How Startups Can Make the Most of Conflicts:

A Study Into the Moderating Role of Servant Leadership and Problem Solving on the Relationship Between Intragroup Conflicts and Performance

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Master Thesis

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Overview

Abstract

The current study is aimed at investigating how conflict management and leadership styles could buffer against the potential detrimental effects of intragroup conflict on startups' performance and employee work attitudes. This study clarifies and contributes to the research in two key ways: First, results showed that intragroup conflicts have a general negative association with startup performance, especially team cohesion. Second, results revealed that conflict management strategies (problem solving and forcing) and servant leadership can attenuate this negative association. Autocratic leadership, in contrast, tends to aggrevate the negative relationship with conflict on performance. Discussion and practical implications were formulated.

Keywords: Conflict handling style, Problem solving, Servant leadership, Autocratic leadership

Introduction

'Make something people want, includes making a company that people want to work for.'
(Sahil Lavingia, CEO Gumroad)

Technology is changing the fabric of our society faster than in any other time in our history. Through these turbulent changes, we have seen the meteoric rise of startups as young companies create life changing products and services. Sometimes these outcasts end up disrupting entire industries. Spotify, for example, turned the music industry upside down, and Tesla created the electric car of the future while opening up their patents.

Although startups are a popular topic for the media, startups remain ill-defined in academia. Traditionally startups are simply defined as any new businesses. However, this definition makes no distinction between a tech-startup, such as early day Facebook, or the new muffin shop around the corner. A more precise definition of startups is 'organisations formed to *search* for a repeatable and scalable business model' (Blank, Gary and Dorf, 2012). This is in contrast to established organisations that are designed to *execute an existing* repeatable business model (Blank, 2014).

Startups spend most of the time pursuing new opportunities and therefore often lack the key resources needed to build their organisation (Starr & MacMillan, 1990). As a consequence, startups generally work within extreme uncertainty, resulting in high pressure environments caused by a demanding work ethic, a large amount of responsibility, continuous competitive pressure and income insecurity (Ries, 2011; Wasserman, 2003). This leads to increased tension among the team members. As a result, over two third of all the startups fail due to intra-group conflicts (Wasserman, 2003; 2003; CB insight 2014). Leading members of the startup community confirmed this high prevalence of intra-group conflicts during personal interviews. Despite these strong indications for the importance of intra-group conflict in startup organisations, research has hitherto been limited to intra-group conflicts within established organisations (Hackman,1987; Jehn, 1999; Han & Harms, 2010). To help startup teams increase their chances of success, the current study investigates how startups can constructively manage

conflicts. The following question will thereby be answered: What is the role of leadership style and conflict management style in the relationship between conflicts and team performance?

Even though there are incredible success stories of the transformative power of startups, in reality these stories are far and between. Estimates are that between 50% and 90% of the startups fail within their first two years (Carrol, 2014). A study done by CB insights (CB insights, 2014) suggests that team dynamics play a considerable role in the failure of startups. There is general consensus that intra-group conflicts reduces team performance and can lead to team break-ups (Hackman,1987; Jehn 1999; Han & Harms, 2010; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Van Woerkom, & Van Engen, 2009; Boz, Martínez, & Munduate, 2009) and employee turnover (Slamon, 2003; Foo, Sin, & Yiong, 2006). However, conflicts are inevitable and therefore constructive ways to manage them are essential for high organisational performance (De Church & Marks, 2001). A team leader is often responsible for setting organisational goals, as well as setting the example for norms and values within the team (Schraeder, Tears, & Jordan, 2005) and by doing so, greatly influences the way conflicts are managed (Schafer, 2010; Kotlyar, Karakowsky & Ng, 2011).

This study contributes to the literature around conflict and performance in two key ways: First, this study sheds light on the possible detrimental effects of intragroup conflict on startup performance. Second, this study looks into ways how startups can constructively manage intragroup conflicts by studying the role of conflict management style (problem solving versus forcing) and leadership style (servant leadership and autocratic leadership) within their team.

In sum, this correlational study aims to answer the following question: What is the moderating role of leadership style, (servant leadership and autocratic leadership) and conflict management, (problem solving and forcing), on the relationship between conflicts and startup performance (affective organisational commitment and team cohesion). The expected model of this study can be found in Appendix A.

To answer this question I will first provide some background information about startup performance, followed by a description of the different types of conflict (process conflict, task conflict and relationship conflict), after which the literature about the relationship between conflict and startup performance and conflict management and leadership styles is described. Secondly, a description of the method and research details is provided. Thirdly the results,

discussions and limitations of this study are given together with suggestions for future research. The thesis will close with practical implications.

Startup performance: Cohesion and Affective commitment

What is defined as success is vastly different between startups. One startup may be focused on user acquisition while another focuses on direct revenue. Some startups are dependent on that one big corporate customer while others are looking for millions of users to download their app. As a result, it is hard to find one clear measure for performance. As effective teams are vital to any type of startup I will focus on team level performance. The two indirect performance measures that I will look at are cohesion, as it has been clearly linked to overall team performance (Mach, Dolan & Tzafrir, 2010; Tekleab, Quigley, & Tesluk, 2009; Carron, Bray & Eys, 2002) and affective commitment as it has demonstrated to have a clear link to the individual's contribution in achieving the organizational goals (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997). Both have been found to be essential to the success of organisations (Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly,Goffin, & Jackson,1989). Moreover, the importance of cohesion and affective commitment was supported in the personal interviews I conducted with startup leaders.

Cohesion

Cohesion is defined as a dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of members' affective needs (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998, p. 213). Team cohesion consists of commitment to the task, interpersonal attraction and group pride (Wendt, Euwema & van Emmerik, 2009). Task commitment is a group's shared commitment or attraction to the group's tasks or goals and the motivation to coordinate the team's efforts to achieve common work-related goals (MacCoun, 1996; Hackman, 1976). Interpersonal attraction to the group is a shared liking or attraction to the group and the enjoyment of each other's company or social time together (MacCoun, 1996, Evans & Jarvis, 1980). Group pride consists of personal feelings of pride towards the achievements of the group (Wendt et al., 2009).

Team cohesion is an emotional experience and is created when the team or organisation becomes a part of the social identity of the individual (Beal, Cohen, Burke, & McLendon, 2003).

This leads to behaviour that is congruent with that identity and, in turn, increases the motivation to achieve organisational goals and solve problems that prevent these organisational goals from being realised (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Members of high cohesive teams spend more time together and share information more frequently. This information sharing is especially important to startups as exchange of information is vital for creative problem solving and innovation. Furthermore, high cohesive teams provide each other with better social support in stressful situations (Steinhardt, Dolbier, Gottlieb, & McCalister, 2003), further boosting productivity within the high pressure environment most startups work in.

Team cohesion has been associated with team performance improvement (Ensley, Pearson, & Amason, 2002), satisfaction and team viability (Tekleab, Quigley, & Tesluk, 2009; Carron, Bray, & Eys, 2002). Conflicts reduce team cohesion when team members are not able to manage them effectively. However, when conflicts are managed well, team cohesion and thereby team effectiveness can increase (Chang et al., 2003). A correlational study of Tekleab et al., (2009) showed that high conflict management (teams that engage in open discussion about the conflict and are prepared to manage conflicts when they arise), can alter the negative relationship between task and relationship conflict on cohesion. Where cohesion is focused on team strength, the second performance indicator of this study, affective commitment, has a direct link to the individual's desire to help fulfil the organisational goals.

Affective commitment

Organisational commitment can be defined as "a psychological state of mind that characterises the employee's relationship with the organisation and that has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue with the organisation" (Meyer & Allen, 1991). There are three types of organisational commitment: firstly, continuance commitment, the commitment caused by anticipated penalties induced if the employee would leave the organisation. Employees with a continuance commitment stay with the organisation because leaving would be too costly, for instance a loss of salary. Secondly, there is normative commitment, the commitment caused by personal norms about leaving organisations. Employees with a normative commitment stay with their organisation because they feel it is the 'right thing to do'. Thirdly,

there is affective commitment. Employees with affective commitment stay because of their emotional connection with the organisation (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993).

This study will focus on affective commitment as it has been found to be the strongest predictor of overall organisational commitment and of organisational performance (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002). Furthermore affective commitment has been closely linked with intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which is an important, long term motivating factor for high employee performance (Benabou & Tirole, 2003). Affective commitment consists of three components: emotional attachment, identification and involvement. The emotional attachment caused by affective commitment to an organisation increases the willingness of team members to put a lot of effort in their work in order to produce high quality output (Galletta, Portoghese & Battistelli, 2011) and therefore is an important driver of organisational performance (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). The other components, identification and involvement, are important factors that contribute to the engagement of the employee with the organisation or team, and have thus been associated with lower turnover intentions, stress and work-family conflict (Galletta, Portoghese & Battistelli, 2011; Meyer et al., 2002).

In most startups, working hours of 10-13 a day are not uncommon, and the salary is often significantly lower than it would be in an equivalent job at an established organisation. To keep employees on board, the emotional bond they form with the organisation and the personal attachment to its goals is paramount. Rune Theil (Co-founder at Rockstart and alumni manager) said *"Emotional Connections are what drives a team"*. Moreover, research has demonstrated that leaders' and subordinates' affective commitment are positively related to extra-role behaviour; behaviour that contributes to the organisational goals, but is not in the function description (Loi, Lai, & Lam, 2012). This is especially important within startups because a general shortage of staff creates a strong need for startup members to operate outside of their functional boundaries. Furthermore, affective commitment is especially important for startups as the emotional attachment compensates for the high stress and low pay and will keep key team members on board when the organisation hits a rough patch.

