

# Conflict as a Catalyst for Innovation in Organizations: How to Optimize it in a Collectivism Culture Setting?

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## Abstract

**Objective** – Conflict is inevitable in organizations. Conflict can be a catalyst for innovation in the organization. This study aims to review the types of conflict, conflict management styles, and other supporting factors that can stimulate the innovation in organizations in the setting of collectivism culture.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The method used is a narrative review of secondary data, involving the analysis of 18 articles, most of which are of high quality (indexed in Scopus Quartiles 1–2). The selected literature, focusing on conflict and innovation in collectivist work culture settings, was analyzed and synthesized to address the research objectives.

**Findings** – The findings show that cognitive conflict (also called task conflict) type can stimulate innovation in the organization, while affective conflict (also called relationship conflict) type is the opposite. Conflict management styles that are relevant in collectivism work culture in producing innovation are integrating, compromising, and obliging. For obliging, another critical success factor is that one of the parties to the conflict has a lower bargaining position. These findings were synthesized into a set of practical recommendations for optimizing innovation through conflict management in collectivist work culture settings.

**Research limitations/implications** – The majority of the literature cited in this study is derived from research conducted in China. Although China and Indonesia share a collectivistic cultural orientation, caution is warranted when applying these findings to the Indonesian context.

**Practical implications** – Organizations are expected to manage (cognitive) conflict at an appropriate level in order to stimulate innovation. Therefore, leaders need to develop strategies that involve a variety of programs to achieve this.

**Originality/value** – This study contributes by conclusively demonstrating, based on a variety of existing research, that conflict should not be viewed solely in a negative light; rather, well-managed conflict can catalyze innovation.



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## INTRODUCTION

The current business environment is characterized by rapid and dynamic developments in various aspects, such as technological developments (Sainio et al., 2012), as well as market changes and increased competition (Hortinha et al., 2011). This is also supported by the use of technology in various life settings, including the emergence of Internet of Things (IoT) based industries (Brik et al., 2019). The existence of disruption creates openness in competing across regions, thus providing new challenges for business organizations. Only business organizations that are able to respond to all disruptions appropriately will survive (Ortiz-de-Mandojana & Bansal, 2016).

To respond to all these changes, organizations are required to provide innovative breakthroughs. Innovation is important because the problems arising from disruption usually cannot be solved in the old ways. Through innovation, organizations will be able to create relevant strategies formulated from various processes (Alexiev et al., 2010), and increase competitive advantage (Ribek et al., 2022). Seeing the importance of innovation, innovative behavior is one of the abilities that must be possessed by members of business organizations. Supported by several studies that prove that innovative behavior has a positive impact on organizational sustainability (Ng & Feldman, 2013; Yuan & Woodman, 2010).

Robbins (1978) suggests that one of the factors that can catalyze the birth of innovation is conflict. Siegall and Cummings (1995) define conflict as a process of social interaction between two or more people who have different opinions and goals. The conflict that occurs in a business organization is a dysfunctional result of poor communication and a lack of openness and trust between superiors and subordinates. However, the presence of conflict in certain situations can identify an ineffective environmental and resource management process, sharpen ideas, and can even explain misunderstandings (Elgoibar et al., 2020). This shows that a conflict that is managed appropriately in certain situations will produce an innovation to fix existing problems.

There are two types of conflict, consisting of functional conflict and dysfunctional conflict. Functional conflict leads to organizational performance gains, while dysfunctional conflict is detrimental or hinders achieving organizational goals (Robbins, 1978). It shows that it is very important to have conflict management in an organization to maximize the creation of functional conflict in creating innovation in the business environment (Camelo-Ordaz et al., 2015; Nurhalim, 2022).

Some research results show that conflicts within organizations can increase the creation of innovation (Giebels et al., 2016; Leonardo et al., 2020; O'Neill & Mclarnon, 2018). For example, agricultural innovation in Sudan is growing rapidly precisely during wartime (Leonardo et al., 2020). Conflict can produce positive things when it is able to stimulate employees to brainstorm, so that new creativity and innovation emerge (Yong et al., 2014). The constructive conflict to innovation usually involves an open exchange of conflicting ideas, where each party involved feels equally heard, respected, and unafraid to voice a different opinion. The goal is to generate new solutions that cannot be optimally achieved by one party's thinking alone (Badriyah et al., 2024; Seitchik, 2019).

