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The Buffering Role of Employee Resilience in The Relationship Between Project Conflicts and Employee Burnout with The Mediation of Negative Emotions

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Abstract

This study aims to test the hypothesized moderated mediation process combining project conflicts, negative emotions, employee resilience, and employee burnout. It proposes that negative emotions can be considered as a mediator between the relationship of project conflicts and employee burnout, and this mediation effect is moderated by the level of employee resilience. Data were collected from employees working in project-based organizations. The final number of responses was 389. We used structural equation modelling for model fitness and direct relationships, and PROCESS macro model 4 and 14 were used for mediation and moderated mediation analysis respectively. The main finding is that employee resilience moderates the indirect relationship between project conflict and employee burnout via negative emotions. Project conflict has a positive and significant effect on employee burnout. The results of this study help us understand why the higher management of a project-based organization should consider employee resilience to avoid the negative consequences of project conflicts. Resting on the research gaps identified, this study proposes a unique conflict model that hypothesizes a moderated mediation process.

Keywords: Project conflict, task conflict, relationship conflict, process conflict, status conflict, negative emotions, employee resilience, employee burnout, project-based organizations, Pakistan.

1. Introduction

In the modern era, a number of projects are underway and the market is going to be more competitive. These projects face many issues, especially conflicts related to the project (Wu et al., 2017). For better performance, the project manager gives authority to team members to work in their way for high performance, which leads to conflict (Wong et al., 1999). The complexity of project design has increased, and a specific division of labor is observed. Such features involve a high level of commitment and cooperation among project team members, leading to project conflicts (Wu et al., 2017). Conflicts among team

members are very common in the workplace, and must be tackled in a timely (Yang et al., 2019; Tremmel et al., 2019). Some research studies have shown that conflicts among team members regulate the moderator that regulates the relationship of conflicts with their outcome (Kuriakose et al., 2019). Research studies indicate that conflicts at workplaces are an important stressor in employees' lives (Kundi and Badar, 2021; Beitler et al., 2018)

During the project phase, these conflicts are inevitable because there are distinct views on project objectives, such as time, quality, security, and weak communication among project team members (Wu et al., 2017; Harmon, 2003). Conflicts among team members tarnish satisfaction and a sense of belongingness with the organization (Yue, & Thelen, 2023). According to Jelodar et al. (2015), project disputes can lead to challenging connections between different teams and make it difficult to attain the goals of the project. Conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018) argues that workplace stressors deplete individuals' resources, leading to negative outcomes. According to Hobfoll (2001), the corollary of COR states that loss begets loss, which means depletion in resources will further lead to a negative impact on individual resources. Based on this statement, we argue that project conflicts (loss tied with team members) will trigger negative emotions that will lead to loss of resources (employee burnout). COR theory assumes that employees use their resources to reduce the negative impact, so the moderating role of employee resilience is tested through a moderated mediation model.

Workplace stressors trigger negative emotions among team members that act as mediators between project conflicts and employee burnout, which will cover the issue mentioned by Humphrey et al. (2017) that emotions that pertain to conflicts (Rispens and Demerouti, 2016), further Roderiguez-Rey et al. (2024) recommended studying the relationship between negative emotions and burnout. Shin et al. (2012) argued that an employee's resilience focuses on the ability to recover from disruptions while performing tasks. Cooke et al. (2020) and Bardoel et al. (2014) investigated the role of resilience in the workplace because it has received little academic scrutiny.

The main aim of this study is to address the problem of how project conflicts affect employee burnout, and as many conflict studies have investigated their outcomes, those studies showed detrimental effects, and few studies showed curvilinear effects. According to COR theory, workplace stressors trigger negative emotions that can boost the negative relationship between project conflicts and employee burnout. This study covered the gap mentioned by Humphrey et al. (2017) that the relationship between conflicts and emotions should be studied. Shin et al. (2012) and Tugade and Fredrickson (2004) argued that research studies indicate that resilient employees are well equipped to cope with unforeseen stressful events; thus, employee resilience hampers negative outcomes, such as employee burnout. Therefore, this study covered the gap mentioned by Cooke et al. (2020) and Bardoel et al. (2014) that limited studies have been conducted to investigate the role of resilience in the workplace. Therefore, based on these research gaps, there is a need to

investigate the impact of project conflicts on employee burnout through the mediation of negative emotions and moderation of employee resilience in project-based organizations. This is an individual-based study in which responses are recorded by individual employees working in a project-based organization. Based on the research objectives and gaps identified in the literature

This study is supported by the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2018), which proposes that employees with higher resources are less vulnerable to workplace stressors, so we can assume that employee resilience hampers negative outcomes due to workplace stressors and emotions. With the support of COR, this study investigated the moderated mediation role of employee resilience through the indirect relationship between project conflicts and employee burnout through negative emotions.

This study intends to provide a deep understanding of how project conflicts affect burnout among employees working in project-based organizations. In addition, a moderated mediation model of negative emotions and employee resilience was studied.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Project Conflicts and Employee Burnout

Researchers have defined conflict as psychological and social, which vary from context to context. According to Thomas (1973), conflict is a process that begins when an individual tries to take advantage of or benefit from another individual, resulting in frustration. Conflict is a state in which someone feels hostile and fears showing their emotions (Wang et al. 2012). Wall and Callister (1995) explain conflict as a process in which one perceives concerns that are opposed to others. The traditional view of conflict highlights conflict as an opposition of individuals during competition with one another, and it is assumed that the opposing party has some sort of advantage over this conflict (Jehn, 1995).