To sum up, this study will use cohesion and affective commitment as indirect measures of performance since they have clear links to both organisational and team level performance. In the next paragraph the literature on conflicts will be presented.

Intragroup Conflicts

A conflict is defined as the process in which one party perceives that his or her interests, views or norms or values are being opposed or negatively affected by another party (Thomas, 1992, p.653). Various forms of conflicts are common within teams, and management of these conflicts constitute one of the most important day-to-day tasks of management (De Dreu & Van De Vliert, 1997; Rahim, Magner and Shapiro, 2000). Within startup teams it is likely that the number of conflicts is higher than in established organisations due to the high-pressure environment of startups described earlier. Marc Wesselink (Co-Founder startup Bootcamp and Alumni manager) even said: *Conflicts will always be there, it's the great startup teams that make 'use' of it.* According to him, managing conflicts constructively separates the mediocre teams from the great teams. Managing conflicts constructively leads to the development of trust, cohesion and team effectiveness (Chang, Bordia and Duck, 2003).

Three types of conflicts can be distinguished; process conflict, task conflict and relationship conflict (De Wit et al., 2012). Process conflicts are conflicts where there is a disagreement about the logistical aspects of task accomplishment, such as the delegation of tasks and responsibility (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). For example, conflicts resulting from a power struggle over promotion. The second type of conflicts is task conflict. These conflicts are caused by disagreements concerning the execution or content of a task. An example of this type of conflict is a conflict caused by opposing views on which features to implement in a particular piece of software. The third type of conflicts is relationship conflict. Relationship conflicts are conflicts resulting from interpersonal differences such as personality or norms and values. An example of this type of conflict would be a conflict resulting from bullying or from opposing political stances.

Due to the poorly-structured distribution of tasks and responsibilities within startups and the resulting overlap in tasks it is likely that process conflicts in startups are higher than in established organisations. These process conflicts lead to lower levels of trust within teams and

reduced performance (De Wit et al., 2012; Behfar, Mannix, Peterson, & Trochim, 2011). In contrast, when team members perceive the process conflict as being about process improvements and not about obstruction, process conflict can have a positive influence on team performance (Greer & Jehn, 2007). This would be especially important at the early stages of team formation, such as early stage startups, when the group can still benefit from the examination of different alternatives to complete the task (Goncalo, Polman & Maslach, 2010). Overall process conflict has been more strongly linked to negative effects on organisational performance (De Wit et al., 2012) and as such I would expect the same effect within startup organisations.

Task conflict is also likely to happen within startups because finding new, innovative and more effective ways to perform existing tasks, is an important part of their core business process. The relationship between task conflict and team performance is not clear-cut (Homan, Redeker, & De Vries, 2014). On the one hand studies point to the negative effects of task conflict such as an increase in stress (Dijkstra, Van Dierendonck & Evers, 2005; Yang & Mossholder, 2004), an increase in cognitive load which in turn reduces cognitive resources that can be invested in the task itself (Carnevale & Probst, 1998) and a decrease in overall performance and effective work behaviour (De Dreu, 2008). On the other hand studies found that well managed task conflicts can facilitate information sharing (Moye & Langfred, 2004) and elaboration (Van Knippenberg, De Dreu & Homan, 2004). Through this process, task conflict can generate new insights by stimulating critical thinking and can increases the development of new innovative solutions (Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; De Dreu & West, 2001). De Dreu (2008) demonstrates that task conflict can only have a positive effect on performance under a very specific set of circumstances. According to De Dreu '*the negative functions easily outweigh positive functions, prohibiting the emergence of positive workplace conflict.'* In other words, having no conflict to manage would always result in better performance. That's why, despite the mixed results, I expect a negative relationship of task conflict on startup performance.

The last conflict type is relationship conflict. Research on relationship conflicts has demonstrated mainly negative associations on performance (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Van Woerkom & Van Engen, 2009). Relationship conflicts reduce team member satisfaction and performance (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Boz, Martínez & Munduate, 2009); are negatively related to team learning (van Woerkom & Engen, 2009), organisational citizenship behaviour

(OCB) and knowledge sharing (Lu, Zhou & Leung, 2011); and lead to prolonged fatigue and reduction in general health (De Raeve, Jansen, Van den Brandt, Vasse & Kant, 2009). Relationship conflicts are especially associated with anger, tension and other negative emotional states within teams (Curseu, Boros, & Oerlemans, 2012). Relationship conflict can be caused by prolonged frustration from task conflicts (Curseu & Schruijer, 2010; Greer et al., 2008). If leaders are able to foster a climate of trust within the organisation they can prevent task conflict from turning into relationship conflict (Simons & Peterson, 2000). As constructive conflict management can dampen the harmful consequences of conflicts, the next section in this study will elaborate more on this matter.

To sum up, it is clear that conflict, especially relationship conflict, can have severe negative consequences on team performance. In this study I will look into the role of both relationship, task and process conflict on team cohesion and affective commitment within startups. Based on the previous findings the following hypotheses can be formulated (figure 1):

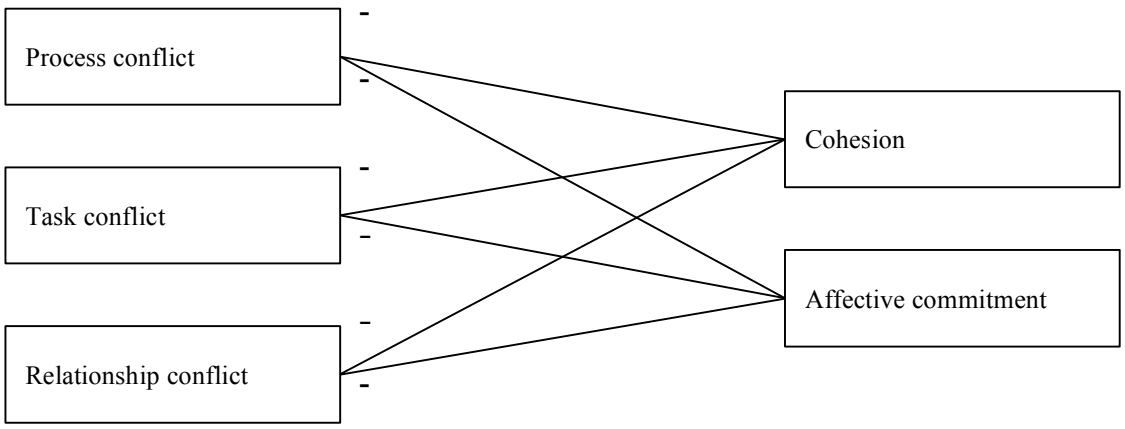

Figure 1. Task-, relation- and process- conflict on team cohesion and affective commitment.

H1: *Task conflict is negatively related to (a) team cohesion and (b) affective commitment.*

H2: *Relationship conflict is negatively related to (a) team cohesion and (b) affective commitment.*

H3: *Process conflict is negatively related to (a) team cohesion and (b) affective commitment.*

Conflict Management styles

Conflicts are as much part of any organisation as the furniture within it. Therefore, effective conflict management that can buffer the negative effects of conflicts is essential for

startup success. One might be tempted to avoid conflicts entirely as this might seem as the easiest and most effective way to deal with conflicts in the short run. But repressed conflicts often lead to escalation, irritation, blame and personal animosity that will only increase the conflicts until they are beyond repair (Murnighan & Conlon, 1991; Greer, Saygi, Aaldering, & De Dreu, 2012). Managing these conflicts constructively, and proactively, can greatly dampen the negative effects of conflicts on team performance (De Dreu, Evers, Beersma, Kluwer & Nauta, 2001) and is vital for both team cohesion (Chang et al., 2003; Tekleab, Quigley, & Tesluk, 2009) and affective commitment (Thomas et al., 2005, Chen et al., 2011).

The leading model of conflict management is the Dual Concern Model of conflict management (De Dreu et al., 2001). The way an individual manages conflict, depends on the one hand on the individual's concern for his or her own needs, interests, values and beliefs and on the other hand on their concern for the needs, interests, values and beliefs of the other person. Conceptualising these two concerns as independent dimensions results in five different styles of conflict management: yielding (high concern for other and low for self), avoiding (low concern for both self and other), forcing (high concern for self and low for other), compromising (medium concern for both self and other) and problem solving (high concern for both self and other). The five conflict management styles are depicted in Appendix B.

Every individual has a dominant conflict management style (Renwick, 1975; Callanan, Benzing, & Perri, 2006). The choice for a certain conflict management style is influenced by the perceived power and self-efficacy of the self and that of the other (Ergeneli, Camgoz, & Karapinar, 2010) and by the importance of the issue and the perceived level of aggressiveness of the other party (Callanan et al., 2006; Hüffmeier et al., 2014). The effectiveness of the style depends on the context of the situation (Greer et al., 2012).

Yielding. When using the yielding conflict management style (low concern for self and high concern for other) people are inclined to submit to others' views, needs and desires. It involves giving in and conceding unilaterally, acknowledging others' rights and privileges; self-censuring and sharing information that weakens one's own position or strengthens and supports others' position and entitlements (Greer et al., 2012). This conflict management style is most useful when the other party is using a forcing style and resolving the conflict is more important than getting your way (Greer et al., 2012; Callanan et al., 2006).

