

# **Investigating the Effects of conflict styles from the perspective of Kenneth Thomas on Cooperation and performance of staff (Case Study: Corporate Snowa)**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to Investigating the Effects of conflict styles from the perspective of Thomas Kent on Cooperation and performance of staff . The purpose of this study is functional - practical and the nature and the method of it is descriptive – survey and is of correlation type. The population of this study includes managers at various levels in the Company Snowa in 2012 and statistical sample were 159 who were selected by simple random sampling. In this study, a questionnaire was used for data collection and statistical tests were used to analyze data and test hypotheses. To confirm the Justifiability of the questionnaire, comments and advice of supervisors and some management professors was used and management software SPSS was used to assess the reliability And, Cronbach's alpha was 0/921. In this study, SPSS and AMOS software and path analysis were used for data analysis.

**Keywords:** Conflict Styles, Cooperation, performance, Snowa

## **1.Introduction**

With regard to the increasingly importance of the organizational goals in today's variable and dynamic environment, the role of manpower is considered as the most valuable human capitals in facing the organizational strategic goals, employers' ability in recruiting and maintaining employees, and increasing the organizational productivity (Ronagh, 2011: 10). Improvement of the employees' efficiency (as a short-term goal) is very important in the organizations because of its critical role in promoting organizational performance (Zaheer, et.al,

2008: 181). When a performance evaluation system will be successful that is designed based on the recognition of employees' need and also has compatibility with employees and organizations' needs and wants (Bartol and Locke, 2000). The use of scientific methods in actual performance valuation is the best mechanism for decreasing employees' dissatisfaction and their conflicts in the workplaces. This results in recognition of actual qualifications, employees' preferences in comparison to each other in the rewards, motivating coworkers, and showing the actual and potential capabilities in providing a competitive environment (Ronagh, 2011: 237-238). A well-designed reward system creates a belonging sense among employees in any organization. This also results in the employees' cooperation and greater sense of responsibility (Tohidi, 2003: 29). The results of the studies have been done in the empowerment; cooperation and participation reveal that the employees with high levels of belonging to their organization will have more performance. The employees who have more participation opportunities will participate in their organization. The reward is a common capability resource that can be used for encouraging employees' participation (Kandla, 2007). Showing the cooperation and collaboration in every organization leads to decrease conflicts in workplaces. On the other hand, this promotes and actualizes the employees' creativity and capabilities and increases efficiency and productivity in every organization (Tohidi, 2003': 29). The results of different studies have been done in this area indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between perceptions of justice and the extent of employees' performance (Podsakoff et al., 2000). If the employees perceive that there is a justice-based performance evaluation system that is implemented for everybody and also if they perceive that the organization pay attention to the employees' welfare issues, then this leads that they strive to achieve organizational goals more seriously. On the other hand, if the employees perceive that the organization does not behave them fairly; this may decrease their performance and increase the deviant behaviors, conflict, and job turnover. This also results in less commitment, cooperation, and participation among employees (Philip et.al 2012: 1218). As Kotler (2006) point out, conflict is derived from both economic and cultural interests in the organizations. The results of different studies indicate that the differences in the levels of employees in a department can lead to several serious problems in coordination and create interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts. The common structures of rewards help to increase cooperation among employees, because each of the partners (organization and employee) has responsibility in success or failure of the common project. Lower (1997) believes that the organizational rewards influence the employees' attitudes and behaviors and also change their perceived satisfaction of rewards, attitudes, and behaviors toward their participation (Shang Pao, 2007: 278). The participation and cooperation increases the production and competitiveness capabilities in the organizations (Tjosold, 1988). But conflict and contention leads to decrease cooperation and operational effectiveness (Lemeunier- Fitzhugh, and Piercy, 2007).

Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to:

- Recognize the key effective factors on the cooperation staff in workplaces
- Understand the role of managers' in cooperation, the role in decreasing conflict and increasing cooperation in the workplaces .