The success of conflict in producing innovation will be significantly influenced by the type of conflict and conflict management applied in the organization (Tjosvold et al., 2014). The type of conflict comes from the form of commodities, such as interests, resources, beliefs, values, or other practices that are being contested between one party and another (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008). Meanwhile, conflict management style is a strategy used by a party when dealing with other parties in certain situations that have the potential to cause conflict. The choice of conflict management style will be strongly influenced by the situational context that exists in the organization (Kleinman et al., 2003). Apart from being influenced by the type of conflict and conflict management, differences in work culture also need to be considered in carrying out conflict management (Apriyantopo & Aprianingsih, 2020). For example, regarding the differences between the individualism work culture that is widely applied in American and European countries and the collectivism work culture that is commonly applied in Asian and African countries (Lee et al., 2019; Putra et al., 2018). Countries with a culture of collectivism are considered to value group goals, obligations, and responsibilities more than personal interests. In contrast, adherents of a culture of individualism are thought to value personal goals, wants, needs and rights more. These cultural differences will

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make individuals have certain preferences regarding the appropriate conflict management style based on the values indoctrinated into them (Riaz et al., 2017).

However, if traced further, exciting facts show that the conflict management styles applied in collectivism and individualism work cultures are similar. This is evidenced by the results of (Song, 2006; Su'udy & Zhang, 2009) research showing that both collectivism and individualism cultures mostly use integrating and compromising conflict management styles. However, in addition to these two conflict management styles, the difference is that in collectivism work cultures also often use the obliging conflict management style. Meanwhile, in individualism work cultures also often use the dominating conflict management style (Su'udy & Zhang, 2009). The differences and similarities make the results of other studies on conflict management styles in the two work cultures important to be studied further.

So far, the development of research on conflict and its role in generating innovation has been conducted in the cultural background of individualism only (Desivilya et al., 2010; Klein et al., 2011), for example in the United States (Yong et al., 2014), France-Canada (Montani et al., 2017), Spain (Camelo-Ordaz et al., 2015), Germany (Schulze et al., 2014). Various research results in individualism countries have been elaborated integratively in literature review articles (e.g., (Vollmer, 2015). On the other hand, no literature review article has been found that elaborates on various research results in collectivist countries. Whereas in recent years in countries adhering to collectivism, especially in China, there has also been a lot of research on conflict and innovation (e.g., Wu et al., 2018; Yin et al., 2020).

Based on this, this article focuses on reviewing conflict in stimulating innovation in the context of collectivism through a literature review. This literature review research is conducted to provide a comprehensive explanation in maximizing innovation in conflict conditions, especially in countries with a collectivist work culture. Thus, this research aims to review (1) types of conflict and their relationship in producing innovation; (2) conflict management styles that trigger the birth of innovation in the cultural setting of collectivism; (3) practical recommendations for business organizations to optimize the emergence of innovation in conflict management in the cultural setting of collectivism.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH MODEL**

Whether conflict is inherently destructive or can serve a constructive function has long divided organizational and social theorists. Coser (1956), in his classic formulation of functional conflict theory, contended that conflict need not be viewed solely as disruptive; it can instead prevent the stagnation of established norms and push social systems toward adaptation, innovation, and change (Elgoibar et al., 2021). Conflict, in this view, is a normal, arguably necessary, feature of social life rather than evidence of dysfunction. What matters is not whether conflict exists, but how it is expressed, regulated, and channeled. This premise finds continued support in more recent organizational research: Cattaneo et al. (2025), for instance, showed that conflicts in innovation projects, when handled appropriately, become sources of learning that extend benefits well beyond the project itself.

Later work has refined this functionalist view rather than simply restating it. De Dreu (2006) showed that the relationship between conflict and innovation is curvilinear rather than linear, indicating that conflict promotes innovation only up to a certain level of intensity, after which its benefits begin to diminish. Deutsch's theory of cooperation and competition (1973) adds a different piece to the picture, locating the constructive-versus-destructive outcome of conflict not in the conflict itself but in the underlying goal structure and the process by which it is managed. A similar pattern was reported by Wang and Duan (2025), who found that cognitive conflict was positively associated with team innovation performance, whereas affective conflict was negatively associated with it. Across these strands, one implication is fairly consistent. Conflict is neither inherently good nor bad for innovation because its consequences depend on how it is structured and managed.

