

Dynamics of Task Conflict for Employees in the Virtual Workplace: Moderating Role of Relationship Conflict and Mediating Role of Team Mindfulness

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Abstract

In the modern-day workplace, conflicts among team members are often observed due to multiple reasons. Therefore, it is important to study the different aspects associated with conflict dynamics. For this research study, the sample was selected from organizations enabled by information and communication technology, where employees are virtually connected. As a result, this research becomes particularly relevant in post-COVID-19 scenarios. SPSS version 23 was employed for moderation and mediation analyses using the Process Macro developed by Preacher and Hayes (version 3.3). Additionally, linear regression analysis was conducted. The statistical tests demonstrated a significant direct effect of task conflict on the outcome variables, as well as the indirect effects of moderating and mediating variables. The moderating variable of relationship conflict had a significant impact on both task conflict and team mindfulness. The direct association of task conflict was also assessed using simple linear regression analysis in SPSS. This research explored a novel relationship among variables in virtual and digital organizations, where psychological contract breaches sometimes also contribute to conflict dynamics. Thus, the study has investigated this phenomenon from the overarching theoretical perspective of mindfulness theory. Valuable recommendations have been provided for future researchers based on the insights derived from this research.

Keywords: Relationship conflict; task conflict; team mindfulness; virtual workplace; information and communication technology (ICT).

JEL Classification: M19, J24

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1. Introduction

Conflicts of various kinds among individuals can serve as sources of cognitive stress for workers in a team-based environment. Consequently, it becomes challenging for team members to differentiate between their priorities for emotional well-being and job-related prioritization. These disputes can frequently lead to disagreements over tasks, potentially fracturing relationships among teammates who collaborate within and across teams. (Hilal, 2021; Khan et al., 2022). Such conflicting scenarios at a workplace may lead to negative outcomes such as deviant behavior and organizational politics (Greer et al., 2008; Khan et al., 2022), and occasionally, people see it as a danger for their ability to perform their jobs in a competent manner (Gastón, 2022; Tidd et al., 2004). Consequently, the tension related to tasks experienced by employees, which can lead to strained relationships, has the potential to adversely affect both team-based and individual relationships. Employees who cultivate mindfulness can effectively maintain a neutral perspective when facing the current situation. Such mindfulness entails observing the situation without biases. Moreover, individual instances of deviant behavior can also be attributed to the presence of a toxic interpersonal social network (Adeyemi, 2022). Conflict can stem from interpersonal difficulties at work, consequently, negatively impacting other teamwork-related factors. This can lead to a deterioration in individuals' perceptions of their work-related psychological stress and an escalation in the extent to which social networking is impaired (Hilal, 2021).

Social networking in the workplace can be influenced by various forms of conflict, such as task and relationship conflicts. Consequently, it holds the potential for a correlation with instances of social undermining within the work environment (Adeyemi, 2022; Shaw et al., 2011). Employees' endeavors to sustain meaningful relationships within the group promote the effective resolution of moral issues based on their perceptions. However, when ethical measures are construed as a component of politics, it can complicate matters (Shaw et al., 2011; Van Kleef, 2010). This situation can lead to evident pressure and social disruption among individuals working in a group. Perceived pressure can serve as a catalyst for certain instances of workplace contentment, although not all forms of pressure are anticipated or visible. Previous research has defined stress as a perception arising within a situation or as an event that surpasses an individual's cognitive capacities. Consequently, investigating the dynamics linked to both task and relationship conflicts becomes imperative. However, this research gap is even more pronounced within the context of virtual workplaces, which gains further significance in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (Lazarus, 1984).

There is an emerging concept of mindfulness in the literature and very little attention has been paid at how it positively or negatively affects workplace behaviors at the individual and team levels. Scholars have also explained the concept of mindfulness as a non-judgmental analysis of a situation faced by an individual, group, or team that focuses on the present scenario without the excessive focus on the past or the uncertainties of the future (Yu &

Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018). Most of the scholars who have written on this concept's application at the workplace are of the view that mindfulness protects against staggered conflict resolution procedures, even though logical academic literature frequently examined mindfulness as a cross-functional perspective at the level of the individual (Sutcliffe et al., 2016; Turner et al., 2016), high-performance practices. At the organizational level, mindfulness can be typically explained through mindfulness theory and social adaptability (Baron et al., 2018), for the social and organizational learning of employees, stimulates greater managerial knowledge (Cacioppe, 2017), enhanced efficiency (Dietz et al., 2017; Sutcliffe et al., 2016), from diverse sources (Turner et al., 2016), helping the organization to retain valuable employees for its survival in this competitive business world (Gastón, 2022; Hafenbrack et al., 2014; Johnson & Avolio, 2019). The practice of mindfulness is such that it can be learned with time and individuals may practice it at the team level as well. There always remains a possibility to observe the application of mindfulness at different levels of a team (Shaw et al., 2011).