## **2. Literature review**

### **2-1.Conflicts**

The conflict is defined as an opposition among the groups that encounter one another, and opposition among moral and religious ideals. According to Dubrin (2004), conflict among individuals and groups is a natural outcome of competitive environment. This occurs when there are differences between employees' needs, wants, goals, beliefs, and values with each other (Dubrin, 2004: 193). Konrad and Scoot (2002) believe that conflict refers to the employees' individual interaction that depends to each other and perceive that their interest is in conflict with others' one (Konrad and Scoot, 2002: 134). Daft (2007) points out that conflict is a behavior among organizational groups that each of them thinks that other groups prevent from achieving each other's goals (Daft, 2007: 826). Rahim et al. (2002) defines conflict as an interactive process that reveals inter-group heterogeneity of every social institute (Srivasan, 2005). Also conflict means that employees interest their own viewpoints. On the other hand, it is should be remembered that a medium level of conflict is necessary to employees' individual and organizational growth (Furumo, 2009: 67). With regard to the evolution of the management approaches in recent years, three theories have been presented in conflict. The first is the traditional approach of conflict. Based on this approach, the conflict should be avoided, because it has several harmful functions. The second is the human relations approach. This approach considers conflict as a natural event that has possible positive outcomes in every organization. The third is the interactive approach. Based on this approach, the conflict not only creates a positive force in the organization, but also it is considered as an obvious necessity for organizational efforts (Robbins, 2006: 293).

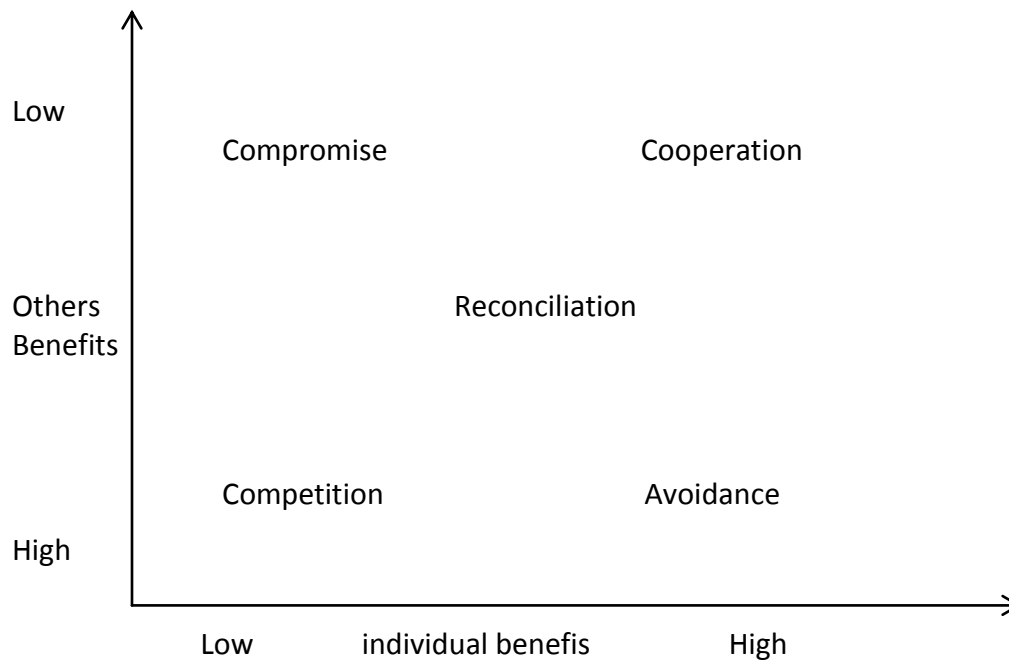
#### **2-1-1.The process of conflict**

The process of conflict consists of five stages: 1- Potential opposition: this refers to the conditions that pave the grounds for creating conflict. 2- Revealing conflict: this can be a perceived and felt conflict. Since an inaccurate perception can results in undesirable outcomes for individuals and organizations, it is necessary to recognize this stage. 3- Intention: in this stage, the employee decides to do a work in an especial manner. Because this stage makes manifest of employees' reaction, it is necessary to recognize their styles in solving conflict. These styles have been indicated in the following sections. 4- Behavior: this includes involved individual's opposition, action, and reaction with each other. 5- Outcomes of conflict: this can be constructive (improving performance) and deconstructive (decreasing performance) (Robbins, 2006: 293).

