

Role of Structural Empowerment on Organizational Conflict Management -Case Study on the Directorate of Maintenance in Laghouat (DML)-

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Abstract:

The aim of this research is to highlight the role of structural empowerment and its dimensions on organizational conflict management and its styles from the point of view of the employees of the directorate of maintenance in Laghouat state (DML). Survey data was collected through distributing 100 questionnaires, 96 was recovered. 79 were fit for statistical analysis. Survey data was analysed using structural equation modelling using PLS methodology. After the statistical analysis using the programme (Smart PLS version 3.0), the results showed there is no role of structural empowerment on organizational conflict and its styles.

Keywords: empowerment, Structural empowerment, conflict, conflict management styles.

JEL Classification Codes: O15, D23, D74

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I. Introduction:

In a competitive environment in which organizations must be faster, leaner, provide better service quality, and be more excellent, an empowered and proactive employee is thought to be essential.

On the one hand, delegation of authority for a long period of time in the past, dominated the management field. In fact, this view has become known as the “empowerment” concept. It covers the participation and delegation of authority along with the motivation of the employees.

On the other hand, if a conflict is not managed at the right time and properly, it might reach a level where employees become enemies and work against each other, which will cause a negative impact on their performance.

This paper aims to highlight the four dimensions of structural empowerment (access to opportunities, access to information, access to support and access to resources) and their effects on conflict management styles.

1. Research Problematic: in the light of the presented introduction, the main question for this paper is: to what extent does structural empowerment amongst DML employees impact their conflict management?

2. Research Hypotheses:

In the light of the presented problematic, the main hypothesis for this paper is:

H1: there is statistically significant impact of structural empowerment on conflict management.

Further sub-hypotheses are:

H2: there is statistically significant impact of structural empowerment on collaborating style

H3: there is statistically significant impact of structural empowerment on accommodating style

H4: there is statistically significant impact of structural empowerment on competing style

H5: there is statistically significant impact of structural empowerment on avoiding style

H6: there is statistically significant impact of structural empowerment on compromising style.

II. Literature Review:

1. Structural Empowerment:

1.1. Defining Structural Empowerment:

Before defining structural empowerment, a proper definition of empowerment must be presented. Throughout the literature review. Researchers indicate that empowerment can be either structural or psychological. (Ma, Zhang, Xu, Wang, & Kim, 2021). Structural empowerment is the presence of practices, social structures and organizational resources in the organization (Amore, Vazquez, & Faina, 2020, p. 170).

Psychological empowerment is defined as a motivational construct demonstrated in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact (Amore, Vazquez, & Faina, 2020, p. 170).

Empowerment is defined as “the process of enhancing feeling of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information” (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 474).

Structural Empowerment is the process by which a leader or manager shares his/her power with subordinates (employees) (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 473).

Kanter (1993) defined structural empowerment as a practice, or set of practices to offer access to information, resources, support and opportunity to acquire a set of skills in work environment (Takuma , 2011, p. 45).

Structural empowerment occurs when employees have access to “information, support, resources and opportunities to learn and grow” (Stewart & Quinn, 2010, p. 28).

1.2. Dimensions of Structural Empowerment :

Building upon the seminal work by Kanter 1993, (Spence Laschinger, Finegan, & Wilk, 2001) demonstrates that Kanter believes particularly that the important dimensions that lead to the growth of empowerment are: having access to information, receiving support, having access to resources necessary to do the job, and having the opportunity to learn and grow. Access to these empowering structures is facilitated by formal job characteristics. That is, jobs that are visible and central to the organization’s goals and allow flexibility to enhance empowerment. In addition, informal job characteristics such as alliances with superiors, peers and subordinates within the organization further influence empowerment.

The six dimensions are defined as follows: (Spence Laschinger, 2012)

Access to opportunity refers to the possibility for growth and movement within the organization as well as the opportunity to increase knowledge and skills.

