



National  
College *of*  
Ireland

**Impact and effect of conflict in the workplace on the Performance  
of management in the Retail industry**

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**Master of Arts in Human Resources Management 2021**

**National College of Ireland**

**Submitted to the National College of Ireland**

**August 2021**

## **ABSTRACT**

In today's business environment conflict in the workplace is a significant issue and understanding the causes and outcomes is crucial. Workplace conflict is worth studying to reduce costs in a personal and professional way, so organizational leaders could harness the conflict situation and creativity.

**Purpose** - The purpose of this research paper is to evaluate how conflicts in the workplace impact employee performance with negative or positive outcomes. Consequently, it is essential to understand where conflict comes from and how it affects the performance of management. The purpose of this study was to understand the causes and types of conflict, as well as conflict management styles, and how it is affected by the performance of management.

**Design/methodology/approach** - Data was collected from eight employees from the retail industry using semi-structured interviews. A qualitative research approach was taken by conducting interviews with eight retail managers/team leaders, taking transcripts, and analysing them thematically by research question and objectives. Data analysis of the conflicts' outcomes on performance management was also undertaken. The study also explores conflict types, causes, conflict handling styles and how conflicts impact employee behaviour.

**Findings** - Research findings demonstrated that workplace conflict impacts employee performance through increased absenteeism, turnover, and decreased employee wellbeing. However, the findings show that task conflicts have a significant, positive connection to employee performance, and relationship and process conflicts negatively affects employee performance. Overall, the findings shows that workplace conflict outcomes can be mixed.

**KEYWORDS:** Conflict, Conflict Management, Performance management, Workplace conflict, Employee performance, Retail Industry.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who helped me and participated in my research process and made an effort to support me during the two-year journey.

I want to say a huge thank you to my supervisor Dr. Kesiena Ebenade, who helped me and guided me in the right direction toward my final dissertation and supported my entire dissertation journey. It was very new and challenging for me.

I would like to say a huge thank you to my family, firstly my wonderful parents who encouraged and motivated me to achieve this qualification. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for helping to mind my daughter during my dissertation and NCI journey. Also, thank you to my beautiful daughter Dominyka, for being patient and understanding and empowering me to achieve the final goal. Thank you for all your support, love, understanding and belief in me and my achievements going forward to my goal.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Statement of Problem/Issue**

In the dynamic 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace, conflict is continually increasing and becoming a very significant issue in the business environment. Conflict occurs everywhere within organizations and the retail industry is no exception. A survey by The Centre for Creative Leadership and Eckerd College St. Petersburg, Florida found that managers spend twenty to forty percent of their working time dealing with and responding to conflicts (McGuire, 2014). That means one to two days per week of working time spent on solving issues in the workplace and the relationship between manager productivity and organization profitability when managing workplace conflicts can be very costly. Therefore, the conflict process impacts both employee behaviour and organizational financial resources (Manesis, Vlachou and Mitropoulou, 2019).

Conflict in organizations is defined as disagreement between people working for the organization to perform organizational aims and goals. In simple terms, conflict happens due to different personalities working together, when they have different backgrounds, cultures, views, thoughts, expectations, and purposes (Yarbag, 2015). Working in a team, each person is an individual and has different opinions, ideas, attitudes, and background. Employees generally have disagreements regarding their opinions and/ or behaviours. Therefore, the study of conflict in organizations is not new, and has been researched in detail from different perspectives over many decades (Robbin, 1978). As discussed in the literature, conflict can be described as having two main forms, namely task and relationship conflicts. For instance, task conflicts are about distribution and resources, procedures and policies, and interpretation of fact. An example of relationship conflicts are conflicts in relation to values, personal taste and interpersonal style (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003). Also, conflict can have both positive and negative outcomes. It leads to seeking and getting better ideas, employees can look for different approaches to conflict situations, which creates a good approach for team-based settings, if employee interest in creativity is increased, an employee has the opportunity to use their capabilities (Mullins, 2007). On the other hand, negative outcomes of conflict in an organization indicate unhealthy relations and can lead to certain consequences for the employee's performance. It becomes a significant issue in the workplace which can be a



significant variable in workplace productivity, effectiveness, and overall success. Conflict at work can destroy people’s performance and productivity (CIPD, 2020).

### 1.2. Research Aim

The aim of this study is to answer the main research question and objectives.

The main research statement of this study examines workplace conflicts and their impact on performance management.

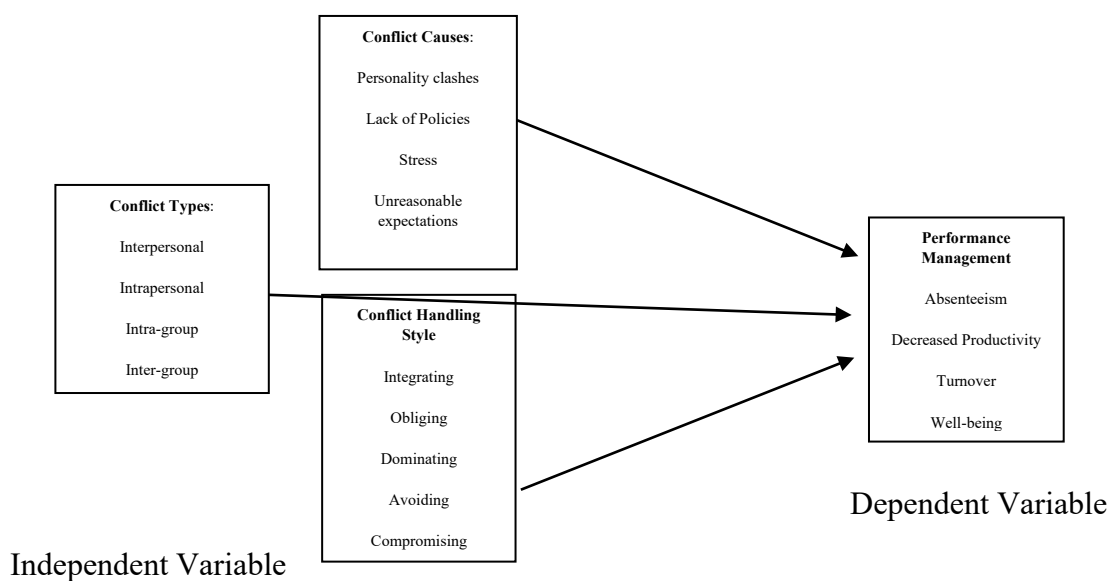
More specifically, it aims to answer three main objectives:

- a) Identify different conflict types and causes in the workplace.
- b) Analyse how retail managers approach conflict and which handling styles they use.
- c) Examine how workplace conflicts can impact employee behaviours.

This study examines the relationship between workplace conflict and employee performance within organizations in the retail industry. It emphasizes the important causes and issues, including conflict managing style, conflict types in the organization and, overall, what are the negative consequences for job outcomes for employees experiencing workplace conflict.

### 1.3. Research Outcome

The conceptual framework of this study analyses conflict types, conflict causes, and conflict handling styles. These three variables have outcomes on performance management in the organization such as absenteeism, decreased productivity, turnover and well-being. More elements are shown in the table (Figure 1).



## **Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of Study**

### **1.4. Research Design**

In this study a qualitative research approach was used, and primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews. This method uses small participant samples; eight retail managers from different retail stores who have been involved in a conflict situation or dealt with conflict in the workplace personally. This descriptive research will focus on people's personal experiences with workplace conflicts and managers will share their opinions, views and thoughts. They can explore feelings about workplace conflict in depth and discuss it in detail. The study will gather leader views, experiences about workplace conflicts, causes, handling styles and consequences to employee performance.

In this research one to one electronic interviews will be conducted using Microsoft Teams. The transcript of interview records will be collected, in the process the interview will be coded and approached by using thematic analysis, by identifying themes that influence the performance management for further investigation of the research.

### **1.5. Research Project Structure**

The dissertation is divided into seven parts, where each of the parts is analysed and classified in detail regarding the conflicts, conflict management and performance of management involved. All parts are related to each other, and are organised as follows:

**Chapter one** starts with an introduction of the study, presents the conflict issue in the organization, discusses the main research question and design, and provides an overall summary of the study.

**Chapter two** will analyse the literature review about conflict, including: types, causes, their outcome on performance management, and types of conflicts in the retail industry. It combines all connections and relationships to each other.

**Chapter three** will discuss the main research question, linked to three objectives for more identification of research outline, and the conceptual framework is explained in detail, consisting of a qualitative research methodology philosophy explanation, including how the primary data/ interviews were conducted and data analysed.

**Chapter four data analysis and findings** provides an overview of the research interview results and primary research findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Codes and

themes have been identified in the interviews with eight retail managers/leaders and linked to research objectives and theoretical implications.

**Chapter five** discusses and compares the research data analysis and findings with the literature.

**Chapter six** summarises the research study and offers some conclusions/ recommendations for managers, including some courses and training for managing conflicts in the workplace.

The last part of the dissertation is the reference list and appendices.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Conflict is a functional element in the organisational lifecycle. From an organization's perspective, conflicts stem from the problems of working together occurring/ combining and preventing employees from carrying out their duties. Conflict comes not only from different thinking styles, but also from their benefits and incompatibilities (Eren, 1984). Competition, disagreements, and tension are part the conflict process, whenever people are collaborating and engaging within the workplace, conflicts can occur. It can also lead to positive and negative outcomes. Conflict can be differentiated into different types and occurrences are categorised into several settings. To deal with conflict constructively and functionally one needs to apply different handling techniques to conflict styles in various situations. Finally, several negative outcomes of dysfunctional conflict on employee performance are outlined.

### **2.2. Theoretical background**

#### **2.2.1. Nature of Conflict: definition and analysis**

Conflict has been defined in a multitude of ways and researchers have not found a common term, but there are different interpretations of it (Rahim, 2002; Thomas, 1992). Early organisational conflict theorists like Max Weber and Henri Fayol described conflict as unfriendly and unpleasant (Katz and Flynn, 2013). Conflicts have been confirmed as an unavoidable part of the organizational life cycle, and all managers, employees, and subordinate's expectations within organization are incompatible (Jones et al, 2000) and it arises from tension between people working in a team because of individuals real or perceived differences (De Dreu, 1999; Thomas, 1992; Wall and Callister,1995). According to Rahim (2002), conflict occurs when the individuals need to do a task and social entities such as individuals, groups, and/ or organization's interests/ needs are incompatible; when a party is seeking a goal and is not fully satisfied with the result; when the parties have different skills, attitudes, and/ or values in the workplace and perceive the outcome differently; two parties have different behavioural preferences when they are engaged in the same activity; any conflict has to be recognised when it occurs so it does not escalate further. Another conceptual approach to conflict is defined as a form of discord or disagreement arising between individuals or within groups when the beliefs and actions of one or more members of groups are resisted as unacceptable. In the short-term conflict is generally defined as people being in a situation which presents different opinions and views (Blackburn, 2020); it

brings the outcome of an antagonistic state (Tschannen, 2001). Conflict is an expression of hostility and misunderstanding between one another. When dealing with employee conflicts, it is important to recognise a small conflict in the early stages and deal with it appropriately, in a healthy environment. Simple and small conflicts can escalate into bigger problems and lead to a major problem in an organization. Although all researchers' approaches are defined in their own way, they all have a common dimension that is described as diverse in nature and has different perspectives.

### **2.2.2. Conflict causes.**

The most frequent causes are personality clashes, stress, lack of clarity of work directions, overload of tasks, poor communication, lack of openness and honesty, competition, cultural difference, dissatisfaction with salary and rewards, and unfair treatment. According to Workplace Conflicts Statistics (2020) the main three triggers of conflicts are personality clashes (ego), stress, and heavy workloads (PPS, 2020). The primary source of conflict is personality differences when employees fail to accept and respect differences between each other, and tension arises. Straightforward personality types like-to say what is on their mind, but to other employees with different personalities this can seem rude and offensive. Conflict can occur very quickly among people with differences in background, values, and experiences (Isa, 2015). Therefore, when employees/ colleagues do not have enough tolerance and/ or respect and don't want to understand differences about each other that can cause conflict. Scholars indicate three main root causes of conflict and characteristics which influence conflict, namely:

- Power - how employees use their capabilities.
- Organization demand - such as different expectations of work,
- Worth - self-esteem, emotional connection, emotion intelligence (Katz and Flynn, 2013).