Within this broader theoretical foundation, the task-versus-relationship conflict theory offers a more specific lens for understanding the mechanisms linking conflict to innovation. According to this framework, the relationship between conflict and innovation can be understood through the distinct mechanisms generated by cognitive/task conflict and affective conflict. Cognitive conflict refers to differences in perspectives, ideas, or opinions related to tasks, whereas affective conflict

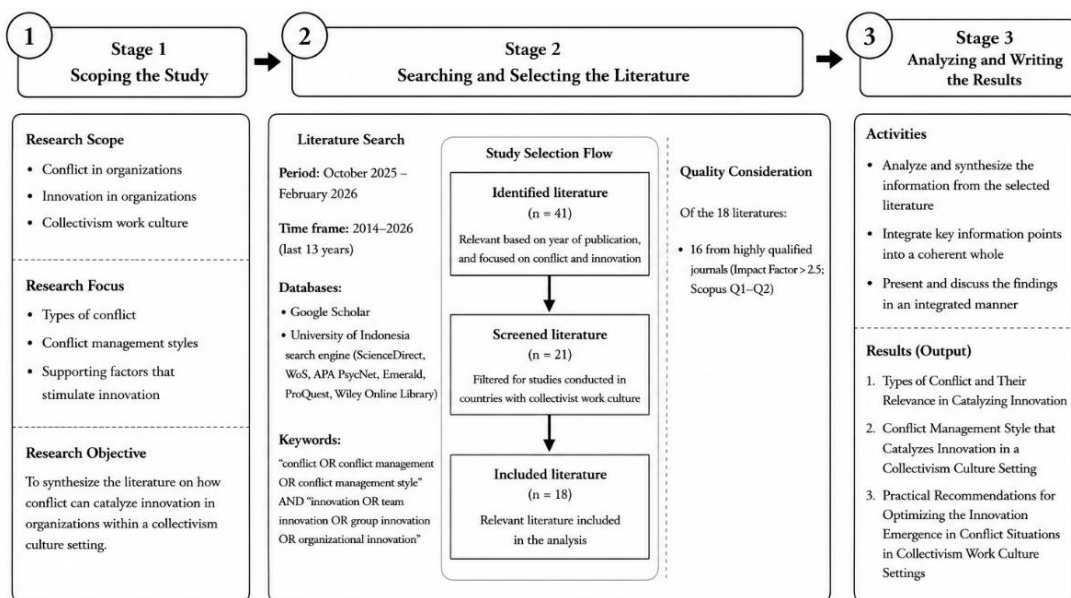
pertains to interpersonal tension and negative emotions between individuals. Understanding this is important because each type of conflict has different consequences for team processes and performance (Jehn, 1995).

Within this framework, cognitive conflict is viewed as functional because it fosters the exchange of diverse perspectives and the critical evaluation of ideas. Task-focused disagreements can stimulate deeper information processing and help teams generate and refine new ideas, thereby supporting innovation (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008). However, these positive effects are not always linear and may depend on the intensity and management of the conflict. Conversely, affective conflict is consistently associated with negative consequences because it fosters hostility, erodes trust, and disrupts cooperation among team members (De Dreu & West, 2001).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses the narrative review method. A narrative review is research that summarizes various research results and compares them with each other to produce a holistic interpretation. Therefore, in conducting a narrative review, literature search criteria and inclusion criteria must be explicitly defined (Gasparyan et al., 2011).

According to Gasparyan et al. (2011), the stages of narrative review research consist of 3 stages, as illustrated in Figure 1.



Source: Adapted from Gasparyan et al. (2011)  
Figure 1. WORKFLOW OF THE NARRATIVE REVIEW

The first stage was scoping the study by defining the research scope, research focus, and research objective. The research scope focused on conflict and innovation in organizations within a collectivism work culture setting. The review specifically examined the types of conflict, conflict management styles, and supporting factors that stimulate innovation. The research objective was to synthesize the existing literature on how conflict can catalyze innovation in organizations within a collectivism culture setting. These elements are presented in the Introduction section of this paper.

The second stage was to search the literature with keywords relevant to the research topic. Literature collection was carried out in the period of October 2025 to February 2026. The literature search in this study was carried out on scientific literature published in the last thirteen years (2014-2026), because in this period, there began to be a lot of research related to conflict and

innovation carried out in countries with collectivist work culture. The literature was collected through Google Scholar, and the University of Indonesia's search engine, which contains various quality journal databases, such as ScienceDirect, WoS, APA PsycNet, Emerald, ProQuest, and Wiley Online Library. The keywords used were "conflict OR conflict management OR conflict management style" AND "innovation OR team innovation OR group innovation OR organizational innovation".