Access to resources relates to one’s ability to acquire the financial means, materials, time, and supplies required to do the work.

Access to information refers to having the formal and informal knowledge that is necessary to be effective in the workplace (technical knowledge and expertise required to accomplish the job and an understanding of organizational policies and decisions).

Access to support involves receiving feedback and guidance from subordinates, peers, and superiors.

Formal Power is derived from specific job characteristics such as; flexibility, adaptability, creativity associated with discretionary decision-making, visibility, and centrality to organizational purpose and goals.

Informal Power is derived from social connections, and the development of communication and information channels with sponsors, peers, subordinates, and cross-functional groups.

1.3. Measurement of Structural Empowerment:

Structural empowerment was measured using the CWEQ-II (Condition of Work Effectiveness Questionnaire-II; Laschinger et al,2001). It consists of nineteen items measuring six dimensions of structural empowerment (access to opportunities, access to information, access to support, access to resources, formal power and informal power) described by Kanter (1977, 1993) and two-item global empowerment scale (Takuma , 2011, p. 49). Among these, fourteen items to measure four structural empowerment dimensions were used which are: access to opportunities, access to information, access to support and access to resources.

2. Conflict Management:

2.1. Defining Conflict:

Before defining conflict management, a proper definition of organizational conflict must be presented. Throughout the literature review, researchers had different perspectives toward conflict.

March and Simon (1958) defines conflict as a breakdown in the standard mechanisms of decisions making, so that an individual or group experiences difficulty in selecting an alternative (Rahim A. M., 2000, p. 17).

Tedeshci et al (1973) defines conflict as “interactive state in which the behaviours or goals of one actor are to some degree incompatible with the behaviours or goals of some other actor or actors” (Rahim A. M., 2000, p. 17).

Rahim (2000) defines conflict as an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (individual, group, organization) (Rahim A. M., 2000, p. 18).

Thomas K.A defines conflict as “process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected something that the first party cares about” (Chaturvedi, 2013, p. 276).

Austin et al defines conflict as “a disagreement between two or more individuals or groups, with each individual or group trying to gain acceptance of its views or objective over others” (Kondalar, 2007, p. 160).

2.2. Manifestations of Conflict:

Conflict in organizations is manifest at the level of individual and the group (McKenna, 2020, p. 591).

Individual conflict: employees experience frustration when their pathway to achieving personal goals is blocked. It can be in the following forms: the way a job description for an internal promotion, it can be a clash between the demands of roles and an individual's values and beliefs and it can be as the conflict between the need for professional autonomy and the demands of bureaucratic organization (McKenna, 2020, pp. 591-592).

Group conflict: this conflict occurs between the members of a workgroup or a team (Buchanan & Huczynski, 2019, p. 724). There are two types for this conflict: Institutionalized and emergent conflict (McKenna, 2020, p. 592). Institutionalized conflict occurs between two different groups for example the marketing and production groups (McKenna, 2020, p. 592), and emergent conflict occurs when two social forces collide. For example, the formal organization (employer) call for greater productive effort, which the informal organization (employees) resists (McKenna, 2020, p. 592).

2.3. Sources of Conflict:

Daniel Katz (1978) proposed three main sources of conflict: economic conflict which is resulted by a limited amount of resources (Blank, 2019), value conflict which takes interest in the difference preferences and ideologies that employees gave as their principles (Blank, 2019) and power conflict occurs when the parties involved aims to maximize their power (Blank, 2019, p. np).