Employee burnout is a psychological strain or distress that can arise due to organizational stressors as well as individual stressors during task performance. If such stressors are not tackled, it leads to burnout in the workplace, feelings of detachment, exhaustion, cynicism, and ineffectiveness. Furthermore, burnout leads to a decrease in organizational commitment. The literature has explored many factors that cause burnout as a combination of individual risks and organizational stressors, such as intra-team conflicts (task conflict, relationship conflict, process conflict, and status conflict). Schaufeli and Salanova (2014) explained the antecedents of burnout as highly qualitative (lack of information to perform tasks, work-family conflicts, and discrepant work roles), quantitative (urgency, excessive work, frequent contact with customers/clients, and long working hours), and lack of job resources. Stress between team members leads to negative emotions, which leads to employee burnout (Kim & Lee, 2023). Schaufeli and Buunk, (2003) concluded that conflicts among the team are the stressor which leads toward burnout among team members. Zhang et al. (2022) argued that conflict employees are positively related to their

deviant behaviors and argued that there is a need to study the role of conflicts in fostering employee behaviors (Ma & Liu, 2019)

Shaukat et al. (2017) argue that conflict causes resource loss, which further increases employee burnout. Task conflict is the most common type of conflict, but it does affect employee burnout less than relationship and process conflicts; conflict increases depression, stress, and burnout among employees (Tafvelin et al., 2020). Several studies resulted that task conflict is unrelated to employee well-being i.e. Burnout (Leon-Perez et al., 2016).

Based on the COR theory, ego threats can develop hostility among team members, leading to distrust, stress, burnout, and depression over time. Relationship conflict leads to a loss of resources such as team member support (Hobfoll et al., 2018), which increases employee burnout. Studies have confirmed the negative influence of relationship conflicts on employee well-being, that is, negative emotions (De Wit et al. 2012), and stress (Sonnentag et al., 2013). Jimmieson et al. (2017) argued that research studies on employee burnout are less conclusive and suggested that relationship conflict increases employee burnout.

Leon-Perez et al. (2016) conducted a study among employees working in a safe inspection department and found no relationship between process conflict and employee burnout, while Rispens and Demerouti (2016) conducted a diary study, which resulted in process conflict leading to negative emotions. Conflicts among team members undermine their association with team members and the organization, as they do not want to remain in that team because of their negative experiences (Jungst and Blumberg, 2016). Li (2023) argued that relationship conflicts have an indirect effect on disengagement through exhaustion, and a direct effect on performance (Zhang & Zhou, 2019; Venz & Nesher Shoshan, 2022). Moreover, Hwang and Shin (2023) argued that task conflict transform to relationship conflict which leads to employee burnout, it means that these conflicts are not static in nature. It means that conflicts are dynamic in nature and transform to one another (Ullah, 2022).

Based on COR theory, workplace stressors (intra team conflicts) generates negative consequences for employees, so we can assume task, relationship, process and status conflict will lead to disagreements on tasks among the teams, and they will consider it a personal insult and generate stress. Prolonged stress and depression lead to employee burnout. Harris et al. (2015) argued that COR theory explains that individual's feel stressed when situations do not meet their expectations. Research on conflicts has ignored the impact on employee burnout, which includes the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of professional efficacy. Based on empirical evidence and the above discussion, we propose the following:

- H1. Project conflicts are positively related to employee burnout.
- H1a. Task conflict is positively related to employee burnout.

- H1b. Relationship conflict is positively related to employee burnout.
- H1c. Process conflict is positively related to employee burnout.
- H1d. Status conflict is positively related to employee burnout.

2.2 Negative Emotions as Mediator

The corollary of COR states that loss begets loss, which means depletion in resources, will further lead to a negative impact on individual resources. Based on this statement, we argue that project conflicts (loss tied with team members) will trigger negative emotions that will lead to loss of resources such as employee burnout (Hobfoll, 2001). Baele et al. (2016) argued that emotion is a vital outcome, but this relationship has been under-theorized and ignored by researchers. Previous research indicates that conflict is one of the significant workplace stressors (Hahn, 2000) and negative emotions negatively impact employees' motivations. Task conflict has a positive relationship with psychological strain (Sonnentag et al., 2013), and employees' negative attitudes, such as job dissatisfaction (de Wit et al., 2012). Moreover, studies have indicated that task conflict has positive effects on employee attitudes (DeChurch et al., 2013); some studies have shown that task conflict does not lead to negative emotions (Meier et al., 2013).