Workplace conflict often starts from the task conflict, which may lead the employees and teams towards mindfulness once they are out of the initial aggressive phase (Gastón, 2022; Turner et al., 2016; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018)); this happens not just at the individual level but at the team level as well which may become a source of perceived stress and social undermining leading to the possibilities of conflict resolution (Gastón, 2022; Good et al., 2016; Hilal, 2021; Xu et al., 2017). Hence, cognitive load at the individual level contributes to the cognitive load at the team level as well. However, team mindfulness acts as a somewhat positive measure for and preventing further conflict (Johnson & Avolio, 2019). At times, when there is task clarity in the teams then task conflict may also take a positive shape for invoking further development (De Wit et al., 2012; Gastón, 2022; Shaw et al., 2011). But it also generates a possibility of relationship conflict which needs further observation at the level of individuals and teams (Gastón, 2022; Gerpott & Kearney, 2017; Hilal, 2021). This research study offers the idea that interpersonal conflict is more challenging since it might induce individuals to engage in deviant behaviors, including social undermining and feeling stressed. Additionally, this study describes the role that mindfulness may play in handling a scenario where there is a relationship and task conflict (Davidson & Kaszniak, 2015; Hilal, 2021). This research had the following six research objectives.

1. To examine the relationship between task conflict and perceived stress.
2. To examine the relationship between task conflict and social undermining.
3. To examine the relationship between relationship conflict and social undermining.
4. To assess the impact of relationship conflict as a moderating variable in the relationship between task conflict and team mindfulness.
5. To examine the role of team mindfulness as a mediator in the relationship between task conflict and perceived stress.
6. To examine the role of team mindfulness as a mediator in the relationship between task conflict and social undermining.

This study has investigated the direct and indirect impacts of task conflict on perceived stress and social undermining within ICT-based organizations in Pakistan. The study has explored how team mindfulness serves as a mediating variable and relationship conflict functions as a moderating variable within this relationship. In today's virtual landscape, organizations frequently adopt a team-based approach. Hence, for the survey of individual respondents, team-based organizations were deliberately chosen. Organizations from both the public and private sectors of Pakistan were selected for this purpose. These virtual organizations, often overlooked in prior research pertaining to the causal relationships between the variables under scrutiny in this study, have been given due consideration in this research, thereby addressing an existing gap in the literature.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Task Conflict

Colleagues with opposing socio-cognitive traits frequently cause conflict inside and between teams, and the intensity of this conflict can be particularly pronounced concerning interpersonal and task-related conflict. The conflict that arises while working includes disagreements about a particular method, structure, and workflow, whereas relational conflict primarily results from differences in personality traits and viewpoints in the workplace (Jehn, 1995; Li et al., 2022). Past research explained that the frequency of conflict may vary in different types of workplaces but it is a natural phenomenon that surely occurs at some level, may it be a micro level or at a team organizational level, especially when there is an unjustified distribution of tasks (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). It may create relationship barriers, and further complexities are generated for the employees and managers (De Wit et al., 2012; Iskamto et al., 2022). Employees depend upon socialization with peers for accomplishing their difficult tasks. Hence, relationships matter in the workplace. However, a conflict due to a task may lead to relation breach (Greer et al., 2008). Most of the time, such relational and task-orientated conflicts are observed in a team-based environment (Shahzad et al., 2022; Todorova et al., 2014). Frequent relationship conflicts have negative effects and depend more on the individuals' intentions, determination, and actions than their intellectual qualities and interpersonal relationships (De Wit et al., 2012).

The positive or bad effects of a workplace disagreement depend on the emotions that arise from it (Saundry et al., 2021; Weingart et al., 2015). If employees are satisfied at the workplace then they may have greater job satisfaction (Malhotra et al., 2021; Todorova et al., 2014), and this enhances interaction and positive association among team members at the workplace (Malhotra et al., 2021). Individual and team performance are negatively impacted by negative emotions and interpersonal connections are frequently ruined. Hence, employees and managers do realize this factor for greater productivity (Van Kleef, 2010). Otherwise, conflict may escalate at the workplace, which may have detrimental effects on the organization including organizational politics, deviant behavior, and increased turnover intention (Weingart et al., 2015).