2.4. Conflict Management:

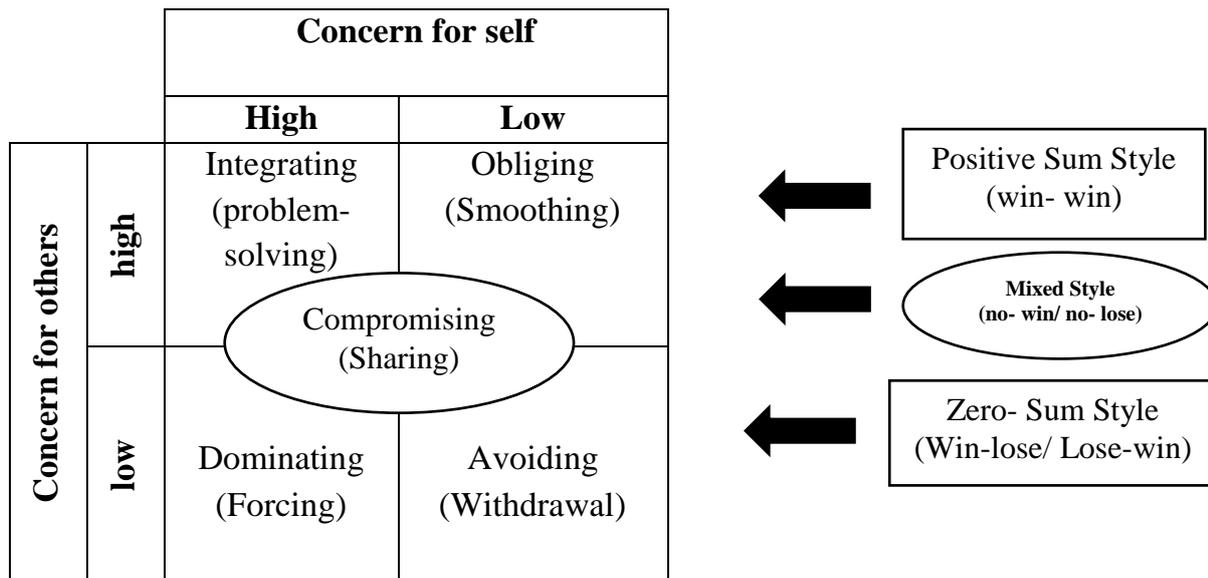
In this section, the main focus will be on one particular approach for managing conflict in workplace between individual as employees at any hierarchy level versus another.

The most common styles (strategies) for handling conflict within an organization are the five styles model, which was developed by Rahim (1983), and Rahim & Bonoma (1979).

The model is based on two dimensions that occur in any conflict situation: concern for self and concern for others. The first dimension explains the degree (high or low) to which a person attempts to satisfy his or her own concern. The second dimension explains the degree (high or low) to which a person wants to satisfy the concern of others (Lebrague, Benamar, & Rahmani, 2020, p. 223).

The combination of the two dimensions results in five styles (strategies) for managing conflict, just as figure 01 demonstrates.

Figure 01: Interpersonal Styles of Handling Conflict



Source: (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979, p. 1327)

The figure demonstrates the five styles:

- 1- Integrating style: this style occurs when the level of concern for self and concern for others is high. This style is known as problem-solving. It involves collaboration between parties (openness, exchange of information and examination of differences to reach a solution acceptable to both parties) (Rahim A. M., 2000, p. 28).
- 2- Obliging style: this is known as the accommodating style. This style occurs when concern for self is low and concern for others is high. This style is associated with attempting to play down the differences and emphasizing commonalities to satisfy the concern of the other party. It is also useful when a party is willing to give up something in exchange for getting something from the other party in the future (Rahim A. M., 2000, p. 29).
- 3- Dominating style: this style is also known as competing. This style occurs when concern for self is high and concern for others is low. This style is identified with win-lose orientation or with forcing behaviour to one's position (Rahim A. M., 2000, p. 29).
- 4- Avoiding style: this style is also known as suppression. This style occurs when concern for self and concern for others are low. Avoiding style has been associated with withdrawal, buck passing, or sidestepping situations. An avoiding person fails to satisfy his own concern as well as the concern of the other party (Rahim A. M., 2000, p. 29).
- 5- Compromising style: this style occurs when concern for self and concern for others are intermediate. The compromising style involves sharing whereby both parties give up something to make acceptable decision (Rahim A. M., 2000, p. 30).