41 pieces of literature were identified as relevant based on the year of publication, and focused on conflict and innovation. From these 41 literatures, the literature was filtered based on whether the study was conducted in a country classified as having a collectivist work culture, using Hofstede's individualism index as the reference criterion (The Culture Factor Group, 2026); only literature originating from countries scoring low on this index (i.e., collectivist societies) was retained. Finally, 18 relevant literatures were included in the analysis to answer the research questions. Table 1 shows that of the 18 literatures used in this study, 16 were from highly qualified journals with high impact factor scores (>2.5) and indexed by Scopus Q1-Q2, except for two other literatures (Gumilang & Sunaryo, 2021; Maulana, 2019) which were retained because they represented research results in the Indonesian context.

The third stage involves analyzing and writing the results. At this stage, the information gathered from the selected literature was analyzed, synthesized, and brought together into a coherent body of evidence. This synthesis gave rise to three main themes: (1) Types of Conflict and Their Relevance in Catalyzing Innovation, (2) Conflict Management Style that Catalyzes Innovation in a Collectivism Culture Setting, and (3) Practical Recommendations for Optimizing the Innovation Emergence in Conflict Situations in Collectivism Work Culture Settings. The writing process begins with integrating information points from the literature used so that they become a unified whole. These themes are presented and discussed in an integrated manner in the results and discussion section.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The relevant literature sources used in this study have been summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.**  
**SUMMARY OF LITERATURE ANALYZED IN THIS STUDY**

| No | Author(s)<br>and Year | Title                                                                                                                                 | Journal<br>(Quartile)                             | Study<br>Location | Result                                                                                |
|----|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | (Ma et al.,<br>2017)  | On the dimensionality of intragroup conflict: An exploratory study of conflict and its relationship with group innovation performance | International Journal of Conflict Management (Q1) | China             | Cognitive conflict and interest-based conflict have a positive effect on innovation.  |
| 2  | (Hu et al.,<br>2017)  | Conflict and creativity in inter-organizational teams: The moderating role of shared leadership                                       | International Journal of Conflict Management (Q1) | China             | The correlation of conflict with organizational creativity forms an inverted U curve. |
| 3  | (To et al.,<br>2021)  | Applying Conflict Management Styles to Resolve Task Conflict and Enhance Team Innovation                                              | Emerging Science Journal (Q1)                     | Vietnam           | Task conflict is negatively correlated with team innovativeness.                      |

|   |                            |                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                           |           |                                                                                               |
|---|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | (Wu et al., 2018)          | How does emotional conflict affect innovation behavior? The moderating roles of leader-member exchange and team-member exchange                             | International Journal of Conflict Management (Q1)                         | China     | Emotional conflict forms an inverted U-curve correlation to innovation.                       |
| 5 | (Wang et al., 2019)        | Top management team conflict and exploratory innovation: The mediating impact of market orientation                                                         | Industrial Marketing Management (Q1)                                      | China     | Cognitive conflict has a positive effect on innovation.                                       |
| 6 | (Guo et al., 2019)         | When and how cognitive conflict benefits cross-functional project team innovation: The importance of knowledge leadership                                   | International Journal of Conflict Management (Q1)                         | China     | Cognitive conflict has a positive effect on innovation with moderated knowledge leadership.   |
| 7 | (Maulana, 2019)            | Pengaruh Perilaku Manajemen Konflik pada Kepuasan Kerja dan Kinerja Inovasi Karyawan (Studi pada Karyawan Tetap PT. Telekomunikasi Indonesia Yogyakarta)    | e-repository Universitas Sebelas Maret (Undergraduate Thesis)             | Indonesia | Integrating and compromising conflict management styles have a positive effect on innovation. |
| 8 | (Gumilang & Sunaryo, 2021) | Proactive personality and innovative behavior: Role of task conflict and work autonomy (Study on state civil personnel in The City Government of Surakarta) | International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Research (Q3) | Indonesia | Task conflict has a positive effect on innovative behavior.                                   |
| 9 | (Xie et al., 2014)         | It is not what we have, but how we use it: Reexploring the relationship between task conflict and team innovation from the resource-based view              | Group Processes & Intergroup Relations (Q1)                               | China     | The correlation of task conflict with organizational innovation forms an inverted U curve.    |