Employees need to have emotional intelligence for better conflict handling (Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020). Conflict expression theory states that when people develop negative cognitive bias, harmful sensations are produced when the behavioral outcomes of conflict are depicted (Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020; Todorova et al., 2014). Sometimes, due to task conflicts, employees could take a threatening, confused, or defensive stance. This may be contrary to the goals of the department, team, or organization. However, it needs training, experience, and emotional intelligence to handle such scenarios for mutual gain (Weingart et al., 2015). A person's level of oppositional intensity and sense of conflict may differ from the team's overall viewpoint on the same issue (Bradley et al., 2015). Conflicts can be addressed more skillfully with experience, a present-oriented orientation, and nonjudgmental mindfulness behavior (Good et al., 2016; Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020). So, of various circumstances and business settings, team mindfulness aids in the better elaboration of task conflict.

2.2 *Relationship conflict*

Conflict-related behavior in people is influenced by opposing relationship connections (Malhotra et al., 2021; Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020; Wu et al., 2015). Conflict in group interactions may therefore make social subverting at work even worse. Duffy et al. (2002) Social subverting was defined in the past literature as "a behavior intended to impair a worker's ability to create and sustain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success, and a favorable reputation". The social environment also affects interpersonal conflict and social manipulation (Duffy et al., 2002; Hershcovis, 2011). Disregarding allures to preserve wonderful relationships demands work, preparing friends with fewer relationships or those having conflicts to understand the other side and cope with ethical issues competently so that they can reply with morally appealing actions (Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020; Van Kleef, 2010). Task conflict and mindfulness at work are associated, which may be explained by relationship conflict.

A balanced application of team mindfulness and task conflict frequently reduces interpersonal conflict (Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018). For instance, job conflict raises the intellectual load on employees, making it challenging to distinguish between task conflict enhancement and individual relationship conflict augmentation (Simons & Peterson, 2000). Therefore, groups may interpret task-related interpersonal differences as a person's preference or aversion or as an evaluation of their capacity, moving the emphasis from the task to relational conflict (Greer et al., 2008; Malhotra et al., 2021; Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020; Tidd et al., 2004). The group dynamics shift as a result of increased workplace conflict (Choi & Cho, 2011), which lowers people's views of their sensitivity to unanticipated consequences (Tsai & Bendersky, 2016). Past research has also shown that employees interpret task difficulty at the group level (Weingart et al., 2015).

Because the inexperienced administration undermines instinctive reasoning, relationship conflict cannot always be classified as a dissident (Chaiken, 1980; Iskamto et al., 2022). Contextual management slows down progressively quick recoveries, such as in a marital quarrel, and softens unpleasant reactions that could cause social problems. The present focused thought with intentional mindfulness makes people rapidly conscious of conditions, thereby helping to bring acknowledgment to specific character traits of the individuals. Organizations, team members, and individuals with mindful awareness are more reluctant to relationship-related conflict as a means that partners are purposely constructive (Iskamto et al., 2022; Simons & Peterson, 2000). Overall, mindfulness reduces a person's or a group's propensity for hostility, wrath, and contagious aggressiveness (Good et al., 2016; Krishnakumar & Robinson, 2015; Saundry et al., 2021). But the dynamics of mindfulness in a virtual workplace have not been studied in the prior literature.

2.3 *Team Mindfulness*

Being mindful is frequently a relational, collective, and cognitive oddity that occurs between coworkers in groups and teams (Saundry et al., 2021; Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). One typical viewpoint of people working in a group comes from relational connection when colleagues work together for both formal and informal engagement (Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1991; Iskamto et al., 2022). In team dynamics, cultural pattern defends against harmful relational linkages. Team mindfulness, as explained in the literature depicts a strong agreement among members of the team because teamwork encounters are characterized by awareness and focus on the present event, as well as by experiential, non-judgmental processing of within-team experience (Sutcliffe et al., 2016; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018). Rarely does an employee at employment remain connected for job-related communication to the exclusion of some or all of their other coworkers. Coworkers frequently criticize one another to further their positions without taking a closer look at those of their fellow workers. In any event, it is uncommon for the group members to remain close over the long term because the crucial intellectual cycles vehemently increase a group's exhibition and sufficiency. Social as well as team mindfulness significantly contributes to commitment and capacity with mutual consensus and conception to act decisively for the group. Teamwork serves as inspiration for those functioning together, particularly when working on a topic of common interest, due to the supportive comments from coworkers in a particular setting (Saundry et al., 2021; van Knippenberg et al., 2013; Weick & Roberts, 1993).

Mindfulness enables people to have a better and more insightful perspective on the world, particularly as it relates to a team or group. With a setting with multiple orientations, it aids in decision-making. People remain more aware of and attached to the components of the current point of view and group requirements (Iskamto et al., 2022; Karlin, 2018). Another element of mindfulness in a team is how individuals respond to changes in external stimuli (Baron et al., 2018). People stay drawn during group dynamics of mindfulness because of the

shared effort. Therefore, cognitions serve as a kind of constructive interference for the members' relational communication and individual perception to enhance intellectual abilities that are risky for normal administrative activities. Although it is well known that meditation is an event that takes place on an individual basis, human resource experts frequently focus on how mindfulness functions just at the group and collective level (Hülshager, 2015; Iskanto et al., 2022; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018). As a result, a deeper understanding of how team and group mindfulness functions at different levels requires experimental designs and survey-based research, which is one of the research gaps in the literature.