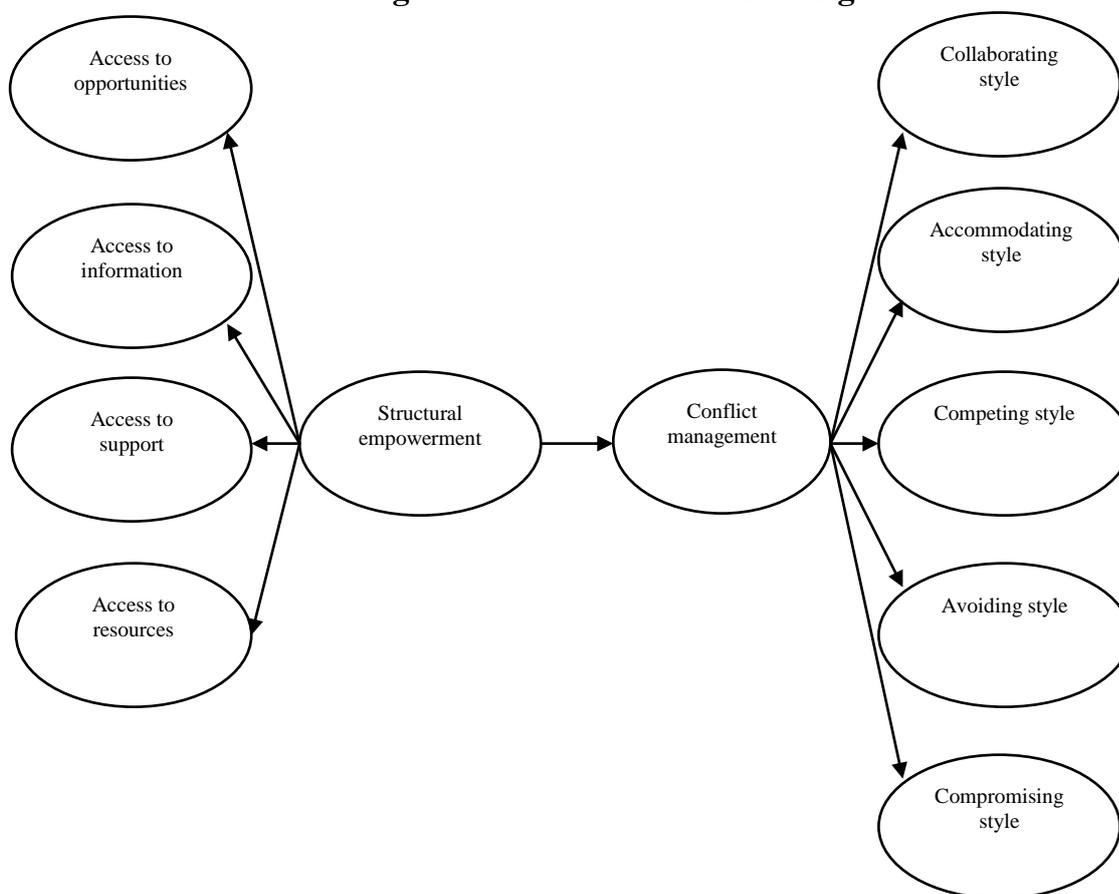
2.5. Measurement of Conflict Management Styles:

Conflict management styles were measured using the ROCI II (Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II). It consists of twenty-eight items measuring five styles of conflict management (integrating style, obliging style, dominating style, avoiding style and compromising style).

III. Methodology:

1. Research Model:

Figure 02: Research Model Design



Source: by authors

2. Research Steps:

A questionnaire was used as a primary tool to collect data related to our research. 100 questionnaires were distributed to the employees of DML. We recovered 96 of them, 79 of them were fit for analysis. The survey was launched on September 2020.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first section reveals personal information of the respondent (age, gender, qualification, length of service and job title); the second section contains items that define the indicators of the research variables. A five scale Likert was adopted to measure respondents' answers.

