

## **Conflict Management Style and Employee Performance: Leadership and Emotional Intelligence as Moderation**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Increasing competition forces all businesses to develop. These demands often lead to a conflict which will later have an impact on the performance of employees, especially SMEs. Therefore, conflict management is needed so that the stability of the situation can be maintained. The purpose of this study was to analyze and explain the effect of conflict management style on employee performance, and to determine the role of leadership and emotional intelligence as moderating variables. This research involved UKM employees in regencies/cities in Bali. Data collection uses a questionnaire with the snowball method, the questionnaire is distributed electronically using the Google form. The data used were 174 respondents and then analyzed using the Smart PLS application. The findings of this study indicate that the style of conflict management has a significant effect on the performance of SMEs. Leadership shows a moderating role with a tendency to reduce the interaction of conflict management styles on performance. Meanwhile, emotional intelligence acts as a full moderator of the influence of conflict management styles on the performance of SME employees.*

**Keywords:** *Conflict Management Style, Employee Performance, Leadership, Emotional Intelligence*

## INTRODUCTION

Today businesses face various challenges including high levels of competition followed by product, process and technology development as a result of customer preferences (Alosani et al., 2019), including small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In other words, every business must accept these consequences and must participate in exploring existing commercial opportunities (Monteiro et al., 2019). So it takes participation from various elements within the company in order to contribute. Then a management plan is needed, assessing interests, and possible conflicts that may occur (Maczka et al., 2021). Through identifying sources of conflict such as mutual interests or relationships, it can help resolve conflicts that occur.

In the SME environment, employees are directed to resolve conflicts with a conflict management style approach. The conflict management styles described in (Caputo et al., 2018) include avoiding, which is a decision not to take part in conflict and deliberately not managing it; force, use competitive and aggressive ways of managing conflicts where each individual is always concerned with personal gain; problem solving, prioritizing cooperative and collaborative motives to balance each individual's interests with those of others. When collaboration is carried out, communication and professionalism must be prioritized to understand potential conflicts (Hastings et al., 2019). The successful application of a conflict management style is highly dependent on how the leadership is applied in the company.

Leaders with all the authority they have, of course, have a very important role in resolving conflicts that occur (Lee, 2009). Sometimes to anticipate conflict leaders sometimes choose to dominate, the goal is that employees are not affected by any situation (Ozkalp et al., 2018). Turesky et al. (2020) describe conflict as important for technology companies to develop an innovation, but managers have a unique way of aligning conflicting needs and situations. So that team members return to their goals after the conflict is over. However, leaders play a role in implementing strategic quality management in companies (Bolatan et al., 2022). Recent studies explain that leaders are able to improve the relationship between conflict management styles in influencing employee performance (Lee, 2009; Rahim et al., 2001). In addition to leadership in the application of conflict management styles requires emotional intelligence.

Various studies on conflict management that occur in companies/organizations have been carried out by previous researchers, so we try to re-measure the influence of the conflict management style applied to SMEs. Considering that SMEs have high organizational dynamics. In addition, considering that there are still many SMEs that apply conventional management in management, so this is very vulnerable to conflicts related to conveying ideas, providing compensation and other things that affect the operations of SMEs. This is very likely the occurrence of conflict between individuals or groups. Ignoring conflicts that occur in the

work environment can reduce performance, so a conflict management style is needed. The successful application of a conflict management style requires leadership as a policy holder, while for personal employees much needed emotional intelligence in dealing with conflict. The purpose of this study is to analyze the direct effect of conflict management on performance, as well as to determine the role of leaders and emotional intelligence as moderators.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Job Performance

Job performance is an objective and subjective approach; objective is focused on work results and subjective concentrates on how employees do/activities throughout the work (Kundu et al., 2019; Witt et al., 2002). Individual performance has an interesting perspective between individuals and organizations. For organizations, task performance is an important thing because it has the capacity to have an impact on profits, effectiveness and survival of the organization (Ferris et al., 2010). For individuals, showing high performance in every job can provide satisfaction, feel more effective and more masterful of their work (Aqqad et al., 2019). So it is very important to pay attention to the work performance of each individual because it can have a positive impact on the organization and the individual himself.