Avoiding. When a person uses the avoiding conflict management style (low concern for both self and other), the actor ignores the conflicts, avoids discussing the issues, and withdraws mentally or physically from the situation. This style involves downplaying the importance of the issue and ignoring requests and suggestions to confront the problem (Greer et al., 2012). This conflict management style is found to be effective in preventing relationship conflicts. By setting the issue aside to discuss later, when there is no longer any performance pressure, escalation of relationship conflicts can be prevented (Greer et al., 2012). This style is also effective when the issues at hand are not important to both parties involved (Callanan et al., 2006).

Compromising. The third conflict-management style is compromising (medium concern for both self and other). This style is focused on creating mutual and constructive concessions, and an attempt to share the (fixed) pie as equally as possible. It involves behaviour in which both parties give in a little (De Dreu et al., 2001). This style is most effective when conflict is moderate, where there is no aggression from both parties, the central issue is moderately important to both parties and when problem solving is unlikely to happen due to the nature of the conflict or time restraints (Callanan et al., 2006).

Problem solving. When the issues at hand are important to both parties and there is a certain amount of trust, which allows open communication, problem solving (high concern for both self and other) is the most effective conflict management style (De Dreu, Weingart, & Kwon, 2000; Callanan et al., 2006). With problem solving the actors recognise that the negotiation ground is not fixed but can be shaped by mutual cooperation. The actors initiate communication and negotiation to find mutually acceptable or even beneficial solutions that integrate seemingly opposing views and desires. It involves taking a proactive approach to counterparts, encouraging open communication with the focus on information sharing and an effortful endeavour to understand the other person's viewpoints and desires. Problem solving is an effective way to reach integrative solutions that benefit all parties compared to the other styles (De Dreu et al., 2000) and is associated with team effectiveness (Somech, Desivilya, & Lidogoster; 2009), team performance through trust (Hempel, Zhang, Tjosvold; 2009) and organisational commitment (Ahmad & Marinah, 2013). More importantly, this style often leads to the most constructive long-term solutions (Greer et al., 2012; De Dreu et al., 2001; Rubin,

Pruitt, & Kim, 1994). As such, I expect that problem solving will weaken the negative relationship between conflict and cohesion and affective commitment.

H4: *Problem solving moderates the relationships between (1) process conflict, (2) task conflict and (3) relationship conflict and (a) cohesion and (b) affective commitment such that the relationship will be weaker for high and stronger for low levels of problem solving.*

Forcing. Lastly, the forcing style of conflict management (high concern for self and low for other) uses straightforward power tactics to force the other party to accept the negotiation terms. This style is used when people hold a win-lose orientation and believe that parties are drawing from a fixed pie. It involves verbal and physical force and abuse; lying and deception; withholding of information that weakens the other party's' position and ignoring or downplaying others views, arguments and position (Greer et al., 2012). This style is likely to be effective when the issues at hand are very important to the forcing party but not to the other; when the other party holds a yielding style; when it concerns a relationship conflict (De Dreu, 1997; Van de Vliert & Euwema, 1994) or when the forcing party is higher in the hierarchical structure (Aquino, 2000). Furthermore, forcing has been found to be the most used conflict management style within organisations (Munduate, Ganaza, Peiró, & Euwema, 1999). Previous studies have found that forcing is an effective conflict management style in combination with problem solving (Aquino, 2000; Van De Vliert, 1995; Munduate et al., 1999). As forcing involves verbal and physical abuse and lying and deception (Greer et al., 2012) I expect forcing to strengthen the negative relationship between intragroup conflict and performance.

H5: Forcing moderates the relationship between (1) process conflict, (2) task conflict, (3) relationship conflict and (a) cohesion and (b) affective commitment, such that the negative relationship will be weaker for low forcing and stronger for high forcing.

To sum up, conflicts can have severe consequences when poorly managed. When conflicts are well managed, however, teams can benefit from positive consequences such as include access to new insights (Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; De Dreu & West, 2001),

information sharing (Moye & Langfred, 2004) and improved operational processes (De Wit et al., 2012). How these conflicts are managed thus has important implications not only on team dynamics but also the overall performance of any organisation.

Leadership styles

How is it that some organisations develop a culture in which conflicts are managed productively, whereas others work in cultures in which conflicts escalate from almost nothing? Some researchers argue that leaders' own conflict management behaviours are a driver of a conflict culture (Hogg, 2010; Gelfand et al., 2012). Conflict culture encompasses the socially shared normative ways to manage conflicts within organisations (De Dreu, van Dierendonck, & Dijkstra, 2044; Gelfand et al., 2012). Through their own behaviour, leaders demonstrate what is an appropriate and a normative way to manage conflicts. They set organisational goals and the norms and values within a team and by doing so have a great influence on the way conflicts play out (Schafer, 2010; Kotlyar, Karakowsky, & Ng, 2011). Leaders are among the most visible actors in an organisation and their behaviour has the greatest influence on team and organisational processes (Hogg, 2010). Therefore, the main influencer of the organisational conflict culture is the leader (Gelfand, Leslie, Keller, & De Dreu, 2012; Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). Through effective leadership, leaders can effectively manage conflicts to prevent conflicts from damaging team-member organisational commitment (Foo, Sin, & Yiong, 2006).

One of the main leadership styles that has been linked to successful conflict management and trust building is servant leadership (Simons & Peterson, 2000; Schaubroeck & Peng, 2011). Servant leadership is a leadership style where the leader focuses on the development of employees in the domain of task- effectiveness, community stewardship, self-motivation and leadership potential. Servant leaders practice one-on-one communication in order to understand the abilities, needs, goals and potential of their employees and build trust through selflessly serving others first (Greenleaf, 1977). Patrick de Zeeuw (Co-founder Startup Bootcamp global) emphasised the importance of servant leadership within startups when he said: "*We coach all our startup leaders to pursue an empowering role towards their team to help them grow into their full potential"*.

Servant leaders focus on service to other members of the organisations, instead of direct change through command-and-control (Gregory Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2004; Bass, Avolio, Jung & Berson, 2003), gain influence in a non-traditional manner that derives from servanthood itself (Russell & Stone, 2002), place a higher degree of trust in their followers than any other leadership style (Gregory Stone et al., 2004) and stress personal integrity and focus on forming strong long-term relationships with employees (Graham, 1991). To sum up, servant leaders have a strong focus on the development of their employees, community stewardship, self-motivation and personal leadership. Research into leadership and performance shows that servant leadership is positively related to organisational performance and individual performance (Liden, Wayne, Liao, & Meusser, 2014), higher affective commitment (Miao, Newman, Schwarz, & Xu, 2014; John & Taylor, 2014), trust (Goh & Low, 2013), feelings of informational and interpersonal justice (Kool & van Dierendonck, 2012) and negatively related to turnover intentions (Liden, Wayne, Liao & Meusser, 2014).

Furthermore, the aspects of shared leadership in servant leadership are positively related to startup performance (Ensley, Hmieleski, & Pearce, 2006; Ensley, Pearson, & Pearce, 2003; Wasserman, 2003). As startups work in small teams, to get things done they need to get the most out of every team member. Servant leaders tend to have closer relationships with their team members and are focused on community stewardship and trust building. As a result they can get more out of their team (Linden et al., 2014). That is why I expect that servant leadership will be positively related to team performance.

When conflicts arise I expect servant leaders to use problem solving as their conflict management style. Problem solving is a conflict management style that fosters open communication to find beneficial solutions for all parties involved. This matches the focus that servant leaders have on organisational community and interpersonal trust. As such I expect that servant leadership moderates the relationship between conflict and performance in such a way that the negative relationship between intra-group conflict and performance will be weakened. Lastly, I expect that the moderating relationship of servant leadership between conflict and performance is mediated by problem solving. The following hypothesis can be postulated:

H6: Servant leadership is positively related to (a) cohesion and (b) affective commitment.

H7: Servant leadership is (a) positively related to problem solving and (b) negatively related to forcing.

H8: Servant leadership moderates the relationship between (a) process conflict (b) task conflict and (c) relationship conflict and (1) cohesion and (2) affective commitment such that it weakens the negative relationship.

H9: The moderating role of servant leadership between conflict and performance is mediated by problem solving.