Perceived power imbalances impact the ability to address the conflict and its disagreements between individuals by creating tension between each other. The best way to solve conflict is to identify the issue and manage it constructively with an appropriate response. Believing that small disagreements or conflict will just disappear can lead to a bigger problem, which costs more money and requires more time to resolve. Conflicts can occur consistently when issues arise between employees, or between managers and employees. According to Bingham (2016), the causes of conflicts are: power and status differences, a disconnect between

organization management and employees, breach of company policies and procedures, lack of consistency in the treatment and support of employees, and lack of trust and justice. Conflict between individuals can happen in many ways and its causes can be basic work issues, such timekeeping, poor attendance, personality clashes, unfair treatment (CIPD, 2021).

To conclude, there are often numerous causes of conflict which lead to disagreement. There is always underlying tension between individuals which may surface in a specific issue, to identify the underlying issue is complex, but it is vital to recognise it in the early stages and resolve it in time.

### **2.2.3. Conflict types and classification**

Organizational conflict can be differentiated into substantive or affective conflicts, each of which can be classified as intraorganizational or interorganizational conflicts. Intraorganizational conflicts occur within organizations between individuals and groups based on levels, and the second classification is interorganizational, which happens between two or more organizations (Rahim, 2002). Intraorganizational conflicts can be classified into a few different groups: the first is interpersonal conflict, which sets two different individuals against each other and refers to conflict between two different individuals. Secondly, intrapersonal conflict refers to individuals' minds, emotions, principles, and values. The third, intra-group conflict, occurs between individuals within teams and misunderstandings or incompatibilities between individuals. The fourth is inter-group conflict, which occurs between different teams within organizations and the conflict arising from misunderstandings and competition between each other (Madalina, 2015). Also, conflicts have several dimensions, where one conflict is related to task and another related to interpersonal issues. Researchers of these dimensions have named them differently: task, relationship, and process conflicts (Jehn and Mannix, 2001), substantive and affective conflicts (Guetzkow and Gyr, 1954), task and emotional conflicts (Ross and Ross, 1989). Task conflicts are defined as instances in which an employee has incompatibilities such as different opinions and viewpoints towards the task, policies, and/ or organizational issues (Jehn and Mannix, 2001). It is about diversity of ideas and opinions toward achieving a task in the workplace. It leads to a positive outcome in performance and avoiding negative feelings.

The next conflict type is relationship conflict, and it occurs with different personalities by creating tension/ friction between each member within a group (Jehn and Mannix, 2001).

This type of conflicts includes personal issues, dislikes and likes, attitude, a result of which is frustration and feelings of anger. The third unique conflict has been defined by researchers as a 'process' conflict, which relates to issues of duty and resources which empower people with different responsibilities, more specifically who is responsible and what kind of different responsibilities people get. Process conflicts occur when people do not agree with a specific responsibility, they have to achieve a specific duty. It has been shown that relationship and process types of conflict are detrimental to individual employee or group performance and job satisfaction. Therefore, relationship conflict relates to problems with personalities of employees and process conflict relates to the assignment of duties and resources which can harm the performance (Jehn, 1997). In contrast, another type of task conflict brings positive and effective outcomes, because it relates to tasks at work, and encourages individuals' capabilities and inspires creativity in the workplace, it improves and boosts performance (Eisenhardt and Schoonhoven,1990; De Dreu and Weingart, 2003). It is like an opportunity to solve problems in creative ways from different perspectives. Conflicts can inspire brainstorming, full engagement and listening to different ideas and views when addressing the issue.

#### **2.2.4. Type of conflicts in Retail Industry**

Conflict is not a simple consequence of working on the shop floor. Rather, it is working on daily tasks such as selling and providing excellent customer service, dealing with internal conflicts with another colleague or team member and effecting efficiency on the shop floor. Therefore, dealing with conflict in the workplace is always very complex and challenging. Demanding customers, differences in employee opinions, work ethics, and desire to be engaged and involved more in decision making can create tension in the workplace. The studies conclude that managers or team leaders spend half of their days engaged with reaching an agreement and collaborating with colleagues up or down the company hierarchy (O'Leary and Van Slyke, 2010). Conflict can arise not only between two employees within an organization but in retail when the employees work on the shop floor most of the time, conflicts can also happen between employees and customers. Employees deliver customer service on duty and interact with people constantly; therefore, unpleasant interactions can occur. Retail managers need to recognise any conflict which happens in the workplace and understand the reasons and reduce the tension in the meantime. It is important to provide a pleasant experience for the customer and maintain a good reputation for any organization. Most problems arise over territory issues (Esmark and Noble, 2016). Which means that

employees and customers have two different territories, and once the territories agreed are different then conflict can occur. It can be very serious and damage the employer's reputation or bring more serious problems. Also, the dysfunctional customer can impact the employee emotionally, psychologically, and behaviourally, which negatively impacts the employee's performance.

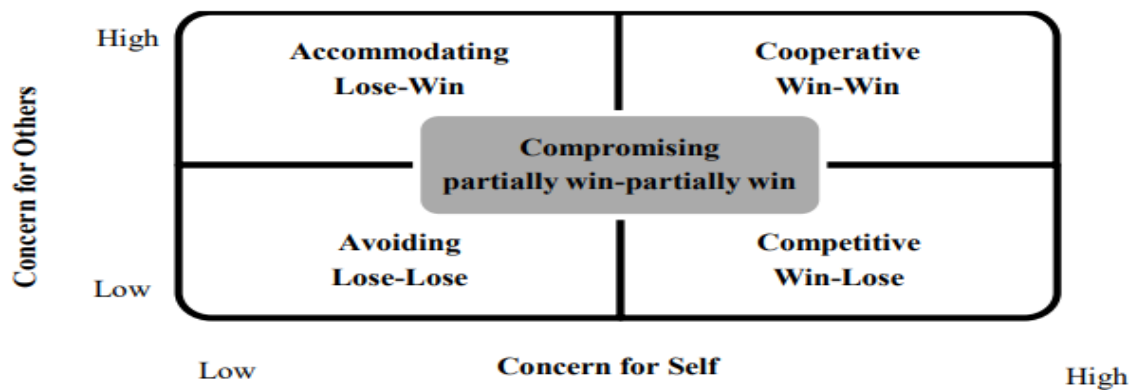
## **2.3. Styles of Conflict Management**

### **2.3.1. Conflict Management Handling Styles**

According to Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (1964) and their Managerial Grid model there are two different approaches to conflict style in relation to people and task (Kew and Stredwick, 2016). Subsequently, Thomas (1976) refined the Blake and Moutons model and presented his own five styles of resolution model, which includes cooperative, competitive, accommodating, avoiding, and compromising (Rahim and Magner, 1995). The model is shown in figure 1 and explained in detail. It includes:

- Accommodating style. In the conflict process one person is right in a winner position, another person is wrong in a losing position.
- Cooperative style. That means that the dispute resolution has two dominant people with two winners' positions. Two individuals in the conflict situation are integrated into the winner stage.
- Competitive style, which is like the competition between each other. In conflict resolution one person becomes the dominant winner, the other loses.
- Avoiding style. The conflict process proceeds with the ignoring principle, where any issues happen employees try not to pay attention and ignore it. Therefore, there is no winner in this stage, both parties are losing.
- Compromising style. This style approach is to find the best solutions for each party, to make a compromise to each other. (Tabassi et al, 2017).





**Figure 1- Five conflict-handling styles**

(Amin Akhavan Tabassi et al 2017/Procedia Computer Science)

Rahim and Bonoma (1979) emphasize two dimensions: concern for self and concern for others. The first dimension can be described as a high or low level of your own satisfaction with personal concerns. The second dimension indicates high or low level of others' satisfaction of their concerns. These two dimensions are then linked to the five conflict handling styles (Rahim, Bonoma, 1979). Previous research of conflict has defined it as disagreement, incompatibility, disputes, annoyance, and measures conflict intensity in various levels (Rahim, 2002). When team members interact with each other, they approach conflict by using the different conflict handling styles to resolve disagreement effectively and constructively where situations can be dealt with appropriately.

Conflict handling is discussed as managing different individuals and individuals in groups (Kew and Stredwick, 2017). It is very important that the leaders in the organization use and select handling styles in various situations.

### **2.3.2. Interpersonal Handling Conflict styles**

The five conflict management handling styles help to achieve better results within an organization. The appropriate situations for using the five interpersonal conflict handling styles are shown in table 1 and are explained in relation to which conflict handling styles are appropriate or inappropriate for a given situation.

**Table 1**

Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict and the Situation Where they are Appropriate and Inappropriate.

<b>Conflict style</b>	<b>Situation where appropriate</b>	<b>Situation where inappropriate</b>
<b><u>Integrating</u></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Issues are complex.</li> <li>2. Synthesis of ideas is needed to come up with better solutions.</li> <li>3. Commitment is needed from others Parties for successful implementation.</li> <li>4. Time is available for problem-solving.</li> <li>5. One party alone cannot solve the problem</li> <li>6. Resources possessed by different parties are needed to solve their common problems.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Task or problem is simple.</li> <li>2. Immediate decision is required.</li> <li>3. Other parties are unconcerned about outcome.</li> <li>4. Other parties do not have Problem-Solving skills.</li> </ol>
<b><u>Obliging</u></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You believe that you may be wrong.</li> <li>2. Issue is more important to the other party</li> <li>3. You are willing to give up something in Exchange for something from other party In the future.</li> <li>4. You are dealing from position of a weakness</li> <li>5. Preserving relationship is important.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Issues is important to you.</li> <li>2. You believe that you right.</li> <li>3. The other party is wrong or unethical.</li> </ol>
<b><u>Dominating</u></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Issue is trivial.</li> <li>2. Speedy decision is needed.</li> <li>3. Unpopular course of action is Implemented.</li> <li>4. Necessary to overcome assertive Subordinates.</li> <li>5. Subordinates lack expertise to make technical decisions.</li> <li>6. Issues is important to you.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Issue is complex.</li> <li>2. Issue is not important to you.</li> <li>3. Both parties are equally powerful.</li> <li>4. Decision does not have to be made quickly</li> <li>5. Subordinates possess high degree of competence.</li> </ol>
<b><u>Avoiding</u></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Issues is trivial.</li> <li>2. Potential dysfunctional effect of Confronting the other party outweighs Benefits of resolution.</li> <li>3. Cooling off period is needed.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Issues is important to you.</li> <li>2. It is your responsibility to make decision.</li> <li>3. Parties are unwilling to defer, Issue must resolve.</li> <li>4. Prompt attention is needed.</li> </ol>
<b><u>Compromising</u></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Goals of parties are mutually exclusive</li> <li>2. Parties are equally powerful</li> <li>3. Consensus cannot be reached</li> <li>4. Integrating or dominating style is not successful</li> <li>5. Temporary solution to complex problem is needed,</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. One party is more powerful.</li> <li>2. Problem is complex enough. Needing problem-solving approach.</li> </ol>

### **Integrating**

This conflict style is related to problem solving styles, defining the problem and resolving it in the meantime. It involves communication, collaboration, looking for alternatives and satisfaction for both parties. This style can be used for complex issues, when one party does not have a solution, another party can propose an alternative way, and this style is appropriate. It is useful in dealing with organizational issues, objectives (Rahim, 2002) and is the best approach for social conflicts (Pruitt and Carnevale, 1993).

### **Obliging**

This style of handling is used for minor differences and is unaware of the roots of the issue, and the issue is the most important element. It leads to the winning and losing position, where one party will quit for some reason and another party will benefit from it. This style is inappropriate when the party is unethical. Preserving relationships is important when dealing from a position of weakness and this style is appropriate in such a situation.

### **Dominating**

This style is defined as competitor style, no matter what is happening one person has to become dominant in the position and forget all expectations and objectives of the other party. This can be harmful for one party once a decision has been made. In an appropriate situation this style will be used for technical and quick decisions to be made but is inappropriate when issues are not important to any one party.