Table 01: Number of Questionnaire Items

Variables	dimensions	Number of items	Items definitions
Structural Empowerment	Access to opportunities	3	AO1 to AO3
	Access to information	3	AI1 to AI3
	Access to support	3	AS1 to AS3
	Access to resources	5	AR1 to AR5
Conflict Management	Collaborating style	6	CM1 to CM6
	Accommodating style	6	CM7 to CM12
	Competing style	4	CM13 to CM16
	Avoiding style	6	CM17 to CM22
	Compromising style	3	CM23 to CM25

Source: by authors

3. Statistical Tools:

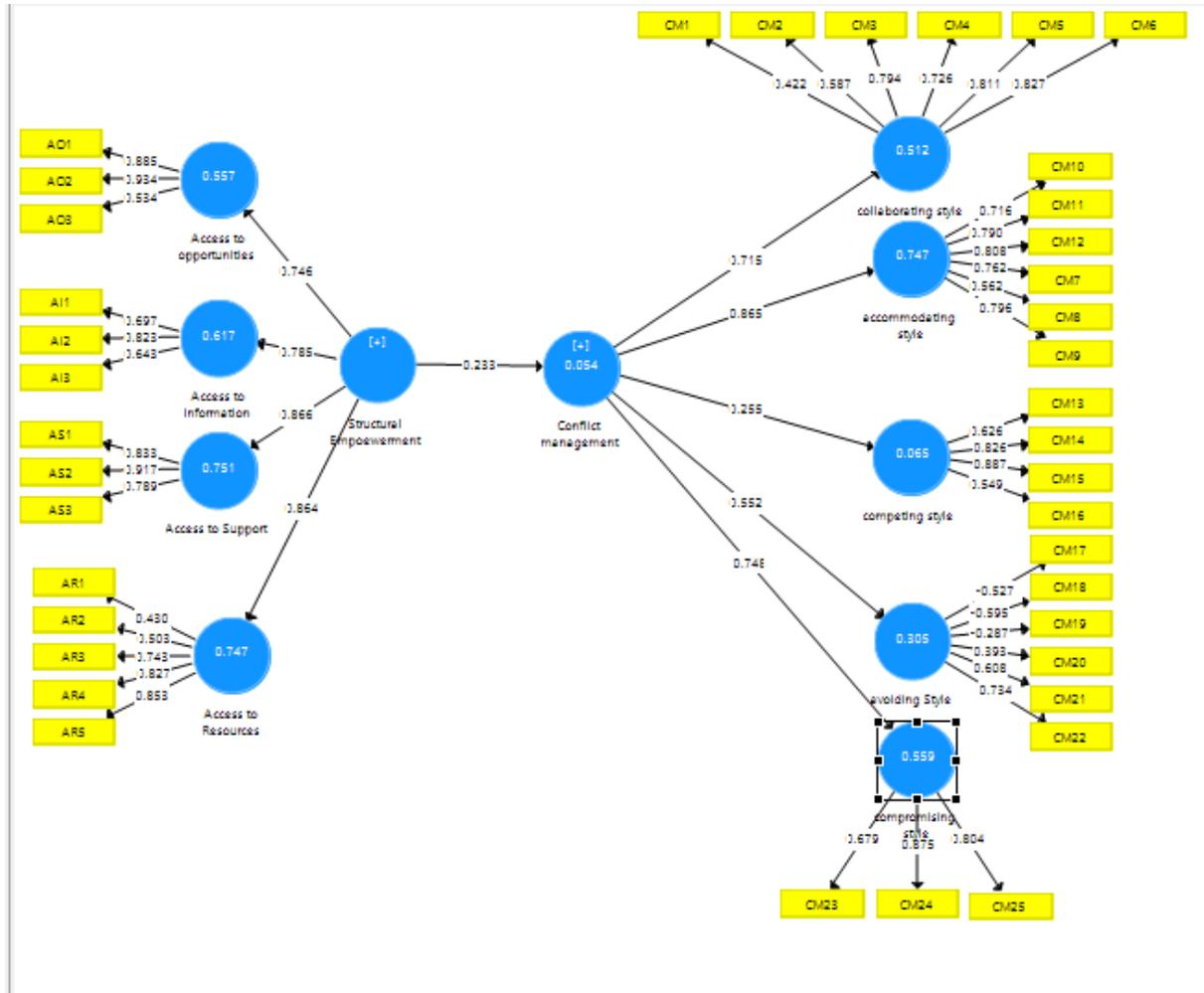
In order to reach the set of objectives for this study, SPSS version 23 and Partial Least Square “PLS” methodology using Smart PLS 3.0 (student version) were applied. The two software were used to analyze the relation between variables and test the research hypotheses. The reliability and validity of the scale were tested by Average Variance Extracted and Composite Reliability.