Rispens and Demerouti (2016) found that relationship and process conflict experienced negative emotions (sadness, guilt, anger, and contempt), while task conflict did not elicit negative emotions. Research studies have consistently found that the negative consequences of relationship conflict elicit negative emotions among employees, and social stress experiences lead employees towards negative emotions such as anxiety, frustration, and anger (Jehn, 1994). Wu et al. (2018) argue that relationship conflict leads to anger, tension, hostility, and other types of negative emotions, leading to a harmful impact on employee dissatisfaction, depression, and burnout. De Wit et al. (2012) argued that there is a positive relationship between process conflict and negative emotions, Kuriakose et al. (2019) investigated the mediating role of negative emotions between process conflict and individual well-being, which resulted in the partial mediation of negative emotions. Feeney and Collins (2015) studied negative emotions as a mediator, in which individuals with low support show more negative emotions that lead to emotional distress (Wilson et al., 2021; Jacobson et al., 2013). Employees involved in team conflicts experience negative emotions (Venz and Nesher Shoshan, 2022), but there is little literature available on the detrimental outcomes of these emotions (Zhang and Zhou, 2019; Venz and Nesher Shoshan, 2022). Ullah (2022) pointed out that task conflicts and process conflicts lead to relationship conflicts through negative emotions, which is a concern when studying all the dimensions of conflicts.

Several studies have investigated the relationship between workplace conflicts and negative emotions among employees working in an organization, but they have mainly focused on anger (Rispens, 2012) while Watson et al. (1988) proposed 10 items on negative

emotions in their PANES items. Based on the above empirical studies and discussion we can assume the following hypothesis:

- H2. Negative emotions mediate the relationship between project conflicts and employee burnout.
- H2a. Negative emotions mediate the relationship between task conflict and employee burnout.
- H2b. Negative emotions mediate the relationship between relationship conflict and employee burnout.
- H2c. Negative emotions mediate the relationship between process conflict and employee burnout.
- H2d. Negative emotions mediate the relationship between status conflict and employee burnout.

2.3 Moderation of Employee Resilience

Resilience is defined as a person's ability to adapt to difficult events and hardships, as well as to overcome challenges (Tonkin et al., 2018; Chi et al., 2016). There is significant evidence in the literature that difficult job settings or stresses can contribute to poor employee results and burnout (Maslach et al., 2003). Employees with resilience as a resource capability may be able to recover from situations such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, flexibility, employee behavior, employee performance, and effectiveness (Luthans et al., 2014; Cai et al., 2024). Individual variables, such as personality, determine the level to which an individual may suffer emotional tiredness or stress, as well as repercussions such as burnout. Greater resilience protects employees from emotional tiredness and leads to better personal performance (Rushton et al., 2015). Given the relationship between resilience and burnout in high-intensity nursing specialties (Rushton et al. 2015), one option for helping nursing students manage their stress is to teach them positive adaptive coping skills (Sanderson & Brewer 2017).

Value of social capital in improving psychological resilience and reducing burnout in the workplace. Khaksar et al. (2019) observed that psychological resilience helps mitigate the negative link between social capital and job burnout in individuals who work in hazardous environments, and we suggest that resilience is important for limiting job burnout in people who work in hazardous environments (Khaksar et al., 2019). Resilient workers perform better in difficult work situations (Shatté et al., 2017). Furthermore, research suggests that people with high resilience are better able to cope with adversity and change (Rossi et al., 2013). However, some researchers argue that it is unclear whether employee resilience shows the same level of adaptation (Britt et al., 2016). Resilience is an employee’s resource that helps to cope with stressful situations (De Clercq et al., 2021), and researchers suggest that employee resilience moderates psychological stress and outcomes.

The moderating role of employee resilience has received less attention from researchers, whereas AlHawari et al. (2020) studied resilience as a moderator between stressors and outcomes (Hudgins, 2016; Kumari & Sangwan, 2015). Borden et al. (2018) argued that resilient employees, who suffer less from stressful events, consider themselves self-worthy (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2017). Yasami et al., (2024) argued that employee resilience enhances the relationship of work engagement and psychological withdrawal behavior. Employee resilience is a personal resource that motivates employees to cope with unforeseen situations (Caniëls & Baaten, 2019), and highly resilient employees have the habit of dealing with negative emotions (Al-Hawari et al., 2019). Based on the above discussion, we propose the following moderated mediation hypothesis:

- H3: Employee resilience moderates the indirect relationship between project conflict and employee burnout through emotions. The indirect effect will be weaker for employees who report high levels of resilience than for those who report low levels of resilience.
- H3a: Employee resilience moderates the indirect relationship between task conflict and burnout via negative emotions. The indirect effect will be weaker for employees who report high levels of resilience than for those who report low levels of resilience.
- H3b: Employee resilience moderates the indirect relationship between relationship conflict and employee burnout through negative emotions. The indirect effect will be weaker for employees who report high levels of resilience than for those who report low levels of resilience.
- H3c: Employee resilience moderates the indirect relationship between process conflict and employee burnout through negative emotions. The indirect effect will be weaker for employees who report high levels of resilience than for those who report low levels of resilience.
- H3d: Employee resilience moderates the indirect relationship between status conflict and employee burnout through negative emotions. The indirect effect will be weaker for employees who report high levels of resilience than for those who report low levels of resilience.

2.4 Research Framework

In this research framework (Figure: 1), project conflicts are conceptualized as the independent variable with a mediating variable negative emotion, employee resilience is a moderating variable, and the outcome variable is employee burnout.