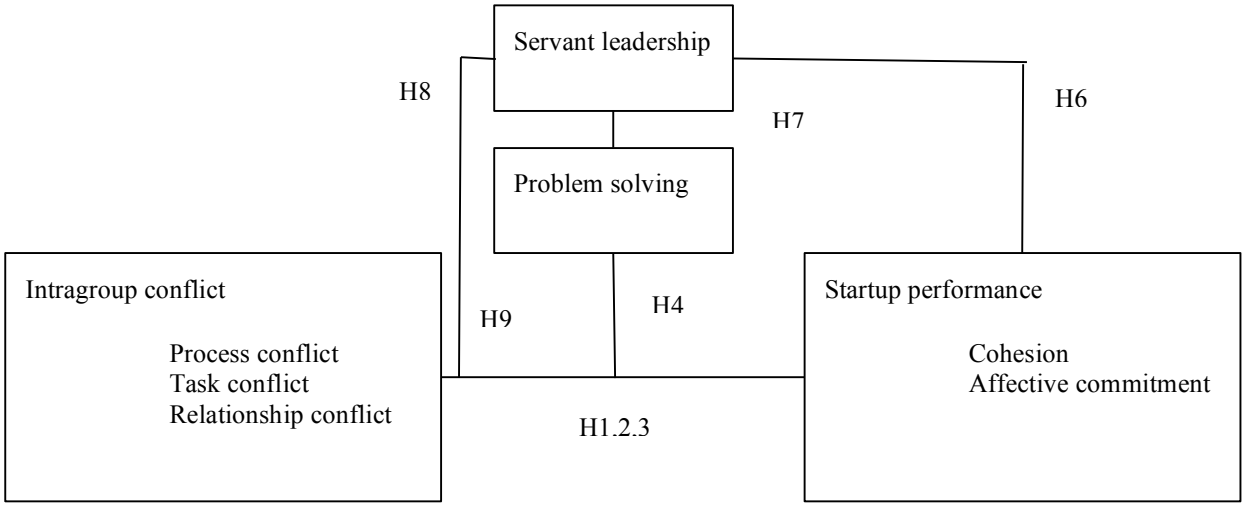

Figure 2. Model based on the predictions for conflicts on performance and the role of servant leadership and problem solving

In contrast to servant leadership, autocratic leadership is a style that is less focused on employee development, community stewardship and trust building. An autocratic leader is directed towards the accomplishment of the task itself rather than the happiness or satisfaction of the subordinates (Hogg & Giessner, 2013; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2009). Furthermore, autocratic leaders take decisions through centralized concentrated power (Foels, Driskell, Mullen & Salas, 2000; Bass & Bass, 2008, Yukl, 2010) and tries to control every aspect of the activity of their subordinates without considering their input (Sauer, 2011; Hogg & Giessner, 2013; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2009); keeps social distance from subordinates; and tries to motivate subordinates through punishment or rewards (Bass & Bass, 2008; Yukl, 2010; Rast III, Hogg, & Giessner, 2013; De Luque, Washburn, Waldman, & House, 2008). Autocratic leadership can have a negative effect on performance through limiting team members control over group decisions (De Cremer, 2006; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2009) which may result in feelings of injustice and under-appreciation (Anderson & Brown, 2010; Harrison & Klein, 2007). This, in

turn, leads to low levels of psychological safety (De Cremer, 2006; De Cremer, 2007). On a positive note, autocratic leaders can create a higher sense of direction and clarity in the early stage of an organisation (Foels et. al, 2000; Halevy, Chou & Galinsky, 2011; Keltner, Van Kleef, Chen & Kraus, 2008). However, as De Dreu (2008) shows that psychological safety and trust, which are negatively related to autocratic leadership (De Cremer, 2006; De Cremer, 2007), are vital preconditions for constructive conflict resolution, I expect autocratic leadership to strengthen the negative relationship between intragroup conflicts and performance.

Furthermore, when conflicts arise I expect that autocratic leaders use forcing as their main conflict management style. Forcing is a conflict management style that involves straightforward power tactics to force the other party to accept the negotiation terms. This matches the autocratic leadership style where decisions are taken through centralized and concentrated power (Foels et al., 2000; Bass & Bass, 2008, Yukl, 2010) and without considering the input of their subordinates (Sauer, 2011; Hogg & Giessner, 2013; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2009). As such I expect that autocratic leadership moderates the relationship between conflict and performance in such a way that the negative relationship between intra-group conflict and performance will be strengthened. Furthermore, I expect that the moderating relationship of autocratic leadership between intragroup conflict and performance will be mediated by forcing. The following hypothesis can be formulated:

H10: Autocratic leadership is negatively related to (a) cohesion and (b) affective commitment.
H11: Autocratic leadership is (a) positively related to forcing and (b) negative related to problem solving.
H12: Autocratic leadership moderates the relationship between (a) process conflict (b) task conflict and (c) relationship conflict and (1) cohesion and (2) affective commitment, such that it enforces the negative relationship.
H13: The moderating relationship of Autocratic leadership is mediated by forcing.

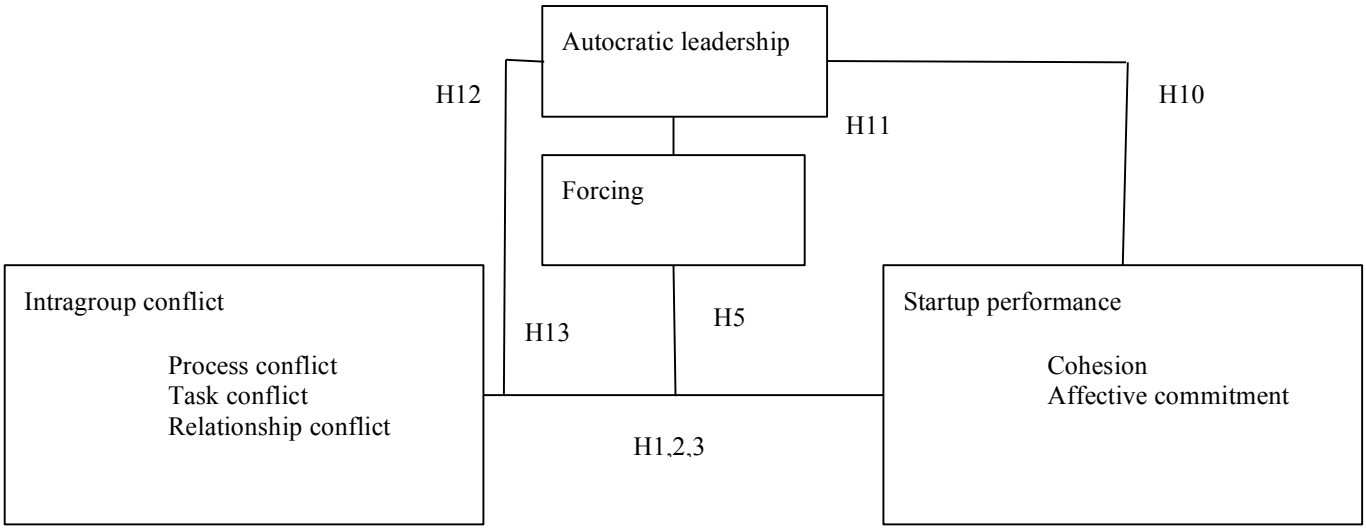

Figure 3. Model based on the predictions for conflicts on performance and the role of servant leadership and problem solving.

Method

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 102 participants from 70 different startup teams. I defined a startup as a company with 2 or more members looking for a scalable business model and is in one of the three phases of the startup life cycle: scale-up, product-market, and problem-solution. More than half of the respondents were male (63%) and the mean age was 29.40 years (*SD* = 6.63). The average duration that respondents had worked at the company at the time of the survey was 2.14 years (*SD* = 3.02). Around half of the respondents were team leaders (47%). The average size of the teams participating in this study was 1.5 (*SD* = 1). The average team consisted of 5.9 members (*S* = 4.49). The startups existed on average 2.95 years (*SD* = 2.02). Most of the startups (56%) were in the scale-up phase, followed by the product-market phase (27%) and the problem-solution phase (17%).

Procedures

All participants received the questionnaire via their email, accompanied with a small-personalised message to spark their interest. Participants were asked to sign the informed consent. The questionnaire was presented in the following order: life-cycle questionnaire, intra-group conflict, conflict management style, servant leadership and autocratic leadership, followed

by the affective commitment questionnaire and closed with the cohesion questionnaire. Halfway through the questionnaire, participants had to indicate what their motivation level was to proceed with the survey. No motivational problems were found. At the end of the survey, all participants had the option to leave their email address in order to receive the results of the study. Participants received a personal thank you message after filling in the questionnaire. The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

Measurements

Conflict measure

Relationship conflict and task conflict were measured with the 8-item Intragroup Conflict Scale (Jehn, 1995). Process conflict was measured with the 3-item Process Conflict Scale (Shah & Jehn,1993). The reliability of the complete intra-group conflict questionnaire was high with a Cronbach's Alpha of .90. The reliability of the subscales of relationship conflict, task conflict and process conflict were reliable (α = .87, α = .85, α = .66). An example question of relationship conflict was '*How much emotional conflicts is there in your team?*' An example question for task conflict was '*How frequently are there conflicts about ideas in your team?*'. An example questions of the process conflict questionnaire is ' *How often are there disagreements about who should do what in your team?*' Participants had to rate their answers on 7-point scale ranging from 1 = seldom to 7 = very often.

Conflict management

Conflict management style was measured with the DUTCH 20-items scale (De Dreu et al., 2001). This scale was found to be reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of .77. Except for forcing (α = .56) all the subscales were reliable: for yielding α = .70, for avoiding α = .70, for problem solving α = .63 and for compromising α = .72. Participant had to rate their answer on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = not at all to 7 = very much. An example question for forcing was '*I push my own point of view'*, for problem solving '*I examine issues until I find a solution that really satisfy me and the other party',* for yielding '*I give in to the wishes of the other party*' , for avoiding "*I try to avoid confrontation with the other*" and for compromising '*I insist we both give in a little*'.

Servant leadership

Servant leadership was measured with the 14-item servant leadership scale of Ehrhart (2004). Overall Cronbach's alpha for this questionnaire was found to be .92. An example question was '*My department manager's decisions are influenced by department employees*' *input*.' Questions were adapted to fit the context of startups. For example, the example question above was transformed to: '*My (team) leader's decisions are influenced by team member input.'* Participants had to rate their answers on a 7-point scale from 1 = to a very small extent to, 7 = to a very large extent. A high overall score indicated a high level of servant leadership.

Autocratic leadership

Autocratic leadership was measured using the 5-item questionnaire of De Hoogh, Den Hartog and Kooman, (2004). The Cronbach's alpha was α = .65. An example questions was '*my leader is bossy and orders team members around*'. Participants had to rate their answer on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = I strongly disagree to 7 = I strongly agree. A high overall score indicated a high level of autocratic leadership.