|    |                      |                                                                                                                                                    |                                                   |             |                                                                                                |
|----|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 | (Deng et al., 2021)  | When and How Does Team Task Conflict Spark Team Innovation? A Contingency Perspective                                                              | Journal of Business Ethics (Q1)                   | China       | Cognitive conflict has a positive effect on innovation moderated by team elaboration ability.  |
| 11 | (Yin et al., 2022)   | Team Leader's Conflict Management Style and Team Innovation Performance in Remote R&D Teams—With Team Climate Perspective                          | Sustainability (Q1)                               | China       | Cognitive conflict has a positive effect on innovation moderated by psychological safety.      |
| 12 | (Jung & Yoon, 2018)  | Improving frontline service employees' innovative behavior using conflict management in the hospitality industry: The mediating role of engagement | Tourism Management (Q1)                           | South Korea | Conflict management has a positive effect on innovation with moderated engagement.             |
| 13 | (He et al., 2014)    | Unpacking the relationships between conflicts and team innovation: Empirical evidence from China                                                   | Management Decision (Q1)                          | China       | Cooperative conflict management style has a positive effect on innovation.                     |
| 14 | (Zhang et al., 2015) | Emotional intelligence, conflict management styles, and innovation performance An empirical study of Chinese employees                             | International Journal of Conflict Management (Q1) | China       | Integrating and compromising conflict management styles have a positive effect on innovation.  |
| 15 | (Yin et al., 2020)   | Team leader's conflict management styles and innovation performance in entrepreneurial teams                                                       | International Journal of Conflict Management (Q1) | China       | Cooperative conflict management has a positive effect on innovation moderated by team passion. |



|    |                        |                                                                                                                              |                                                   |       |                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16 | (Prasad & Junni, 2017) | Understanding top management team conflict, environmental uncertainty and firm innovativeness: Empirical evidence from India | International Journal of Conflict Management (Q1) | India | Affective conflict has a negative effect on innovation.                                                                                                               |
| 17 | (Du et al., 2025)      | How does status conflict benefit or frustrate the innovation behavior of civil servants? The role of pressure and resource   | Current Psychology (Q1)                           | China | Conflict management has a positive effect on innovation with mediated challenge or hindrance performance pressure.                                                    |
| 18 | (Wang & Duan, 2025)    | Generational diversity and team innovation: the roles of conflict and shared leadership                                      | Frontiers in Psychology (Q1)                      | China | Cognitive-based conflict has a positive effect on team innovation performance, whereas affective-based conflict has a negative effect on team innovation performance. |

Source: Author’s compilation based on the reviewed literature (2026)

Table 1 presents a summary of the studies included in this review, outlining their author(s), year, title, publisher, study location, and key findings. As shown, most studies were conducted in China and primarily used quantitative methods. These descriptive patterns serve as a foundation for the subsequent synthesis and discussion.

DISCUSSION

Types of Conflict and Their Relevance in Catalyzing Innovation

The conflict has several types that contain different dimensions. (Ma et al., 2017) divided it into four types, namely cognitive conflict (also called task conflict), affective conflict (also called relational/emotional conflict), interest-based conflict, and behavioral conflict. First, cognitive conflict is often associated with task-related disputes, differences in ideas, and opinions. This conflict usually involves frequent discussions, interactions, and arguments about work tasks. Second, affective conflict is often associated with emotional disputes and usually leads to negative emotions, such as dislike, annoyance, anger, boredom, fear, and frustration at something in the work environment. Thirdly, interest-based conflict is often associated with disputes of interest related to the struggle for resources, power, and rewards. This conflict has little resemblance to cognitive conflict because it involves discussion, communication, and arguing to get the desired interests. Fourth, behavioral conflict is often associated with destructive disputes, such as fighting, betrayal, disruptive and obstructive behavior.

The four types of conflict need to be presented, because so far most of the literature uses only two types of conflict, namely cognitive conflict, and affective conflict (e.g., Deng et al., 2021; He et al., 2014; Hu et al., 2017; Prasad & Junni, 2017; To et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2018; Xie et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2015). It is evident that from a total of 11 literatures analyzed as a reference source for writing types of conflict in organizations in this subchapter, only the literature belonging



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to (Ma et al., 2017) reviewed four types of conflict. Even though the four types of conflict are very likely to influence the emergence of innovation in the organization. Therefore, future research also needs to analyze the role of interest-based conflict, and behavioral conflict in influencing organizational innovation, because so far it has been done very little. That also causes the review in this article regarding interest-based conflict, and behavioral conflict cannot be done in detail.