### **Avoiding**

This style is associated with stepping back, where each party's concerns are not satisfied. It is used to deal with small issues and involves a cool down period when dealing with a conflict process. Also, this style is used when one of the parties experiences a negative outcome. An inappropriate situation is when the party has decided and both parties are not willing to wait.

## **Compromising**

This style will be used in negotiations for solving complex problems to find a compromise or mutually acceptable solution. Even if the parties do not find a solution, a temporary solution can be used to get the issue solved temporarily. It is complex and it is inappropriate to use this style when one party is more powerful than another.

Some scientists agree that the most suitable style for managing conflict constructively involves the integrating and compromising style as it solves strategic issues. Some styles are appropriate to use for daily issues or problems (Blake and Mouton, 1964, Rahim and Bonoma, 1979). Each handling style can be applied to a specific situation, some styles can be more appropriate than others (Rahim, 2001).

Women and men as the leader of a team use different approaches when dealing with conflicts. Men in higher positions approaching conflict will use it to satisfy their own concerns and prefer a competing position, whereas women will differ and look to satisfy the other side's concerns and choose a position of compromise (Blackburn, 2020). But in general, for optimum organizational effectiveness and enhancing learning how to deal with conflict, using an integrating or problem - solving style is the most effective (Rahim, 2001).

### **2.3.3. Glasl's Nine-Stage Model of Conflict Escalation**

Glasl's (2000) presents a nine-stage conflict escalation model which emphasises three levels. It is an amazing diagnostic tool for employees in the workplace to recognise conflict and for it not to escalate further. From a more academic perspective, this model provides a conflict escalation model in which people involved in the conflict process feel pressure to act and may damage each other; and once conflicts go deeper and deeper leading to a higher stage, that effects human morality (Jordan, 2000). Stages from one to three are named 'win-win', whereby the parties solve conflicts in a peaceful way, and there is no dominant party or negative outcome. On the second level of this model is 'win-lose' wherein one individual or side has to be a winner and satisfy their concerns towards the disagreement. The third level is a 'lose-lose' position for each individual participating in the conflict, which is self-destructive and damaging to each other once the conflict exists. Overall, all stages show a conflict escalation mechanism from start to end and how people are involved and related to it. It's a step by step of conflict escalation from very pleasant to an extreme stage where conflict between people gets out of control.

## **2.4. Relationship between Workplace Conflict and Performance Management**

### **2.4.1. Conflict: functional and dysfunctional outcomes**

Conflict as discussed previously has two outcomes, positive-functional and negative-dysfunctional. From the original perspective of the workplace, conflict is negative and/ or dysfunctional because it impacts people negatively as they become annoyed, upset, and angry (Jehn, 1997). Unsolved conflict can cause unhealthy problems for employees such as fatigue, work disability, stress, anger, disappointment.

Functional conflict or constructive conflict is defined as a benefit to organizations and enables them to achieve organizational goals (Robins, 1978). As a result, employees can produce better ideas, explain and clarify different views, creativity, and ongoing problems. Functional outcomes occur when people disagree with one another's tasks, but if the environment during a conflict interaction process is positive, open communication can still be maintained within a team during a conflict interaction process, thereby encouraging employees to establish a value, trust and respect system.

Dysfunctional and destructive conflict negatively impacts performance (Olu, 2014). Uncontrolled conflict can bring dysfunctional outcomes and result in isolation and avoidance between people; a person may feel defeated and down, the working environment becomes tense and distrust develops, with no motivation and desire for tasks and passive initiatives into teamwork, with people concerned with their own narrow interests. Work groups with high levels of relationship conflict are harmful and lead to employee turnover, absenteeism, work dissatisfaction and low work team productivity (Ayoko et al 2003). Negative conflict causes like personality clashes can harm individuals and undermine teamwork (CIPD, 2021). Dysfunctional conflict destroys interpersonal relationships, loyalty and commitment to the organization and performance, leading to hurt feelings and emotions, creating anger and disappointment, damaging job performance and satisfaction (Jehn, 1995. Rahim, 2001). Dysfunctional employees create tension in the workplace with other colleagues and managers and reduce sales by not providing good service and impact daily targets. Such dysfunction leads to a negative customer experience in stores (Harris and Reynolds,2003).

### **2.4.2. Performance Management**

Employee performance is defined as how employees fulfil their duties, it leads to effectiveness, quality, and efficiency in their output (Okolie and Kawedo, 2018). Overall, how an employee is valuable to an organization in achieving its goals. It pertains to employee

quality of work (competence, accuracy), quantity of work (productivity, time management, meeting deadlines), job knowledge (skills or understanding about the job), working relationship (ability to work with others, communication skills). Conflict in work can damage relationships and productivity and results in lower performance. (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003). Employee performance influences many factors such as work environment, stress, trust, rewards recognition, communication, motivation, and relationship with the boss (Okolie and Kawedo, 2018). Therefore, it can diminish work performance – causing conflict between individuals' performance by poor motivation, leading to mistakes in work, overall, in the business or organization struggling to perform successfully, leading to a loss in revenue. More time should be spent on identifying new productive jobs rather than neglecting duties or fighting with each other.

#### **2.4.3. Workplace conflict effecting Employee Morale.**

All the issues and escalation of conflict in the workplace impact the employee's engagement, productivity, resulting in poor relationships with colleagues, lone working, and overall, to solve the conflict formally costs a huge amount of money and impacts the business's effectiveness. Albert (2011), emphasises that conflict not solved constructively results in low employee morale, reduces employee productivity, increases employee absenteeism, increases the chances of losing skilled personnel and lack of employee commitment to work (Ndulue and Ekechhukwu, 2016). According to Nicole (2011) employee morale can be defined as job satisfaction and has a direct effect on employee performance, it is one of the cornerstones of business (Greg, 2010). Low morale in the workplace leads to lost concentration which can cause mistakes, missed deadlines and projects, and, as a result, can increase staff turnover and absenteeism. Communication plays a crucial role in human interaction, if you do not speak with your staff about good or bad things in the workplace, explain and clarify the tasks, it leads to misunderstanding and miscommunication.

#### **2.4.4. Workplace conflict impacting Absenteeism and Turnover.**

Workplace conflicts have a direct influence on employee performance such as employee morale, absenteeism and it is one of the cornerstones of business (Greg, 2010). Workplace conflict affects employee morale, job satisfaction and motivation. Stress feels draining emotionally, increasing staff turnover and absenteeism. Hostile environments contribute to illnesses such as the employee involved in conflict feeling depressed, anxious, stressed, -and consequently having poor sleep, back pain, and/ or migraines. When dealing with conflict

managers need to focus on reducing threats and tension, it's basically prioritising workload on different tasks, instead of focusing on work, which has negative effects on performance, work commitment and high turnover (Jehn, 1997). Employee satisfaction in a toxic environment creates job dissatisfaction, increased turnover of employees and an increase of money spent on recruiting new people and training them, negatively impacting the customer experience and reducing profit. Not enabling employees to do the job properly results in negative relationships within the company and with clients. Workplace conflict has a negative impact and impacts on the retention strategy in the organization.

#### **2.4.5. Conflict impact work environment and employee well-being**

The presence of a pleasant environment and positive human relationships has a significant impact on well-being. In an organisation it is very important to create a culture where even if conflicts occur, the environment still has to be respectful, welcoming, where opinions matter, being open, trusting, collaborative, co-operating, being treated fairly and equally, according to the research (CIPD, 2020). All these factors affect employee well-being and the working environment influences conflict too. When people are working in a toxic environment with lots of tension and issues that means there will be disagreements or conflicts, an unpleasant organizational climate and culture increases low employee productivity and performance. When employees do not feel safe and/ or able to talk and discuss concerns without any fear it can lead to disputes. According to CIPD 2020 research, a good culture among employees is defined as being treated equally, with respect, enjoyment, valuing everyone, collaborating, discussing differences. In general, to create a good culture and a pleasant environment it must be based on dignity and respect within an organization.

#### **2.5. Conclusion of Literature review**

When conflict has been analysed, it has been described and defined in many ways. Potential for conflict occurs with interactions in relation to two or more people in the workplace. No matter what kind of disagreement happens: small or intense conflicts can escalate with dysfunctional outcomes for professional and personal lives. Therefore, conflict is not easy to manage or resolve and requires a great deal of effort. Most conflict theories and psychological approaches are directed towards recognising the conflict at the early stages and managing the conflict between employees in a positive way. It may appear that causes of conflict are myriad within any given organization. Disagreements arise between managers and colleagues on a daily basis. Therefore, conflict could happen between individuals, as they

are themselves different with different opinions, values, understandings, and beliefs. It leads to individual or group conflicts within the organization. In different situations of conflict, five separate conflict-handling styles can be applied. These conflict strategies and styles are very important in the organization in order to create a pleasant environment and encourage the setting up of creative thinking and a problem-solving attitude (Sanda, 2008).

Conflict consequences can be very functional and dysfunctional. Substantive conflict should be encouraged given the positive outcomes and affective conflict minimizes between individuals and groups within organizations (Rahim, 2002).

Conflict cannot be resolved or reduced if leaders do not understand the cause of the conflict. It is crucial to diagnose the conflict and manage it effectively, which can significantly impact employee performance. Therefore, the goal of conflict management (planning measures) is to avoid conflicts when possible and when conflicts occur, manage them rapidly and effectively (Madalina, 2016).

Conflict effects commitment and employee absenteeism. The most common effect of conflict occurs when staff argue constantly and are not able to collaborate and/or communicate properly. It results in misunderstanding, low morale employee engagement, distrust, missed performance goals, and lost sales.



## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. Introduction**

The aim of this research methodology is to provide an outline of the primary research guidelines and explain how it will be managed. It covers the participant profiles and how sampling was done. Participants were gained online from various retail industries and provide the method of analysing the data. Therefore, it outlines the limitations and ethical considerations of the research.

Following the background of relevant literature, the purpose of this study is to examine workplace conflicts and their impacts on the performance of management. To narrow the apparent gap in the literature, this research provides a more subtle understanding about the nature of conflicts, and their harmful consequences on employee behaviour in the workplace. In particular, the research question formed and previously mentioned for this study remains as follows: How do workplace conflicts affect the performance of management in the organization? Specifically looking into the retail industry.

### **3.2. Research Objectives**

The study aims to investigate the main causes of conflict occurrence in the retail environment, how retail senior managers deal with and manage conflict in the retail industry, and what kind of approaches are used to handle conflict and what are the consequences or outcomes on the performance of management in the retail industry.

This study will examine the impact of workplace conflicts on employee performance, how workplace conflicts arise in the retail industry and how they can be effectively handled by leaders /managers at various levels. More specifically, this research will focus on three objectives:

#### **3.2.1 Evaluating the types and causes of workplace conflicts in the retail industry.**

The study addresses conflict functionality and triggers as the result/ cause of negative outcome on performance management. Even though conflict can be functional and have positive outcomes, this study will focus more on the occurrence of dysfunctional conflicts in the workplace. It is important to understand why employees trigger the issue, what is the most common cause and how it can be addressed by retail managers on duty. Most of the time it is challenging to identify only one specific issue, but it is very important to address it an early stage. Working in the retail sector involves different non-standard working hours and

requires working different patterns such as early mornings, late nights, or weekends. This can lead to additional tension between employees as different shifts have different workloads and/or duties. Therefore, human interaction and collaboration in these circumstances is always a complex process, and it is always more than one issue at a time (CIPD, 2020).

### **3.2.2 Different styles of handling conflict used by retail managers.**

To identify five different handling styles and how retail managers use them in approaching an individual conflict situation and to show the importance of conflict and their resolving/handling styles; and in which situations a particular handling style is appropriate and others inappropriate, including a particular focus on the most effective way to use Collaborating or Problem-solving handling styles, in which it is possible to address conflict through open communication and resolve the problem (Singleton et al, 2011). However, it does not always work in the same way, every situation is very different and unique, and people involved in a conflict process react and manage it differently. In this regard, this research objective enables a more detailed investigation into the connection between conflict and managers' approaches to handling it.