While examining it at the team or group level, working in a team is a process that also takes individual attention into account. In group work, mindfulness rises and creates a shared intellectual state that colleagues establish by engaging in the group (Marks et al., 2001). Since rising events are the outcome of collected correspondence and the perceived resultant influence after its linkages, an individual's cognitive focus is connected to newly independent mental states and strategic tactics (van Knippenberg et al., 2013). Characteristic of shared experience that sets it apart from personal experiences depicts mindfulness at the team level. The individual and group levels of analysis are both included in common mindfulness-related theoretical frameworks, but their construction is different (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999). Two main components of mindfulness include present-focused attention and consciousness about what is occurring and current attentiveness and knowledge about potential future events dependent on the current situation (Adeyemi, 2022).

A concept of Buddhist provenance that is finding practical application at work as well is viewed as a type of receptive, open-minded, and self-controlled mindfulness. Yoga and other forms of exercise that are designed to soothe the body and mind have a strong connection to mindfulness. Labeling the events and impulsive reactions are not advised in team mindfulness because when people develop their ability to assess both the current situation and the impulse it is causing in them, this could affect how they make good decisions (Good et al., 2016; Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020). This may also incorporate a variety of other constructive and destructive aspects of the mind (Weick & Putnam, 2006). Individual mindfulness is a type of practice that people must adhere to, whereas interpersonal mindfulness focuses more on interpersonal connections (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020). It is a type of meditation in which one believes that one may influence circumstances and events through conscious thought (Good et al., 2016). Individual mindfulness is a phenomenon that can affect people, and it shows itself in people's actions and behaviors. Two components are emphasized by mindfulness theory. These include the cognitive and emotive aspects (Good et al., 2016). It is frequently viewed as a framework that lessens unpleasant feelings.

Workers' adaptability at work is improved by mindfulness in a variety of ways (Hamre et al., 2022). It prevents groups from having vulnerable attribution errors and communications predisposition in the way that participant and task adjustments continue to stay isolated (Hopthrow et al., 2017), cognition about immaterial improvements (Amason, 1997; Khan et al., 2022; Slagter et al., 2011), basic mistakes, and limited experiential handling are more uncertain (Iskamto et al., 2022), and outstanding team skills are much less likely to be seen as subjective. According to Good et al. (2016), mindfulness reduces personalization and response in group situations, which lowers the likelihood of interpersonal conflict at work. Mindfulness also enhances relationships (Amason, 1997). Transparency permits contrast while preventing hostility (De Wit et al., 2012; Jehn, 1995; Li et al., 2022). The relationship between task conflict and the perceived stress that people experience in a teamwork setting may be explained by team mindfulness. It might also explain the social weakening (Khan et al., 2022; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

2.4 *Perceived Stress*

Many health-related issues are thought to be predicted by stress, both in individuals and teams. Stress is linked to modifications in judgment, behavior, and emotions. Pressure is the awareness that a condition or event outweighs the resources available for adaptation (Richard S. Lazarus, 1984). One's ability can be increased with the support of mindfulness, especially when dealing with relationship stress. Because practicing mindfulness may help people cultivate emotional empathy and foster stronger relationships between individuals (Li et al., 2022; Reb et al., 2014; Shahzad et al., 2022). The scheduling of mindfulness introspection starts with setting goals since it considers the need to remain in the present moment to reduce stress and increase both personal and professional prosperity (Baer et al., 2004; Hamre et al., 2022; Miller et al., 1995).

2.5 *Social Undermining*

Behavior problems at work may be the cause of social isolation for those who are affected. People's morale will suffer if they are treated unfairly at work by their peers or bosses, which would undermine social order. Such social undermining has been seen not only at jobs but also within households, and it may be a possible cause of abnormal conduct (Li et al., 2022; Sarwar et al., 2020). The bottom-line mindset of managers contributes to social undermining among workers at the workplace (Eissa et al., 2020). Additionally, social undermining lowers self-efficacy and may harm employees' creative capacities (Hilal, 2021; Khan et al., 2022). Task and relational conflict both directly and indirectly affect social undermining at work (Tsai & Bendersky, 2016; Van Kleef, 2010; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

3. Conceptual Framework

Mental and emotional functions are two of the elements of mindfulness theory (Good et al., 2016). These might be used to clarify the events that lead to a task conflict or a relationship conflict. The dispute thus explains valuable issues for task handling at work for various outcomes. This model might also be partially explained by other theories like organizational conflict theory and cognitive models like Ernest and Corral's model. Negative attitudes are triggered when conflict is considered to have an opposing intensity, claims the conflict expression theory. Though the cited literature in this study also highlighted the spillover effects of relationship conflict as it is created from task conflict, much like it was demonstrated in this research model, mindfulness theory does not just explain felt stress concerning task conflict but its associated contingency with the relationship conflict (Todorova et al., 2014).