When referring to its characteristics, cognitive conflict has great potential to be able to give birth to various new innovations. This is supported by various research results that prove that cognitive conflict or task conflict plays a positive effect in increasing innovation at the team and organizational levels (Hu et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2019; Wang & Duan, 2025). Cognitive conflict can naturally stimulate information processing in organizations/teams so that there will be an exchange of information through discussion, learning from each other, and even arguing to produce good decisions. It is very relevant to the character of collectivism in certain regions, especially in Asia (Zhang et al., 2015). These various activities trigger the formation of new innovative solutions (Guo et al., 2019).

In contrast to cognitive conflict, affective conflict is more associated with the opposite. Many research results prove that affective conflict negatively affects innovation (Hu et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2017; Prasad & Junni, 2017; To et al., 2021; Wang & Duan, 2025). This happens because affective conflict triggers destructive behavior that makes communication and discussion impossible. It is also usually characterized by distrust between members so that they cannot rationally formulate each solution, because all behavior is based on emotions (Ma et al., 2017).

After comparing the role of cognitive conflict and affective conflict, it does not mean that cognitive conflict always has a positive impact on innovation creation. The relationship between cognitive conflict and innovation forms an inverted U curve (Xie et al., 2014), which after passing a certain critical point, cognitive conflict will actually cause cognitive fatigue. This happens when leaders in the organization do not control the level of difficulty of the tasks assigned, and the lack of media that can be used to communicate or provide mutual feedback so that the level of cognitive conflict does not pass the tipping point. Cognitive fatigue will trigger the emergence of negative emotions, such as stress, interpersonal tension, and distrust that prevent someone from being able to focus on generating new ideas. In the end, cognitive conflict that is at too high a level will trigger the emergence of affective conflict so that it backfires because it inhibits innovation (To et al., 2021). Based on this, organizations need to manage cognitive conflict at a moderate level in order to maintain optimal innovation.

### **Conflict Management Style that Catalyzes Innovation in a Collectivism Culture Setting**

Various types of conflicts and the possible impacts generated in the process of forming innovations make leaders in organizations need to use certain conflict management styles. The style a leader adopts essentially determines whether a given conflict is channeled toward productive outcomes or allowed to escalate into dysfunction, making the choice of conflict management style as consequential for innovation as the type of conflict itself. So far, conflict management styles often associated with the emergence of innovation in organizations are integrating, compromising, avoiding, obliging, and dominating (Rahim, 1983; Zhang et al., 2015). Each management style has different characteristics and orientations. These differences will also play a role in the possibility of innovations.

First, the dominating style is highly self-oriented, so it does not care about requests from other parties. This strategy is also known as a win-lose strategy (To et al., 2021). This management style is usually inflexible, a lot of competition, and even uses a violent approach (Saragih & Harisno, 2015). As a result, it will cause higher conflict so that it will be suitable for solving urgent problems or problems that are not too important (Dell'Aquila et al., 2020).

Second, the obliging style has characteristics that care more about others than themselves, so they try to reduce differences or emphasize the common interests of various parties. This management style is known as the lose-win strategy (To et al., 2021). This style will prioritize relational integrity between one another so that it is possible to be relevant in the work environment of Asian countries which are collectivistic (Apriyantopo & Aprianingsih, 2020).

Third, integrating is characterized by a balanced orientation between oneself and others in finding solutions. This style is also called a win-win strategy (To et al., 2021). Individuals involved will take creative and imaginative approaches to integrate the interests and resources of all parties. It is seen as efficient in conflict resolution, and has great potential for creating innovations (Zia et al., 2018). This works well for innovation because it keeps differing viewpoints in play long enough for something new to emerge from them, rather than resolving disagreements too quickly.

Fourth, compromising has a similar orientation to integrating because it is oriented towards balancing one's interests with those of other parties. However, this style tends to negotiate and compromise in accommodating interests. It also makes it possible to create innovations (Zia et al., 2018). It rarely produces the same level of creative synthesis as integrating, but in collectivist settings where preserving harmony matters, meeting halfway is often enough to keep the process moving.

Fifth, avoiding usually has no orientation for oneself or others. Therefore, this style is also referred to as a lose-lose strategy. This style is usually less effective because it allows the conflict to be prolonged. This unresolved conflict will only negatively impact the organization and the possibility of growing innovations (Sharma & Sehrawat, 2014; Zia et al., 2018). Since the disagreement is never actually addressed, it tends to resurface later in a more damaging form, closing off the exchange of ideas that innovation depends on.