#### **2-1-2.Conflict management and its styles**

Conflict management refers to the methods that utilize organizational conflict for achieving organizational goals, decrease its dysfunctional aspects, and increase its functional aspects (Jonz, 2000). In other words, conflict management refers to recognizing and managing conflict through a rational, functional, and justly method (USDA, 2002). Thomas presents five styles for conflict management. These include competitive, cooperation, compromise, reconciliation, and avoidance styles (Cann, 2008: 1335). These styles can be shown in a diagram (Eckstein, 1998).

Recognition of these styles can be helpful for solving conflicts effectively and currently and managing them efficiently. This diagram has been presented in fig 2.



**Fig1: different styles of conflict management (Vertim, 2002)**

**Competition style:** when an individual uses competition style, he/she wants to achieve his/her goal and pay not any attention to others' benefits.

**Reconciliation style:** the purpose of this style is to find a desirable solution for both side of conflict. This leads that two sides achieve a common solution for their problem. This style is between competition and compromise styles (Horang, 2002).

**Cooperation style:** when the conflicting groups and individuals effort to satisfy each other's wants and demands, it can be concluded that there is a cooperation style.

**Compromise style:** in this style, a side ignores its benefits and wants and let others to achieve their wants and demands. Many individuals believe that it is better to have a friendly relationship with others in every condition (Koc, 2010: 90).

**Avoidance style:** when the individuals select this style, they do not involve themselves in any conflict. Neither do they pay attention to their own demands nor to that of the others (Durbin, 2004).

## **2.2. Cooperation**

Cooperation and participation are the necessary need of mankind that is derived from his/her social entity. This is a historical concept that its root is in the publicity and religious thoughts. Many authors believe that cooperation and participation are the cultural concepts and prerequisite of every successful design and plan for improving life and social development. It is somehow difficult to define cooperation and participation, because their definition is depends on the cultural values and different peoples have different perceptions from them (Tohidi,2003:30). Many authors and researchers define these concepts differently. The present study focuses on the definition that has been presented by Booksel and Parcel (2003). They state out that participation refers to the mechanism that empowers the employees for cooperating and making decision and also improve their abilities in their organization directly or indirectly. On the other hand, participation refers to a mental and emotional involvement that motivates individuals to participate in group workings eventually in order to achieve group goals. There are three aspects in this definition including mental and emotional involvement, assist, and responsibility (Benson,2000). On the other hand, there are several points in the definition of participation. For example, participation must be done from beginning of efforts and all of the organizational members must be involved in any organizational efforts. In such conditions, participative management system will be formed and developed. Human resource management is one of the most important resources that lead to organizational growth, development, and excellence through thought, creativity, innovation, commitment, and responsibility in every organization. On the other hand, an individual will have different reactions when facing different information, conditions, and events (Bean and Vars, 2000: 18). Hanifi (2001) categorizes participation into two groups including Uni-dimensional participation and multi-dimensional one. Uni-dimensional participation refers to the one that peoples participate in a social or political aspects based on the society's needs and avoid other aspects or prevented from it. Multi-dimensional is the one that peoples participate in every affair (Tohidi, 2003: 29).

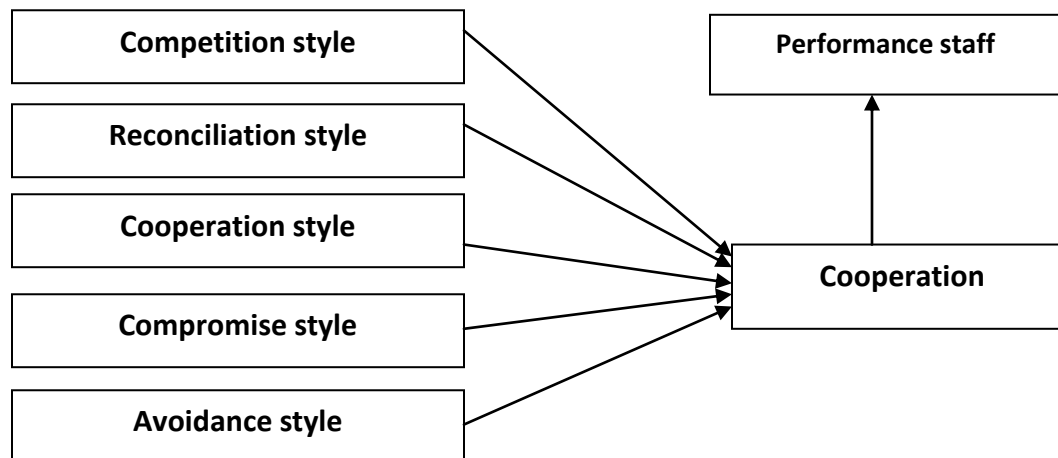
## **2.3. Meaning and concept of performance**

