
7. Ik kwam op voor mijn eigen en voor andermans doelen en belangen
8. Ik benadrukte dat we een tussenweg moesten zien te vinden
9. Ik omzeilde de meningsverschillen waar mogelijk
10. Ik probeerde winst te boeken
11. Ik probeerde de ander tegemoet te komen
12. Ik onderzocht ideeën van beide kanten om een voor ons beide optimale oplossing te bedenken
13. Ik stond erop dat we allebei water bij de wijn doen
14. Ik probeerde tegenstellingen minder scherp te doen lijken
15. Ik vocht voor een goede uitkomst voor mijzelf
16. Ik paste me aan andermans doelen en belangen aan
17. Ik werkte een oplossing uit die zowel mijn eigen, als de belangen van de ander zo goed mogelijk diende.
18. Ik streefde waar mogelijk naar een compromis
19. Ik probeerde een confrontatie met de ander te voorkomen
20. Ik deed alles om te winnen

1 = Beschrijft mij niet, 2 = Beschrijft mij enigszins, 3 = Beschrijft mij redelijk, 4 = Beschrijft mij goed, 5 = Beschrijft mij bijzonder goed

Task performance

Kies bij onderstaande stellingen het antwoord dat voor u het meeste van toepassing is:

In de afgelopen 3 maanden…

1. Lukte het mij om mijn werk zo te plannen, dat het werk optijd af was
2. Hield ik voor ogen welk resultaat ik moest behalen met mijn werk
3. Lukte het mij om hoofdzaken van bijzaken te scheiden
4. Lukte het mij om mijn werk goed uit te voeren met zo min mogelijk tijd en inspanning
5. Heb ik een optimale planning gemaakt

1 = Nooit, 2 = Zelden, 3 = Regelmatig, 4 = Vaak, 5 = Altijd

Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT)

1. Op het werk voel ik me geestelijk uitgeput
2. Alles wat ik doe op mijn werk, kost mij moeite
3. Ik raak maar niet uitgerust nadat ik gewerkt heb
4. Op het werk voel ik me lichamelijk uitgeput
5. Als ik 's morgens opsta, mis ik de energie om aan de werkdag te beginnen
6. Ik wil wel actief zijn op het werk, maar het lukt mij niet
7. Als ik me inspan op het werk, dan word ik snel moe
8. Op het einde van de werkdag voel ik me mentaal uitgeput en leeg
9. Ik kan geen belangstelling en enthousiasme opbrengen voor mijn werk
10. Op mijn werk denk ik niet veel na en functioneer ik op automatische piloot
11. Ik voel een sterke weerzin tegen mijn werk
12. Mijn werk laat mij onverschillig
13. Ik ben cynisch over wat mijn werk voor anderen betekent
14. Op mijn werk heb ik het gevoel geen controle te hebben over mijn emoties
15. Ik herken mezelf niet in de wijze waarop ik emotioneel reageer op mijn werk
16. Tijdens mijn werk raak ik snel geïrriteerd als de dingen niet lopen zoals ik dat wil
17. Ik word kwaad of verdrietig op mijn werk zonder goed te weten waarom
18. Op mijn werk kan ik onbedoeld te sterk emotioneel reageren
19. Op het werk kan ik er mijn aandacht moeilijk bijhouden
20. Tijdens mijn werk heb ik moeite om helder na te denken
21. Ik ben vergeetachtig en verstrooid tijdens mijn werk
22. Als ik aan het werk ben, kan ik me moeilijk concentreren
23. Ik maak fouten in mijn werk omdat ik er met mijn hoofd 'niet goed bij ben

1 = Nooit, 2 = Zelden, 3 = Regelmatig, 4 = Vaak, 5 = Altijd