### 2. Conflict Management Style

Conflict management style is a strategy for solving problems that arise (conflict). Conflict is an interactive process that explains

incompatibilities and disagreements both within speech and within social entities (individuals, groups or organizations). (Rahim, 1983; Rahim, 2002; Rahim et al., 2001). Various studies have tried to formulate different conflict management styles to provide advice on conflict management. Like Blake et al. (1963) proposes that the conflict management style is divided into five styles, namely; forcing, withdrawing, smoothing, compromising and problem solving. Then Kilmann & Thomas (1977) and Thomas (1992) proposed a conflict management style divided into avoiding, compromising, accommodating, competing and collaborating. This research refers to theory (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979) where the conflict is divided into two dimensions; concern for others and concern for self (Noermijati et al., 2019). Based on these dimensions, five conflict management styles are described, namely integrating, obliging, compromising, dominating, and avoiding (Rahim, 2002).

### 3. Leadership

Organizational management cannot be separated from the role of leader with applied leadership. Leadership is defined as a way to influence subordinates to be willing to work together to achieve goals (Aristana et al., 2020; Bolatan et al., 2022; Huikko-Tarvainen, 2022). The basic practice of the leadership process is applied by aligning the values believed through actions and words (O'Neill et al., 2021) and this action

represents the normative behavior shown by a leader (Franczukowska et al., 2021). Along with the existing changes, leadership development is based on cognitive learning which aims to improve competence (skills and abilities), rather than prioritizing the leader's capacity (mindset) to carry out increasingly complex leadership roles (Day & Dragoni, 2015). van Droffelaar (2021) explaining that a change in situation causes a change in leadership style and this has been felt by leaders. So we need a training program that can transform leadership that is applied to the organization.

#### 4. Emotional Intelligence

The form of response given by each individual to an event. This is appropriate Salovey & Mayer (1990) explain emotion as an organized response, transcending psychological, physiological, cognitive, motivational and experiential boundaries. Meanwhile, emotional intelligence is expressed as the ability to identify and manage feelings of oneself and others (Salovey et al., 1995). Nghiêm-Phú & Nguyễn (2021) explain emotional intelligence as a personal concept of employees and more likely as a style of thinking. However, Abdo et al. (2021) emphasizes that emotional intelligence as a skill-based ability based on attitudes and behavior. So that emotional intelligence has a positive impact on work attitudes, beyond cognitive abilities which are part of one's personality (Mustafa, 2021). In addition, emotional

intelligence provides an overview of the level of individual maturity in acting by paying attention to emotional information (Udimal et al., 2019). This further confirms that emotional intelligence is an important concept in organizational psychology and plays an important role in workplace outcomes (Dåderman & Kajonius, 2022).

#### 5. Research Hypothesis

##### a) Conflict management style and employee performance

Role conflict arises because of the stress and ambiguity experienced by workers, because an agent follows different expectations and demands (Broughton, 2019; Terpstra & Salet, 2019). Conflict handling is needed to maintain the performance shown by employees (Rahim et al., 2001). The conflict management style that is applied determines whether the performance shown is good or bad (Ayub et al., 2017). Aqqad et al. (2019) explained that the conflict management style can improve the performance of the work carried out by employees. Understanding the nature and management of conflict is a useful process for individual advancement in organizations (Ozkalp et al., 2018). Specifically Shih & Susanto (2010) and Noermijati et al. (2019) finding integrating styles and compromising styles also contributes to improving job performance. Based on the empirical studies conducted, we formulate the first hypothesis as

follows;

Hypothesis 1: Conflict management style has a positive effect on employee performance

**b) Leadership and employee performance**

Organizational progress is largely determined by how capable the leader is in motivating each individual to make the maximum contribution (Brimhall, 2019). Effective leadership can increase employee satisfaction (Aristana et al., 2021; Hermawati & Mas, 2017). On study Buil et al. (2019) and Thamrin (2012) provides managerial implications where managers design a comprehensive framework to understand employee performance, Jiang et al. (2017) and Aristana et al. (2020) emphasizes that employee performance is continuously determined by leadership roles. Conceptualization and operationalization of leadership can achieve better employee performance (Adler & Reid, 2008). Along with the development of the organization and changes in employee behavior, leadership will still play a role in determining the direction of organizational policies. Based on this, we formulate the second hypothesis as follows;

Hypothesis 2: Leadership has a positive effect on employee performance.

