

The Effect of Conflict on Performance: The Moderating Role of Individual and Team Agreeableness

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Abstract

Previous research on individual and team conflict has primarily examined the effects of individual characteristics or team characteristics on conflict outcomes, while insufficient attention has been paid to the interaction effects between individual and team characteristics in the conflict management process. Based on person-team fit theory, this study investigates the influence of individual-level agreeableness and team-level agreeableness heterogeneity on the relationships between individual conflict (relationship conflict, task conflict) and job performance within teams. Drawing upon multi-source, multi-time point longitudinal data from 64 bank service teams (comprising 339 subordinates and 64 supervisors), the findings reveal: (1) Relationship conflict significantly negatively affects job performance, whereas the effect of task conflict on job performance is not significant. (2) Individual agreeableness significantly attenuates the negative impact of relationship conflict on job performance, while enhancing the positive impact of task conflict on job performance. (3) A three-way interaction effect exists among relationship/task conflict, individual agreeableness, and team agreeableness heterogeneity, jointly influencing job performance. Specifically, when team agreeableness heterogeneity is low, the moderating effect of individual agreeableness on the relationship between relationship/task conflict and job performance becomes more pronounced.

Full Text

Preamble

Self-Check Report for *Acta Psychologica Sinica*

1. Please list up to three innovative contributions of this study in the form of "Research Highlights," with a total of no more than 200

words.

Acta Psychologica Sinica aims to publish cutting-edge psychological research that is “both scientifically excellent and of particularly broad interest and significance.” Studies with only incremental contributions, those that do not attempt to open new areas of inquiry or propose unique and innovative perspectives, or those that purely investigate algorithms or techniques without addressing clear psychological questions, have low acceptance probability. We recommend submitting such work to other journals.

Response: 1. Unlike previous research that examined conflict outcomes primarily from a single level, this study adopts a multilevel perspective to reveal how individual-level agreeableness personality traits and team-level agreeableness heterogeneity interact to influence the relationship between individual conflict and work performance. 2. By examining individual agreeableness as a boundary condition affecting the relationship between relationship/task conflict and work performance, and by considering team agreeableness heterogeneity as a measure of person-team fit that moderates the moderating effect of individual agreeableness, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the role that agreeableness personality traits play in conflict management.

2. Have you used the same data as this study in any submitted or published articles? If yes, please attach the article for review. (We do not encourage authors to publish multiple articles with the same variables from the same dataset, nor do we support splitting a series of related studies into multiple publications.)

Response: [No response provided in the original text]

3. For studies in management, clinical, personality, and social psychology that rely solely on self-report (questionnaire) methods, it is necessary to examine whether common method bias exists. What methods did you use to control for or demonstrate that such bias would not affect the validity of your conclusions? What measures were taken? (Relevant literature on common method bias can be found at: <http://journal.psych.ac.cn/xlkxjz/CN/abstract/abstract894.shtml>) Studies based on cross-sectional data, using only self-reports, and conducted on convenience samples are easy to conduct but typically have limited innovative value and low acceptance probability.

Response: Data collection for this study occurred in three phases, with a two-month interval between each phase, and questionnaires were administered to both team members and team leaders. Collecting data from multiple sources across multiple phases can reduce the impact of common method bias to some extent.

4. Clinical experiments aimed at treating diseases are recommended to pre-register before data collection. Other experimental studies are also encouraged to pre-register. Pre-registration requires stat-

ing all research hypotheses and their rationales, as well as detailed procedures and steps for the experiment/intervention. The journal's pre-registration website is <https://osf.io/>. If your study has been pre-registered, it will significantly increase the chance of acceptance. If your study has been pre-registered, please provide the registration number. The importance of pre-registration can be referenced at <https://osf.io/5awp4/>.

Response: This study does not involve experiments and was not pre-registered.

5. Did you report and analyze effect sizes (e.g., Cohen's d for t-tests, Eta-squared or partial Eta-squared for ANOVA, standardized regression coefficients)? (Many studies mechanically report effect sizes without necessary analysis or explanation, such as whether the effect size is small, medium, or large, or what theoretical or practical significance it has.) (Searching "effect size calculator" on Google yields many convenient apps. Chinese explanations of effect sizes can be found at: <http://journal.psych.ac.cn/xlkxjz/CN/abstract/abstract1150.shtml>; English references can be found at: <http://www.uccs.edu/lbecker/effect-size.html>) Did you report 95% CIs for statistical analyses? (e.g., 95% CI for differences, 95% CI for correlation/regression coefficients) Calculations and graphing of confidence intervals can be referenced at <https://thenewstatistics.com/itns/esci/>.

Response: In the submitted manuscript, we reported ANOVA analysis results for the dependent variable of individual work performance and ICC(1) values in scale measurement. As our study primarily investigates moderating effects, we reported unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors, p-values, and residuals for all regression models, and provided detailed analysis and explanation of key variables' regression coefficients and statistics in the text, interpreting the significance and meaning of coefficients. Additionally, Figures 2 [Figure 2: see original paper] through 5 [Figure 5: see original paper] depict interaction effect diagrams, which more intuitively reflect relationships between variables and moderating effects.

6. Please state the planned sample size and actual sample size. If they differ, please explain why. Previous psychological research has commonly suffered from low statistical power due to insufficient sample sizes. We recommend explaining the basis for your sample size calculation and determination in the Methods section. Sample size should be determined based on justified effect sizes and desired power, and the calculation software or program should be reported. Rationale and practices for sample size planning can be referenced at <https://osf.io/5awp4/>.

Response: This study required team-based data (each team included one direct leader and multiple subordinate employees). We planned and invited 75 teams to participate in the questionnaire survey, comprising 394 subordinates and 75

supervisors. The final valid questionnaire data came from 64 teams, including 339 subordinates and 64 supervisors. Due to our time-lagged research design with measurements at three time points and two-month intervals between each (totaling six months), factors such as employee turnover and transfers during this period prevented some leaders or subordinates from completing all surveys. Furthermore, to ensure the data reflected the entire team, we only included teams where at least 70% of members completed all three surveys. These factors account for the discrepancy between planned and actual sample sizes.