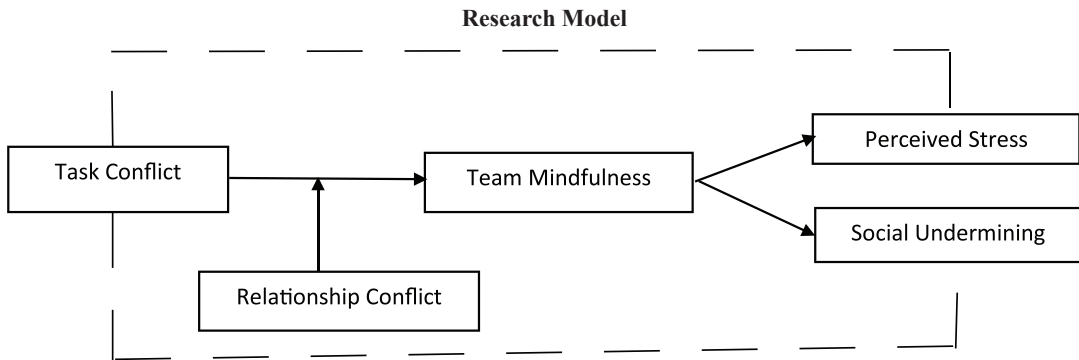


Figure 1: Proposed Research Model of the Study

Using mindfulness theory as the underpinning theory for this conceptual model, the following were the proposed hypotheses of this research study:

H1: Task conflict has a positive association with perceived stress.

H2: Task conflict has a positive association with social undermining.

H3: Relationship conflict acts as moderating effect in the relationship between task conflict and team mindfulness.

H4: Team mindfulness has a positive mediation effect on the relationship between task conflict and perceived stress.

H5: Team mindfulness has a positive mediation effect on the relationship between task conflict and social undermining.

4. Research Methodology

This quantitative investigation employed a hypothetic deductive methodology. In this explanatory study, the researcher used a positivistic research philosophy to try to investigate social factors as they are without any personal involvement. Non-probability purposive sampling was utilized to gather data due to the variety of responses. Members of virtual teams from companies where coworkers primarily communicate and interact with one another via computer-mediated virtual interactions and correspondence were the source of the data. Quantitative data was mostly gathered from software companies and a Pakistani university with an ICT focus. A few more freelance digital businesses were also contacted to gather data. Individual employees who worked in an online or digital environment served as the study unit. The present research was a one-shot study. 230 respondents to a survey were used to acquire quantitative data for this research article.

Surveys and online data collecting were used for data collection. The potential responders were also sent an email with a link, and before that, they received information about the survey. Purposive sampling is still a good choice in situations like this, where the researcher's judgment is crucial, and it was used in this case. The population of virtual workers employed by various businesses and as independent contractors in the digital freelancing industry is vast, hence sampling was done to try and measure demographic characteristics. 326 people were emailed the survey, and 230 of them responded, yielding a response rate of 71%. The gathered data was coded before being entered into SPSS. Through SPSS version 23, Pearson correlation analysis (one-tailed) was done, and the results were then interpreted.

Using the proper criteria, Preacher and Hayes' Process Macro version 3.3 was utilized to examine the impact of mediating and moderating variables. To evaluate the impact of the mediating variable, Model 4 of Process Macro was employed. The conceptual model's moderating variable's impacts were examined using Model 1. The direct effect of variables was measured using simple linear regression analysis in SPSS. Adopted measurement scales were used in this study. The 12 items on the perceived stress measurement scale were taken from previous literature (i.e., Cohen, 1988). Task conflict was measured using a four-item measurement scale adopted from previous literature (Pearson et al., 2002). The 5-item measuring was used to evaluate relationship conflict and it was also adopted from previous literature (Pearson et al., 2002). For team mindfulness, 10-item measure was employed which was adopted from previous literature (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018). 13-item measuring instrument to assess social undermining which was also adopted from previous literature (Duffy et al., 2002).

5. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed in SPSS version 23. After data cleaning, the normality of the data was assessed through skewness and kurtosis values. Reliability statistics were found through Cronbach Alpha values as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1
Reliability Analysis

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| .765 | 44 |

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Variable

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis | | |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Std. Error |
| pStress | 230 | 1.08 | 4.00 | 2.3638 | .58042 | -.083 | .160 | -.612 | .320 |
| tMindfulness | 230 | 1.50 | 4.00 | 3.0248 | .51474 | -.296 | .160 | -.441 | .320 |
| tConflict | 230 | 1.50 | 4.00 | 3.0248 | .51474 | -.296 | .160 | -.441 | .320 |
| rConflict | 230 | 1.20 | 4.40 | 3.1608 | .57259 | -.503 | .160 | -.059 | .320 |
| sUndermining | 229 | 1.15 | 3.54 | 2.7459 | .42346 | -.837 | .161 | 1.138 | .320 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 229 | | | | | | | | |

Values between +2 and -2 are typically regarded as acceptable. Relationship conflict had one value that was higher than the cutoff level of 2.5 for the Z score of data normality. That case was so dropped.

5.1 Correlation of Variables

Table 3
Pearson Correlation Values of the Variables

| | | pStress | tMindfulness | tConflict | rConflict | sUndermining |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| pStress | Pearson Correlation | 1 | | | | |
| | Sig. (1-tailed) | | | | | |
| | N | 230 | | | | |
| tMindfulness | Pearson Correlation | .053 | 1 | | | |
| | Sig. (1-tailed) | .214 | | | | |
| | N | 230 | 230 | | | |
| tConflict | Pearson Correlation | .053 | 1.000 | 1 | | |
| | Sig. (1-tailed) | .214 | .000 | | | |
| | N | 230 | 230 | 230 | | |
| rConflict | Pearson Correlation | -.308 | .550 | .549 | 1 | |
| | Sig. (1-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | | |
| | N | 230 | 230 | 230 | 230 | |
| sUndermining | Pearson Correlation | .030 | .337 | .337 | .441 | 1 |
| | Sig. (1-tailed) | .326 | .000 | .000 | .000 | |
| | N | 229 | 229 | 229 | 229 | 229 |

It is evident from the correlation of variables that most of the variables had moderate correlation. However, the strongest correlation was between team mindfulness and perceived stress.

5.2 Use of Hayes Process Macro for Testing Indirect Effects in the Model

Hayes Process Macro version 3.3 was downloaded and plugged into SPSS 21 to be used to examine the significance of the indirect effect of moderating and mediating variables for this model. The following results were obtained.

5.3 Mediating effect of team mindfulness between task conflict and perceived stress

Table 4
Mediation Analysis through Process Macro by Preacher and Hayes (Model 4)

| | Effect | SE | LLCI | ULCI |
|----------|---------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| tMindful | .1837 | 0416 | .1076 | .2729 |

Here, the critical values of the upper and lower bound confidence intervals were both positive. Therefore, it is significant evidence that the mediation effect exists between the variables through team mindfulness. This was tested at a 95 % confidence interval with a bootstrapping value of 5000.

5.4 *Moderating effect of relationship conflict between task conflict and team mindfulness*

It was hypothesized that relationship conflict would act as a positive moderating variable between task conflict and relationship conflict.

Table 5

Moderation Analysis through Process Macro by Preacher and (Model 1)

| rConf | Effect | se | t | p | LLCI | ULCI |
|--------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|
| 2.7920 | .2861 | .0405 | 7.0620 | .0000 | .2062 | .3659 |
| 3.2000 | .1965 | .0337 | 5.8247 | .0000 | .1300 | .2630 |
| 3.8000 | .0648 | .0492 | 1.3173 | .1891 | -.0322 | .1618 |

The interaction term was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) at 95% confidence interval ($p = .000$, $s.e. = .070620$, $b = .2861$). Therefore, the moderating effect's hypothesis is supported that the relationship conflict has a strong contingent effect on the relationship between task conflict and team mindfulness.

5.5 *Mediation of team mindfulness for task conflict and social undermining*

Table 6

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y

| | Effect | SE | LLCI | ULCI |
|----------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| tMindful | .0956 | .0214 | .0555 | .1389 |

Here, the critical values of the upper and lower bound confidence intervals were both positive. Therefore, it is significant evidence that the mediation effect exists between the variables through team mindfulness. This was tested at a 95% confidence interval with a bootstrapping value of 5000.

5.6 *Testing direct effects through linear regression analysis*

5.6.1 *Linear Regression Analysis Between Task Conflict and Perceived Stress*

The direct effect of task conflict and perceived stress was tested through simple linear regression analysis, and the effect was found significant. The value of R^2 was 0.11, which

depicted an 11% change in perceived stress due to the task conflict in the individuals working in the virtual teams.