Various research results conducted in countries with a collectivist work culture (e.g., Maulana, 2019; Yin et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2015), prove that there are certain conflict management styles that are relevant or irrelevant to apply. More details have been illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2.**  
**RESEARCH RESULTS ON THE ROLE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLE ON**  
**INNOVATION IN ORGANIZATIONS IN COLLECTIVE WORK CULTURE**

| <b>Author(s)</b>     | <b>Conflict Management Style</b> |                                 |                             |                             |                             |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                      | <i><b>Dominating</b></i>         | <i><b>Obliging</b></i>          | <i><b>Integrating</b></i>   | <i><b>Compromising</b></i>  | <i><b>Avoiding</b></i>      |
| (Yin et al., 2020)   | Not significant positive effect  | -                               | Significant positive effect | Significant positive effect | -                           |
| (Maulana, 2019)      | Not significant negative effect  | Not significant positive effect | Significant positive effect | Significant positive effect | Significant negative effect |
| (Zhang et al., 2015) | Significant negative effect      | Significant negative effect     | Significant positive effect | Significant positive effect | Significant negative effect |

Source: Author's compilation based on the reviewed literature (2026).

Based on table 2, it can be seen that integrating and compromising conflict management styles consistently from three research results play a positive role in innovation. Meanwhile, other conflict management styles, such as dominating, obliging, and avoiding have a negative tendency toward innovation. (Maulana, 2019) explains that the integrating management style will make conflicting parties find solutions by discussing, exchanging ideas, and providing each other's points of view. This makes this management style have great potential to resolve conflicts in new ways. If, for example, integrating has not achieved the desired conflict resolution goals, the organization or team can try to switch to using the compromising management style. Compromising can also create situations that allow employees to communicate and develop collective solutions to increase innovation (De Dreu & West, 2001). Integrating and compromising

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have in common that they emphasize communication, discussion, and healthy debate, making them relevant to a collectivist work culture that emphasizes harmony (Tjosvold et al., 2006).

Although applying the obliging conflict management style in Zhang et al. (2015) has a negative effect on innovation, and in Maulana (2019) it does not play a significant role. The research results by Özkalp et al. (2009) show different findings, where the obliging conflict management style applied in Asian countries with a collective work culture plays a positive role in employee performance. This happens because the obliging style is oriented towards the interests of others to increase cohesion, and reduce excessive tension due to cognitive conflict. This obliging style is still relevant because countries with a collectivist work culture usually try to maintain good relations with other parties (Sunindijo & Hadikusumo, 2014).

The three previous studies showed inconsistent results regarding the use of the obliging conflict management style in generating innovation, even though the three studies were conducted in collectivist countries. One factor that can affect the success of the obliging conflict management style is the level of bargaining position held by the conflicting parties. When one of the parties is in a weak bargaining position, and believes that giving up in the conflict will provide a more favorable outcome, then the party will be more optimal if it uses an obliging conflict management style. Various things can cause a weak bargaining position, one of which is if the party concerned believes that they are in the wrong position (Rahim, 2002).

In line with this, the unsuccessful use of the obliging conflict management style in generating innovation in Maulana (2019) and Zhang et al. (2015) may be due to the fact that the participants used are company employees who have positions at the same level. These employees have the same bargaining position so that one party will feel disadvantaged if they apply an obliging conflict management style. In contrast to the research of Özkalp et al. (2009) who used manager participants from various organizations that allow participants to be in an unequal bargaining position with each other, so that the obliging conflict management style can be effectively applied. Future research is recommended to investigate more empirically about the role of bargaining position in becoming a moderator variable between the obliging conflict management style and the birth of innovation.

Based on the findings of existing research, it can be concluded that the conflict management styles that are almost never found evidence of a positive contribution to innovation in a collectivist work culture are dominating and avoiding. The dominating conflict management style is considered too confrontational and aggressive, while the avoiding conflict management style is considered too passive. Both are not in line with the concept of harmony or balance commonly embraced by collectivist work cultures (DeChurch et al., 2013). On the other hand, the dominating conflict management style is still relevant to use in organizations in individualistic work cultures, such as in America, because individuals in work cultures tend to use assertive, active, and competitive strategies in resolving conflicts (Su'udy & Zhang, 2009).