IV. Results and Discussion:

1. Assessment of the Measurement Model:

1.1. Model at First: structural equation modelling (SEM) outcomes in the first result illustrated that the model is compatible with data research. Styles of conflict management (collaborating style, accommodating style, competing style, avoiding style and compromising style) are affected by structural empowerment.

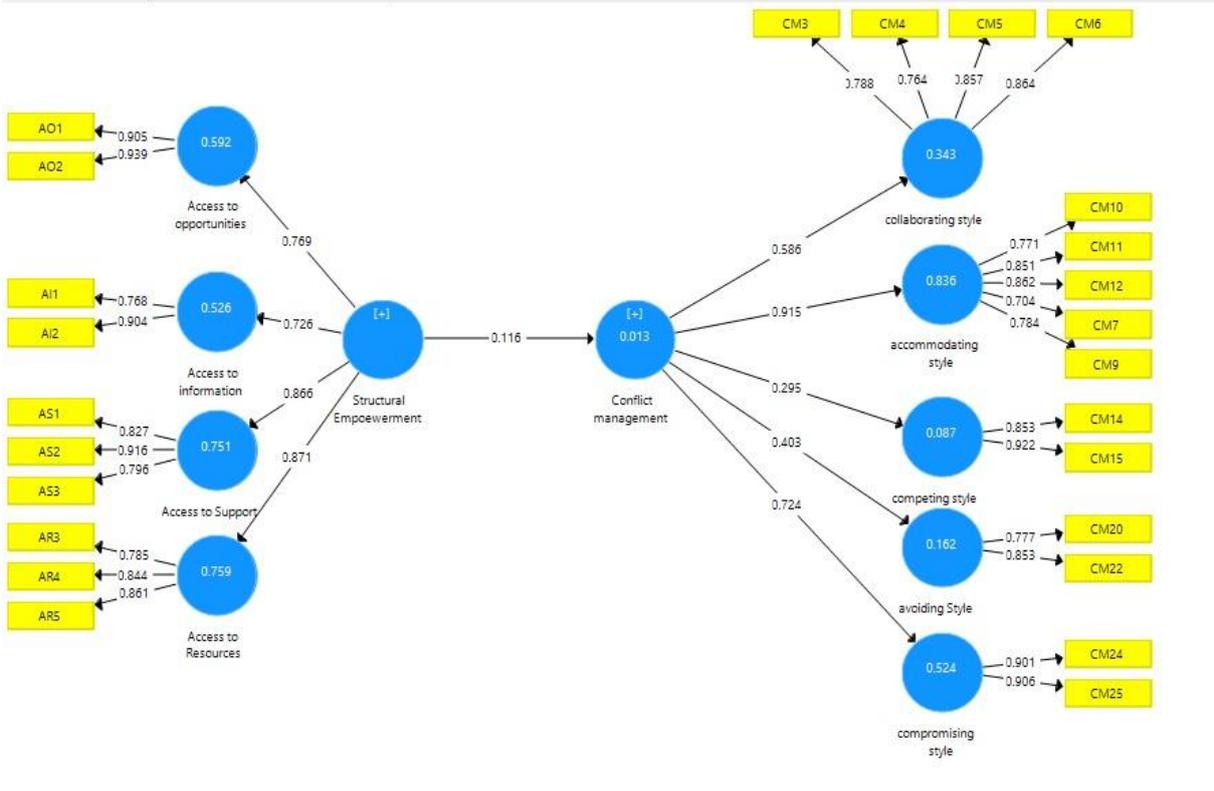
Figure 03: First Result of the Research SEM Model.