7. Regarding the reporting interval for 0.001 and reporting exact p-values for others, does your paper meet this requirement? If using Bayes factors, have you reported their sensitivity to prior distribution assumptions?

Response: This study has reported regression coefficients, standard errors, and exact p-values for all regression models as required, with details available in Table 2 .

8. To ensure completeness of data reporting, if some data were excluded from statistical analysis, was this reported in the paper? What were the reasons? How would statistical results change if this portion of data were included? How was missing data handled in statistical analysis? When using scales, were any individual items deleted? Why? How would statistical results change if these items were included? Were any measured items or variables not reported? Why? Please indicate where in the paper this is addressed.

Response: Since we collected time-lagged team data, we excluded data from participants who did not complete all three questionnaire surveys. Specifically, if a leader did not complete all surveys, the entire team's data were excluded; if a subordinate did not complete all surveys, we retained the team only if at least 70% of other team members completed the surveys, otherwise the entire team was excluded. Due to the long time span of data collection and the relatively high turnover rate in bank service teams, such data loss was unavoidable. However, we ensured that valid questionnaires were collected from over 70% of team members, guaranteeing that the data remaining after exclusion could reflect the entire team situation. In statistical analysis, if participants omitted individual questionnaire items, missing values were coded as -999 and handled via listwise deletion by Mplus 7.0 software. This study used complete scales published in top-tier domestic and international journals and did not delete any scale items during measurement. All measured variables, including control variables, were reported as required. Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations of all variables.

9. For experimental materials, scales, or questionnaires that have not undergone peer review, are they attached at the end of the file for review? If not, please explain why. If this article is published, are you willing to share these materials with other researchers?

Response: The study used established, mature scales that have been cited by many other studies. The scales used are attached at the end of this document.

10. Can the raw data of your study be uploaded for reviewers and editors to verify? If not, please explain why. If this article is published, are you willing to share the data with other researchers?

Response: Raw data can be uploaded for review. Interested readers may contact the corresponding author to obtain the raw data.

11. If your study involved human or animal subjects, was it approved by your institution's ethics committee? If yes, please send a scanned copy to the editorial office. If no, please explain why.

Response: We invited bank service teams to participate in the questionnaire survey and obtained approval from the participating organization. All participants were informed that the data would be used only for research purposes, their responses would be anonymous, and questionnaires were collected on-site and sealed for strict confidentiality.

12. Was a 400-500 word English abstract written according to the "English Abstract Writing Guidelines" published on the editorial office website? Has the English title and abstract been reviewed by English-proficient professionals or edited by professional SCI/SSCI paper editing companies?

Response: The English abstract was written according to requirements and was edited and polished by Jake Gale, a second-year Ph.D. student in the Management Department of Warrington College of Business at the University of Florida (who earned his bachelor's degree from the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University). Email: Jake.Gale@warrington.ufl.edu. Jake's information can be found at: <https://warrington.ufl.edu/phd-in-business-administration-management/phd-students/>.

The Impact of Conflict on Performance: The Moderating Effects of Individual and Team Agreeableness

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Abstract

Previous research on individual and team conflict has primarily examined how individual characteristics or team characteristics affect conflict outcomes, while insufficient attention has been paid to the interactive effects between individual and team characteristics in the conflict management process. Based on Person-Team Fit theory, this study explores how individual-level agreeableness and team-level agreeableness heterogeneity influence the relationships between individual conflict (relationship conflict, task conflict) and work performance. Using multi-source, multi-timepoint longitudinal data from 64 bank service teams (comprising 339 subordinates and 64 supervisors), the results show: (1) Relationship conflict significantly negatively affects work performance, while the effect of task conflict on work performance is not significant. (2) Individual agreeableness significantly weakens the negative impact of relationship conflict on work performance and enhances the positive impact of task conflict on work performance. (3) There exists a three-way interaction among relationship/task conflict, individual agreeableness, and team agreeableness heterogeneity in affecting work performance. Specifically, when team agreeableness heterogeneity is low, the moderating effect of individual agreeableness on the relationship between relationship/task conflict and work performance becomes more pronounced.

Keywords: individual agreeableness; team agreeableness heterogeneity; relationship conflict; task conflict; work performance

1. Introduction

To rapidly respond to environmental changes and enhance organizational competitive advantages, an increasing number of organizations have adopted teams as their basic operating unit (Somech, Desivilya, & Lidogoster, 2009). Through frequent interactions among team members, conflict is often inevitable (Jehn, 1995; Somech et al., 2009). Generally, intra-team conflict can be categorized into relationship conflict and task conflict (Jehn, 1995). Previous research has shown that both types of conflict can significantly affect team effectiveness (Bradley, Klotz, Postlethwaite, & Brown, 2013; De Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012; Olson, Parayitam, & Bao, 2007; Tekleab, Quigley, & Tesluk, 2009). Therefore, how to effectively manage intra-team conflict has long been an important topic of scholarly interest.