### **3.2.3 Examining how workplace conflicts can impact employee behaviours.**

Clarification of certain conflict patterns are more likely to lead to inferior employee productivity and performance. This study also analyses negative conflict implications on performance management such as a decline in productivity, low morale, absenteeism, poor communication and misunderstanding, and well-being. Employee well-being in the workplace includes jobs satisfaction and positive emotions when conflict occurs (Slemp et al 2015). Therefore, when the employee is unhappy and dissatisfied with work it is a negative environment, which creates tension impacting employee well-being. Experiencing conflict at work establishes negative feelings and a frustrating environment. This objective will find the connection between conflict, retail, and the performance of management by further investigating the connection between conflict in the organization and its negative influence on the performance of management.

The main research will answer the main research question and objectives.

### **3.3. Conceptual Framework**

The Conceptual Framework of the research is illustrated in Figure 1. There are three sections outlined before the conflict process is addressed:

Conflict types: Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Intra-group, Inter-group.

Conflict causes: Personality clashes, Lack of Policies, Unhealthy work balance, Unreasonable expectations.

Handling styles: Integrating, Obliging, Dominating, Avoiding, Compromising.

All three sections are linked to management performance outcomes: absenteeism, decreased productivity, turnover, and well-being. This investigation will show the relationship between conflict and performance management. Present literature indicates the negative workplace outcomes; therefore, this research will focus on workplace conflict and its impact on employee performance. Consequently, conflict types, conflict causes, and handling styles are independent variables and the performance of management in the retail industry is influenced by these variables.

### **3.4. Research Approach and Method/Research Philosophy**

The type of research undertaken in this study was qualitative in nature because this research aims to get a detailed narrative frame of conflict occurring within the retail industry and how it is handled by managers and impacts on employee behaviour in the workplace.

The qualitative research is referred to as field research or interpretive research, where an inductive method is adopted to explain various perspectives or strong beliefs should be given attention or highlighted.

Social phenomena are a key to qualitative research, and participants' emotions, views, and opinions are subjective under investigation. Knowledge is retrievable from social settings and social actions are acceptable for scientific investigation (Syed and Zia, 2013).

Qualitative project research is a method that uses non numerical data as words/ observations, to explore and describe the meanings and experiences under investigation to consider individual experiences and perspectives which are unique, diverse and ambiguous (Jason and Glenwick, 2016). The research will focus on people's personal experiences with workplace conflicts and explore opinions on how conflict could be managed, or which approach was used to handle the conflict. The study will explore individual people's perspectives in depth,

in relation to the impact on employee performance. It will include different views between managers and employees, or an employee involved in a conflict, and different views of managers and employees who have been involved in conflict. The perspectives and thoughts expressed can be completely different from team leaders' and retail managers' views. There will be a focus on discovering inner/ new insights and interpretations of phenomena which are not dependant on numerical data (Quilan et al 2019).

The main characteristics of the qualitative approach include participants' views and the relationships between them, written analysis, using a variety of data collection techniques and analytical procedures, whereby questions and procedures may alter and emerge during a research process, it is likely to use non-probability sampling techniques; the researcher is likely to need to build up a rapport with participants (Saunders et al 2012). Nonprobability sampling has four techniques: convenience sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling. (Bryman, 2004) In this study, the researcher has chosen purpose sampling, as it is very common in qualitative research studies. Managers or leaders managing a team for at least two years in the retail industry were chosen. A sample strategy was planned, which identified a population by important features and sizes, ensuring that access to the sample is possible, deciding the number of contributors I need and how to access them. Particular organizations and people have been selected because they are relevant to the research question (Bryman, 2004).

Therefore, a rapport will be built between two different groups of people, senior management and team leaders who have been involved in a conflict situation or managed people in conflict situations. The focus is to find two different perspectives on conflict. This method uses small participant samples of three to ten retail managers and employees, where they can explore conflict in the workplace in depth and discuss it in detail. The study will gather leader and employee views, experiences about workplace conflicts, causes, handling styles and consequences for employee performance. Qualitative research is very popular and widely used in business practices (Quilan et al 2019).

This research method allows the researcher to analyse data and not depending on numerical data. It is less structured, and interviewees have their own topic to discuss and explore in relation to answering the research questions. The interviews did not rely only on the interview questions, but also discovering ideas, deeper and richer understandings, and involved looking into subjective perspectives. Therefore, they facilitated interpretations of

individual experiences, understandings of the phenomena under investigation, and the discovery of new insights and ideas.

### **3.5. Sampling and participants/ researcher population and sampling**

The total number of samples consists of eight team leaders and managers from different retail industries in private sectors. All participants are quite experienced in their roles and have experience managing people in the workplace. It was important while conducting interviews to gain the managers' views and opinions of selected studies. The sample size was deemed reasonable as qualitative research studies are based on small samples, as such sampling in the research can gain rich summaries and local information (Jason and Glenwick, 2016).

My target populations were retail managers and leaders, employees managing people in the workplace for more than two years and who had experienced conflict issues and managed conflict situations between employees. Purpose sampling was selected to get specific populations in terms of getting specific characteristics in this research experience (Jason and Glenwick, 2016)

My own managerial experiences were beneficial in this research in that I was able to gain participants from different retail businesses. I was focused on and looked into different conflict approaches from different retail businesses and got only one manager from my current organization to participate in my study due to ethical dilemmas. This was largely due to possible negative consequences, specifically, if my team member had refused to participate, it could have led to poor communication/relationship in the workplace (Quinlan and et al,2019).

### **3.6. Research Instrument**

In pursuing this study and achieving its objectives, the research instrument used was semi-structured interviews, designed to touch on topics and pose questions which had been preselected and asked in order. Each interview was conducted with individuals who are participants from the retail industry. All participants' responses were very different to each other and even though they all have considerable managerial experience, they experienced conflicts differently. The most important fact was collaborating and respecting everyone's views, and opinions shared in the interview. According to Glesne (2011) the most important instrument is to create a positive relationship between the researcher and participant. The research instrument had 10 questions and was divided into two parts. The first round was to

know about participants' personal managerial experience and clarify the concept of conflict, and the second round to get more employee perspectives on conflict experienced in the workplace in relation to causes of conflicts, types, impact on employee performance and strategies to manage and resolve conflict in the workplace. This was done to get perceptions from managers on conflict as an issue and touch on specific topics and research questions. In previous research it has been shown that semi-structured interviews are a convenient instrument to collect data (2016).

### **3.6.1. Semi-structured interviews**

All interviews took from thirteen minutes to an hour and were carried out in a private place and have been audio-recorded. During a few interviews I asked participants to provide specific, real examples of conflict situations in the workplace, to be more specific and describe situations with employees. Some interviews were conducted very quickly, and for others I was waiting a long time for participants to get back to me.

The research is derived from interviews involving people and their perspectives and analysing smaller numbers of perspectives. To conduct the research, people's opinions will be elicited by talking with people through interviews, which will form the primary data collected from interviews with the managers or employees who have been involved in a conflict situation. During the interviews, subjective or personal experiences/opinions of individuals were explored. This will allow new/unexpected areas of interest to be found, such as flexible and interpretative areas of interest (Saunders et al 2012). Subjective outcomes on the same interview are possible, in that another researcher could arrive at different conclusions. All interviews are recorded and transcribed (Yin,2008).

The interview process will seek to identify the causes of workplace conflict, and how conflict in retail workplaces is managed. The questions will be semi-structured interviews and interview response sheets are divided into non-standardized or standardised, involving one-to-one and one-to-many people interviews (Sanders et al, 2009). According to the current pandemic situation, all interview meetings were conducted online. In this research one to one, electronic interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams. The transcripts of interview records were collected and will be analysed using Thematic Analysis.

### 3.7. Research Participants

There was a total of eight participants, including five females and three males from retail industries. The participants are working in the retail industry, but very different types of retail. According to the European definition, enterprises are divided into macro, small and medium. All enterprises are established according to employee number, in that a macro enterprise is less than 10 employees, a small enterprise consists of 50 employees, a medium enterprise up to 250 employees, and more than 250 people is classified as a large organization (Kimberley, 2020). All participant names and company names have been changed due to confidentiality and privacy. The participants were interviewed as shown in the table 2.

**Table 2.** Participants Profile

Participants	Gender Age	Job Title	Years of Experience	Company Size	Company type
Participant <b>ONE</b>	Female,32	Team Leader	Almost 7 years	Large, multinational organization	Health and Beauty Retailer
Participant <b>TWO</b>	Male,34	Retail Manager	4 years	Small, Local Business	Food retailer
Participant <b>THREE</b>	Female,34	Manager	5 years	Medium	Food retailer
Participant <b>FOUR</b>	Female, 37	Flow Leader	2 years	Large Global Organization	Online Retailer
Participant <b>FIVE</b>	Male, 40	Store Manager	10 years	Large	Food Irish wholesaler
Participant <b>SIX</b>	Female, 34	Store Manager	6 years	Large	Beauty and fragrance retailer
Participant <b>SEVEN</b>	Female,40	Counter Manager	N/A	Large	Beauty Product retailer
Participant <b>Eight</b>	Male, 61	Retail Owner	35 years	Micro Enterprise	Women Clothing retailer

### 3.8. Data Analysis

The interviews were organised through online meetings and were recorded and analysed. Transcripts of each interview were carefully tagged and assigned, then divided into main

categories and then themes emerged. A thematic analysis was used, data was gathered, and themes are organized according to participants' answers.

According to Braun and Clark, (2006) step by step guidelines of thematic analysis were used. The focus is always related to the research questions, objectives and themes, which were all analysed together. Six phases of thematic analysis were followed such as: familiarizing yourself with data, assigning codes, searching themes, reviewing themes, naming themes, and producing reports (Braun and Clark, 2006). Firstly, codes were developed in terms of main categories, interview transcripts were examined and assigned codes, data was summarised, comparisons made, and finally, themes were determined. It was vital to maximise insights from the interviews and generate data.

Table 3 provides a sample of data analysis and shows quotations from participants, which have been assigned codes and themes in order to answer the main research question.

The conflict analysed from interviews occurred in various surroundings. In the interview process, conflict has been described as not avoiding the process, another viewpoint defined conflict as arising from a lack of communication between departments in the workplace.

Data collected through the primary sources was organized in terms of employees' interviews and were merged into themes, categorized, and analysed by following principals linked to the literature review:

1. Triggers or Causes of Conflict
2. Type of Conflict
3. Style of Conflict Management
4. Positive and negatives outcomes to performance management

The focus was to answer the research questions and objectives. Therefore, the interviews were structured according to objectives and the main research questions and determined by groups.



**Table 3.** A sample of data analysis

Transcribed interview text (Participant's quotation)	Coding	Theme	Research Question
Participant SEVEN: "One of the members thought we will a get certain package, but it was not there so we have to have a conversation to see where the confusion came from, it was handled by HR"	Confusion about payment package	Type – Task Cause – Pay	1. What are the types and causes of workplace conflicts?
Participant TWO: "Conflicts in the workplace create a very negative effect in the workplace and on the business" Inner issues between staff include working hours; it happens very often due to personality issues; it happens more often than you think. Especially when you work with lots of different people, and they have different work ethics".	Different people Different work attitudes	Type – Relationship Cause - Personality Clashes, different background.	
Participant FIVE: "In my organization there are conflicts, lots of conflicts, there is a conflict between employee and management, I put it very simple like a Rubik's cube, you have a front retailing section, second part deli section, and management look after these sections. Everybody has their own job to do, and they need to help to each other with other jobs to close the store on time. If there is no team work to help each other, then conflict arises".	No teamwork No support Different Attitudes	Type – Process Cause – Engagement to work	
Participant TWO:" Conflicts happen once a week between staff, when an employee is feeling like they're getting too much work. Gossip's going on and they're not able to handle it the work"	Overload work	Type – Task Stress	

### 3.9. Limitation

The researcher found some limitations in relation to the study, and identified some limitation as follows:

- **Sample Size** - First, I found it difficult to agree a time with the managers to participate in my interview. I had arranged it with them in advance, but when the time came a few people refused to participate due to lack of time and pressure/overload in

the workplace. Overall, I just had fewer participants than planned, to find new participants at the last minute was very challenging. However, all interviews went very smoothly, and the participants were very happy to share their experiences. Secondly, it was time consuming to gain all participants in a planned timeframe.