**c) Emotional intelligence and employee performance**

Emotions are explained as a reaction that arises from an event, this reaction can be positive or negative (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). We direct the response of emotions as an adaptive process and lead to the transformation of personal and social interactions. Aqqad et al. (2019) proves that there is a direct correlation between emotional intelligence and job performance. Employees who have social skills, motivation, and empathy can increase team effectiveness (Polychroniou, 2009; Abdo et al., 2021). Shih & Susanto (2010) conducted a comparative study between private organizations and public organizations, where the results showed that emotional intelligence has the same impact on performance. As well as Noermijati et al. (2019) the impact of demonstrated emotional intelligence on public organizations, provides the benefits of private organization findings. Seeing the impact shown by emotional intelligence from previous studies, we formulated the third hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 3: Positive emotional intelligence on employee performance

**d) Leadership moderating effect**

Organizational progress cannot be separated from the role of the leader in formulating every policy, including in handling conflict. The success of handling conflict is very

dependent on the style of conflict management that is applied (Başoğul & Özgür, 2016). The conflict management style that is applied depends on how the leader plays his role. Alzoubi & Jaaffar (2021) when leaders manage crises that occur in their organizations, they will influence their subordinates to implement crisis management. At the operational level, a positive climate of a supervisor supports a conflict management style to reduce anxiety/depression and intimidation faced by employees at work (Kirsten et al., 2016). The leader's ability to intervene/dominate in resolving conflicts between teams, so as not to have an impact on performance (Hu et al., 2017; Curşeu, 2011). In addition, leadership helps strengthen the conflict management style applied to increase trust (Masood & Javed, 2016). Based on this, we formulate the fourth hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 4: Leadership acts as a moderator on the influence of conflict management styles on employee performance

**e) The moderating effect of emotional intelligence**

Employees with emotional intelligence can create a conducive work environment by making changes to attitudes, perceptions and productive affiliations (Raheja & Dhiman,

2020). Several studies show that emotional intelligence has an impact on performance (Shih & Susanto, 2010; Polychroniou, 2009; Abdo et al., 2021). Noermijati et al. (2019) and Wu (2011) found that emotionally intelligent employees always avoid adopting an uncooperative conflict management style and can lead conflict handling to performance. In addition, emotional intelligence is proven to have a significant impact on bad behavior and increase employee satisfaction (Chen & Wang, 2019). Shahhosseini et al. (2013) and He et al. (2012) explained that emotional intelligence provides a new way to increase productivity by increasing performance and reducing failure rates. Furthermore, avoiding, integrating and obliging styles when conflicts occur can be maximized through managing employee emotions (Chen et al., 2019). Based on the findings in previous studies, we formulated the fifth hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 5: Emotional intelligence acts as a moderator on the effect of conflict management style on employee performance.

**RESEARCH METHODS**

This research leads to a quantitative approach that measures the cause and effect of a relationship (causality). The population of this study is all UKM employees spread across nine districts/cities in Bali. Data collection used a questionnaire

which was distributed online using googleform with the snowball method. Data collection was carried out from January to March 2022. The researcher did not determine the classification of respondents specifically considering the difficult situation amid a pandemic. Through this method, 192 questionnaires collected data, but there were 18 incomplete questionnaires, therefore they were not used. So that the number of questionnaires used in data analysis was 174 questionnaires. Data collection was carried out in two stages, the first stage of data collection was carried out as many as 30 questionnaires.(Hair et al., 2016). After the instrument testing is carried out and it is declared that it meets the criteria, it will be continued in the second stage, namely the process of distributing the questionnaire which is limited by the time determined by the researcher. Data analysis uses data analysis using the Smart PLS 3.0 program.