Previous conflict research has primarily examined how individual characteristics or team characteristics independently affect conflict outcomes, while paying less attention to the interactive effects between individual and team characteristics during conflict. According to Person-Environment Fit theory (Kristof, 1996), individual behavior is not determined by individuals or environments alone, but rather results from the joint action of both (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006). Therefore, to better understand how relationship and task conflict affect work performance, it is essential to incorporate both individual and environ-

mental characteristics simultaneously into the theoretical model. Specifically, we focus on the interactive effect between individual-level agreeableness personality traits and team-level agreeableness heterogeneity, and its moderating role on the relationship between relationship/task conflict and work performance. Compared with the other four dimensions of the Big Five personality model, agreeableness focuses on interpersonal interaction characteristics and reflects individuals' motivation to maintain harmonious and positive interpersonal relationships (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Hair, 1996). Whether individuals hold altruistic or selfish motives fundamentally determines their tendencies in interpersonal interactions (Dijkstra, Van Dierendonck, Evers, & De Dreu, 2005). When facing conflict, individuals high in agreeableness are more likely to adopt harmonious and constructive conflict management strategies (Jensen-Campbell, Gleason, Adams, & Malcolm, 2003), communicate and cooperate, and thus are more likely to effectively reduce the harm caused by conflict (DeChurch & Marks, 2001). Therefore, this study combines team members' agreeableness personality traits (an individual factor) with team agreeableness heterogeneity (a contextual factor) to analyze their boundary moderating effects on the "relationship conflict/task conflict–work performance" relationship. The hypothesized model of this study is shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

1.1 The Effects of Relationship Conflict and Task Conflict on Work Performance

Conflict refers to the incompatibility, differences, or even opposition that individuals or groups perceive between themselves and other individuals or groups (Jehn, 1995). Forsyth (1983) noted that members can contribute to teams through social investment and task investment; accordingly, intra-team conflict can be divided into relationship conflict and task conflict (Jehn, 1995).

Relationship conflict emphasizes interpersonal incompatibility, including tension, annoyance, and animosity among members (Jehn, 1995). Numerous studies have shown that relationship conflict negatively affects work performance (Bradley et al., 2013; De Wit et al., 2012; Tekleab et al., 2009). First, relationship conflict issues are often closely related to self-concept (e.g., values, beliefs) (De Wit et al., 2012), which tends to trigger a sense of threat (陶爱华, 刘雍鹤, 王沛, 2018), elicit hostility and confrontation among members, reduce trust and commitment, decrease the likelihood of cooperative problem-solving (De Dreu, 2006), and ultimately affect members' work performance. Second, relationship conflict also diverts members' resources from completing work, causing team members to spend substantial time and energy dealing with issues unrelated to work tasks (De Dreu, 2006; De Wit et al., 2012), thereby reducing work performance. Based on this, we propose:

Hypothesis 1: Relationship conflict has a negative effect on work performance.

Task conflict refers to differences in ideas and opinions among members regarding task content, processes, and distribution (Jehn, 1995). Scholars hold two

opposing views on the effect of task conflict on work performance (De Wit et al., 2012). One view suggests that task conflict hinders work performance. First, task conflict significantly increases individuals' cognitive load (De Dreu, 2008), inhibiting cognitive flexibility and creative problem-solving (Carnevale & Probst, 1998). Additionally, task conflict may transform into relationship conflict due to attribution errors and poor management (Jehn, 1997; Mooney, Holahan, & Amason, 2007), thereby reducing work performance. The alternative view argues that task conflict enhances work performance (Jehn, 1995, 1997; Olson et al., 2007). The rationale is that task conflict can strengthen members' cognitive processing of task-related issues (Simons & Peterson, 2000), prompt them to form more comprehensive evaluations of work situations (Amason, Thompson, Hochwater, & Harrison, 1995; De Wit et al., 2012), and reduce cognitive biases in decision-making (Schulz-Hardt, Brodbeck, Mojzisch, Kerschreiter, & Frey, 2006), thereby improving work performance.

Previous research also shows that when relationship conflict is not controlled for, task conflict has a negative effect on work performance (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999; Lovelace, Shapiro, & Weingart, 2001; De Wit et al., 2012). However, when relationship conflict is controlled for, task conflict shows a positive effect on work performance (Olson et al., 2007; Tekleab et al., 2009). Therefore, we believe that while simultaneously considering relationship conflict, task conflict has a positive promoting effect on work performance.

Hypothesis 2: Task conflict has a positive effect on work performance.

1.2 The Moderating Role of Individual Agreeableness

Individuals have different tendencies in managing conflict, which affects the relationship between conflict and work performance (Behfar, Peterson, Mannix, & Trochim, 2008). We argue that individuals with high levels of agreeableness traits are better able to manage conflict, as they can minimize the negative effects of conflict while maximizing its potential benefits. Dijkstra et al. (2005) noted that individuals with high agreeableness traits need close interaction, are willing to communicate and interact with others, have a need for affiliation and desire to build a sense of belonging (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 2001), and have cooperative motives, typically showing prosocial orientation and considering the overall interests of both themselves and their work partners (Beersma & De Dreu, 2002). Therefore, members high in agreeableness are more likely to adopt inclusive and cooperative approaches to handle conflict, seek better outcomes for both parties (Antonioni, 1998; Moberg, 2001), and more effectively resolve and manage conflict at work.

Specifically, when relationship conflict occurs, members high in agreeableness tend to respond with compromise or accommodation (Jensen-Campbell et al., 2003), which facilitates timely completion of work tasks, reduces distraction, and effectively mitigates the negative impact of relationship conflict on performance. Conversely, individuals low in agreeableness are self-centered (Jensen-Campbell

& Graziano, 2001), have difficulty remaining calm (Wilkowski & Robinson, 2008), and are more likely to adopt domineering interpersonal interaction styles when dealing with relationship conflict with other members (Jensen-Campbell et al., 2003), thereby further deteriorating interpersonal relationships. Based on this, we propose:

Hypothesis 3: Individual agreeableness significantly moderates the relationship between relationship conflict and work performance: when individuals have low levels of agreeableness, the negative effect of relationship conflict on work performance is more pronounced.

When facing task conflict, the needs for close interaction, affiliation, and cooperation among members high in agreeableness motivate them to adopt compromising and collaborative strategies (Ayub, AlQurashi, Al-Yafi, & Jehn, 2017; Moberg, 2001). They guide other members to participate in discussions jointly, help the team better analyze and understand the current situation to find more effective problem solutions (Afzalur Rahim, 2002), thereby fully realizing the positive effect of task conflict on work performance. Conversely, team members low in agreeableness tend to reject different opinions when dealing with task conflict (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997) and are more inclined to use pressure and coercion to solve problems (Moberg, 2001; Jensen-Campbell et al., 2003), which prevents them from benefiting from diverse viewpoints, leads to cognitive biases in decision-making, inhibits the positive role of task conflict, and may even cause relationship ruptures due to task disagreements (Mooney et al., 2007), affecting work performance. Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 4: Individual agreeableness significantly moderates the relationship between task conflict and work performance: when individuals have high levels of agreeableness, the positive effect of task conflict on work performance is more pronounced.