- **Research Methods** – semi-structured interviews were conducted in this research. For further investigation the researcher could take a mixed design of data gathering involving qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, to result in more detailed results and conclusions. Due to time constraints the researcher was unable to undertake a quantitative methodology and thus took a qualitative approach by conducting online interviews.

### **3.10. Ethical Considerations**

- **Confidentially and Anonymity** - All participants' contributions to this research are confidential and remain anonymous, before the meeting all participants were sent an email with an information sheet with instructions and were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality in the research process.
- **Informed Consent** – the research was conducted with integrity towards the participants and researcher. Consent forms were sent to participants, which explained the research process and its purpose, once participants agreed; they signed the form sent it back to the researcher.
- **Data Protection** - The interview was organised with ethical standards, in relation to respecting participants' opinions, privacy and rights. Before the interview, all participants were contacted by email. All collected data will be stored securely, protected with a password, and will be used only once for this project. The data will be kept for two years according to the College internal rules and procedures.

### **3.11. Conclusion**

This Research Methodology explained how the data was collected, how it will be analysed in detail and how findings will be interpreted in the next chapter. All eight retail managers/leaders attended the meetings for interviews and shared their experience about workplace conflicts or managing a team in conflict situations. The information was very useful and important for further dissertation topic investigation. Even though there were some limitation issues, a small sample as required in a qualitative methodology was attained. The

interviews were done very carefully and accurately, and transcripts have been recorded and categorized by themes for further investigation.

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter will provide data analysis and findings from the research data. It determines the ability to answer the main research question: How workplace conflicts impact employee performance and follows up into three research objectives. To satisfy these questions, interviews were conducted with participants which found similarities and contrasting opinions/views about specific issues.

### **4.2. Participants interpretation about workplace conflict**

Employees were asked to describe conflict and its impact in the workplace and how often conflicts have been addressed within their organization

- *“Conflict means that two or more people do not get along and have a problem working together to get tasks done or two different parties have poor communication with each other, or one is unfair to another staff member. Conflicts happen quite frequently.”* Participant One
- *“Conflicts start with different opinions between each other, disagreements, or lack of resources in the workplace. In big organizations like mine, conflicts happen every day, very rarely we do not have conflicts daily.”* Participant Four
- *“In small organizations you cannot have conflicts, because you’re not able to run a business effectively if there are ongoing conflicts with employees. It does not happen regularly in my organisation, if we do have it, I would address it and it’s resolved at the time and quickly.”* Participant Eight
- *“Workplace conflicts are disagreements between individuals and create a very unpleasant working environment. In my store conflicts have happened on a few occasions: like when an employee has a different attitude to work, a different way of looking at different things, different personalities, and a lack of respect.”*  
Participant Six

- *“Conflicts start with a lack of communication and misunderstanding between each other, it can be between employees or from one department to another department within the organization. At the moment we do not have conflicts, but conflicts arise from time to time.”* Participant Seven
- *“Conflicts in the workplace have a very negative effect on the workplace and the business, I try to solve it in a professional manner by not hurting anyone’s feelings. In my organization conflict doesn’t happen very often but happens regularly.”* Participant Three
- *“Conflicts arise when people look at things in different ways, it can be negative and positive, and it depends on the conflict situation. It cannot be tolerated in the business as it destroys the whole system. We have lots and a mix of conflicts within the organization, some of them happen day to day, for example employee and customer conflict happens regularly, but not every day.”* Participant Five
- *“Conflict in the workplace means a system designed to make a store run smoothly on a day-to-day basis is failing and conflict in retail can revolve around personalities, policies, and workload balance. Conflict can happen in my organization anytime due to different opinions, misunderstandings and lacking proper training.”* Participant Two

**4.3. Research objectives 1-** Evaluating the types and causes of workplace conflicts in the retail industry.

**4.3.1. Conflict types happen within organization.**

*“Conflicts arise between an employee and the manager when the manager is not fully confident to deal with an issue in legal terms. For example, lack of knowledge in Employment Law, as a manager we need to deal with various situations in relation to employee sickness, disability, maternity leave, and lateness. Especially in retail, it can be very daunting and very pressuring, you have been thrown problems and situations, you don’t know how to handle them properly as you are not trained to do it”* Participant Seven.

In today’s pandemic climate, which has impacted the retail industry drastically as the physical stores have been paused for a year, those companies have not been making any profit and have been trying to find different patterns of working. It is reflected in employees within a business as disagreements happen due to increased workloads and stress. When

ranking the types of conflicts in the workplace, the research participants described disagreements as follows:

1. Employee - employee conflict
2. Employee - manager/team leader conflict
3. Employee - customer conflict
4. Employee – department conflict

The researcher made the following findings about conflict types; that conflict types are varied, broad based and diverse. Intraorganizational conflicts were found to arise in the research, all companies' managers explained that it happens between individuals or groups within the company. Most of the time conflict occurs between the management team and an employee, or between employees themselves, or between an employee and another department, for example most stores' Head Office departments are in different locations, participants gave an example of a conflict which occurred between HR and an employee about a payment package. Also, conflicts arise between employees and customers regularly. This may include customers being unhappy with store policies, for example the exchange policy, or bulk policy if not allowed to buy ten items of certain products; or employees spending too much time favouring a customer, and not another, so there is a conflict between them and staff or a customer complaint about an employee fault when selling the wrong item. (Participant Eight, Two, Five).

#### **4.4. Conflict types in the workplace.**

##### **4.4.1. Task, Relationship, and Process conflicts arising within organization.**

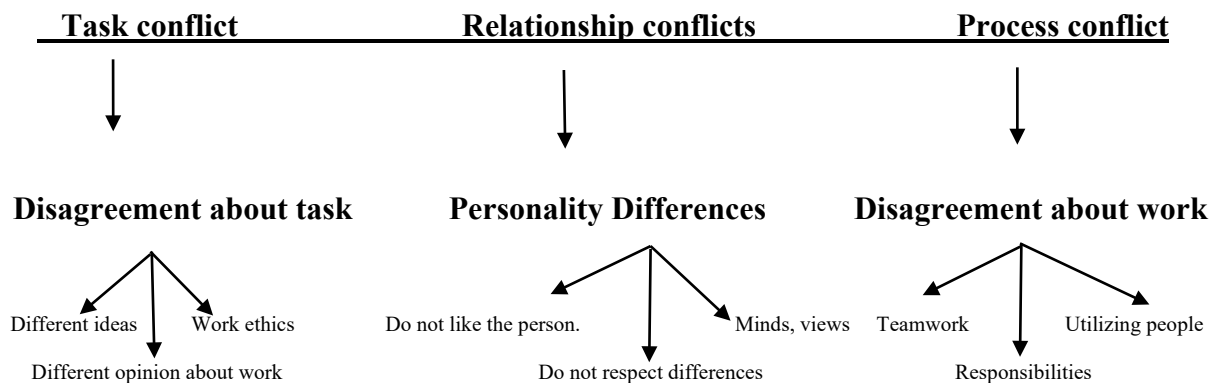
The researcher adapted to the literature (Jehn and Mannix, 2001) on task, relationship, process types of conflicts, and usually individuals perceiving different types of conflicts within organization. Relationship conflicts focus on relationship conflict, task conflict occurs within task to achieve organization goals, process conflicts focusing on how work is done with different responsibilities and duties (Jehn, 1997).

Figure 2 shows the types of conflicts experienced by participants within companies, it is explained in more details as follows:

- Task conflicts - disagreement about work: people always have different ideas to the task in work, different opinions, and differences in work ethics.

- Relationship conflicts – personality differences. The most common conflicts was relationship issues; it is defined as personality differences. These conflicts happen in all participants in all organizations, and they all mentioned it. It is described as not accepting the manager as a person; all employees have dislikes and likes, they did not respect each other, every employee has different views and opinions in certain points.
- Process conflict – disagreement about work. Teamwork, utilizing people, responsibilities. An employee does not want to do jobs which the manager asked him/her to do, they want to pick something else, employees looking for excuses for certain jobs. For example, recently it happened, and the employee was complaining about back pain. The employee had complaints about sharing duties and responsibilities on the day of work, why certain people are asked to do one thing, not agreeing with this. Some employees prefer to do a job alone; some people like to join in teamwork.

**Figure 2.** Sample categorising three types of conflicts observed from participants within their organization.



#### 4.4.2. Conflict causes in the workplace.

Conflict causes are classified as more obvious, such as limited resources, poor communication, competition, salary comparison and dissatisfaction, or less obvious causes, such as cultural differences, or unclear expectations (Hovtepo et al 2010). In the research from participants, both obvious and less obvious causes of conflicts were found. The most common issue was different personalities, different values and backgrounds which in the literature, according to Isa (2015), are described as ‘personality clashes. Conflict causes were varied in the organizations; participants gave an example about a conflict situation and described the cause, so it was easier to understand them more deeply.

Conflict causes - themes and codes which were found are shown in Table 4 below:

**Table 4:** Conflict causes by theme and code.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Code</b>
<b>Conflict causes</b>	
<b>Inadequate Training</b>	Manager does not have the knowledge to approach inappropriate behaviour.  Task has to be done, but not sure how it should be done, not providing proper training, poor training.
<b>Pay satisfaction</b>	Confusion about payment pack, not getting paid for extra hours.
<b>Competition</b>	Competing due to promotion, due to different tasks.
<b>Stress</b>	Overload/ stress, does not understand culture, language barrier, personal issues.
<b>Working schedule</b>	Employee not happy with rota, working hours, different shifts, not enough hours.
<b>People problems</b>	Bithching, personal issues from home.
<b>Personality Clashes</b>	All the people are very different with their opinion, views, likes and dislikes, or work ethic.
<b>Lack of clarity of Role</b>	Pushed into an uncomfortable higher position-employee was not ready for it. Ubiquity role, unclear expectations, heavy workload, big pressure, gossip, unclear job role, misunderstanding.
<b>Poor(limited) Communication</b>	Not enough time explaining what to expect it, very unclear and rushed a lack of communication.
<b>Employee Engagement to work</b>	No teamwork and support for each other, sharing duties and responsibilities.
<b>Breach Company Policies and Procedures</b>	Lateness, absence from work does not follow company guidelines.
<b>Limited Resources</b>	Not enough tools and equipment provided.
<b>Unfair treatment</b>	Employee unfair treated of discrimination of age, ethnicity, gender, racism

### **Inadequate Training**

One of the participants mentioned it was very challenging to approach a situation not knowing the employment law, as HR advisors in the company are a little bit disconnected from shop floor branches. The conflicts arose from not knowing and not being trained in the basics of Employment Law, as conflict would not have escalated that far if they had been trained in this field.

Another participant mentioned very poor training in the workplace, which also caused a conflict. Not explaining things properly in the workplace could result in poor customer service and work productivity. Not demonstrating how the work should be done but still expecting them to do it:

*“If you do have really proper training, you should not have any problems in the workplace and shouldn’t have any workplace conflicts” - Participant Two*

Employee performance is directly based on training function, and it is essential in every organization for employee productivity and better employee performance. Therefore, not providing proper training causes an employee to struggle to perform successfully, leads to miscommunication, difficulty adapting to the work environment and effects the achievement of daily targets.

### **Pay satisfaction and Working Schedule**

Conflict arising from shifts, difficult hours, working night shifts and/ or weekends, as the retail industry is open 24/7 online and 7/7 for a physical store, though it depends on the segment in which the organization is located. The shift could be very irregular, for example an early shift, late nights, weekends, night shifts doing stocktake or working for an online retailer, this pattern often triggers conflict. Participants mentioned two causes of conflicts: pay satisfaction and working schedule:

*Conflicts between myself and an employee arose from rota hours” - Participant Five*

Most of the time managers work very long hours, and don’t get paid for it, or sales advisors’ contracts are part-time, and if it is not peak time, they just get a small number of hours. Conflict arises from not getting enough hours or doing late nights.

*“A pay package was outlined for an employee, and didn’t happen, that caused conflict, too. An informal investigation was done of the payments within the organization”- Participant Seven.*

Sometimes managers are not able to deal with conflicts like payments themselves, they need to forward the issue to a Head Office professional to deal with it.