Team Cohesion

Team Cohesion was measured with the 9-item questionnaire of Dion (2000). The questionnaire was found to be reliable with a Cronbach's Alpha of .94. An example questions was '*People in my work group trust each other*'. Participants had to rate their answers on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = I strongly disagree to 7 = I strongly agree. A high score indicates high team cohesion.

Affective organisational commitment

Affective organisational commitment was measured with the Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) 9-item scale. This questionnaire was found to be reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of .84. An example question was '*I really feel that I belong to this organisation*'. The participants had to rate their answers on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = I strongly disagree to, 7 = I strongly agree. A high score indicates high levels of affective commitment.

Current phase in the Life cycle of the startup

The current study distinguishes three phases of a startup based on the organisational 'life cycle' model by Adizes (1979) and Ries (2011). Because there is no validated questionnaire to assess the current phase a startup is in, a new questionnaire was created. Via a single multiple choice question, '*In which phase is your startup at the moment?*', the current phase of the startup was measured. the *validation phase*, the *minimum market-fit phase* and the *scale up phase*. In the validation phase organisations flesh out their first ideas, test their assumptions and potential markets through minimum viable products (MVP). MVP's are simple low-cost prototypes for understanding customer needs (Ries, 2011). In the minimum market-fit phase the product shows traction and starts to attract additional external resources. In the scale-up phase organisations scale their business. After this phase organisations are no longer considered startups.

Results

After receiving the raw data from the survey's I decoded the data in order to make them anonymous. As this research focused on team level outcomes, I aggregated the data into team level responses. Therefore I created a new data file and calculated the average of all responses of all the participants and created team level variables. These team level variables included the scores of the leader of that team. The size of the teams varied between the 1 and 6 members. Afterwards I centered the data in order to avoid multicollinearity. Through using the median absolute deviation method I found one outlier on problem solving. This outlier was deleted from the sample. I used the Median absolute deviation as it has demonstrated to be the most robust dispersion measure for outliers (Leys, Ley, Klein, Bernard, & Licata, 2013). Normality was tested with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Relationship conflict ($D(65) = .16$, $p < .01$), servant leadership ($D(65) = 0.14$, $p < .01$), yielding ($D(65) = .11$, $p < .05$), team cohesion ($D(65) = 0.13$, $p < .01$) and affective commitment ($D(65) = 0.12$, $p < .05$) were found to be significantly non-normal. I assumed that the significant normality tests were not an issue since the values for skewness and kurtosis were within the limits of 2 for skewness and 7 for kurtosis (Finch, West & Mackinnon, 1997; West, Finch & Curran, 1995).

I found relatively low reliability for the subscale autocratic leadership (α = .65) and problem solving (α = .63). As previous studies (de Dreu, 2001; de Hoogh, Greer & den Hartog, 2015) have shown high reliability of these measures across a wide range of contexts, I do not consider this to be a serious issue for the reliability of this study.

Due to the complexity and the large amount of hypotheses the results are presented in four parts. The first part presents the correlations and direct regressions (relationship, task and process conflict on cohesion and affective commitment). The second part looks into the moderating role of servant- and autocratic leadership, problem solving and forcing. In the third section I will zoom into the conditional processing analysis, testing the moderated-mediation of servant leadership with problem solving, and autocratic leadership with forcing. The visualised summary of the findings can be found in Appendix N. The final section presents explorative analyses on the mediation effects of problem solving, forcing, autocratic leadership and servant leadership. Due to this distinction the order of the results are not necessarily in the same to the order as the hypotheses were presented previously.

Part I: Correlation and direct main effect

In Table 1 the means and standard deviations of the different measures are presented. Table 2 depicts the different correlations between the variables with their *p*-value. A variance analysis showed that the phase a startups was in did not affect cohesion $F(31, 67) = 0.98$, *n.s* nor did it affect affective commitment $F(27, 72) = 0.52$, *n.s.*

Variable	*M*	*SD*
Process conflict	7,52	3,21
Task conflict	9,22	3,75
Relationship conflict	6,42	3,54
Servant leadership	70,54	13,27
Autocratic leadership	18,30	5,14
Problem solving	22,27	2,81
Forcing	16,39	3,69
Yielding	16,12	3,70
Avoiding	14,14	4,00
Compromising	17,18	4,32
Affective commitment	39,43	6,96
Cohesion	52,28	9,11

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of the variables in this study.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Process conflict	1											
2. Task conflict	,636**	1										
3. Relationship conflict	,726**	,567**	1									
4. Servant leadership	-,289*	-,166	-,234	1								
5. Autocratic leadership	0,193	,063	,268*	-,214	1							
6. Problem solving	-0,204	-,114	-,122	,521**	-,093	1						
7. Forcing	0,041	,119	,073	,144	-,005	,095	1					
8. Yielding	-0,065	-,150	-,096	,086	,211	,122	,087	1				
9. Avoiding	0,185	-,109	,099	-,181	,263*	-,072	-,049	,581**	1			
10. Compromising	0,166	-,115	,048	,200	,110	,329**	,023	,390**	,502**	1		
11. Affective commitment	-,264*	-,181	-,147	,684**	-,116	,418**	,187	-,102	-,278*	-,035	1	
12. Cohesion	-,384**	-,152	-,446**	,624**	-,384**	,405**	-,018	-,094	-,415**	-,041	,513**	1

Table 2. Correlation matrix of all the variables.

* Significant at $p < .05$

** Significant at $p < .01$

+ Marginal significant at $p < .10$

Intra-group conflict

The first hypothesis predicted that process conflict would be negatively related to cohesion and affective commitment. This hypothesis (H1) was tested with a simple regression analysis. Process conflict negatively predicted team cohesion, (β = -.38, $t(68)$ = -3.42, p = .001) as well as affective commitment, (β = -.25, $t(68)$ = -2.16, p = .03). This confirmed H1, teams dealing with more process conflict experienced lower levels of cohesion and affective commitment.

The second hypothesis predicted that task conflict would be negatively related to cohesion and affective commitment. Simple regressions showed task conflict predicted neither cohesion (β = -.15, $t(68)$ = -1.27, p = .21) nor affective commitment (β = -.17, $t(68)$ = -1.42, p = .16). This does not support H2.

The third hypothesis predicted that relationship conflict would be negatively related to cohesion and affective commitment. This was tested with a regression analysis and received partial support. Relationship conflict negatively predicted cohesion (β = -.45, $t(68)$ = -4.10, p < .001), but did not predict affective commitment (β = -.14, $t(68)$ = -1.15, p = .25).[1]

Servant leadership

To test (H6) whether servant leadership is positively related to team cohesion and affective commitment a linear regression analysis was conducted. Results supported H6a and H6b and showed that servant leadership was positively related to cohesion (F (1, 67) = 42,67, p < 0.001, β = .62, $t(67)$ = 6,53, p < .001) and affective commitment (F (1, 67) = 58.89, p < 0.001, β = .67, $t(67)$ = 7.67, p < .001). Thus, teams with servant leaders experience more team cohesion and affective commitment. Furthermore, via a linear regression analysis, (H7) if servant leadership is positively related to problem solving and negatively related to forcing, was tested. Results showed that servant leadership positively predicted problem solving (β = .52, $t(67)$ = 5, p < .001) but did not negatively predict forcing (β = .14, $t(67)$ = 1.19, p = .24) and thus supported H7a but not H7b.

Autocratic leadership

To test whether autocratic leadership was negatively related to cohesion (H10a) and affective commitment (H10b) linear regressions were conducted. Results showed support for H10a but not for H10b. Autocratic leadership was negatively related to cohesion (β = -.38, $t(65)$ = -3.41, p = 0.001) but not to affective commitment (β = -.12, $t(65)$ = -.9, p = .34). Furthermore, a regression analysis showed that autocratic leadership was neither related to forcing (β = -.01, $t(67)$ = -.04, p = .97) nor to problem solving (β = -.09, $t(65)$ = -.77, p = .45), therefore H11 was not supported.

Part II: Moderation

In this section the moderation effects will be tested. First the interaction effects of the conflict management styles, first problem solving and then forcing, will be presented, followed by servant leadership and autocratic leadership.

Problem solving

Hypothesis 4 predicted that problem solving would moderate the relationship between conflict and (a) cohesion and (b) affective commitment. To be more precise, problem solving would buffer the negative relationship between each of the three types of conflict and (a) cohesion and (b) affective commitment. As depicted in Table 3 problem solving does, in fact, moderate the relationship between process-, task- and relationship conflict and cohesion, and also moderates the relationship between task (but not relation- and process-) conflict and affective commitment. Results will be presented firstly for process conflict, then for task conflict and lastly for relationship conflict.