The Oxford English Dictionary defines performance as (to implement, to apply, and do any regular work or commitment). This definition in addition is related to the outcomes and outputs show that the performance is closely related to the work doing and gained results. Thus, the performance can be considered as "behavior" (The way that organizations, teams and individuals can use to do something).

Campbell (1995) believes that the behavior is in the performance and should be distinguished from the results because some of the systems factors can eliminate results. It is important to determine clear meaning of the performance word because without a clear definition of performance, organization cannot be managed and evaluated. Bates and Haltom (1995) define performance as (performance is a multi-dimensional structure that its variables depends on many factors. They also claim that determining the purpose of evaluation is very important than evaluating of performance results and behavior). There are different views about the nature of the performance. Kahn (1996) argues that performance is a process that individual does not attend to it and in fact it is separated from the target. Bernardin (1995) believes that (performance must be defined as business results, because these results have strongest

relation with the organization's strategic goals, customer satisfaction and economic participation) (Golshani, 2012). A comprehensive view about the performance is obtained when it includes behavior and results. This theory was proposed by Barombareh: (performance is meant to behaviors and results. behaviors are derived from factor and convert performance from thought to action) behaviors are not just tools to achieve results but are outcomes that are taken from product of physical and mental tasks and can be separated from results. This definition of performance leads to this conclusion that data (behavior) as well as outputs (results) should be considered during the management of teams and individuals performance and this model is called (performance mix model) (Hartel, 1995) that including ability or competence level, results and also goal determining and review (Armstrong, 2007: 11).

### 3.The conceptual framework



**Fig 2: the conceptual framework of study.**

### 4.Hypotheses development

H1:The conflict in the workplace efforts influence cooperation staff in the negatively.

H1a: The competitive style in conflict management influences cooperation staff in the workplace efforts negatively.

H1b: The cooperation style in conflict management influences cooperation staff in the workplace efforts negatively.

H1c: The avoidance style in conflict management influences cooperation staff in the workplace efforts negatively.

H1d: The reconciliation style in conflict management influences cooperation staff in the workplace efforts negatively.

H1e :The compromise style in conflict management influences cooperation staff in the workplace efforts negatively.

H2: Cooperation in workplaces employees negatively affected the performance staff.

## **5. Research Methodology**

Research method in this study is descriptive – survey and is of correlation type and in terms of position is the field and library study. The purpose of descriptive studies is regular and systematic description of the specific situation as the real and objective describing-(namely what is).As regards in this study, library research methods and literature review and also field methods including questionnaire will be used and its purpose Investigating the Effects of conflict styles from the perspective of Thomas Kent on collaborative and performance of staff . It can be said that this is field study based on the nature and methods of research. To gather theoretical information about the subject, related books and articles are investigated and the questionnaire was used to collect data.

## **6. Method and tools for data collection**

Questionnaire was used to collect data and information for analysis. This questionnaire is divided into three sections. The first section contains a brief description about questionnaire to provide more clarity for respondents, the second part of the questionnaire included personal data that have five questions including gender, age, education level, years of service and administrative position of respondents. The third section includes questions related to the conflict styles on Cooperation and performance of staff . The third section of the questionnaire has been designed as package. The Likert scale has been used for answers to questions in the third section, so that the 5 options for each question have been used.