### **Competition**

Cause - position promotion competition, two employees applied for a promotion, but the winner was the one who performed better in the workplace.

*“A supervisor role was on offer, it was a conflict between each other, the person who was not willing to work that hard was a little bit jealous of another staff member. In that role the person was not respected even though that person well deserved it, there was a little bit of attitude, a little bit of bullying, the staff member was picked on, the other staff member said not to listen to the new supervisor, they undermined the supervisor, avoided work, sickness*



*increased, they were avoiding and not doing work together, it could be bad". Participant Five*

Another participant mentioned that competition can be about daily tasks, they can compete for what kind of task the employee wants to do and can cause a conflict by competing with each other.

### **Stress**

Stress is a very general problem which causes conflict within an organization. It influences the individual's work and has an impact on an individual physically and psychologically and impacts the profitability of an organization (Venkateshwara and Suganya,2021).

*"The main cause of conflict is stress from different people in the team" Participant Five*

The participant mentioned that in his organisation conflict was caused by stress/ personal issues. The organization has a multiracial workforce, with only a few locals. Stress can be caused by not understanding the language due to barriers, not understanding the culture, and the employee may not know how to take orders.

### **People Problems**

*"Personal issues – bringing from home lots of personal issues such as the Covid-19 situation, family members lost jobs, they've been hurt, upset and they want to express this at work, it impacts the whole team, it's not even a team but everyone is working inside, individually, it brings a bad experience to all the team, and brings everyone down" - Participant Four.*

In this research there were instances of what can be called 'people problems', this may sound overly simplistic, but the causes are deeper and more serious. Emotions and moods caused by personal issues play a big role in the workplace and are seen as important triggers of conflict in the workplace. Emotions and moods are experiences of feelings, and basic examples of negative emotions include anger, fear, and happiness, which is more short-lived, so one's mood can be positive or negative and unrelated to a specific cause which may last longer than emotions (Budd, Colvin, and Pohler, 2020).

*"Emotions run high sometimes in a conflict situation" Participant Three*

So, the mood that an employee brings to the workplace can remain for a significant period of time and affects everyone and the work environment.

*“Bitching among each other, because the majority are ladies, we are selling ladies’ clothes; it’s a problem between the girls themselves”* Participant Eight.

### **Personality Clashes**

This was the most common cause among all participants. Relationship conflicts demonstrated as personality clashes include facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice can cause a conflict (Syed and Zia,2021) and differences in people’s backgrounds, values, and experiences (Isa, 2015) can also cause a conflict.

*“Personality clashes – it happens more than people think, when you work with different people, with different work ethics, we all have a very different understanding of work ethics and personality issues”* - Participant Three

A few participants mentioned that they have difficulty adjusting to a new workplace, because the staff members did not want to accept the person as a new manager. The participants found it extremely difficult at times to be in the workplace, because the employees did not accept a new manager’s techniques, did not respect them, did not want to listen, did not accept a new authority in a team, didn’t like body language, facial expression, and/or the tone.

*“Everybody has different views, everybody has different minds, some do not want to hear my views, do not respect me, they do not like me”* - Participant Five.

*“It is difficult to be accepted by staff members, for them to adjust to somebody new in the workplace, they’re always bringing in the previous manager’s decisions and ideas, refusing to do certain tasks, questioning every single decision, just finding it difficult to adjust to a new manager’s techniques and my role”* - Participant Six.

### **Unfair treatment**

Conflict between individuals can happen in many ways and the causes can be basic work issues, such as timekeeping, poor attendance, personality clashes, and unfair treatment (CIPD, 2021).

Unfair treatment of discrimination *“Gender is the main problem in retailing – the workforce is multiracial - some people come from developing countries, some people come from developed countries, some of them are local. So there are three different cultures, three*

*different views about women. The deli staff are from Eastern Europe, so they have their own views and own culture. The front section is 80 percent Muslims”, Participant Five.*

*An employee was not following the regulation closely enough and was given a punishment, she didn't feel she had done anything wrong and she didn't feel she needed to improve something, she said she had met the standards, everything was done by company guidelines.”, Participant One.*

Participant Two mentioned another conflict resolution option that they apply in the store for an employee if they feel they've been treated unfairly within the company. They have an open suggestion box-and if an employee is not happy with management or feels unfairly treated in the workplace they can email or write a letter.

### **Lack of clarity of role**

*“I asked several times for support and not to put me in an uncomfortable situation or higher position, I did not get support or clarification, so I left the organization” - Participant One.*

Role conflicts have arisen for Participant One from not getting support in a role and always being pushed into a higher position by their employer, not having a clear explanation of the duties of the role and its responsibilities. Role ambiguity, not knowing what to expect from an employee to do a certain job, negatively related to her task performance. The role that person is doing could be a very different role from what they were asked to do and cause a conflict because of the differences in a different role for that person (Venkateswaran and Suganya, 2021).

### **Poor Communication-**

*“Lack of communication, from one department to another department, that was the cause of conflicts in the group, one department promised one thing and once it came to the employee and it was twisted, we kept it within the group.” Participant Seven*

Communication is one of the causes of conflict too. The participant explained the issue arose between staff members and their department not getting the right messages about payment packages.

Communication is defined in the literature as a process to share company policies, rules, goals, organisational performance, getting solutions, opinions, feelings, and cooperation from

employees (Magginson, 1967). In other words, poor communication causes numerous conflicts in the workplace.

Participant one explained they do not have enough meetings, as they would be a crucial tool to communicate and avoid miscommunications, where everyone is clear on what they are trying to do and gain as a company.

### **Work Engagement - Employee Engagement with work**

According to Katz and Flynn (2013) one element of conflict is organizational demand, such as different expectations of work. A number of participants during the interviews mentioned that each employee has different work ethics, different attitudes to work, and different expectations of work. It causes conflict when people don't agree to go in the same direction in the workplace. Participant Eight said that some people expected others to do their job instead of themselves.

*“Different expectations of work, not fully cooperating on work, relying on other people and expecting them to work instead, some do not want to work or take a task, if everyone did their job, it would be easier for the business and for people”* - Participant Eight.

Participant Five mentioned that conflict arises from attitude to work, and not fully engaging with work and helping each other:

*“Everyone wants to have their own job to do. For example, the front has to close the shop, the deli has to close their counter on time, everybody wants to go home in a hurry, but if there is no teamwork or helping each other, conflicts arise from attitude to work”*. -

Participant Five.

### ***Breaching policies and procedures***

According to Bingham (2016), one of the causes of conflict is breaching policies and procedures. It happens in our participant organization that employees often do not follow the internal Code of Conduct rules, and this triggers a conflict in the workplace. The two main reasons which trigger conflicts are being late and absence from work, which is defined as employee misconduct. In both instances of an employee breaching company policies and procedures, and subsequently informing management about absences or sickness in their own/ incorrect way, this might result in a grievance and disciplinary action. According to Roche (2015), disciplinary action can be an oral warning, written warning, final warning, suspension without pay, demotion, some other disciplinary action, or dismissal. There are

ways to solve conflict informally and formally. Regarding conflict situations, the company manager mentioned that an effort must first be made to solve the problem informally, but if it does not work, further action is taken.

*Conflicts arise with people being late – they need informal solving. The lateness policy we have in our company is that 5 to 10 minutes is ok, over 10 minutes it will be formal, if they're too late there has to be a decent reason for it. With sickness – following the proper company procedure is important, like text messages are not ok to inform about your absence from work, if some of them do not turn up, certain guidelines are followed. We have procedures in the workplace in relation to conflicts, firstly have a conversation, secondly, we will file documents to have records for further investigation, thirdly we will involve HR in the conflict resolution. Informal, formal, and HR formal". - Participant Seven.*

### **Limited Resources**

This applied for online retail stores as they are working with online orders, and if an employee does not have the right tools, it causes a conflict in the workplace. An employee was not happy to do different jobs or take another task which was lacking equipment, but as Participant Four explained, the employee even argued with the team leader that they still needed to adjust to that day's tasks. But before taking the job the employee could complain and cause a conflict:

*"Sometimes if we do not have enough tools to provide, or equipment provided, employees start arguing that they do not want to do the job, they do not want to work directly on that job and want another job". - Participant Four.*

**4.5. Research objective 2** – Different types of handling style or conflict resolution used by retail managers.

According to Mountain and Blake (1976) there are five different conflict handling styles; retail managers use different approaches in different conflict situations, in this research three handling styles were found according to the model:

**Table 5** Conflict handling style

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Code</b>
<b>Compromising</b> <b>(Partially win-partially)</b>	Neutral, listen to both sides' stories, open communication, dialogue.
<b>Cooperative</b> <b>(Win-win)</b>	Give it time and freedom to resolve conflict between staff members.
<b>Avoiding</b> <b>(Lose-lose)</b>	Not to be involved, leave conflict.

There is no right or one approach to handling conflict, because human interaction is complex (Scharlatt, 2016). As shown in this research, every manager approached a conflict situation differently. Eight participants chose the Compromising method when approaching conflict situations, one participant used a mix of Avoiding and Compromising styles while another participant mixed the Cooperative and Avoiding styles. Both participants agreed that it depends on the situation and what kind of conflict arises in the workplace. As Rahim (2001) mentioned previously, different handling styles can be applied to a specific situation, some styles can be more appropriate than others. According to Mountain and Blake (1976) the Avoiding handling style is defined as where two parties are losers, Cooperative is win-win dominant, and Compromising is partially win and partially lose. Overall, all participants tried to solve and compromise in a conflict situation by using Compromising partially win and partially lose approach, but two of eight participants' approaches to handling the conflict were a mix of methods. Therefore, Participant Five and Participant Three were completely opposite to most of all participants.

**4.5.1. Avoiding Style** was adopted in this situation:

“For instance, if it is a personal matter, I would rather not be involved, because it is personal and people have different relationships, I’m usually not aware of it, I just leave it. I can’t force people to be open with me, they might not want to share what happened”- Participant 3.

“If is it a personal conflict in work, I will wait, like with that couple used to work in the workplace, I gave them time to resolve it themselves and try to ignore it, it depends what kind of conflict arises in the workplace” – Participant Five.

By adopting the Conflict avoiding management style a positive effect can be introduced on team performance and coordination (Tabassi et al 2017). However, it can be very negative as a conflict can escalate very far, not recognizing it in the early stages will damage the wider team, including other employees and the organization. Even though Participant One was not approaching conflict situations using these styles, it was still mentioned as an important message in relation to this style:

*“Never use Avoider style and never leave conflicts as not acknowledged, as this would bring negative outcomes and makes it harder for both parties”- Participant One.*

*“If you ignore the conflict, it just gets bigger and bigger”-Participant Five.*

As per Glas'1 (2000) the third stage of conflicts can be damaging and very out of control, bringing negative outcomes. Therefore, participants try to avoid the third stage according to Glas'1 (2000) and handle conflict within an appropriate time with control.

In contrast, participants Three and Five used the Avoiding approach, where an employee has personal issues and is bringing them into the workplace, and this becomes related to work conflicts. This is the instance which is best suited to the method whereby a manager chooses to ignore and leave it, both participants agreed on this situation. By not getting involved in personal issues and staying away from them, the participants found it easier to control the situation, as they mentioned lots of people bring personal issues to the workplace and that effects the entire team, and team performance/ working environment. Furthermore, the employees felt different and unmotivated when another staff member came in with personal issues and brought that issue into the workplace, the team wanted to avoid that person, or wanted them to stay away. As such issues can be deeply personal, when they are brought to work they often result in business and personal relationships being mixed, and as emotions can play a big role in the workplace, the environment of the workplace can be significantly harmed by the occurrence of these events.