Table 3. *Moderating effect of problem solving between the three different types of conflict and cohesion and affective commitment.*

Dependent variable	Moderator		Independent variable	*β*	*p*-value	B	*Adj* R^2	*SE*
Cohesion	Servant leadership	*	Process conflict	.20	.07+	.20	.26	.11
	Servant leadership	*	Task conflict	.37	.013*	.24	.22	.09
	Servant leadership	*	Relationship conflict	.23	.06+	.18	.33	.09
Affective commitment	Servant leadership	*	Process conflict	.05	.63	.04	.17	.09
	Servant leadership	*	Task conflict	.31	.038*	.15	.21	.07
	Servant leadership	*	Relationship conflict	.12	.36	.07	.16	.08

* Significant at $p < .05$

** Significant at $p < .01$

+ Marginal significant at $p < .10$

Process conflict. To test if problem solving was a moderator in the relationship between process conflict and cohesion multiple regression analyses were conducted. Results showed a marginal significant interaction effect between problem solving and process conflict on cohesion (See table 3). Simple slopes were plotted (see Appendix D) to further investigate how problem solving influences the relationship between process conflict and cohesion. For low problem solving there was a significant negative relationship between process conflict and cohesion (β = -

.49, $t(66) = -3.46$, $p = .001$). For high problem solving, there was no significant effect ($\beta = -.297$, $t(65) = -.65$, $p = .52$). This means that low problem solving strengthens the negative relationship between process conflict and cohesion but that high problem solving weakens this relationship. These findings are in line with H4a1 that stated that problem solving would moderate the relationship between process conflict and cohesion.

When investigating the relationship between process conflict and affective commitment a different picture emerges. Multiple regression analysis showed no significant interaction between process conflict and problem solving on affective commitment (See table 3). This means that problem solving is not an moderator in the relationship between process conflict and affective commitment. These findings do not support the prediction that problem solving would moderate the relationship between process conflict and affective commitment (H4a1).

Task conflict. To test (H4b1) whether problem solving was a moderator between task conflict and cohesion, multiple regression analyses were conducted and showed a significant interaction between problem solving and task conflict on cohesion (See table 3). Simple slopes revealed no significant relationship between task conflict and cohesion when problem solving was high ($\beta = .07$, $t(65) = -.51$, $p = .61$), but when problem solving was low task conflict significantly negatively predicted cohesion ($\beta = -.48$, $t(65) = -2.64$, $p = .011$) (Appendix E). This means that low problem solving strengthens the negative relationship between task conflict and when problem solving is high, there is no relationship between task conflict and cohesion. These findings are in line with H4b1.

There was also an interaction effect found between problem solving and task conflict on affective commitment (See table 3). To further investigate this relationship, simple slopes were plotted. Simple slopes (Appendix F) showed no significant relationship between task conflict and affective commitment when problem solving was high ($\beta = .01$, $t(65) = .07$, $p = .94$) but there was a significant relationship when problem solving was low ($\beta = -.45$, $t(65) = -2.45$, $p = .017$). This means that low problem solving strengthens the negative relationship between task conflict and cohesion but high problem solving weakens this relationship. These findings are in line with H4b2 and support the prediction that problem solving moderates the relationship between task conflict and affective commitment, further supporting H4b2.

Relationship conflict. Moreover, as table 3 shows, there was a marginally significant interaction effect between problem solving and relationship conflict on cohesion. Simple slopes were plotted and showed a significant relationship between task conflict and cohesion when problem solving was low (β = -.*50*, $t(65)$ = -4.28, $p < .001$) but not when problem solving was high (β = -.*18*, $t(65)$ = -1.18, p = .24) (see Appendix G). This means that high problem solving buffers the negative association of intragroup conflict on cohesion. This finding is in line with H4c1, that problem solving would moderate the relationship between relationship conflict and cohesion.

However, H4c2 was not supported as there was no interaction between problem solving and affective commitment found (*see table 3*). Based on these results I can conclude that problem solving is an important moderator between the different types of conflict and cohesion. Teams using problem solving as their conflict management style can generally buffer against the negative relationship between conflict and cohesion. The same is true for affective commitment, when dealing with task conflict. These findings show support for H4a1, H4b1, H4c1 and H4b2.

Moderating role of Forcing

This study hypothesised that forcing moderates the relationship between the different types of conflict and cohesion and affective commitment. It was expected that forcing, for all types of conflict, strengthens the negative relationships or weakens positive relationships. As depicted in Table 4 forcing moderates the relationship between process- and task conflict and cohesion.

Table 4. *Moderating effect of forcing between the three different types of conflict and cohesion and affective commitment.*

Dependent variable	Moderator		Independent variable	*β*	*p*-value	B	*Adj R*	*SE*
Cohesion	Forcing	*	Process conflict	.21	.07+	.19	.15	.10
	Forcing	*	Task conflict	.41	.008**	.21	.08	.08
	Forcing	*	Relationship conflict	.21	.24	.12	.18	.10
Affective commitment	Forcing	*	Process conflict	.13	.27	.09	.09	.08
	Forcing	*	Task conflict	.26	.09+	.10	.08	.06
	Forcing	*	Relationship conflict	19	.33	.08	.03	.08

* Significant at $p < .05$

** Significant at $p < .01$

+ Marginal significant at $p < .10$

Process conflict. To test if forcing was a moderator between process conflict and cohesion multiple regression analysis were conducted. Results showed a marginal interaction between forcing and process conflict on cohesion (*See Table 4*)**.** To investigate how forcing influenced the relationship between process conflict and cohesion simple slopes were plotted (see Appendix H) and showed no significant relationship between process conflict and cohesion when forcing was high (β = -.04, $t(65)$ = -.22, p = .83) but a negative relationship when forcing was low (β = -.55, $t(66)$ = -3.33, p = .001). This means that teams dealing with process conflict can manage the negative relationship between process conflict and cohesion by using forcing as their conflict management style. These findings are opposite to H5a1 which predicted that forcing would strengthen the negative relationship between process conflict and cohesion. Multiple regression analysis showed no support for H5a2 that predicted that forcing would moderate the relationship between process conflict and affective commitment, the interaction was not significant (see Table 4).

Task Conflict. Multiple regression analysis were conducted to test (H5b1) whether forcing was a moderator in the relationship between task conflict and cohesion. Results supported this hypothesis as there was a significant interaction between forcing and task conflict on cohesion (See table 4). To investigate how forcing influences the relationship between task conflict and cohesion simple slopes were plotted (see Appendix I). There was no significant relation between task conflict and cohesion when forcing was high (β = .15, $t(65)$ = 1.02, p =

.31), but this relationship was significant and negative when forcing was low (β = - .57, $t(66)$ = -2.69, p = .009). This means again that at high forcing levels there was no significant (negative) relationship between task conflict and cohesion but at low forcing levels the negative relationship is strengthened. These findings do not support H5b1, in fact they are the exact opposite of what I predicted.

To test (H5b2) if forcing was also a moderator in the relationship between task conflict and affective commitment multiple regressions analysis showed a marginal significant interaction effect of forcing with task conflict on affective commitment (See table 4). After plotting simple slopes (see Appendix J) results showed no significant effect between task conflict and affective commitment when forcing was high (β = .08, $t(65)$ = .54, p = .588), but an negative relationship when forcing was low (β = - .52, $t(66)$ = -2.46, p = .016). Again, this means that high forcing buffers the negative relationship of intragroup conflict on affective commitment.

Relationship conflict. To test (H5c1) whether forcing would moderate the relationship between relationship conflict and cohesion multiple regression analysis were conducted and showed no significant interaction between forcing and relationship conflict on cohesion (*see Table 4*) These findings did not support H5c1. Neither did the analysis show support for H5c2, that predicted that forcing would moderate the relationship between forcing and relationship conflict on affective commitment. No significant interaction was found (see Table 4).

To sum up, contrary to hypotheses, forcing appears to be an important buffer of the negative association between both process and task conflict with cohesion and between task conflict and affective commitment.

Moderating role of servant leadership

This study hypothesised that servant leadership is a moderator in the relationship between the different types of conflict on the one hand and cohesion and affective commitment on the other. It was expected that servant leadership, for all types of conflict, strengthens positive relationships or weakens negative relationships. As depicted in Table 5 servant leadership only moderated the relationship between process- and task conflict and cohesion.

Table 5. *Moderating effect of servant leadership between the three different types of conflict and cohesion and affective commitment.*

Dependent variable	Moderator		Independent variable	*β*	*p*-value	B	*Adj R²*	*SE*
Coheison	Servant leadership	*	Process conflict	.15	.11	.03	.43	.02
	Servant leadership	*	Task conflict	.23	.12	.03	.39	.02
	Servant leadership	*	Relationship conflict	.10	.36	.02	.47	.02
Affective commitment	Servant leadership	*	Process conflict	.06	.54	-.01	.45	.02
	Servant leadership	*	Task conflict	.03	.80	-.00	.45	.01
	Servant leadership	*	Relationship conflict	.06	.60	.01	.45	.02

* Significant at $p < .05$

** Significant at $p < .01$

+ Marginal significant at $p < .10$

Process Conflict. To test (H8a1) if servant leadership was a moderator in the relationship between process conflict and cohesion, multiple regression analyses were conducted. These analyses showed a marginal significant interaction effect between servant leadership and process conflict on cohesion (*see Table 5*). To investigate how servant leadership influences the relationship between process conflict and cohesion, simple slopes were plotted (Appendix K). At the high servant leadership level, there was no significant relationship between process conflict and cohesion ($\beta = .63$, $t(65) = 1.22$, $p = .23$). For low servant leadership there was a significant negative relationship ($\beta = -1.22$, $t(65) = -2.47$, $p = .016$). This means that teams dealing with process conflict experience low team cohesion only when there is low rather than high servant leadership. This finding supports H8a1.

To test (H8a2) whether servant leadership was a moderator in the relationship between process conflict and affective commitment, multiple regression analysis were conducted. Results showed no significant interaction effect between servant leadership and process conflict on affective commitment and therefore did not support H8a2 (see Table 5).