**RESEARCH RESULT**

**a) Evaluation of structural models**

Evaluation of the structural model was carried out to determine the variation of the variables used, by looking at the value of R-Square (R2). From the results of the analysis it can be seen that the R2 value is 0.915 indicating that the model formed is stated to be strong(Hair et al., 2013). To predict the accuracy of the model seen from the Q-Square predictive relevance (Q2) value, based on the calculations performed it shows a Q2 value of 0.837 or 83.7 percent, so that it is declared relevant and can predict the model formed.

**Hypothesis test**

The results of hypothesis testing were carried out using the SEM-PLS approach, by confirming the path coefficient values and p-values shown in Figure 1 and Table 1 below:

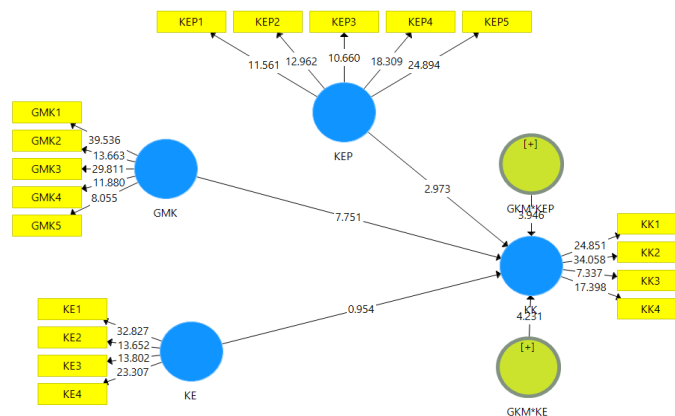


Figure 1. Results of SEM-PLS analysis

Table . Path coefficient direct and indirect effects

	$\beta$	Means	Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Information
GMK -> KK	0.632	0.636	0.082	7,751	0.000	supported
KEP -> KK	0.238	0.245	0.080	2,973	0.003	supported
KE -> KK	0.078	0.069	0.082	0.954	0.340	Not supported

GMK*KEP -> KK	-0.195	-0.198	0.049	3,946	0.000	supported
GMK*K -> KK	0.219	0.224	0.052	4,231	0.000	supported

Source: Results of data analysis, Year 2022

Based on Figure 1 and Table 1, information can be obtained that conflict management style has a positive and significant effect on employee performance with a path coefficient value of 0.632 with a p-value of 0.000 so that hypothesis 1 is supported. The results of this study also prove that leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance with a path coefficient value of 0.238 with a p-value of 0.003 so that hypothesis 2 is supported. The results also show that emotional intelligence has a positive and insignificant effect on performance with a path coefficient of 0.078 with a p-value of 0.340 so that hypothesis 3 is not supported. The moderation test shows that leadership acts as a quasi-moderating variable for the effect of conflict management style on employee performance with a path coefficient value of -0, 195 with a p-value of 0.000 so that hypothesis 4 is supported. Meanwhile, emotional intelligence acts as a pure moderator of the influence of conflict management style on employee performance with a path coefficient value of 0.219 with a p-value of 0.000 so that hypothesis 5 is supported.

## **DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS**

This study proposes five hypotheses, based on the analysis showing that the first hypothesis states that conflict management style has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This explains that the better the conflict

management style, the better the performance of SME employees. Conflicts that occur within the organization will certainly have an impact on environmental stability and certainly have an impact on employee performance (Rahim et al., 2001). This is an important reason why a strategy is needed to manage the conflict that occurs (Ozkalp et al., 2018). So far, conflict management applied to SMEs has a tendency to take a personal approach. Through this approach, employees who have problems with their work or co-workers take the initiative to convey it directly. So that conflicts that occur can be resolved quickly, besides that the faster conflicts are resolved, it will not interfere with their performance. This finding supports previous research which found that conflict management style has an effect on employee performance (Aqqad et al., 2019; Job et al., 2017; Kirsten et al., 2016; Shih & Susanto, 2010).