#### **4.5.2. Compromising Style**

The most effective style to solve issues according to Rahim (2001) is the Problem -solving or Integrating style, while according to Mountain and Blake (1964) it is the Compromising or Cooperative styles. This research shows that all eight participants in conflict situations used the Compromising style. The majority of them mentioned that they never ignore or leave conflict unaddressed, and always try to compromise with both parties. The Compromising style was used by one of participants and was explained as follows:

*“Be neutral, you cannot take any sides, do not take it personally and emotionally. Listen to each side of the story, and understand it, speak about it in your terms, and explain how you understand the situation, to come back and explain that we understand it on the same level, make a solution and agreement together. Sort out everything, to make sure we are on the same page, and all problems are resolved” Participant Seven.*

The most important factor participants mentioned is addressing the conflict, i.e., finding the roots of the conflict and finding a solution. As Glas'1 (2000) outlined, it's vital to recognise and diagnose conflict, not to allow it to escalate further and solve conflict in a more peaceful way in the first specific stages. It is shown from participants' experiences that all of them want to solve conflicts in a more informal and quicker way.

*“Address conflict straight away because this might affect the performance of employees at that time”, Participant Two.*

Participants used the Compromising style in conflict situations, and solved issues by talking, understanding both sides, including everyone through participation, by asking questions, making them feel important and expressing themselves, and finding the solution together. All participants mentioned that it's very important to control your emotions and take the situation into consideration in a professional and calm manner; otherwise, the message will be lost in translation.

*“Stay calm and listen to both sides involved in that conflict, give equal opportunities to express how they feel and find the reason for the conflict, that's an important part, you need to identify the important points in their disagreements, this is the way you can resolve it once you know. The most important for me is everyone is included, feels needed and happy in the workplace and it brings very good results not just for the business but for a healthy atmosphere in your personal life. You need a private place to resolve it where you are not disturbed, as everybody feels important and has time to express themselves to find out the root of the conflict. If you find the root you can resolve it. If you cannot find the root you can only take it from a very shallow perspective” -Participant Six*

Participant Eight used the same Compromising Approach in a conflict situation with a customer and with his employee too. He compromised on the issue by talking with the employee and customer to find the best solution for both individuals. Communicating and giving feedback to an employee and a customer is very important. Participant Five mentioned



that an employee in her team is her own customer and I need to make them happy the same as customers. So, if you, as a manager, approach your own employee in a 'compromise' way, it is more likely that when an issue arises with a customer it will, in turn, be approached in the same manner.

*Employee-customer complaints have happened several times, if they occur due to an employee fault, then the customer will often ring the store and would be looking for a manager or to speak with me. If I speak with them, I will take a phone number, and ring the person back to explain the situation, find out where the problem is, if the problem is from my side, I would apologise on behalf of the staff member. To get good feedback I would offer them a good discount for their next time shopping with us, our approach is working well, and we have gained lots of customers, we address the issue quickly and in a professional manner -Participant Eight.*

#### **4.5.3. Cooperative (integrating style)**

Only one participant mentioned using this style when approaching task-type conflicts when two staff members have two different opinions about a daily task. According to Rahim (2003) the Conflict Handling Integrating Style is appropriate for a situation in which people have different ideas and need another party to step in to solve the problems for a better solution, and where commitment is important for the successful implementation of a strategy. In this situation the manager only steps in at the end of conflicts and combines all the ideas together, leaving the two parties as dominant winners and offering a third idea with all different views and opinions.

*"A conflict arose from a merchandising display of two staff members with different views, I gave freedom to them and in the end, we combined all our ideas together. As a manager I used the Pioneer system management style, it tends to be outgoing, creative, spontaneous and adaptable"-Participant Five.*

**4.6. Research objective 3** - Examining how workplace conflicts can impact employee behaviours.

*"Conflict is the worst demon for employee's productivity – the staff feel unmotivated, it impacts your results, in some cases there's a bad atmosphere in the whole workplace, also in some cases it impacts your home life, and it can be really stressful, it can bring other employees down. Once you have one unmotivated employee, we always get attitude from*

*another, it could easily be passed on to another member. It brings the whole store down”*. - Participant Six.

In this research I found four different factors: stress, absenteeism/turnover, employee morale, employee wellbeing and environment impacting employee performance in the workplace. Themes and codes are shown in more detail in table 5:

**Table 6** Different factors influence performance management

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Code</b>
<b>Stress</b>	Negative feelings, too much pressure.
<b>Absenteeism/Turnover</b>	Employees get sick conflicting with sickness note-stress, intention to leave organization.
<b>Employee Morale</b>	Upset, anxious.
<b>Employee Wellbeing and environment</b>	Emotional well-being; toxic, negative environment.

**Stress**

According to Okolie and Kawedo (2018) performance is influenced by various factors, one of those is stress. Conflict can destroy employee performance and is influenced by many factors, such as work environment, stress, trust, rewards recognition, communication, motivation, and relationship with the boss (Okolie and Kawedo,2018).

*“I left the organization from too much workload going on, too much pressure and stress- I felt like I couldn’t handle it”* - Participant Two.

Participant Two explained that they had to leave the organization because of too much stress and heavy workload, they were not able to manage everything. Therefore, it diminished their work performance –they had poor motivation and too much work led to mistakes and a drop in concentration on work, and finally they left the organization. Employee motivation is the most important factor to employee productivity (Kulcmanov and Kallianan,2014). Once the person loses motivation from too much work/ stress, then it negatively affects employee performance.

**Absenteeism/Turnover**

*“If conflicts are not controlled, the first problem would be absenteeism and if you solve conflict from the beginning, you will not have workforce turnover”*. - Participant Five.

Participant Five explained that workplace conflict affected employee turnover as the person left the organization from being in conflict over a promotion position. The internal employee did not get a promotion as an outside employee got the position; the employee didn't feel appreciated for their work and left the organization. So, the conflict was out of control, and this affected employee turnover within the organization.

According to CIPD (2020) conflict impacts employee sickness and absence, creating an unworkable relationship in the organization.

Participant Seven explained that conflict arises from personality clashes between employees and managers, with the impact of employee absenteeism on the entire team. As a result, the participant talked about the need to hold the position for that employee and not being able to recruit anyone for the time being when an employee was sick, it impacted the whole team with more workload and responsibilities. When conflicts affect the workplace environment it can become very toxic.

*“Sickness causes stress and conflicts with the manager; it impacts the whole store too, as you cannot recruit somebody else into her position. That was not the case with the same manager, as we needed to find an alternative after they moved to a different department, the role was big and was not filled for a year, it created overload for current staff and the delegation of more tasks, an increase hour wise, giving more responsibilities”*- Participant Seven.

### **Employee morale**

Conflicts in the workplace effect employee morale. Albert (2011) emphasises that if conflict is not solved constructively it results in low employee morale, reduces employee productivity, increases employee absenteeism, increases the chances of losing skilled personnel and a lack of employee commitment to work (Ndulue and Ekechhukwu, 2016).

*“I felt very down and depressed, nobody was helping me, nobody could bring this store up, these two members were completely against me, and we were fighting, we worked in completely different directions. I was feeling very lonely”*. - Participant Six.

One conflict in the workplace can destroy employee morale, employee performance, goals, plans; staff commitment to the organization reduces and negatively affects job satisfaction.

*“It makes people unmotivated and, essentially, they give up, they feel deflated coming in and they do not want to be there”. – Participant One.*

Conflict impacts employee morale, resulting in loneliness and lost commitment to work. You become lonely at work, questioning yourself, ‘Why am I working hard to get this job? What did I do wrong here? I am getting so much negativity from it.’ You become very annoyed with this institution, feeling wrong in the role, in a frustrating environment, it becomes very difficult to work, if you make a mistake, an employee can catch you and point it out, creating arguments.

**Employee well-being and environment**

*“I can talk on behalf of a small organization –everybody has to come and do their job, be treated properly, not arguing among each other, and once they are treated properly, they’re happy, I have staff working for me almost 20 years, the majority of my staff have been working over 10 years, the environment is happy, they are not arguing amongst themselves. The company culture and environment are important, of course.” - Participant Eight.*

Conflicts affect employee wellbeing and work productivity, if the environment is not happy it directly affects the business. Participant Eight said if they are not happy there is no point being there, no point having an argument within the staff, when we are a happy organization and try to maintain a happy atmosphere, it solves conflicts.

Emotional wellbeing was very important to Participant Three. The culture of a working environment when people are having conflicts effects wellbeing; for example, Participant Four mentioned a decrease in work performance due to a conflict happening in the workplace.

**4.7. Conclusion**

**4.7.1. Summary of results/ findings and positive/negative outcomes on the performance of management.**

Table 7: Summary of Causes and Types, Conflict Management Styles and outcomes positive/negative to Performance Management.

Types	Cause	Style	Outcome
Relationship	People Problems	Avoiding  Cooperative	Negative - Destroyed work environment, no one wanted to work, the

			whole team was affected emotionally.
Task	Competition	Cooperative	Positive- encouraged creativity, learned from each other.  Negative- Left organisation.
Process Task	Engagement to work	Compromising	Positive – helped develop as a team, set up new rules, and grew as an organization.
	Stress	Compromising	Negative-increased absenteeism and turnover.
	Unfair treatment	Compromising	Negative-Left organization.
	Inadequate training	Compromising	Mix Negative and Positive.  Negative-Costly.  Positive- improved policies and provided better training.
Task	Limited Resources	Compromising	Positive- developed and grew as a team, employee needed to adjust to it and worked on a different work task for the day.
	Pay satisfaction	Compromising	Negative-Left organization.
	Working Schedule	Compromising/Avoiding	Negative – employee left organization.
	Role ambiguity	Compromising	Negative employee didn't feel supported and left

			organization.
Relationship	Poor Communication	Compromising	Negative - employees felt uncomfortable and unconfident in the role.
Task	Breach Policies and Procedures	Compromising	Negative – for employee, manager took informal and then formal actions.
Relationship	Personalities clashes	Compromising	Negative-effected employee morale and well being

To conclude, with regard to the findings about workplace conflicts, it was found that how team leaders and managers/owners define conflict, their views on it, and their effectiveness in the workplace are very different. Even if it is not happening daily, when it does occur it cannot be avoided. The results are summarised as follows:

1. Triggers or causes of conflict – there is not only one cause, but also always several different causes within an organization. The one most frequently mentioned was personality clashes and stress.
2. Type of conflict – intraorganizational conflict, a mix of task, relationship, and process.
3. Style of conflict management - all managers approach it differently, compromising style was the most mentioned point during the data collection. A few managers mixed handling styles depending on the type of conflict.
4. Conflict’s outcomes on the performance of management can be mixed, both positive and negative, it depends on the nature of conflicts, and it depends on the people involved. Frequently, managers/team leaders were positive that the conflict was solved in a compromising way, although the outcome had a negative aspect.

## **5: DISCUSSION**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The goal of this research was to understand why and when teams are challenged by the occurrence of workplace conflicts, what the main causes are, and how it influences employee behaviour in the workplace. It took an inductive approach to look at the different sides, positive and negative, and the influence of different types of conflicts on employee performance within an organization. Workplace conflicts happen when individuals or groups have differences and are not satisfied from their organizational perspective.

#### **5.1.1. Interpretation**

The study has shown that conflict occurrence happens in any organization, and it's a natural phenomenon. As already theoretically outlined by Rahim (2002), Thomas (1992) did not find just one concept of conflict; this research has shown that participants have no common concept either. All participants described conflict differently and shared their own views about it. According to Blackburn (2020), conflict happens as people present different ideas, views, and/ or opinions. This shows that there is a general consequence about the-surrounding ideas as this research found conflicts happen due to differences and conflicting goals.

The study's findings are closely related to previous studies on workplace conflicts impacting the performance of management positively and negatively. The findings largely confirmed our predictions. Task conflicts have been discussed in the literature as impacting positively (Jehn and Mannix, 2001) and relationship or process conflicts have negative outcomes on management's performance (Jehn and Mannix, 2001). Task conflict was found during the research and participants mentioned every staff member can learn from each other and can develop as a team; it gives a positive outcome as they grow as a team and improve rules and procedures within the company. Relationship conflicts, such as personality clashes and personal reasons, destroyed the performance because people did not get along and the environment can be very toxic, making it difficult to perform well, feeling lonely, losing motivation and commitment to work. Overall, employees feel very down and have a negative attitude to work. Process conflict happened within organizations due to a lack of resources, or due to different responsibilities to do the work. In the literature, process conflict outcomes are defined as negative, but participants expressed that even if there is a lack of resources or employees do not want to take responsibility for that job, they still need to adjust and do the

job. In contrast with the literature, the process conflict experienced by participants had outcomes which were positive, because the employee needed to adapt to it and move on to different tasks.