## **7. Justifiability and reliability of questionnaire**

### **7.1. Validity**

Validity of a test (tools) is usually determined by specialist by those skilled in the subject. At this stage, testing experts, consultation with the faculty supervisor and consultant and the opinions of experts in the field of insurance in question designing has used.

### **7.2. Reliability**

Cronbach's alpha has been used in this study to determine the reliability of the test. First, a questionnaire randomly distributed and collected among 30 subjects and then its Cronbach's alpha was obtained by SPSS statistical software that this number indicates that whether questionnaire has needed reliability. Table (1) shows Cronbach's alpha for variables. total cronbach's alpha was obtained 0.921 from theses questionnaire.



**Table 1. Cronbach's alpha for variables**

Row	Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
1	conflict styles	20	0.86
2	Cooperation	9	0.84
3	performance	15	0.87
Total questionnaire		44	0.92

## 8. Population and statistical samples and sampling method

Statistical population of this research included all managers of Corporate Snowa that their total are 412 people according to last position in 2012 and by letting it in the sample size formula, sample number between managers, supervisors and chief of Entekhab industrial group is 199 people. Cochran formula for finite population was used to determine the required sample minimum size:

$$n = \frac{Nz_{\alpha/2}^2 p(1-p)}{(N-1)d^2 + z_{\alpha/2}^2 p(1-p)}$$

## 9. Sampling method

It is assumed that in the simple random sampling, population have relative homogeneity and are homogeneous; but it's not always that population have heterogeneity and homogeneity, therefore, they can divided in to the special sub-sections and sub-groups who have inter- group heterogeneity. Simple random method is not suitable in these communities, because all or most of samples may be elected from a group or class and therefore is not representative of the general population. Classification method was used to solve this problem in the selection of the sample; this means that individuals are divided into different classes according to their inter-group characteristics and samples are selected proportionally from among all classes (Hafez niya, 2010 :152). In the population under study, 200 eligible persons randomly selected based on factors (availability, having patience, being compassionate and ...) and questionnaires were delivered to them to answer it. 159 questionnaires were returned from 200 distributed questionnaires and were used for analysis. The questionnaire return rate is 80% and has the ability for generalize.