Source: by authors based on Smart PLS 3 output.

1.2. Model at Last: after the first calculation of our research model, we have removed all items that indicated individual item reliability less than 0.7. The 14 removed items are as follow: AO3, AI3, AR1, AR2, CM1, CM2, CM8, CM16, CM13, CM17, CM18, CM19, CM21, and CM23.

Figure 04: Result of the Research SEM Model at Last



Source: by authors based on Smart PLS 3 output

1.3. Consistency and Reliability: the previous figure and the table below show all items, with the factor loading scoring more than 0.7. Our model is tested through composite reliability in which the measure of reliability is statistically accepted.

Table 02: Research Model's Factor Loading, Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted

Items	FL > 0.7	CR > 0.7	AVE > 0.5
AO1	0.905	0.919	0.850
AO2	0.935		
AI1	0.768	0.825	0.703
AI2	0.904		
AS1	0.827	0.884	0.718
AS2	0.916		
AS3	0.796		
AR3	0.785	0.870	0.690
AR4	0.844		
AR5	0.861		
CM3	0.788	0.891	0.671
CM4	0.764		
CM5	0.857		
CM6	0.864		
CM7	0.704	0.896	0.634
CM9	0.784		
CM10	0.771		
CM11	0.851		
CM12	0.862		
CM14	0.853	0.882	0.789
CM15	0.922		
CM20	0.777	0.799	0.666
CM22	0.853		
CM24	0.901	0.899	0.816
CM25	0.906		

Source: By authors based on Smart PLS 3 output.

The table demonstrates that the composite reliability changes between 0.798 to 0.919 which is above the recommended value of 0.7.

AVE results are between 0.569 and 0.850, which is more than 0.5. This proves that our model is internally consistent.

1.4. Discriminant Validity: Fornell-Larcker criterion indicates that the latent variable should explain better the variance of its own indicators than the

	Access to resources	Access to support	Access to information	Access to opportunities	Accommodating style	Avoiding style	Collaborating style	Competing style	Compromising style
Access to resources	0.831								
Access to support	0.621	0.847							
Access to information	0.562	0.559	0.839						
Access to opportunities	0.587	0.556	0.376	0.922					
Accommodating style	-0.003	0.093	-0.177	0.181	0.796				
Avoiding style	0.161	0.172	0.217	0.231	0.197	0.816			
Collaborating style	0.136	0.192	-0.082	0.165	0.334	0.244	0.819		
Competing style	0.216	0.014	-0.019	0.215	0.333	-0.074	-0.035	0.888	
Compromising style	-0.146	0.067	-0.181	0.205	0.605	0.305	0.167	0.064	0.903.

variance of other latent variables by showing the highest score, just as the table demonstrates.

Table 03: Model’s Fornell- Larcker Criterion

Source: By authors based on Smart PLS 3 output

2. Assessment of the Structural Model:

2.1. R and R Square value: (Chin, 1998) suggested that when the value of R Square is less than 0.19, it is considered weak. When it is more than 0.33, it is considered moderate, and when it is more than 0.67, it is considered substantial.