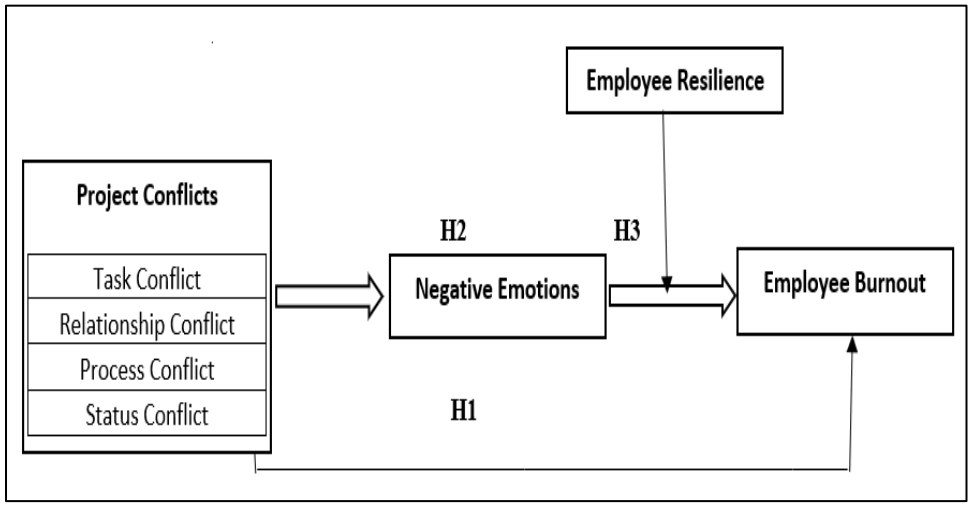

Figure 1: Research Framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Sample and Procedure

This study uses a quantitative methodology. The population selected for this survey consisted of employees working in project-based organizations. All research ethics were strictly followed, with written consent obtained from all respondents before distributing the questionnaire. Participant confidentiality and anonymity were fully maintained. Following the rule of thumb, the sample size for this study should be 385. A time-lagged design of the research was used instead of a cross-sectional design to avoid the problem of a common method of variance (Mehmood et al., 2024; Shang et al., 2022). Data were collected in three waves with a minimum gap of 15 days between the two time periods.

Data are collected from high-level officers in the project-based organization as they are well aware of the importance and sensitivity of the data collection, and with higher qualifications (bachelor 'sand master's level education), they can easily understand English and be able to answer properly. National Managers of these employees were contacted face-to-face in their head office, and the objective of the study was explained. After obtaining their consent, research ethics and Covid-19 SOPs were ensured. They helped us arrange the meeting at different venues, and the objective of the study was explained to those respondents who came while the rest were contacted through their contact numbers and email addresses. A total of 650 questionnaires were distributed through random sampling at Time 1, as the data were collected through a three-time lag design; thus, the

final dataset consisted of 389 respondents. The total number of male respondents was 264, comprising 67.9 % of the study sample, 16.6 % of the respondents were in the age bracket of 20-25 years, 51.2 % were in the age bracket of 26-30 years, 22.6 % were in the age bracket of 31-35 years, and 10 % of the respondents were 35 or more than 35 years old. In total, 25.7 % of the respondents were bachelor qualified, 73.8 % were master qualified, and 0.5 % were Ph.D. qualified, as indicated in Table 1. In this study, the demographic variables presented in Table 1 are considered as control variables.

Table 1: Background Information of the Employees

Categories	**Type**	**Number**	**Percentage**
Gender	Male	264	67.9
	Female	125	32.1
Age	20-25 Years	63	16.2
	26-30 Years	199	51.2
	31-35 Years	88	22.6
	36 or more Years	39	10.0
Qualifications	Bachelors	100	25.7
	Masters	287	73.8
	Ph.D.	2	0.5

3.2 Measurement Scales

This study included four variables: project conflict as an independent variable, negative emotions as a mediating variable, employee resilience as a moderating variable, and employee burnout as the dependent variable. Data were collected through a 5 Likert scale because the 7 Likert scale is a little more confusing to share experiences (Revilla et al. 2014).

3.2.1 Project Conflicts

Project conflict was measured through four dimensions: task conflict, relationship conflict, process conflict, and status conflict. To measure task conflict and relationship conflict scales, adapted from Jehn (1995), and for process conflict, three items were adapted from Shah and Jehn (1993), as this scale has been widely used in previous conflict studies. To measure status conflict, a four-item scale was adapted from Bendersky and Hays (2012); an example of an item is “I experienced conflicts when I tried to assert dominance on my team members”.

3.2.2 Negative Emotions

To measure emotions, a words scale was adapted from the PANAS scale, which was developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988), as this scale is widely used in previous emotion studies. The respondent was asked to self-report their emotions on words through an example of words, “I feel guilty when I encounter conflicts with my team members”.

3.2.3 Employee Resilience

For measuring employee resilience, eight items are adapted from Campbell-Sills, and Stein, (2007) as this scale is widely used in resilience studies. The respondents asked through an example of an item "I can handle unpleasant feelings".

3.2.4 Employee Burnout

To measure Employee Burnout, 22 items scale was adopted from Maslach and Jackson (1981), as this scale is widely used in previous burnout studies. One example of an item is "One should carry work out to the best of one's ability."