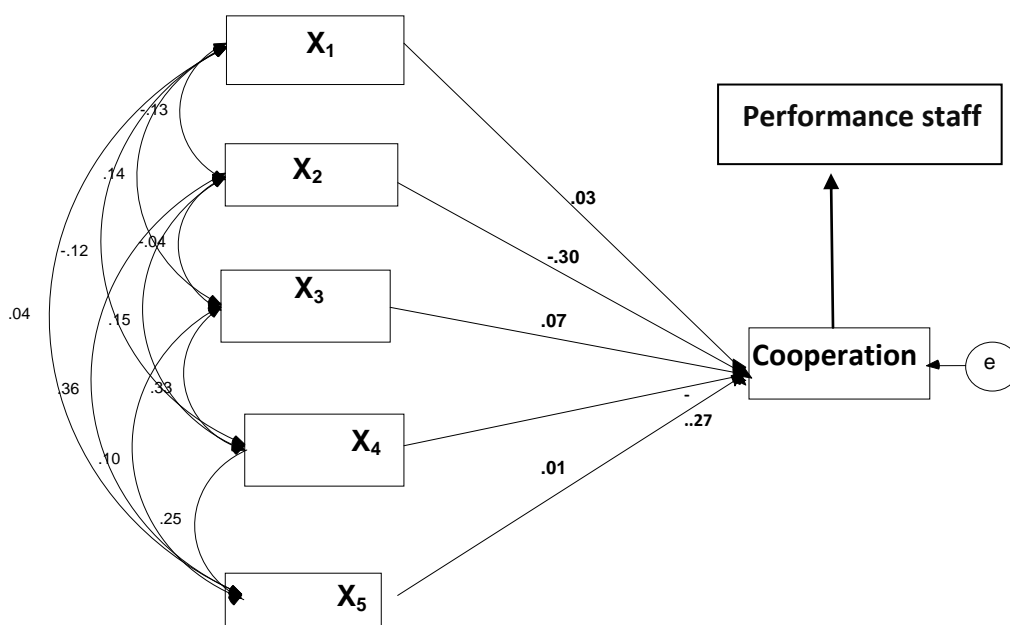
## 10 . Data analysis method

Two statistical techniques that are well known and commonly used in social research have been used in this study to analyze collected data. So that data processing has been done in both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics levels after data collection and data extraction. In the descriptive study, collected data related to the individual and demographic characteristics has been studied and gained results are presented in tables and graphs. In the next section (inferential statistics) research hypotheses have been evaluated using normality tests, regression tests, variance analysis, Friedman test and structural equation .



### 10.1. Inferential statistics (research hypothesis testing)

Path analysis model has been used to test the main research model. In the path model, there is often more than one internal variable. Each variable can only be as a dependent variable or simultaneously as an independent and dependent variable (Ghassemi, 2010). In the main model of this study, Competition style, Reconciliation style, Cooperation style, Compromise style, Avoidance style of the independent variable, and performance dependent variable. But the Cooperation Mediator Main research model with free and fixed parameters is shown in the following figure.



**Fig 3. Path analysis model**

Significant relationships between model components and path coefficients are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Path coefficient of research model to test hypothesis**

Number of hypothesis	Description of hypothesis	Solidarity coefficient	Meaningfulness coefficient	Acceptance or rejection of hypothesis
<b>H1</b>	conflict in the workplace efforts in fluence cooperation staff in the negatively.	-0/298	0/023	Accepted
<b>H1a</b>	the competitive style in conflict management influences cooperation staff in the workplace efforts negatively.	-0/371	0/010	Accepted

<b>H1b</b>	the cooperation style in conflict management influences cooperation staff in the workplace efforts negatively.	-0/315	0/017	Accepted
<b>H1c</b>	the avoidance style in conflict management influences cooperation staff in the workplace efforts negatively.	-0/289	0/022	Accepted
<b>H1d</b>	the reconciliation style in conflict management influences cooperation staff in the workplace efforts negatively.	-0/542	0/000	Accepted
<b>H1e</b>	the compromise style in conflict management influences cooperation staff in the workplace efforts negatively.	-0/374	0/010	Accepted
<b>H2</b>	Cooperation in workplaces employees negatively affected the performance staff.	0/596	0/000	Accepted

Table 2. Shows a significant negative correlation between t just style Hmary conflict with variable partnerships. Co-workers as well as direct and positive impact on employees' performance is variable. Table 3. Index of fitness of the model shows.

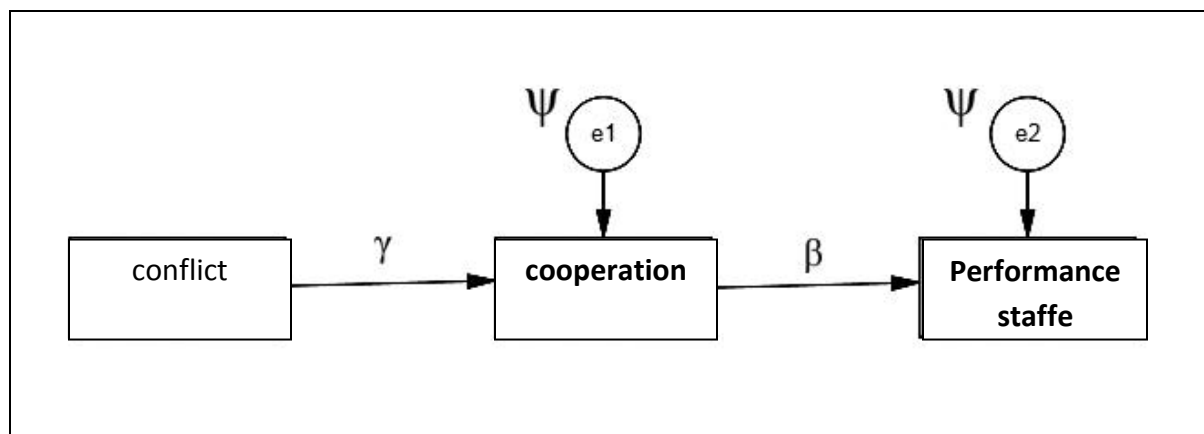
**Table 3. the fitness indices of the model.**