2.3 The Three-Way Interaction Among Relationship/Task Conflict, Individual Agreeableness, and Team Agreeableness Heterogeneity

Person-Group Fit theory (Kristof, 1996) posits that in teams, individual performance improvement depends not only on one's own knowledge and abilities but also on the degree of fit between the individual and their team (Gonzalez-Mulé, DeGeest, McCormick, Seong, & Brown, 2014; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006). Therefore, drawing on Person-Group Fit theory, this study further examines the moderating effects of team agreeableness heterogeneity and individual agreeableness levels on the "relationship/task conflict–work performance" relationship.

Low team agreeableness heterogeneity indicates that individuals have similar agreeableness trait levels to other team members, forming a supplementary fit between the individual and the team. In this context, for members with high agreeableness traits, the team's interaction patterns and environmental atmosphere align with their needs, which can further strengthen the positive role that agreeableness traits play in helping individuals cope with conflict. Specif-

ically, when team agreeableness heterogeneity is low, similarity increases mutual attraction and trust among members (Tsui & O' Reilly, 1989), satisfying high-agreeableness members' need for close interaction. Second, this similarity can evoke members' perception of common interests and enhance team cohesion (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005), fulfilling the need for affiliation. Additionally, similarity and compatibility make cooperation within the team more efficient (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987), aligning with cooperative motives. Therefore, members high in agreeableness will more actively respond to various conflict issues through cooperative and inclusive interaction methods (Ayub et al., 2017), and in an environment that forms supplementary fit, they are also more likely to receive cooperation from other members, further promoting cooperation efficiency (Humphrey, Hollenbeck, Meyer, & Ilgen, 2007), weakening the detrimental effect of relationship conflict on work performance and enhancing the potential positive effect of task conflict on work performance.

Conversely, in teams with high agreeableness heterogeneity, members lack relatively consistent needs and behavioral preferences, resulting in a poor fit between the individual and the team and preventing the formation of consistent goals. This inhibits mutual attraction among members, reduces team cohesion, and is not conducive to establishing cooperative norms (Gonzalez-Mulé et al., 2014). For high-agreeableness members who value cooperative win-win outcomes, their needs and motivations do not fit with the team, reducing their enthusiasm for communication and collaboration, making it difficult to effectively reconcile relationship conflict (Ayub et al., 2017; De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001) and alleviate the low collaboration efficiency caused by task conflict (Humphrey et al., 2007), ultimately affecting work performance. Thus, team agreeableness heterogeneity and individual agreeableness traits jointly influence the relationship between relationship/task conflict and work performance. When team agreeableness heterogeneity is low, the moderating effect of individual agreeableness traits is further strengthened. Based on this, we propose:

Hypothesis 5: There is a three-way interaction between relationship conflict, individual agreeableness, team agreeableness heterogeneity, and work performance: when team agreeableness heterogeneity is low, the moderating effect of individual agreeableness on the relationship between relationship conflict and work performance is stronger.

Hypothesis 6: There is a three-way interaction between task conflict, individual agreeableness, team agreeableness heterogeneity, and work performance: when team agreeableness heterogeneity is low, the moderating effect of individual agreeableness on the relationship between task conflict and work performance is stronger.

2.1 Sample and Survey Procedure

Data for this study were collected from customer service teams of a large state-owned bank in South China. We contacted and invited 75 customer service teams from the bank, comprising 394 team members and 75 team supervisors, to participate in the questionnaire survey. All participants were informed in advance that the questionnaire would be completed anonymously, results would be kept strictly confidential, and all data would be used only for research purposes. Participants completed the questionnaire during work hours, and research assistants collected and sealed the responses on-site. To ensure that team members' responses could truly reflect the entire team situation, we ultimately only included teams where at least 70% of members participated in the survey.

We adopted a multi-source, time-lagged design to reduce common method bias. Specifically, data collection for this study was conducted at three time points, with two-month intervals between each. At Time 1, team members reported their own agreeableness and demographic information, while team supervisors reported their own demographic information. At Time 2 (two months after Time 1), team members reported their perceptions of relationship conflict and task conflict within the team. At Time 3 (four months after Time 1), team supervisors rated the work performance of each member in their team.

Ultimately, we collected 339 valid team member questionnaires (a response rate of 86.04%) and 64 valid team supervisor questionnaires (a response rate of 85.33%) from 64 teams. Among team members, 65.20% were male, 71.98% had a university degree or higher, 74.90% were married, and 86.70% had worked in the organization for more than three years. Among team supervisors, over half were male (68.80%), 65.08% had a bachelor's degree or higher, the vast majority were married (95.30%), and 82.54% had worked in the organization for more than ten years.

2.2 Measures

All study variables were measured using mature scales, following Brislin's (1980) recommended back-translation procedure to translate English scales into Chinese.

2.2.1 Relationship Conflict We selected the four-item scale developed by Jehn (1995) and adapted the items appropriately to reflect individual-level relationship conflict. For example, "There are emotional conflicts among team members" was modified to "There are emotional conflicts between me and other team members." We used a Likert scale ranging from "1 = never" to "5 = always." The Cronbach's α for this scale was 0.88.

2.2.2 Task Conflict We selected the four-item scale developed by Jehn (1995). As this study focuses on individual-level task conflict, we made necessary adaptations. For example, "Team members have different opinions" was modified to

“I have different opinions from other members.” We similarly used a Likert scale ranging from “1 = never” to “5 = always.” The Cronbach’s α for this scale was 0.86.