Table 7
Model Summary

| Model | R | R² | Adjusted R² | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | .333 ^a | .111 | .107 | .54844 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), tConflict

b. Dependent Variable: pStress

Table 8
ANOVA

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|--------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 8.567 | 1 | 8.567 | 28.483 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 68.579 | 228 | .301 | | |
| | Total | 77.146 | 229 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: pStress

b. Predictors: (Constant), tConflict

ANOVA table shows a significant positive value of the F statistic. The table of coefficients has shown that the p is significant at < 0.05 , which proves the relevant hypothesis.

Table 9
Coefficients and Significance Value

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized | t | Sig. |
|--------------|------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------|-------------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Coefficients | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 3.088 | .141 | | 21.981 | .000 |
| | tConflict | -.213 | .040 | -.333 | -5.337 | .000 |

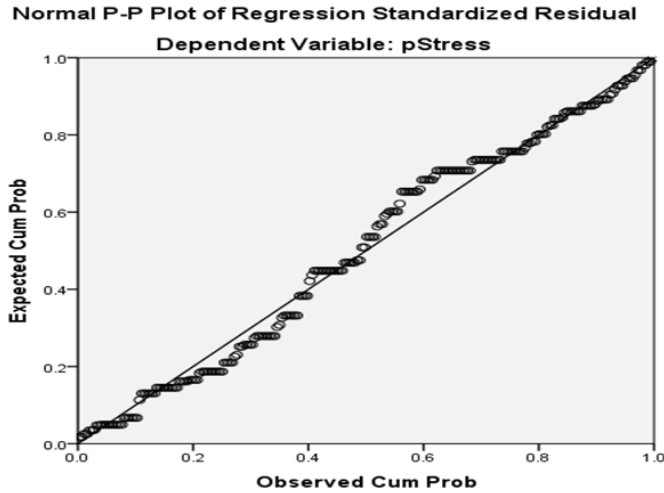


Figure 2: Linear Regression Plot

5.6.2 Linear Regression Analysis between Task Conflict and Social Undermining

The direct effect of task conflict and perceived stress was tested through simple linear regression analysis, and the effect was found significant. The value of R² was 0.01, which depicted a 1% change in perceived stress due to the task conflict in the individuals working in the virtual teams.

Table 10
Model Summary

| Model | R | R ² | Adjusted R ² | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .136 ^a | .018 | .014 | .42045 |

ANOVA table shows a significant positive value of the F statistic. The table of coefficients has shown that the p is significant at < 0.05, which proves the relevant hypothesis.

Table 11
ANOVA

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | .755 | 1 | .755 | 4.271 | .040 ^b |
| | Residual | 40.129 | 227 | .177 | | |
| | Total | 40.884 | 228 | | | |

- a. Dependent Variable: sUndermining
- b. Predictors: (Constant), tConflict

Table 12
Coefficients and Significance Value

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 2.531 | .108 | | 23.468 | .000 |
| | tConflict | .063 | .031 | .136 | 2.067 | .040 |

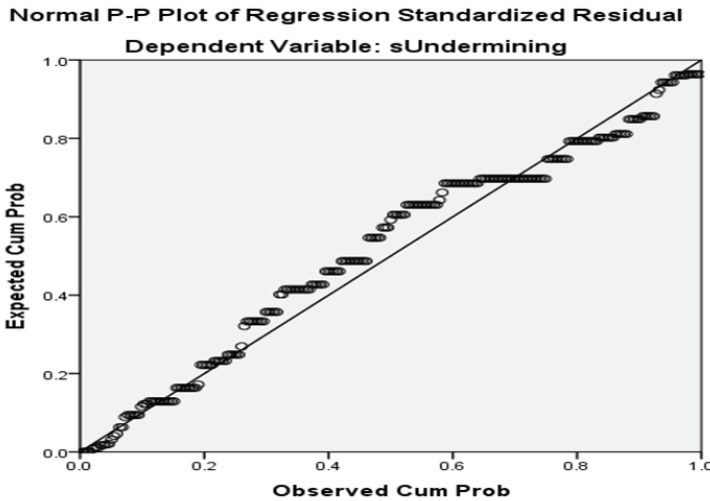


Figure 3: Linear Regression Plot

6. Discussion

The data analysis makes it clear that the constructs of this study adequately explain the model. Conflict over tasks occurs when virtual teams are working together. In virtual teams, task conflict may lead to relationship ambiguities among workers. To test the one-tailed hypothesis on task conflict and interpersonal conflict, more research was required. Similarly, to this, psychological stress and interpersonal conflict have a substantial indirect effect. This leads to the conclusion that interpersonal disagreement may heighten the sense of stress in virtual work teams. However, more research is needed to determine how team mindfulness affects social undermining (Li et al., 2022). Current research has addressed these gaps to a large extent. It is evident that if mindfulness is present at the team level then task conflict leads to perceived stress and social undermining, which are the stimulants to suppress further aggravation of conflict. However, it well also been proved that task conflict directly impacts perceived stress and social undermining. Therefore, practitioners must strategize their priorities to restrict those effects and inculcate a positive association among such factors so that the resultant outcomes are productive for the organization.