Task conflict. H8b1 predicted that servant leadership moderates the relationship between task conflict and cohesion. Multiple regression analysis were conducted to test this. Results showed support for H8b1. There was a marginal significant interaction effect between servant leadership and task conflict on cohesion (*See Table 5*). Simple slopes were plotted (Appendix L)

to investigate how servant leadership influences the relationship between task conflict and cohesion. Results showed a significant positive relationship between task conflict and cohesion when servant leadership was high ($\beta = 1.08$, $t(65) = 2.25$, $p = 0.028$). When servant leadership was low there was a significant negative relationship between task conflict and cohesion ($\beta = -1.50$, $t(65) = -2.69$, $p = .009$). This suggests that task conflicts have a positive influence on the level of cohesion in the team when they have a leader practicing high levels of servant leadership. H8b2 predicted that servant leadership would moderate the relationship between task conflict and affective commitment. Multiple regression analysis did not support this hypothesis as there was no significant interaction effect between servant leadership and task conflict on affective commitment (*see Table 5*).

Relationship conflict. Both H8c1 and H8c2 were not supported. Analysis did not find a significant interaction effect between servant leadership and relationship conflict on either cohesion nor affective commitment (*see Table 5*). This means that servant leadership does not moderate the relationship between relationship conflict and cohesion nor affective commitment.

These findings indicate that teams dealing with process and task conflict showed a decrease in cohesion when servant leadership was low but showed no relationship with cohesion when servant leadership was high. With task conflict, cohesion even increased when servant leadership was high.

Moderating role of autocratic leadership

Table 6. *Moderating effect of autocratic leadership between the three different types of conflict and cohesion and affective commitment.*

Dependent variable	Moderation variable		Independent variable	β	p-value	B	*Adj* R^2	*SE*
Cohesion	Autocratic leadership	*	Process conflict	-.03	.86	-.01	.21	.05
	Autocratic leadership	*	Task conflict	-.12	.42	-.04	.13	.05
	Autocratic leadership	*	Relationship conflict	-.07	.67	-.03	.25	.04
Affective commitment	Autocratic leadership	*	Process conflict	-.12	.26	-.05	.05	.04
	Autocratic leadership	*	Task conflict	-.27	.09+	-.06	.04	.04
	Autocratic leadership	*	Relationship conflict	-.23	.14	-.06	.02	.04

* Significant at $p < .05$

** Significant at $p < .01$

+ Marginal significant at $p < .10$

This study hypothesised (H9) that autocratic leadership is a moderator in the relationship between the different types of conflict and cohesion and affective commitment. It was expected that autocratic leadership, for all types of conflict, weakens positive relationships or strengthens negative relationships. As can be seen in table 6 there were no significant moderating effects found of autocratic leadership between the different types of conflicts and cohesion or affective commitment and H9a1, H9a2, H9a3, H9b1, H9b2, H9b3, were not supported.

Conditional processing

Moderated mediation of servant leadership and problem solving

To test H9 I conducted a conditional processing analysis (Hayes, 2014). I examined whether the indirect effect of process conflict, task conflict and relationship conflict on cohesion (H9a) and affective commitment (H9b) through problem solving was moderated by servant leadership. As can be seen in table 7, H9 was not supported. All analyses (1,000 bootstrap resamples; 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals) showed no significant moderated mediation effect of servant leadership via problem solving on the relationship between process, task or relationship conflict and cohesion or affective commitment. This means that the indirect effect of process, task and relationship conflict on cohesion and affective commitment through problem solving does not differ significantly across different levels of servant leadership. The results of these conditional processing analysis are depicted in table 7. The hypothesis that predicted that servant leadership would moderated the relationship between conflict and cohesion and affective commitment via the mediation effect of problem solving is not supported.

Table 7. *Moderated mediation of servant leadership via problem solving in the relationship between conflict and cohesion and affective commitment.*

Outcome	*Moderator*	*Mediator*	*Conflict*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*
				Low		*Medium*		*High*	
	Servant leadership	*Problem solving*	*Process conflict*	-.03	.01	-.02	.01	-.01	.02
Cohesion	*Servant leadership*	*Problem solving*	*Task conflict*	-.03	.01	-.002	0.01	-.01	0.01
	Servant leadership	*Problem solving*	*Relationship conflict*	-.03	0.01	-.023	.01	-.04	.003
	Servant leadership	*Problem solving*	*Process conflict*	-.16	.18	-.19	.04	-.20	.05
Affective commitment	*Servant leadership*	*Problem solving*	*Task conflict*	-.03	.01	-.02	.003	-.02	.01
	Servant leadership	*Problem solving*	*Relationship conflict*	-.02	.01	-.002	0.01	-.03	.01

* Significant at $p < .05$

** Significant at $p < .01$

+ Marginal significant at $p < .10$

Moderated mediation of autocratic leadership with forcing

Via a conditional processing analysis of Hayes (2014) I examined whether autocratic leadership moderated an indirect effect of process conflict, task conflict and relationship conflict on cohesion through forcing. As can be seen in table 8, H13 was not supported. None of the conditional processing analysis (1,000 bootstraps; 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals) revealed a significant moderated mediation effect of autocratic leadership via forcing on the relationship between process, task and relationship conflict and cohesion and affective commitment. This means that the indirect effect of process, task and relationship conflict on cohesion and affective commitment through forcing does not differ significantly across different levels of autocratic leadership. The visualised summary of the findings can be found in Appendix B.

Table 8. *Moderated mediation of autocratic leadership via forcing in the relationship between conflict and cohesion and affective commitment.*

Outcome	Moderator	Mediator	Conflict	*LLCI*	*ULCI*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*
				Low		Medium		High	
	Autocratic leadership	Forcing	Process conflict	-.01	.02	-.12	.01	-.03	.01
Cohesion	Autocratic leadership	Forcing	Task conflict	-.01	.03	-.02	.01	-.04	.01
	Autocratic leadership	Forcing	Relationship conflict	-.01	.02	-.01	.01	-.02	.01
	Autocratic leadership	Forcing	Process conflict	-.01	.03	-.004	.04	-.01	.08
Affective commitment	Autocratic leadership	Forcing	Task conflict	-.06	.11	-.02	.23	-.05	.43
	Autocratic leadership	Forcing	Relationship conflict	-.01	.03	-.01	.04	-.01	.06

* Significant at $p < .05$

** Significant at $p < .01$

\+ Marginal significant at $p < .10$

Part IV: Explorative Analysis

After studying the correlations (depicted in table 2) five significant mediation relationships were identified, namely: first, servant leadership mediated the relationship between process conflict and affective commitment, and between problem solving and affective commitment and cohesion. Second, autocratic leadership mediated the relationship between relationship conflict and cohesion, and between forcing and cohesion. When patch a and b were

found to be significant, mediation was tested using the bootstrapping method with bias-corrected confidence estimates (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Preacher & Hayes, 2004). In the present study, the 95% confidence interval of the indirect effects was obtained with 1000 bootstrap resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Mediation effect of servant leadership in the relationship between process conflict and affective commitment. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to asses each component of the mediation model. First, it was found that process conflict was significantly negatively related to affective commitment (β = -.38, $t(68)$ = -3.40, p = .001). It was also found that process conflict was significant negatively related to servant leadership (β = -.29, $t(68)$ = -2.47, p = .02), Lastly, results indicated that the mediator, servant leadership, was significantly positive related to affective commitment (β = .67, $t(68)$ = 7.67, p < .001). Results of the mediation analysis confirmed the mediating role of servant leadership in the relation between process conflict and cohesion (β = .35*, CI* = .25 to .45*)*. In addition, results indicated that the direct relationship of process conflict and affective commitment became non-significant (β = -.16*, CI* = -.56 to .24*)*. This means that the variance of affective commitment explained by process conflict is fully mediated through servant leadership. Thus, more process conflict is only positively related to affective commitment through servant leadership.

Mediation effect of servant leadership in the relationship between problem solving and cohesion. Through multiple regression analyses each component of the mediation model was tested. First, it was found that problem solving was positively related to cohesion cohesion (β = .40, $t(8)$ = 3.63, p = .001). It was also found that problem solving related positively to servant leadership (β = .52, $t(68)$ = 5.00, p < .001). Lastly, results showed that servant leadership was positively related to cohesion (β = .62, $t(68)$ = 6.53, p < .001). Results of the mediation analysis confirmed the mediating role of servant leadership in the relation between problem solving and cohesion (β = .39, *CI* = .24 to .54). Results indicated that the direct relationship of problem solving and cohesion became non-significant (β = .36, *CI* = -.37 to 1.08). This means that servant leadership fully mediates the relationship between problem solving and cohesion. Thus, problem solving is only positively related to cohesion through servant leadership.

Mediation effect of servant leadership in the relationship between problem solving and affective commitment. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to asses each component of

the mediation model. First, it was found that problem solving was positively related to affective commitment (β = .42, $t(68) = 3.77$, $p < .001$). It was also found that problem solving was positively related to servant leadership (β = .52, $t(68) = 5.00$, $p < .001$). Lastly, results showed that servant leadership was positively related to affective commitment (β = .68, $t(68) = 7.67$, $p < .001$). Results of the mediation analysis confirmed the mediating role of servant leadership in the relation between problem solving and affective commitment (β = .34, *CI* = .23 to .45). Results indicated that the direct relationship of problem solving and affective commitment became non-significant (β = .21, *CI* = -.31 to .73). This means that servant leadership fully mediates the relationship between problem solving and affective commitment. Thus, in line with the results on cohesion, problem solving is only positively related to affective commitment through servant leadership.