### **Practical Recommendations for Optimizing the Innovation Emergence in Conflict Situations in Collectivism Work Culture Settings**

The practical recommendations outlined below are grounded in the functionalist premise established earlier: conflict is not something organizations should eliminate, but something that needs to be structured and channeled so that its constructive potential is realized rather than its destructive potential (Coser, 1956; Deutsch, 1973). This premise continues to hold up in more recent organizational research: conflicts in innovation projects, when properly managed, generate learning benefits that extend well beyond the immediate problem being resolved (Cattaneo et al., 2025), while the presence of empowering leadership has been shown to shape whether conflict is channeled toward better performance or left to disrupt it (Wang, 2023). This same logic underlies each of the recommendations that follow, from managing the threshold of cognitive conflict to selecting an appropriate conflict management style and leadership approach.

Based on the elaboration of findings from various studies, to optimize the emergence of innovation in organizations in the midst of conflict situations can be done by maintaining the existence of cognitive conflict within a certain threshold that is reasonable. Because too little cognitive conflict will make new ideas difficult to emerge, as well as if cognitive conflict is too excessive it will be prone to triggering affective conflict (Hu et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2017). For example, when a conflict due to differences of opinion regarding the type of new product that will be released in the

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near future (cognitive conflict) occurs very prolonged and does not get an agreement, then in certain situations, it will be possible for members of the organization to blame or resent other members who do not want to agree for unclear reasons (affective conflict).

Cognitive conflict within normal limits will stimulate the organization to face problems, explore alternatives, uncover new information, and learn more so that it will lead to high innovation. Cognitive conflict will also help organizations in solving non-routine problems that are new, unusual, involve high uncertainty, and often do not have clear solutions. By dealing with cognitive conflict, the organization will be better able to recognize the shortcomings of its members so that they can be facilitated through appropriate training and development (O'Neill et al., 2013). On the other hand, affective conflict should be minimized as much as possible because it will only worsen the atmosphere, and the impact will be more stuck in the problem without any new ideas emerging (Prasad & Junni, 2017).

In addition to cognitive conflicts that need to be managed, organizational leaders also need to use appropriate conflict management. In organizations with a collectivist work culture, it is recommended to use three types of conflict management, namely integrating, compromising, or obliging. The selection of one of the three types of conflict management can be based on several considerations, such as needs, context, situation, or certain conditions in the organization (To et al., 2021).

To support the success of conflict management in producing innovation in organizations, leaders have a very vital role. Leaders must be able to become facilitators in various ways that can increase the role of cognitive conflict in stimulating the birth of innovation, for example in terms of supporting and motivating members, ensuring psychological safety for members to argue, to elaborate and convey various information within the organization. This facilitative role is consistent with recent evidence that empowering leadership improves how conflict is managed and translated into better performance outcomes, rather than being left to disrupt them (Wang, 2023). Therefore, organizations need to choose the right leaders, and then continue to develop the abilities and skills of these leaders in order to carry out their roles optimally (Lee et al., 2019).

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the review of various literatures that we have analyzed, it can be concluded that not all types of conflict in organizations can be a catalyst for the creation of innovation in organizations with a collective work culture. Some research results consistently prove that the type of cognitive conflict has a positive role in generating innovation. For example, when an organization has a problem in the area of ineffective marketing strategies, cognitive conflict occurs when members in the marketing department focus on discussing and formulating new strategies to solve the problem. Conversely, it becomes affective conflict when all members of the department blame each other personally for the ineffectiveness of the marketing strategy in the organization.

Consideration of the appropriate conflict management style also plays a vital role. Most research results prove that integrating and compromising conflict management styles are relevant to apply, both in collectivism and individualism work culture settings. However, in addition to these two conflict management styles, it is also appropriate to use obliging in collectivism work cultures, especially if one party has a weaker bargaining position than the other.

This study has limitations that require caution in applying the findings of this study. This is because the majority of articles used in this literature review came from research conducted in China. This allows for cultural differences when applied in other countries. For example, between China and Indonesia, although both embrace collectivism, they also have differences in other ways. Chinese people tend to be more self-directedness and have individual-oriented achievement motivation, while Indonesians tend to favor togetherness, conformity, and social-oriented achievement motivation (Liem & Nie, 2008). These differences allow for dissimilarities in the types of conflict and conflict management that are appropriate for innovation in the two countries. Similar differences are also possible between other collectivist countries. Future researchers are advised to conduct more empirical research, especially in non-Chinese collectivist countries, which are still very minimal.

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