Task conflict and team mindfulness have a substantial indirect impact, followed by perceived stress and team mindfulness. Team mindfulness was selected as the mediating variable for this association. Relationship conflict can therefore lead to social undermining in online teams. The pertinent hypotheses are so, supported based on the objectives of this review for examining the interactions between these parameters. It's mostly because workplace conflict in groups is a typical occurrence (De Wit et al., 2012; Shaw et al., 2011; Smith & Fredricks-Lowman, 2020). But it also touches on the complex issues surrounding interpersonal conflict at work (Gerpott & Kearney, 2017). Task struggle, on the other hand, isn't always unpleasant and if people accept it as a challenging trait, it can be a source of enhanced performance. Any relationship disagreement is uncomfortable and leads to helpless outcomes (De Wit et al., 2012).

Table 13

Shows the Results of Hypothesis Testing after Data Analysis

| Serial | Hypothesis Statement | Results |
|--------|--|-----------|
| 1 | Task conflict has a positive association with perceived stress. | Supported |
| 2 | Task conflict has a positive association with social undermining. | Supported |
| 3 | Relationship conflict acts as a moderating effect in the relationship between task conflict and team mindfulness. | Supported |
| 4 | Team mindfulness has a positive mediation effect on the relationship between task conflict and perceived stress. | Supported |
| 5 | Team mindfulness has a positive mediation effect on the relationship between task conflict and social undermining. | Supported |

Mindfulness theory potentially explains this research model as this concept applies not just to individuals but teams in the workplace. However, past research did not elaborate on the cognitive and emotional dimensions of conflict and mindfulness in the virtual workplace. Therefore, this study is an addition to the existing knowledge in the domain of mindfulness theory for its further broader application and validation in the context of the modern-day workplace (Good et al., 2016; Malhotra et al., 2021). These findings might aid in uncovering the mechanisms behind productive workplace behavior. So, team conflicts offer a helpful technique to understand how conflicts arise in the workplace. Therefore, team mindfulness adequately explains the findings in light of the conceptual model for this investigation. Similarly, the constructs investigated in this study contribute to the theoretical and contextual significance of the study, particularly about employees working in the virtual workplace context. There haven't been many studies on workers in virtual workplaces, particularly in growing markets like those in South Asia, like Pakistan, where the study's basic data came from. This work may be helpful for subsequent empirical studies in this area.

This focus is crucial for professionals as well. For instance, the idea of a virtual workplace and essentially associated representations is now a reality with the development

of data innovation. Chiefs may have a better understanding that labor disputes could push employees towards pressure, which could also harm representatives' ability to market themselves. Additionally, relationship problems result from task difficulty, which surprisingly may lead to pressure in the workplace. Such elements might promote fewer professional behaviors in the workplace. Hierarchically relevant variables are important and they ensure the appearance of administrative equality in a good balance for an environment that would have less impact on the outcomes of tasks simultaneously. Initiatives addressing these concerns can help workers in a virtual workplace to find solutions. The management of these firms may use feedback from staff to develop policy measures to deal with workplace issues and improve performance (Shahzad, 2018).

6.1 Limitations and Future Directions

The present study solely included personnel from ICT-based firms and was cross-sectional in design. The concepts of this study are more broadly applicable. Thus, potential researchers may wish to repeat this research in various industries, contexts, and organizational settings. Since this was a cross-sectional study, its generalization was constrained. Potential researchers might want to conduct this kind of study using a time-lagged approach. Moreover, potential researchers should look into the possibility of a direct relationship between these dimensions in addition to the indirect moderating and mediating effects on perceived stress and social undermining.

7. Conclusion

According to the findings of the research, mindfulness completely breaks the link between social pressure and task difficulties. Relationship contention essentially functions as a linkage between the aforementioned predictor of task conflict and outcome factors. Relationship conflict, however, moderate task-related conflict and team mindfulness in the scenario of digital working groups are observed. People occasionally participate in task-related conflicts to meet their demand for professional status and self-worth, which could be predicted. They occasionally disagree that task conflict causes social undermining, despite the contingent influence of interpersonal conflict, which was also looked at in this study. Thus, the characteristics discussed in this review—such as task conflict, interpersonal pressure from relationships, mindfulness in teams, and social undermining—can have mutually reinforcing effects on one another, especially in the context of virtual work teams.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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