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Measurement Model

Construct validity is tested through discriminant and convergent validity, while reliability is assessed through composite reliability. Table 2 shows that there is no convergent validity or reliability issues. The AVE values of each construct are greater than the correlation values, which proves that there are no discriminant validity issues, and the composite reliability values are also more than 0.7, fitting the threshold values (Fornell & Larcker 1981; Cheung et al,. 2024). Some researchers suggest that factor loadings should be greater than 0.3 (Heravian et al., 2023), while others recommend a threshold of 0.4 or higher (Cheung et al., 2024). The results presented in our table confirm that all values meet these thresholds, with the minimum factor loading being 0.662.

Table 2: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Item Code	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Task Conflict	TC1	0.720	0.822	0.824	0.54
	TC2	0.785			
	TC3	0.730			
	TC4	0.701			
Relationship Conflict	RC1	0.705	0.804	0.804	0.506
	RC2	0.706			
	RC3	0.733			
	RC4	0.701			
Process Conflict	PC1	0.706	0.771	0.772	0.53
	PC2	0.751			
	PC3	0.726			
Status Conflict	SC1	0.729	0.822	0.822	0.536
	SC2	0.740			
	SC3	0.717			
	SC4	0.742			
Negative Emotion	NE1	0.704	0.923	0.923	0.546
	NE2	0.756			
	NE3	0.751			
	NE4	0.746			
	NE5	0.734			
	NE6	0.775			
	NE7	0.753			
	NE8	0.694			
	NE9	0.742			
	NE10	0.728			
Employee Resilience	ER1	0.704	0.892	0.892	0.508
	ER2	0.734			
	ER3	0.699			
	ER4	0.716			
	ER5	0.719			

	ER6	0.698			
	ER7	0.696			
	ER8	0.733			
Employee Burnout	EBO1	0.713	0.958	0.958	0.508
	EBO2	0.662			
	EBO3	0.720			
	EBO4	0.707			
	EBO5	0.701			
	EBO6	0.721			
	EBO7	0.691			
	EBO8	0.733			
	EBO9	0.701			
	EBO10	0.714			
	EBO11	0.717			
	EBO12	0.744			
	EBO13	0.679			
	EBO14	0.736			
	EBO15	0.717			
	EBO16	0.721			
	EBO17	0.717			
	EBO18	0.697			
	EBO19	0.744			
	EBO20	0.727			
	EBO21	0.696			
	EBO22	0.717			

Table 3 shows the seven-factor CFA model showed that the performance of the model structure was sufficient to model fitness values within the threshold: Chi-Square/DF= 1.092, CFI=0.0.988, TLI=0.0.987, RMSEA=0.015, and standardized root mean square residual (RMR)=0.048.1 (Sukamani and Wang, 2020; Hair et al., 2019).

Table 3: Model Fitness

Indicators	Observed Values	Threshold Values
CMIN/DF	1.092	<3.0
GFI	0.877	>0.8
CFI	0.988	>0.9
TLI	0.987	>0.9
RMSEA	0.015	<0.8

Table 4 demonstrates evidence of discriminant validity, as the value for each construct is higher in relation to its correlation with other constructs (Cheung et al., 2024). For instance, the construct RC has a value of 0.711 with itself, which represents the highest value among its interrelations. This pattern is consistently observed across other constructs, such as EBO (0.713), NE (0.739), ER (0.713), SC (0.732), TC (0.735), and PC (0.728).

Table 4: Validity Concerns

Variable	RC	EBO	NE	ER	SC	TC	PC
RC	**0.711**						
EBO	0.509	**0.713**					
NE	0.486	0.516	**0.739**				
ER	0.054	0.065	0.187	**0.713**			
SC	0.414	0.302	0.393	0.069	**0.732**		
TC	0.572	0.48	0.511	0.01	0.462	**0.735**	
PC	0.586	0.515	0.525	0.068	0.36	0.552	**0.728**

4.2 Direct Relationships

Direct hypotheses are tested through SEM, and Table 5 shows that project conflicts significantly impact employee burnout ($\beta = 0.634$, $p < 0.001$), which proves H1 and support previous research studies (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2014). The first dimension, task conflict, also significantly affected employee burnout ($\beta = 0.178$, $p < 0.001$), which support H1 (a) and support Tafvelin et al., (2020) and contradict with Leon-perez et al., (2016). Moreover, Table 3 shows that relationship conflict positively affected employee burnout ($\beta = 0.207$, $p < 0.001$). Process conflict is our third dimension of project conflict, which positively and significantly impacts employee burnout ($\beta = 0.205$, $p < 0.001$), proving H1(c). Both H1b and H1b results support previous studies (Rispens & Demerouti, 2016; Kuriakose et al. 2019) Status conflict is positively related to employee burnout, but the results are not significant, thus rejecting H1 (d). Hence, H1, H1 (a), H1 (b), and H1(c) are accepted, whereas H1 (d) is rejected.