Our studies looked into five different conflict handling styles and the most common one manager used was the compromising resolution style, but if conflicts are managed functionally one style can be more appropriate than another, it just depends which conflict type occurs and the current conflict situation.

This study explores the causes and types of conflict between employees and managers, employee -employee, and found that conflict arises from a lack of communication, an unclear role, disagreement on duty tasks, not getting along with people or a manager, getting too much work, stress in work, breaches of policies and procedures within the company, personal reasons, competition, lacking training, engagement with work, pay satisfaction, working schedule, limited resources and unfair treatment. There is no specific cause of conflicts; there are various causes that influence employee performance within an organization.

The research methodology adopted, and the data retrieved was very useful and enabled the discovery of the main workplace conflict types and causes. The participants shared their examples and talked about conflict scenarios to get a deeper picture about the conflict situation. A semi- structured questionnaire was designed, and free flowing interviews were also very useful.

Recent studies have suggested that different types of conflict have different impacts on employee performance, it can be positive and/or negative, and in some situations, there can be a mixture of both. Positive outcomes which emerged from the studies included how employees and managers can learn from each other and grow as a team, while negative outcomes found included employees who left the organization, absenteeism, sickness, reduced productivity, and decreased employee morale and wellbeing.

### **5.1.2. Implications/Suggestions drawn from findings**

One implication for leadership from the study is that workplace conflicts within an organization have a significant effect on employee absenteeism, turnover, and employee wellbeing. Each employee faces different conflicts, and it has to be accepted and solved. As a result, the managers or leaders have to be trained in conflict management techniques within an organization and will then be more confident in dealing with employees in conflict.



Consequently, there can be gains from minimizing tension in the workplace by addressing conflict once it arises, being communicative with employees, understanding employees with empathy and trying to find the conflict's roots, thereby not letting the conflict escalate very far and encouraging the conflict to be solved in an informal way at an early stage.

### **5.1.3. Limitations**

Sample size - it was difficult to reach managers because I asked quite far in advance. But when the time came, I had to wait for a couple of weeks or do it on my lunch time. So, it would have been better to have had a date organised not too far in advance and have asked a few weeks before the interview. When I started recording managers were careful about what they said, and once I stopped, they told me more beneficial information about conflicts.

Participants' responses in qualitative studies are subject to bias, poor articulation, and poor recall (Yin, 2009). So, the primary limitation of this study is that interview responses are subjective and cannot be represented as a broad population. Another limitation is the conclusion cannot be generalised in total, as only specific conflict causes, and situations can be explored.

I found that the topic could be narrowed down, for instance, selecting one type of conflict such as relationship conflict, one handling style such as compromising and an outcome which is positive or negative. It would give an opportunity to do a more in-depth analysis and be more specific.

### **5.1.4. Recommending future studies and what would you do differently.**

Managing conflicts within any organization is complex and all conflict situations are very different and unique. There are some research challenges future researchers could take into consideration when researching workplace conflicts, including:

- There have been a few studies done about interpersonal relationship conflict and handling conflict styles, but there needs to be more of a focus on and more connections made between personality and conflict handling styles, as the presence of different personalities is perhaps the main issue in the workplace.
- There are five different styles and studies have been done on how they affect different situations and how they should be used in different situations, but more studies need to focus on the effectiveness of different styles within different situations.

- People issues were a big cause of workplace conflict. Studies have been undertaken about lots of conflict causes and their influence on performance management. Although people issues appear small and trivial, this research shows it happens almost everywhere and affects the whole team, more studies and research can be done on personal reasons effecting people's productivity.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS**

### **6.1. Conclusion**

Addressing conflict in the workplace is highly important as the consequences include saving company money, improving customer relations, and maintaining an enjoyable workplace environment for employees. The results of the current study correspond to prior research, in that workplace conflicts are more likely to impact negatively on employee performance than positively. The outcomes can be both positive and negative, where positive outcomes can develop the team by learning from each other, it depends how conflicts are managed. Managers of large companies experience conflict daily and it can occur in any organization. There are various causes which influence workplace conflicts, even if it looks like a small issue, it can become very serious if the conflict is not recognised at an early stage. Workplace conflicts within organizations effect employee productivity through increased absenteeism, but it also impacts an organization's competitiveness, impacting both parties. It might be functional and dysfunctional. When related to personal issues and personalities not getting along, it brings negative outcomes, if it is a task conflict concerning duty it can have a positive outcome. Conflicts within organizations happen when employees disagree about tasks, ideas, and actions in relation to job duty, and another is when people are not getting along together. Small organizations have less conflict as they have fewer employees and interactions, so conflicts are solved more easily and quickly in comparison to big companies. All participants mentioned trying to solve issues in the workplace in a more positive way, and get positive outcomes, often trying to be positive but getting negative outcomes.

Results of conflicts are more likely to be better with active engagement than avoidance. Clearly, the retail industry needs to reduce the high rates of turnover and create sustainable retention strategies including conflict management training. Implementation of conflict management strategies would be a good start towards achieving better staff retention, in addition to increasing focus on staff retention, recruit resourcing and talent management. Furthermore, training managers in conflict management on the ground and being present to

deescalate the conflict could prevent it from going too far and becoming formal. Retail companies need more upskilling and training for their middle managers to implement the company's policies and procedures regarding conflict management. Adopting conflict management approaches and using them effectively to support employee well-being can impact team engagement in a positive way by developing and exploring management capabilities. They can save time in the workplace and improve results by managing conflict in the workplace.

It is important to have conflict management in the organization but not a conflict management solution, because it designs macro-level strategies which can minimise the dysfunctional conflict outcomes and maintain effectiveness in the organization (Rahim, 2002). Learning how to use handling styles constructively in approaching various conflict situations differently means managers have to be very proactive, and problem-solving soft skills have to be top of their duty of care. Managing performance proactively and in a supportive and positive manner, even if the conflict is creating tension, still requires managing employees in positive ways. Naturally, reducing workplace conflict is a long term process which requires the involvement of all senior management, employees and all the organization's heads of management.

## **6.2. Recommendations**

According to this research study and its outcomes, the main recommendation is the implementation of mandatory training courses for retail managers within companies to minimize conflict or be able to effectively solve conflicts in the workplace:

- Essential Conflicts Management skills for Professionals – training for 3 online sessions. The aim of this training is to learn and be able to manage difficult behaviour or challenging employees, the programme provides the skills needed to diffuse, deflect and manage conflict incidents in the workplace. This training is suitable for any industry workers, especially in hospitality, customer service, and retail. This training should be implemented into a manager's role and be mandatory for managing teams in the workplace. The course involves three sessions and costs 395 euro.
- Equality and Diversity training courses for employees within an organization. The course is aware of unconscious bias and other barriers to diversity and inclusion; it motivates the workforce to address attitudes and behaviours in order to maintain

respect between each other in the workplace, preventing discrimination in the organization. An online day course costs 100 euro. Creating a culture with dignity and respect. Cultural competency is very important to implement into the organization, it includes diversity training and inclusion on many different grounds: gender, race, and ethnicity (Katz and 2015). Companies should invest in and develop training and teach about cultural differences with respect through the companies.

- HR employment law seminar for one day. This course involves protecting the organisation and the manager to know their rights and obligations under the law. The one-day seminar costs 175euro and is organised by SHRM and offered by Professional Development Credit. The seminar includes information on laws regarding workplace health and safety, quick guidelines on employment law, equal pay, age discrimination, pregnancy discrimination, sexual harassment, consumer, and employee protection, maternity, and disability. This seminar boosts the manager confidence in dealing with employees with issues on a daily basis and stops conflicts in the early stages.

### **6.3. Personal Statement**

The topic I have chosen for my dissertation was interesting to me because workplace conflict regularly happens in my organization. Personally, I always want to know conflict's causes, solutions and how to deal with staff in certain conflict situations. I have been working as a manager in retail for many years, and I have found that in retail tension is always happening and conflict regularly occurs between employees. It seems to cause a lot of stress, lack of clarity and misunderstanding, something should be done about it and improve it. However, my manager roles were only dealing with basic HR and deeper employee issues used to be sent to the company HR team. Later, I understood I wanted to be part of the HR team and deal with issues myself; I wanted more in-depth knowledge about the HR field. Personally, I was not confident enough to deal with conflicts at the beginning and this study gave me a big opportunity to explore and find in pieces what I have been looking for in managing my team in a store. I have experienced both sides, from practical experiences from working at the bottom level what can happen at work and from academic pieces. I can combine both experiences and work in a very productive way to understand the roots of conflicts. The whole process and academic research were very challenging, but very important to me. From my experience with workplace conflicts and the results from participants it can be assumed

that workplace conflict is a big issue within organisations, but once the person is trained in conflict management and confident to deal with it, conflict can be easily sorted in a positive way.

- Qualitative research was a new experience, and the data analysis was very interesting. Although it was time consuming, I gained huge experience which will be very beneficial for my future.
- The skill set I gained in this course is very useful for my current role as a manager and will be very useful for future working in HR. Particularly, I am not afraid to be in conflicts as I know what the consequences can be and how I can manage it in a constructive way.
- I learned how to prioritise and discipline myself in the current two years' being in college. As I was doing three duties at the same time: working full time, studying and being a mum at home.

The studies have been very enjoyable and very challenging, and pandemic situation was beneficial for me, as I could spend more time on my studies. I am very happy to challenge myself until this point to finish my studies and get a Master's degree. Now, I am feeling strong and confident open a new chapter in my career in HR.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Participant Consent Form

Appendix 2 Research Information Form

Appendix 3 Interview Question

## Appendix 1

### “Impact and effect of conflict in the workplace on the Performance management in Retail industry”

#### Consent to take part into research

I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I understand that participation involves participation views, thoughts, and experience about workplace conflict in the organization.

I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

I agree to my interview being audio recorded.

I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in Dissertation.

I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in the researcher encrypted hard drive with secure password, data will be access only for researcher and her supervisor and all data will hold until the exam board confirms the results of their dissertation.

I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for students this will be two years from the date of the exam board.

I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of research participant

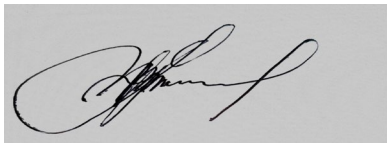
-----

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink on a light gray background. The signature is cursive and appears to be 'J. Smith'.

-----

-----

Signature of researcher

Date

## Appendix 2

### Information sheet for the research

*“Impacts and effect of conflict in the workplace on the Performance Management in Retail Industry”.*

I would like to be invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take your time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

My name is Juste Kulbaciauskaite, I am a student in my final year of my MA in Human Resource Management in the National College of Ireland.

This study will examine the impact of workplace conflicts on employee performance, how workplace conflicts arise in the retail industry and how they can be effectively handled by leaders /managers at various levels.

Participation is completely voluntary and will involve engaging about 30 minutes to complete the semi-structured interviews. After, it will be recorded and coded. Participants have a right to refuse to participate in the research and refuse any question and withdraw at any time without any consequence.

Research participants will be anonymised, not identified by name or company, it will be only assigned by code for further investigation. All information in the research will be kept safe, secure, and confidential. Audio recording will be stored in an encrypted hard drive, and any data not required will be destroyed and deleted in a safe way. Any information and data will be published only for Dissertation purposes.

If you have any queries about this research, you can contact researcher at:  
x19105363@student.ncirl.ie

Juste Kulbaciauskaite

### **Appendix 3**

#### **SEMI-STRUCTURE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Can you tell me about your experience and your role in the organization?
2. How big is your organization in terms of number of employees?
3. What does conflict in the workplace mean for you? And how would you describe conflict?
4. How often do you address conflict in your organization?
5. What types of conflict did you observe in your organization?
6. What are the major causes of workplace conflict?
7. What is your approach to handling conflict?
8. How does conflict impact employee performance in the workplace in your opinion/experience?
9. Would you describe the outcome of that conflict as positive or negative?
10. Are there any other views/experience you would like to share?