2.2.3 Agreeableness We selected eight adjectives developed by Saucier (1994) to describe individual personality (e.g., “compassionate”). The scale developed by Saucier (1994) is currently a commonly used measure of individual Big Five personality and has demonstrated good reliability and validity across different cultural contexts (Choi & Colbert, 2015; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). We used a Likert scale ranging from “1 = strongly disagree” to “7 = strongly agree.” The Cronbach’s α for this scale was 0.94. Additionally, team agreeableness heterogeneity was operationalized as the standard deviation of members’ agreeableness trait levels within each team (Harrison & Katherine, 2007).

2.2.4 Work Performance We selected a five-item work performance scale developed by Janssen and Van Yperen (2004) and Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1989) (e.g., “This employee fulfills all duties required by his/her job”). This scale is commonly used in team research where team leaders evaluate individual team members’ work performance (e.g., Huang, Iun, Liu, & Gong, 2010; Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004) and has demonstrated high reliability and validity in previous studies. We used a Likert scale ranging from “1 = strongly disagree” to “7 = strongly agree.” The Cronbach’s α for this scale was 0.93. ANOVA results indicated significant between-group differences, $F(63, 275) = 2.38, p < 0.001$. The ICC(1) for work performance was 0.21, indicating that 21% of the variance in team members’ work performance could be explained by between-group differences, making it appropriate for multilevel analysis.

2.2.5 Control Variables In our analyses, we controlled for team members’ gender, education level, marital status, and team tenure (calculated in months). Previous research has shown that these demographic variables may affect individual work performance (Zhou, Wang, Chen, & Shi, 2012). We did not include age or organizational tenure as control variables because they were highly correlated with team tenure ($r = 0.52, p < 0.001$ for age; $r = 0.58, p < 0.001$ for organizational tenure). At the team level, we controlled for team-level agreeableness, operationalized as the mean of members’ agreeableness traits within each team (Barrick, Stewart, Neubert, & Mount, 1998).

3.3 Data Analysis

Given the nested nature of our data, we used Mplus 7.4 for analysis (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) and employed multilevel path modeling to test all hypotheses. Specifically, we group-mean-centered individual-level variables including gender, education level, marital status, team tenure, relationship conflict, task conflict, and individual agreeableness to obtain unbiased estimates of cross-level

interaction effects (Enders & Tofghi, 2007). Simultaneously, to facilitate interpretation of our results, we grand-mean-centered team-level variables including team agreeableness and team agreeableness heterogeneity (Zhou et al., 2012).

3.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We first conducted confirmatory factor analysis to examine the construct validity of our study variables. Results for the hypothesized four-factor model (relationship conflict, task conflict, agreeableness trait, and work performance) showed that all standardized factor loadings were significantly higher than 0.40, indicating that each item adequately reflected its latent variable. The four-factor model fit the data well: $\chi^2 = 494.86$, $df = 183$, $RMSEA = 0.07$, $SRMR = 0.04$, $CFI = 0.94$, $TLI = 0.93$. We compared the hypothesized four-factor model with several alternative models. First, we combined variables measured at Time 2 (relationship conflict and task conflict) into a single factor to create a three-factor model. This three-factor model fit the data significantly worse than the four-factor model: $\Delta \chi^2 = 456.78$, $\Delta df = 4$, $p < 0.001$. Additionally, we combined all variables rated by team members (relationship conflict, task conflict, and individual agreeableness) into a single factor to create a two-factor model. This model also fit the data significantly worse than the four-factor model: $\Delta \chi^2 = 1624.02$, $\Delta df = 7$, $p < 0.001$. Thus, we concluded that the four-factor model demonstrated good convergent and discriminant validity.

3.2 Hypothesis Testing

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations among all variables are presented in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, at the individual level, relationship conflict was significantly positively correlated with task conflict ($r = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$), relationship conflict was significantly negatively correlated with work performance ($r = -0.27$, $p < 0.001$), while the relationship between task conflict and work performance was not significant ($r = -0.04$, $p = 0.48$).

We used Mplus 7.4 software to estimate the nonstandardized path coefficients involved in the theoretical model, with results summarized in Table 2. As shown in Model 1 of Table 2, relationship conflict had a significant negative effect on work performance ($\beta = -0.34$, $p = 0.03$), providing strong support for Hypothesis 1 and indicating that when team members perceive high levels of relationship conflict with other team members, their work performance tends to be lower. Meanwhile, results showed that task conflict had no significant effect on individual work performance ($\beta = 0.19$, $p = 0.27$). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

As shown in Model 1 of Table 2, individual agreeableness significantly weakened the negative effect of relationship conflict on work performance ($\beta = 1.23$, $p < 0.001$). Following the recommendations of Cohen J., Cohen P., West, and Aiken (2013), we present the moderating effect of individual agreeableness on the “relationship conflict–work performance” relationship in Figure 2. As shown in Fig-

ure 2, when individual agreeableness was low, relationship conflict significantly harmed employees' work performance ($\beta = -1.34, p < 0.001$); when individual agreeableness was high, the negative effect of relationship conflict on work performance was attenuated ($\beta = 0.66, p = 0.02$). Thus, Hypothesis 3 received strong support.

Additionally, results indicated that individual agreeableness significantly moderated the effect of task conflict on work performance ($\beta = 1.15, p < 0.001$), capable of enhancing the potential positive effect of task conflict. We also present the moderating effect of individual agreeableness on the "task conflict–work performance" relationship in Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper]. As shown in Figure 3, when individual agreeableness was low, task conflict had a significant negative effect on work performance ($\beta = -0.74, p = 0.02$); when individual agreeableness was high, task conflict had a significant positive effect on work performance ($\beta = 1.12, p < 0.001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Hypotheses 5 and 6 proposed three-way interactions among team agreeableness heterogeneity, individual agreeableness, and relationship/task conflict on work performance. As shown in Model 1 of Table 2, after simultaneously entering the three-way interaction terms for relationship conflict, individual agreeableness, and team agreeableness heterogeneity, and for task conflict, individual agreeableness, and team agreeableness heterogeneity, the three-way interaction term involving task conflict did not significantly predict work performance ($\beta = -0.79, p = 0.41$). Notably, however, due to multicollinearity among interaction terms, the predictive power of three-way interaction terms on work performance may be weakened, especially when the regression includes highly correlated variables, as the predictive effect of higher-order interaction terms is particularly susceptible to being attenuated by overestimated standard errors (Edwards, 2001). Therefore, in supplementary analyses, we separated the highly correlated relationship conflict and task conflict and examined the effects of the two three-way interaction terms on work performance individually (see Models 2 and 3 in Table 2).