Table 5: Direct Hypothesis Results

Path	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Hypothesis
Project conflicts on employee burnout	.634	.052	12.291	0.001	H1 Accepted
Task conflict on employee burnout	.178	.046	3.853	0.001	H1(a) Accepted
Relationship conflict on employee burnout	.207	.046	4.459	0.001	H1(b) Accepted
Process conflict on employee burnout	.205	.043	4.715	0.001	H1(c) Accepted
Status conflict on employee burnout	.040	.041	0.964	.335	H1(d) Rejected

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

4.3 Mediation Analysis Results

SPSS macro-PROCESS is used for mediation analysis, model 6 was utilized (Hayes, 2013; Preacher et al., 2007). Table 6 shows the direct and unconditional indirect relationships between independent variables and dependent variables.

Table 6: Simple Mediation Analysis Results

	Negative Emotions				Employee Burnout			
Predictor	**Effect**	**Boot SE**	**Boot LLCI**	**Boot ULCI**	**Effect**	**Boot SE**	**Boot LLCI**	**Boot ULCI**
Project Conflicts	0.712	0.054	0.605	0.819	0.451	0.059	0.333	0.568
Task conflict	0.429	0.043	0.343	0.515	0.235	0.042	0.151	0.319
Relationship conflict	0.407	0.044	0.318	0.495	0.266	0.043	0.183	0.349
Process conflict	0.412	0.042	0.328	0.495	0.246	0.041	0.165	0.327
Status conflict	0.322	0.045	0.233	0.411	0.100	0.041	0.019	0.181

Unconditional Indirect Effects				
Predictor	**Employee Burnout**	**Boot SE**	**Boot LLCI**	**Boot ULCI**
Project Conflicts	0.182	0.050	0.080	0.281
Task conflict	0.146	0.029	0.092	0.205
Relationship conflict	0.136	0.027	0.084	0.194
Process conflict	0.137	0.027	0.084	0.194
Status conflict	0.133	0.025	0.086	0.184

Note(s): boot SE: bootstrapped standard error; boot LLCI: bootstrapped lower limit confidence interval; boot ULCI: bootstrapped upper limit confidence interval

Table 6 result showed that project conflicts positively influence significantly negative emotions (b = 0.712) and employee burnout (b = 0.451) because there is no zero in-between confidence interval. Further, the result also depicts the unconditional indirect effect of project conflict on employee burnout (b = 0.182) through negative emotion and there is no zero in-between confidence intervals which prove our H2. Moreover, the result showed that task conflict positively and significantly influences negative emotions (b = 0.429) and employee burnout (b = 0.235) because there is no zero in-between confidence interval. Table 6 result depicted the unconditional indirect effect of project conflict on employee burnout (b = 0.146) through negative emotion and there are no zero in-between confidence intervals which proves our H2 (a).

Table 6 result showed that relationship conflict positively and significantly influences negative emotions (b = 0.407) and employee burnout (b = 0.266) because there is no zero in-between confidence interval. Table 6 result also depicted the unconditional indirect effect of project conflict on employee burnout (b = 0.136) through negative emotion and there is no zero in-between confidence intervals which proves our H2 (b). Table 6 result showed that process conflict positively influences significantly negative emotions (b = 0.412) and employee burnout (b = 0.246) because there is no zero in-between confidence interval. Table 4 result depicted the unconditional indirect effect of project conflict on employee burnout (b = 0.137) through negative emotion and there is no zero in-between confidence intervals which proves our H2 (c).

Table 4 result showed that status conflict positively and significantly influences negative emotions (b = 0.322) and employee burnout (b = 0.100) because there is no zero in-between confidence interval. Further, the unconditional indirect effect of project conflict on employee burnout (b = 0.133) through negative emotion and there is no zero in-between confidence intervals which prove our H2 (d). In summary, our all-mediating hypotheses are proven and these results supports previous research studies (Venz & Nesher Shoshan, 2022; Ullah, 2022).

4.4 Moderated Mediation Analysis

In this study, moderated mediation was tested using SPSS macro-PROCESS, and Model 14 was utilized for the analysis (Hayes, 2013; Preacher et al., 2007). Table 7 shows that all independent variables positively and significantly influence negative emotions and employee burnout, because there is no zero between their confidence intervals. Table 7 indicates that after adding the mediator negative emotions, all conditional indirect effects of project conflicts on employee burnout through negative emotions were significant because there were no zero in-between confidence intervals, which supports our mediating hypothesis. The moderated mediation results of project conflict on employee burnout were also significant (b = -0.073; LLCI = -0.154; ULCI= -0.001). The indirect conditional effect of project conflicts on employee burnout through negative emotions at three levels of employee resilience: mean (M), one standard deviation above the mean (+1 SD), and one standard deviation below the mean (-1 SD). The results revealed that the conditional

indirect effect of project conflicts on employee burnout through negative emotions is weaker at +1 SD employee resilience (b = 0.150) than at -1 SD employee resilience (b = 0.280), which proves H3 that employee resilience moderates the indirect relationship between project conflicts and employee burnout via negative emotions. The indirect effect will be weaker for employees who report high levels of resilience than for those who report low levels of resilience.