Table 04: Model’s R Square Value

	R square	R Square Adjusted	Result
Accommodating style	0.836	0.834	Substantial
Avoiding style	0.162	0.152	Weak
Collaborating style	0.343	0.335	Moderate
Competing style	0.087	0.075	Weak
Compromising style	0.524	0.517	Moderate

Source: By authors based on Smart PLS 3 output

The table demonstrates that the independent variable “Structural Empowerment” is explained by 83.6, 16.2, 34.3, 8.7 and 52.4 percent by dependant variables

(accommodating style, avoiding style, collaborating style, competing style and compromising style) respectively.

- 2.2. F Square Value:** Furthermore, the effect size f square, which indicates the relative effect of a particular dependant latent variable on independent latent variable. (Cohen, 1998) indicated when f square values are 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35, they are representing small, medium and large effect size.

Table 05: Model's f Square Value

	Conflict management	Result
Structural empowerment	0.014	Small effect size

Source: By authors based on Smart PLS 3 output.

The table above indicates that the independent variable “structural empowerment” has small effect size on the dependant variable “conflict management”.

- 2.3. Q square Value:** Q square value demonstrates the ability of the model dependent variables to forecast and predict the model independent variable. Q square is acceptable when it is positive, above the value 0.

Table 06: Model's Q Square

	Q square = 1- SSE/SSO	Results
Access to opportunities	0.483	acceptable
Access to resources	0.339	Acceptable
Access to support	0.527	Acceptable
Access to information	0.514	Acceptable
Accommodating style	0.205	Acceptable
Avoiding style	0.499	Acceptable
Collaborating style	0.049	Acceptable
Competing style	0.075	Acceptable
Compromising style	0.403	Acceptable

Source: By authors based on Smart PLS 3 output.

2.4. Goodness of Fit of the Model:

The measurement of goodness of fit (GoF) illustrates the global fit of the research model. The purpose of GoF is to account on the study model. Fit of models is considered high when GoF is higher than 0.36. (Wetzels, Odekerken-Schroder, & Van Oppen, 2009)

Table 07: Model's GoF Value

GoF
0.165

Source: By authors based on Smart PLS 3 output.

2.5. Path Coefficient of the Research Hypotheses Test:

Table 08: Path Coefficient and Hypotheses Test

Hypotheses	Relationship	P-Value	Decision
H1	Structural empowerment → conflict management	0.308	Unsupported
H2	Structural empowerment → collaborating style	0.354	Unsupported
H3	Structural empowerment → accommodating style	0.303	Unsupported
H4	Structural empowerment → competing style	0.429	Unsupported
H5	Structural empowerment → avoiding style	0.412	Unsupported
H6	Structural empowerment → compromising style	0.311	Unsupported

Source: By authors based on Smart PLS 3 output.

The table above indicates that the independent variable “structural empowerment” has no statistically significant effect on conflict management and its dimensions.

V. Conclusion:

From this study, it is concluded that structural empowerment is defined as a practice, or set of practices to offer access to information, resources, support and opportunity to acquire a set of skills in work environment. It also includes six dimensions that lead to the growth of empowerment: having access to information, receiving support, having access to resources necessary to do the job, having the opportunity to learn and grow, formal power and informal power.

Also, conflict is defined as a disagreement between two or more individuals or groups, with each individual or group trying to gain acceptance of its views or objective over others. The most common strategies for handling conflicts are: integrating style, obliging (accommodating) style, dominating (competing) style, avoiding style and compromising style.

The results of the questionnaire analysis showed that there is no statistically significant impact of structural empowerment on conflict management, which means that the sample we chose considers that structural empowerment does not have any effect on how employees deal with conflicts. Also, it does not conclude that there is no effect between structural empowerment and conflict management styles.

Although the sample did not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that the effect between structural empowerment and conflict management styles exists. It is highly recommended that DML should empower their employees in the appropriate form to reduce conflicts between groups. For better employees' behavior and effective work, empowerment is recommended to be implemented and integrated in the organization.

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