Results from Model 2 in Table 2 showed that team agreeableness heterogeneity significantly moderated the moderating effect of individual agreeableness on the "relationship conflict–work performance" relationship ($\beta = -4.00, p < 0.001$). We present this three-way interaction effect in Figure 4 [Figure 4: see original paper]. As shown in Figure 4, in teams with high agreeableness heterogeneity, the effect of relationship conflict on work performance was not significant under either low or high individual agreeableness conditions (when individual agreeableness was low, $\beta = -0.36, p = 0.29$; when individual agreeableness was high, $\beta = 0.02, p = 0.96$), and the difference in the effect of relationship conflict on work performance between these two conditions was not significant ($\beta = 0.38, p = 0.38$). In contrast, in teams with low agreeableness heterogeneity, when individual agreeableness was low, relationship conflict had a significant negative effect on work performance ($\beta = -2.39, p < 0.001$); when individual agreeableness was high, the negative effect of relationship conflict on work performance

was significantly attenuated ($\beta = 1.36, p = 0.002$). At this point, the difference in the effect of relationship conflict on work performance between high and low individual agreeableness conditions was significant ($\beta = 3.74, p < 0.001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was supported.

Hypothesis 6 proposed that the moderating effect of individual agreeableness on the “task conflict–work performance” relationship is further moderated by team agreeableness heterogeneity. Model 3 in Table 2 shows that team agreeableness heterogeneity significantly moderated the moderating effect of individual agreeableness on the “task conflict–work performance” relationship ($\beta = -2.25, p = 0.01$). We also summarize the three-way interaction among task conflict, individual agreeableness, and team agreeableness heterogeneity in Figure 5. As shown in Figure 5, in teams with high agreeableness heterogeneity, when team members had low individual agreeableness, task conflict had no significant effect on work performance ($\beta = -0.17, p = 0.64$); when team members had high individual agreeableness, task conflict had a significant positive effect on work performance ($\beta = 0.79, p = 0.01$). At this point, the difference in the effect of task conflict on work performance between low and high individual agreeableness conditions was 0.96 ($p = 0.03$). In contrast, in teams with low agreeableness heterogeneity, when team members had low individual agreeableness, task conflict had a significant negative effect on work performance ($\beta = -1.31, p = 0.004$); when team members had high individual agreeableness, task conflict had a significant positive effect on work performance ($\beta = 1.55, p < 0.001$). At this point, the difference in the effect of task conflict on work performance between low and high individual agreeableness conditions was 2.86 ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 6 was supported.

4.1 Results and Analysis

Based on Person-Team Fit theory, this study examined how individual-level agreeableness and team-level agreeableness heterogeneity jointly influence the mechanisms linking individual conflict (i.e., relationship conflict and task conflict) and work performance. Empirical results showed that relationship conflict negatively affects work performance, primarily because individuals facing relationship conflict trigger a sense of threat (陶爱华, 刘雍鹤, 王沛, 2018), elicit hostility and confrontation, refuse to negotiate and cooperate (Graziano & Eisenberg, 1997), and divert their attention from work tasks to dealing with interpersonal problems, thereby reducing work performance (De Dreu, 2006). Additionally, individual agreeableness traits significantly moderate the relationship between relationship conflict and work performance. When individuals have high agreeableness traits, the negative effect of relationship conflict is effectively mitigated. This confirms our hypothesis that high-agreeableness individuals’ needs for close interaction, affiliation, and cooperation (Dijkstra et al., 2005; Wiesenfeld et al., 2001; Beersma & De Dreu, 2002) help weaken the negative impact of relationship conflict and promote cooperation.

Contrary to our hypotheses, the relationship between task conflict and work performance was not significant. In fact, this result supports the “double-edged sword” conclusion from previous task conflict research (e.g., Somech et al., 2009). Task conflict can both facilitate team decision-making (De Wit et al., 2012) and increase cognitive load (De Dreu, 2008). Notably, we found that when individual agreeableness traits were high, task conflict had a positive effect on work performance; when individual agreeableness was low, task conflict had a negative effect on work performance. This result indicates that individual agreeableness traits help strengthen the positive effects of task conflict while weakening its negative effects, ultimately contributing to improved task performance.

Furthermore, there exists a three-way interaction effect among individual conflict, individual agreeableness, and team agreeableness heterogeneity in predicting work performance. When team agreeableness heterogeneity is low (versus high), the two-way interactions between relationship/task conflict and individual agreeableness are stronger. According to Person-Team Fit theory, team agreeableness heterogeneity can measure the degree of fit between individuals and teams; low heterogeneity indicates that individuals and the team have formed a supplementary fit (Gonzalez-Mulé et al., 2014). In this context, when facing conflict, team members are more inclined to use similar strategies and methods to respond, easily forming consistent goals and improving interactive relationships among members (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; 马金鹏, 蔡地, 徐伟涛, 蔡亚华, 2018), which provides a guarantee for high-agreeableness individuals to adopt communication and coordination interaction methods to solve problems. Moreover, the team environmental characteristics of supplementary fit can further satisfy high-agreeableness individuals’ needs for close interaction, seeking affiliation, and mutual cooperation (Dijkstra et al., 2005; Wiesenfeld et al., 2001; Beersma & De Dreu, 2002). Consequently, high-agreeableness individuals will more actively respond to various conflict issues through cooperative and inclusive interaction methods, thereby further weakening the negative effect of relationship conflict on work performance and strengthening the positive effect of task conflict on work. In contrast, high heterogeneity indicates that when facing conflict, some team members (high agreeableness) will adopt “win-win” cooperative strategies (Ayub et al., 2017), while others (low agreeableness) will adopt “I win, others lose” domineering strategies (Moberg, 2001). Members have inconsistent goals, needs, and behavioral preferences and cannot fully cooperate, thus failing to effectively manage conflict and affecting work performance. In this situation, for individuals with high agreeableness, they cannot reduce the negative effects of interpersonal relationships or realize the positive effects of task conflict by promoting communication and cooperation; consequently, the moderating effect of individual agreeableness traits is significantly weakened.