Table 7: Moderated Mediation Results

	Negative Emotions				**Employee Burnout**			
Predictor	**Effect**	**Boot SE**	**Boot LLCI**	**Boot ULCI**	**Effect**	**Boot SE**	**Boot LLCI**	**Boot ULCI**
Project Conflicts	0.712	0.054	0.605	0.819	0.397	0.0613	0.276	0.517
Task conflict	0.429	0.043	0.343	0.515	0.198	0.043	0.114	0.283
Relationship conflict	0.407	0.044	0.318	0.495	0.239	0.042	0.157	0.322
Process conflict	0.412	0.042	0.328	0.495	0.22	0.040	0.140	0.301
Status conflict	0.322	0.045	0.233	0.411	0.064	0.040	0.015	0.145

Unconditional Indirect Effects (Various Levels of the Moderator)

Predictor	**Level of Moderator (Employee Resilience)**	**Effect**	**Boot SE**	**Boot LLCI**	**Boot ULCI**
Project Conflicts	-1 SD	0.280	0.069	0.154	0.429
	M	0.215	0.053	0.115	0.324
	+1 SD	0.150	0.057	0.027	0.252
Task conflict	-1 SD	0.216	0.043	0.136	0.308
	M	0.164	0.031	0.107	0.230
	+1 SD	0.113	0.032	0.047	0.173
Relationship conflict	-1 SD	0.199	0.039	0.126	0.283
	M	0.152	0.029	0.098	0.214
	+1 SD	0.105	0.030	0.044	0.165
Process conflict	-1 SD	0.202	0.039	0.130	0.284
	M	0.153	0.029	0.099	0.215
	+1 SD	0.105	0.030	0.045	0.167
Status conflict	-1 SD	0.194	0.039	0.119	0.271
	M	0.147	0.027	0.093	0.201
	+1 SD	0.099	0.023	0.053	0.146

Index of Moderated Mediation

Predictor	**Effect on Employee Burnout**	**Boot SE**	**Boot LLCI**	**Boot ULCI**
Project Conflicts	-0.073	0.039	-0.154	-0.001
Task conflict	-0.058	0.024	-0.112	-0.013
Relationship conflict	-0.052	0.022	-0.100	-0.010
Process conflict	-0.054	0.022	-0.102	-0.014
Status conflict	-0.053	0.019	-0.095	-0.017

The moderated mediation results of task conflict on employee burnout were significant (b = -0.058; LLCI = -0.112; ULCI= -0.013). The indirect conditional effect of task conflict on employee burnout through negative emotions at the three levels of employee resilience is significant because there are no zero in-between confidence intervals. The results revealed that the conditional indirect effect of task conflict on employee burnout through negative emotions is weaker at +1 SD employee resilience (b = 0.113) than at -1 SD employee resilience (b = 0.216), which proves H3 (a) that employee resilience moderates the indirect relationship between task conflict and employee burnout via negative emotions. The indirect effect will be weaker for employees who report high levels of resilience than for those who report low levels of resilience.

The moderated mediation results of relationship conflict with employee burnout were significant (b = -0.052; LLCI = -0.100; ULCI= -0.010). The indirect conditional effect of relationship conflict on employee burnout through negative emotions at the three levels of employee resilience is significant because there are no zero in-between confidence intervals. The results revealed that the conditional indirect effect of relationship conflict on employee burnout through negative emotions is weaker at +1 SD employee resilience (b = 0.105) than at -1 SD employee resilience (b = 0.199), which proves H3 (b) that employee resilience moderates the indirect relationship between process conflict and employee burnout via negative emotions. The indirect effect will be weaker for employees who report high levels of resilience than for those who report low levels of resilience. The moderated mediation results of process conflict on employee burnout were significant (b = -0.054; LLCI = -0.102; ULCI= -0.017). The indirect conditional effect of process conflict on employee burnout through negative emotions at the three levels of employee resilience is significant because there are no zero in-between confidence intervals. The results revealed that the conditional indirect effect of process conflict on employee burnout through negative emotions is weaker at +1 SD employee resilience (b = 0.105) than at -1 SD employee resilience (b = 0.202), which proves H3 (c) that employee resilience moderates the indirect relationship between process conflict and employee burnout via negative emotions. The indirect effect will be weaker for employees who report high levels of resilience than for those who report low levels of resilience.

The moderated mediation results of task conflict on employee burnout were significant (b = -0.053; LLCI = -0.095; ULCI= -0.017). The indirect conditional effect of task conflict on employee burnout through negative emotions at the three levels of employee resilience is significant because there are no zero in-between confidence intervals. The results revealed that the conditional indirect effect of project conflicts on employee burnout through negative emotions is weaker at +1 SD employee resilience (b = 0.099) than at -1 SD employee resilience (b = 0.194), which proves H3 (d) that employee resilience moderates the indirect relationship between status conflict and employee burnout via negative emotions. The indirect effect will be weaker for employees who report high levels of resilience than for those who report low levels of resilience. Our moderated mediation results support previous studies that highpoint the role of employee resilience in

moderating the ability to cope with stressful events (Khaksar et al., 2019; Yasami et al., 2024).