Based on testing the second hypothesis which shows leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. From these results it can be interpreted that the better the implementation of leadership practices is carried out, the performance of SME employees will increase. This finding further confirms that leaders with applied leadership practices have an important role in the organization (Aristana et al., 2021). Leadership practices related to employee performance can be seen from how capable a leader can



formulate management policies. Through these policies will foster the desire of employees to contribute through their performance (Brimhall, 2019). The management of SMEs so far has a conventional and family management system, so every decision and policy will be considered by prioritizing a sense of kinship and relationships. So the findings of this study support the results of previous studies (Jiang et al., 2017; Adler & Reid, 2008) which states that leadership affects employee performance.

Testing the third hypothesis shows that emotional intelligence has no significant positive effect on employee performance. So it can be explained that employees who are emotionally intelligent do not necessarily have high performance. According to Salovey et al. (1995) emotional intelligence is described as the ability to identify and manage one's own feelings. So far, the emotional intelligence of UKM employees has a tendency to maintain relationships with colleagues and superiors. In other words, managing feelings does not have an impact on the work being done. In addition, SMEs also do not yet have standards for employee performance (multitasking), so it is also difficult to ascertain whether employee performance is increasing or not. So that with emotional intelligence that is owned can dampen work situations that are not conducive, because employees are able to manage their feelings. This finding does not support previous research (Polychroniou, 2009; Abdo et al., 2021; Noermijati et al. (2019) who found emotional intelligence has an

effect on employee performance.

Testing the fourth hypothesis shows that leadership acts as a moderator of conflict management styles on employee performance. The moderating role of leadership weakens the interaction of conflict management styles on performance. This happens because leadership has a strategic function in an organization, so that all policies taken lead to organizational achievement. Meanwhile, conflict management style is a technical activity. So far, the style of conflict management applied in SMEs is more of a personal approach so that conflicts do not escalate. Very different from what happens in large companies/organizations, conflicts need to be managed properly to reduce organizational instability. However, SMEs still need a conflict management style to maintain the sense of unity or kinship that has been built in them. With these findings it can be seen that so far UKM leaders have a tendency to ignore the conflict management style that has been built so far. This finding is inconsistent with (Kirsten et al., 2016; Riana et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2017; Curşeu, 2011; Masood & Javed, 2016).

Emotional intelligence is proven to be a moderator of conflict management styles on employee performance. So it can be explained that the higher the emotional intelligence of SME employees, the greater the interaction between conflict management styles and employee performance. Employee performance is a result of work achieved by employees. Performance will not be optimal if there is conflict in the workplace, conflict handling is

not optimal if it is not supported by emotional intelligence. This cannot be separated from the ability of employees to manage their own feelings, this ability is directly in line with the conflict management style applied in SMEs with a personal approach. Conflict management style can improve employee performance with support from the emotional intelligence possessed by employees. This finding is in line with (Chen & Wang, 2019; Shahhosseini et al., 2013; He et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2019) employees with emotional intelligence increase the interaction of conflict management styles on employee performance.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Conclusion**

Based on the analysis and discussion conducted, the results of this research analysis can be concluded as follows, conflict management and leadership styles have a positive and significant effect on employee performance, these results explain that the better the application of conflict management and leadership styles, the higher employee performance. While intelligence has no significant positive effect on employee performance, the results explain that the higher emotional intelligence is not able to improve the performance of SME employees. Leadership acts as a pseudo moderating variable with a tendency to reduce the interaction of conflict management styles on employee performance. The application of

the conflict management style that has been carried out so far has been proven to be able to help improve employee performance, but if the leadership applied is not appropriate it will reduce the interaction that occurs. Emotional intelligence acts as a moderator of conflict management styles on employee performance, meaning that the ability to manage feelings of self possessed by employees is in line with the conflict management style applied and is able to improve employee performance.

### **2. Suggestion**

Based on the research results, several research suggestions can be given. First, for UKM emotional intelligence does not affect employee performance, it is necessary to take a more advanced approach which aims to maximize the potential for self-management to improve performance. In addition, it is necessary to pay attention to conflicts that occur in the UKM environment, because conflicts have an unfavorable impact on employee performance. For this reason, the owner/manager needs to design appropriate conflict management, with the hope that good conflict management can overcome decreased performance due to conflict. Second, for future researchers to be able to design an appropriate model in improving the performance of SME employees. Researchers can also classify both respondents and SMEs

involved in further research.

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