4.2 Theoretical Implications

This study makes several theoretical contributions. First, moving beyond the single-level perspective adopted in previous research, this study examines the

individual-team interface in conflict management using Person-Group Fit theory. We found that individual-level agreeableness and team-level agreeableness heterogeneity have interactive effects that jointly moderate the relationships between relationship/task conflict and work performance. This fully demonstrates that when examining team conflict, interactive effects between the individual and team must be considered. Simultaneously, this study effectively extends Jehn et al.'s research on asymmetric perceptions of team conflict (Jehn, De Wit, Barreto, & Rink, 2015; Jehn et al., 2010), further enriching our understanding of how individuals in teams can effectively manage conflict with other members.

Second, by examining how individual agreeableness traits and team agreeableness heterogeneity affect the relationships between relationship/task conflict and work performance, this study more comprehensively demonstrates the important role that personality traits (particularly agreeableness) play in conflict management. This study found that individual agreeableness is an important contingency factor and a key boundary condition for the relationships between task conflict, relationship conflict, and work performance. Additionally, the heterogeneity of agreeableness at the team level is also a noteworthy contextual factor that reflects the degree of trait fit between individuals and teams. We found that when team agreeableness heterogeneity is low, the moderating effect of individual agreeableness traits is more pronounced. Therefore, this study significantly expands the explanatory power and influence mechanisms of personality traits in individual conflict management.

Third, by simultaneously examining relationship conflict and task conflict, this study reveals the differential roles that agreeableness personality traits play in managing different types of conflict. We found that high agreeableness can reduce the negative effect of relationship conflict on work performance while strengthening the positive effect of task conflict on work performance. These effects are particularly pronounced when team agreeableness heterogeneity is low. These results help people more comprehensively understand the individual and situational trait boundaries of different types of conflict management.

4.3 Practical Implications

From a management practice perspective, this study provides professional managers with strategic guidance on how to effectively address various types of conflict within teams. First, when establishing new work teams or selecting new members for existing teams, the personality composition of team members deserves attention. Overall, selecting members with higher sociability (high agreeableness) is beneficial for teams dealing with complex tasks and managing internal conflict. Additionally, for teams currently experiencing internal conflict, team leaders should strive to leverage the positive effects of agreeableness personality traits. For example, team leaders can attempt to change the overall agreeableness trait configuration of the team by stimulating members' agreeableness traits or allocating high-agreeableness members to mitigate the negative ef-

fects of task and relationship conflict and promote the positive outcomes of task conflict. Furthermore, leaders should pay attention to person-team fit issues to form stronger team cohesion and respond appropriately to various conflict issues.

4.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has several limitations. First, although this study used a multi-source, time-lagged design to collect data, which helps reduce common method bias and strengthen the explanatory power of causal relationships between variables, we recommend that future research use more precise experimental methods to verify the conclusions of this study. Second, this study focused on task conflict and relationship conflict; however, the conflict literature also includes different types such as status conflict and process conflict. Therefore, we recommend that future research go beyond the classic task and relationship conflict categories and examine the role that personality traits play in the relationships between other types of individual conflict and work performance. Third, this study primarily focused on the moderating effects of team members' individual agreeableness traits and team agreeableness heterogeneity on the "conflict–performance" relationship. Future research could build on this study to further examine how other personality trait levels and their heterogeneity, as well as the interactive effects of various personality trait means and heterogeneity at the team level, affect team processes and team performance. Finally, due to resource constraints, this study used a convenience sampling method to collect data and selected customer service teams as the research sample. Therefore, whether the conclusions drawn from this study can be generalized to other types of teams remains to be verified by future research.

5. Conclusion

The results show that relationship conflict has a significant negative effect on work performance, but the effect of task conflict on work performance is not significant. Individual agreeableness significantly moderates the relationships between relationship/task conflict and work performance. When individual agreeableness traits are low, both relationship conflict and task conflict have negative effects on work performance; when individual agreeableness traits are high, the negative effect of relationship conflict is weakened, and task conflict helps promote work performance, with its positive effect becoming prominent. Additionally, there is a three-way interaction effect among individual conflict, individual agreeableness, and team agreeableness heterogeneity on work performance. Specifically, when team agreeableness heterogeneity is low, the moderating effect of individual agreeableness on the relationships between relationship/task conflict and work performance is more pronounced.

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Abstract

Based on the nature of conflict, conflict within teams can be categorized as relationship conflict and task conflict. It is inevitable for team members to experience these two types of conflict with each other through daily interactions. As such, how dispositions of team members interact with intra-team conflict to minimize its harm and maximize its benefit appears to be an important research question. Prior research has primarily focused on how individual's traits or team traits would affect the outcomes of conflict. According the Person-Group Fit theory, it's necessary to study the interaction effect of the traits on both the individual and team level. Distinct from other personality factors in the Five Factor Model, agreeableness involves the motives for maintaining harmony and positive interpersonal relationship, which fundamentally determine the propensity for individuals to deal with others in social interactions. In conflict management scenarios, individuals with high agreeableness are more likely to adopt agreeable conflict management, characterized as integrating one another's ideas and seeking to satisfy all members' expectations, thus leading to more effective conflict resolution. Taking a multilevel perspective, this study investigated how individual-level agreeableness interacts with team-level agreeableness heterogeneity to impact the relations between task/relationship conflict and job performance.