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Implications

Conservation of resource theory explains workplace stressors and their negative outcomes and explains how individuals are motivated to use their resources to mitigate the negative impact of those stressors (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Drawing on COR theory, this study explained the mediating role of negative emotions in the relationship between project conflicts and employee burnout. Corollaries 1 and 2 of COR theory explain that employees with high resources are less vulnerable to stressful situations and they try to develop their resources; therefore, based on this argument, we used employee resilience as moderated that high-resilience employees will be less affected than low-resilience ones (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Adding to the literature, project conflicts along with their dimensions have negative consequences (Kim, Huang, & Lee, 2023; Yue, & Thelen, 2023; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014; Tafvelin et al., 2020; Kundi & Badar, 2021; Beitler et al., 2018). Several studies have indicated that task conflict is unrelated to stress (Friedman et al., 2000), burnout (Leon-Perez et al., 2016), and exhaustion (Giebels & Janssen, 2005) but the results of this study concluded that task conflict is positive and significantly affects employee burnout, which supports previous research studies (Ullah, 2022; Tafvelin et al., 2020) and relationship conflicts are positively related to employee burnout (Li, 2023; Venz & Nesher Shoshan, 2022). The results of this study are consistent with those of Leon-Perez et al. (2016), who found that this relationship is positively related to employee burnout. A number of studies have investigated the impact of process conflict, but few studies have found that process conflict is unrelated to negative consequences (Leon-Perez et al. 2016) but this study showed that process conflict is positively related to negative emotions and employee burnout.

Early researchers have argued that conflicts have negative outcomes and modern researchers have argued that conflict can be beneficial but have drawn on the COR theory, explaining that project conflict leads to negative emotions that positively affect employee burnout among employees working in a project-based organization. Studying the mediating role of negative emotions between project conflicts and employee burnout has filled the gap mentioned by (Baele et al., 2016), our results indicate that negative emotions mediate between project conflicts, task conflict, relationship conflict, process conflict, status conflict, and employee burnout. The results of this study are consistent with those of Jimmieson et al. (2017), de Wit et al. (2013), and DeChurch et al. (2013) in that task conflict elicits negative emotions that lead to negative consequences. Rispens and Demerouti (2016) argued that relationship conflict and process conflict lead to negative

emotions, while task conflict does not elicit negative emotions. Kuriakose et al. (2019) argued that negative emotions mediate the relationship between process conflict and well-being, but our study results indicated that all dimensions of project conflicts elicit negative emotions and mediate the relationship between project conflicts and employee burnout.

Project conflicts and negative emotions lead to employee burnout, which is a serious challenge for an organization to tackle the employees' burnout (Kim & Chang, 2015) because well-experienced and skillful human capital is a real asset for any organization (Korsakienė et al., 2015). The moderating results of our study are consistent in that employee resilience mitigates the relationship between workplace stressors and their outcomes (Khaksar et al., 2019; AlHawari et al., 2020; Caniëls & Baaten, 2019).

This study sheds light on critical issues for future researchers. This study explored a novel model of moderated mediation as a moderation of employee resilience through an indirect relationship between project conflict and employee burnout via negative emotions. Our study focuses on project-based organizations working in developing countries, such as Pakistan. Our study fills the gaps in investigating emotions raised due to conflicts (Humphrey et al., 2017), the relationship between negative emotions and burnout (Roderiguez-Rey et al., 2024), and the role of employee resilience in the workplace (Cooke et al., 2020; and Bardoel et al. 2014). Previous researchers have studied project conflicts in three dimensions and ignored the fourth type of status conflict, which we included in this study. This study adds to the literature on the relationship between project conflict, negative emotions, employee resilience, and employee burnout.

5.2 Practical Implications

This study has practical implications for individual employees and managers working in organizations. Previous studies have argued that conflicts can be beneficial (Ullah, 2022; Khosravi et al., 2020), and through conflict resolution, we can effectively manage conflicts among project teams and resolve them to mitigate their negative consequences. Therefore, organizations should focus on employee well-being programs that help employees cope with stressful events, such as team building, communication channels, and engaging employees in constructive debates (Rezvani et al., 2019). The study findings show that negative emotions mediate the relationship between project conflicts and employee burnout; therefore, organizations should invest in employees to train them to cope with challenging events. Through resilience training, employees' capacities can be increased, which enhances their ability to bounce back stressful events, such as project conflicts, and does es not allow negative emotions to build and reduce employee burnout (Rezvani et al., 2019; Kundi & Badar, 2021).

To minimize conflicts, the project management unit should focus on project planning and resource allocation, and effective communication training for employees can minimize constraints because everyone knows their roles as per budget and resource allocation. This will help the team members to use which type of tone and words should be used, because disputing parties do not know about conflict resolving options (Caputo et al., 2019).

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

This study has added literature to the current knowledge and provides future directions for other researchers as well. First, this study used a simple random sampling technique, future researchers should consider stratified sampling techniques if the population is divided into distant groups, cluster sampling if the population is geographically spread, purposive sampling if the population has special characteristics, and snowball sampling technique, which can make it easy to identify competent respondents.

Second, we used a time-lag design for data collection; future researchers should consider experimental and longitudinal studies to gain a better understanding of causal relationships. Third, we collected the data through self-reporting, which could be the reason for common method bias and affect the generalizability of our study. However, we followed all research ethical considerations and tested the CMB using Harman's single factor test.

Fourth, in this study, we investigated the role of negative emotions as a mediator; future researchers should also consider other variables like social support, workplace climate, role ambiguity and perceived fairness. Fifth, the moderating role of employee resilience was studied, and future researchers should consider other variables, such as ethical values and leadership styles.

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