	<b>NPAR</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>CMIN</b>	<b>CMIN/df</b>	<b>CFI</b>	<b>TLI</b>	<b>PCFI</b>	<b>PNFI</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>
1	31	10	29.3	2.93	0.088	0.982	0.178	0.176	0.031

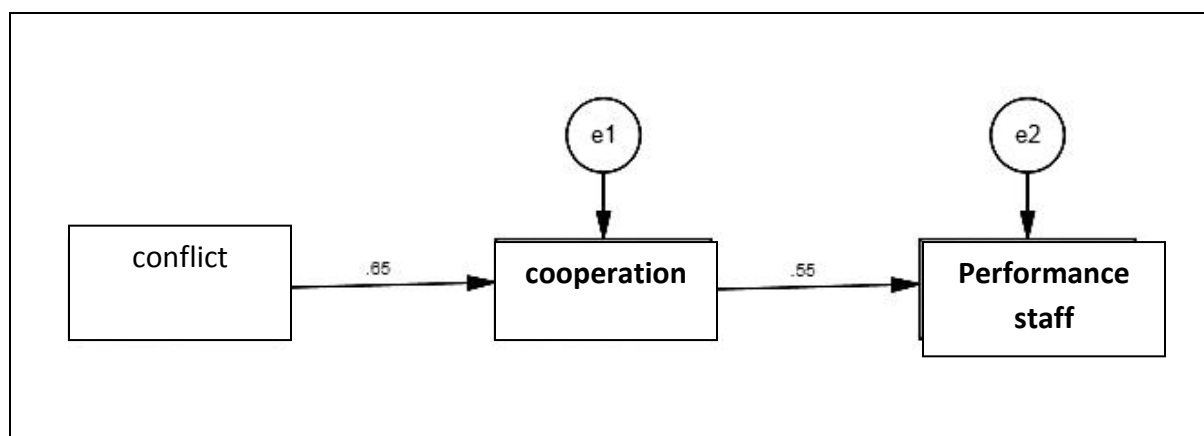
Reported fitness indices in the above table except thrifty indices (PCFI and PNFI) indicate an acceptable fitness of the developed model.

## **10.2. Path analysis model for the main research hypothesis test**

Path analysis model and AMOS software has been used to test the main hypothesis of research. Path analysis model for the main hypothesis test with its free parameters is as follows.



**Fig 6. Path analysis model to test the main hypotheses**



**Fig 7. shows path analysis model after the test.**

**The following table 4. Shows the path coefficients of the above model**

	Result	PURPORST P	Critical rate	Standard error	Standard coefficient
conflict in the workplace efforts in fluence cooperation staff in the negatively.	Confirmed	***	7.093	0.114	0.649
Cooperation in workplaces employees negatively affected the performance	Confirmed	***	5.411	0.085	0.546
*** shows that P amount is less than 0.001					

The above table shows the results of the first and second main hypothesis is confirmed (significantly smaller than the 05/0). That conflict Tasymkvs on supply chain performance standard by a factor of 65/0. Also the performance of supply chain is a direct and positive impact on organizational performance standard by a factor of 0.55.

## 11. Conclusion

The present study was aimed to study the effects of conflict styles on cooperation and staff performance on one organization. cooperation, conflict styles, and performance are the most important variables that have been examined in this study. The results of regression test reveal that there are significant relationships between conflict styles and cooperation, cooperation and staff performance ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). On the other hand, the results indicate that cooperation had the most effects on the organisation departments and conflict had the least importance among research variables. The results of the studies that have been done by Fitzhugh and Lemeunier- Fitzhugh (2009), Kotler et al. (2006), and Chimhanzi (2004) support the results of our study. With regard to the results of this study, it is suggested design reward system that is designed based on the employees' expertise, efforts, and effective performance leads to decrease conflicts in the workplaces. Finally, it should be remembered that decrease in conflict and increase in cooperation results in more effectiveness and productivity.

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