Hypotheses were tested using multisource and time-lagged data collected from 64 teams. Data were collected from client service teams of a large state-owned bank located in South China. A total of 75 service teams of the bank (394 subordinates and 75 supervisors) were contacted and invited to participate. All participants were told that the data were used only for research purpose only,

and their responses would be kept confidential and anonymous. Participants filled out the questionnaires during morning meetings, and research assistants then collected their responses after they completed the survey. The data were collected at three time points with two-month intervals. At Time 1, subordinates reported their levels of agreeableness as well as demographic information. Their immediate supervisors were also asked to report their demographic information. At Time 2 (two months after Time 1), subordinates were asked to report their perceptions of relationship conflict and task conflict within the team. At Time 3 (four months after Time 1), subordinates' job performance was rated by their immediate supervisors. To ensure that the responses of participating team members reflect the whole team, we only included teams with at least 70% of members participating in the survey. In total, we collected 339 valid subordinate responses and 64 valid supervisor responses from 64 teams.

Most of the hypotheses were supported by data analysis. Results demonstrated that relationship conflict was negatively related to job performance, but the relationship between task conflict and job performance was not significant. Further, individual agreeableness both buffered the negative effect of relationship conflict and enhanced the positive effect of task conflict on job performance. Specifically, when individual agreeableness was high, the negative relationship between relationship conflict and job performance was non-significant. By contrast, when individual agreeableness was low, such relationship became negative and significant. As far as task conflict is concerned, when individual agreeableness was high, the positive relationship between task conflict and job performance was significant. However, when individual agreeableness was low such relationship was negative and significant. In addition, there were three-way interactions among individual conflict, individual agreeableness, and team agreeableness heterogeneity on job performance, such that the two-way interactions between task/relationship conflict and individual agreeableness were stronger when team agreeableness heterogeneity was low.

This study contributions to the current literature in several ways. First, our study moves beyond the single level perspective of intra-team conflict to examine the individual-team interface in conflict managing using person-group fit theory. Second, the current study highlights the essential role of agreeableness in the process of conflict management by examining the roles that individual agreeableness and team agreeableness heterogeneity play in shaping the relations between conflict and job performance. Third, by studying relationship conflict and task conflict simultaneously, this study reflected the effect of agreeableness in managing different types of conflict. Practically, our research informs the professional managers about managing team conflict in an effective manner. Based on our findings, when assigning new work teams or selecting new members for existing teams, it is beneficial to select similar team members with high agreeableness, especially when the team tasks involve frequent social interactions that are likely to trigger intrateam conflict.

Keywords: Agreeableness; team agreeableness heterogeneity; task conflict; re-

relationship conflict; job performance

Appendices

Team Member Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam,

Hello! Welcome to participate in our research study on enterprise teams! We greatly appreciate your participation. This research consists of three rounds of questionnaire surveys, and your continued participation across all three rounds is essential to this longitudinal research design. We sincerely thank you for your cooperation!

This study was designed by a research team for research purposes only. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions; please express your true feelings or opinions according to the requirements. Your participation in this questionnaire survey is completely voluntary, and you have the right to skip any questions you do not wish to answer. No one except the researchers can access your responses through any channel. The information you provide will not be shared with your employer or others, and participation in this study does not involve any risks or benefits.

This survey will take 15 minutes of your time. We apologize for any inconvenience! Your careful responses are of great help to our research. Thank you very much for your participation!

Part I: Basic Information (Please check the box to respond)

1. Please provide your department or branch name: _____
2. Please indicate your gender: Male Female
3. Please provide your date of birth: _____
4. Please indicate your years of education (starting from primary school): _____ years
5. Please indicate your marital status: Single Married Widowed Divorced Cohabiting
6. Please indicate how long you have worked in your current organization: _____ years _____ months
7. Please indicate how long you have worked in your current team: _____ years _____ months

In the following items, numbers 1-7 represent seven options from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Higher scores indicate greater agreement with the item content, while lower scores indicate less agreement.

Part II: Team Member Assessment Please rate the extent to which the following characteristics accurately describe you, and check the corresponding

option.

1. Compassionate
2. Enthusiastic
3. Friendly
4. Willing to cooperate
5. Cold
6. Lacking compassion
7. Rude
8. Harsh

In the following items, numbers 1-5 represent five options from “never” to “always.” Higher scores indicate more frequent experience of task or relationship conflict, while lower scores indicate less frequent experience.

Please rate the frequency with which you experience the following task conflicts with other team members in your team, and check the corresponding number.

1. I and other team members cannot agree on how to complete work tasks
2. I and other team members have conflicts over work ideas
3. My work conflicts with other team members' work
4. I and other team members hold different opinions about work

Please rate the frequency with which you experience the following relationship conflicts with other team members in your team, and check the corresponding number.

1. I and other team members have friction
2. I and other team members have obvious personality conflicts
3. My relationship with other team members is relatively tense
4. I and other team members have emotional conflicts

Team Leader Questionnaire

Part I: Basic Information (Please check the box to respond)

1. Please provide your department or branch name: _____
2. Please indicate your gender: Male Female
3. Please provide your date of birth: _____
4. Please indicate your years of education (starting from primary school):
_____ years
5. Please indicate your marital status: Single Married Widowed Divorced Cohabiting
6. Please indicate how long you have worked in your current organization:
_____ years _____ months
7. Please indicate how long you have served as supervisor of your current team:
_____ years _____ months

In the following items, numbers 1-7 represent seven options from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Higher scores indicate greater agreement with the item content, while lower scores indicate less agreement.

Part II: Team Leader Assessment Subordinate name: _____

Based on this employee’ s work performance, please rate your agreement with the following statements and check the corresponding option.

1. This employee always completes his/her assigned work
2. This employee meets all formal job performance requirements
3. This employee fulfills all duties required by his/her job
4. This employee never neglects his/her assigned work
5. This employee often fails to perform important duties

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.