Mediation effect of autocratic leadership in the relationship between relationship conflict and cohesion. Via multiple regression analyses each component of the mediation model was tested. First, it was found that relationship conflict was negatively associated with cohesion (β = -.45, $t(68) = -3.41$, $p = .001$). It was also found that process conflict was negatively related to autocratic leadership (β = .27, $t(68) = 2.28$, $p = .03$). Lastly, results showed that autocratic leadership was negatively related to cohesion (β = -.38, $t(68) = -4.08$, $p < .001$). Results of the mediation analysis confirmed the mediating role of autocratic leadership in the relation between relationship conflict and cohesion (β = -.51, *CI* = -.89 to -.12). Results indicated that the direct relationship of relationship conflict and cohesion was still significant (β = -.95, *CI* = -1.51 to -.39). This suggest partial mediation of autocratic leadership in the relation between relationship conflict and cohesion. Thus, the negative association between relationship conflict and cohesion is partially caused by autocratic leadership.

Mediation effect of autocratic leadership in the relationship between avoidance and cohesion. Via a multiple regression analyses the mediation model between avoidance conflict management style and cohesion via autocratic leadership was tested. First it was found that avoidance was negatively related to cohesion (β = -.42, $t(68) = -3.74$, $p < .001$). It was also found that avoidance was negatively related to autocratic leadership (β = .26, $t(68) = 2.23$, $p = .03$). Lastly, results indicated that the mediator, autocratic leadership, was negatively related to cohesion cohesion (β = -.38, $t(68) = -3.41$, $p = .001$). Results of the mediation analysis

confirmed the mediating role of autocratic leadership in the relation between avoidance and cohesion (β = -.52, *CI* = .-.91 to -.13). Results indicated that the direct relationship of avoidance and cohesion was still significant (β = -.77, *CI* = -1.27 to -.27). This means that autocratic leadership partially mediates the relationship between avoidance and cohesion. Thus, the negative association between avoidance and cohesion is partially caused by autocratic leadership.

To summarise, servant leadership fully mediates the relationship between process conflict and affective commitment, between problem solving and cohesion and between problem solving and affective commitment. Autocratic leadership partially mediates the relationship between relationship conflict and cohesion and between avoidance and cohesion.

Conclusions and Discussion

This study contributes to the literature around intragroup conflict and performance in two key ways. First of all, this study showed that intragroup conflicts have a general negative association with startup performance, especially team cohesion. This result is in line with previous studies on the influence of conflict on performance within established organisations (Dijkstra, Van Dierendonck & Evers, 2005; Yang & Mossholder, 2004; Goncalo, Polman & Maslach, 2010; Homan, Redeker, & De Vries, 2014; De Wit et al., 2012; Behfar, Mannix, Peterson, & Trochim, 2011; Van Woerkom & Van Engen, 2009). Second, results revealed that servant leadership as well as conflict management strategies, namely problem solving and to some extent forcing, can weaken this negative association,. Leadership style plays a pivotal role in buffering the negative association between intragroup conflict and performance. In particular, servant leadership has an attenuating effect on the relationship between intragroup conflict and startup performance while autocratic leadership had an aggravating effect on the relationship between these conflicts and team performance.

In the first section I will present the general findings of process conflict, task conflict and relationship conflict, including moderating variables and possible explanations for these findings. This will be followed by limitations and suggestions for future research. The thesis will then conclude with practical implications for startups to manage conflicts.

General findings

The occurrence of process conflict and relationship conflict (but not task conflict) were associated with important performance indicators, cohesion and affective commitment. More importantly, conflict management style affected these relationships. Specifically, problem solving and forcing styles buffered the negative association between conflicts and startup team performance. The positive effect of problem solving on this relationship was not surprising as problem solving is a conciliatory tactic that aims at finding solutions that work for both parties involved and has been shown to help to manage and resolve conflicts constructively (Greer et al., 2012; De Dreu et al., 2001). This, in turn, leads to more effective teams (Somech, Desivilya, & Lidogoster; 2009) intragroup trust (Hempel, Zhang, Tjosvold; 2009) and commitment to the organisation (Ahmad & Marinah, 2013).

I expected that forcing would be related to lower team cohesion and affective commitment. This expectation was based on the fact that forcing tactics are characterized by the use of straightforward power tactics to force the other party to accept the negotiation terms (Hüffmeier et al., 2014; Callanan et al., 2006). Surprisingly, using forcing as a conflict management style revealed the same pattern as problem solving. This suggests that conflict management within startups benefits both from conciliatory tactics as well as clear command-and-control tactics. A possible explanation is that forcing leads to clear decision making, clarity on what needs to be done and a general feeling that the situation is under control (Organ & Greene, 1974). This might be especially important for startups as they work in conditions of extreme uncertainty (Ries, 2011; Wasserman, 2003). However, as this study is correlational it was not possible to compare the causal effects of using problem solving tactics with forcing tactics in various contexts. As the effectiveness of the style depends on the context of the situation (Greer et al., 2012) further research needs to done on when to use which conflict management style within startup teams.

Looking more closely into the role of leadership style this study reveals that servant leadership is an effective way to manage intragroup conflicts, especially process and task conflict. Autocratic leadership, on the contrary, reinforces the negative circumstances created by intragroup conflict, especially when it involves relationship conflict.

The positive role of servant leaders can be explained by the fact that servant leaders are focused on the development of employees in the domain of task effectiveness, community stewardship, self-motivation and leadership potential (Greenleaf, 1977). Through this process team members become more aware of the needs of other team members, take personal leadership in managing conflicts and, as I found, use more conciliatory tactics when dealing with these conflicts. For instance, I found that through servant leadership process conflict is positively related to affective commitment. By empowering individual team members and providing guidance, team leaders can turn conflicts about 'how things work' into opportunities to increase their subordinates' emotional attachment to the startup. This points to a process in startups where team members are jointly building the organisation and the processes behind it and forming strong bonds with the organisation while doing so. Effective leaders who are able to foster a climate of trust within the startup can prevent task conflict from turning into a relationship conflict (Simons & Peterson, 2000). This might be part of the answer why some startups manage to create committed teams out of a chaotic startup phase.

The negative role of autocratic leadership can be explained by the fact that autocratic leaders focus on maintaining authority, centralized decision making and generally pursue a non-participatory management style (Sauer, 2011; Hogg & Giessner, 2013; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2009). This in turn can create feelings of injustice and under-appreciation (Anderson & Brown, 2010; Harrison & Klein, 2007) and lower levels of psychological safety (De Cremer, 2007). I found that within startups where autocratic leadership is high, team members tend to avoid conflicts. This could create an organisational culture where personal relationships are under-valued and conflicts remain a source of frustration and interpersonal animosity that results in lower team cohesion.

In this study I found clear results on cohesion and limited results on affective commitment. I identified two possible explanation for the limited results on affective commitment. First of all, it is possible that there is a flooring effect where startup team members who no longer feel a high emotional attachment to the organisation simply leave the startup, and are thus excluded by this study. A second explanation is that affective commitment is an internal psychological process and is measured through self-report. Cohesion, in contrast, is a measurement of information you collect by observing interaction between other team members

(other-report). As such it is psychologically easier for a team member to indicate lower levels of cohesion than it is to report and admit lower levels of affective commitment to the startup organisation. Especially as 'doing what you love' is an important aspect of startup culture. Future research incorporating in-depth qualitative interviews may shed more light on the relationship between affective commitment, conflicts, conflict management and leadership styles.

Limitations

There are a few limitations that have to be taken into account. First of all, this study is correlational, therefore it is not possible to make causal inferences. This research design was chosen for a number of reasons. First of all, startup team members have very limited time. This makes participation in an (often time-consuming) experimental study unlikely. More importantly, a correlational study allowed me to cast a wide net on the topic of startup conflict management. Through this design I was able to test three kinds of intragroup conflicts, two kinds of conflict management styles, two kinds of management leadership styles and moderation and mediation effects. With the results found in this study, future research has a focal point for experimental designs. This research could, for instance, study the causal relationships between intragroup conflicts, cohesion, affective commitment, servant leadership and problem solving. This could be done through a controlled (4x3) experiment where four similar teams from a (larger) startup are selected and trained in either servant leadership, problem solving or both (with one control group receiving no training). Repeating this measurement at several points in time, and at multiple organisations, can shed more light on how the effects of conflict management and leadership styles on the relationship between intragroup conflict and startup performance evolve over time.

The second important limitation of this study is that our measures where done on the team level, with most teams consisting of 1-2 participants, half of them leaders. Because of the limited size of these teams I could not properly study the differences between the leaders' view on conflict and conflict management and that of other team members. More team members per organisation would have allowed me to control for leader responses. I do have to note however that the sample in this study, 102 startup team members, is already quite large within the hard-to-access startup community.

Practical Implications

Within startups, leaders often have the unique opportunity to personally select the people they work with and grow a strong organisational culture. From my personal experience and the interviews I held it is clear that conflict management is not high on the agenda. Startup leaders are often focussed on acquiring investments, expanding their client base and improving their product (Starr & MacMillan, 1990). Recent studies have shown the advantages of strong teams for various organisational outcomes (Mach et al., 2010; Tekleab et al., 2099; Carron et al., 2002). This study shows the importance of servant leadership and clear conflict management styles for startups. Based on the results of this study I made a decision model of startup conflict management. This model can been found in Appendix E. Overall this study showed that startups can benefit from the positive effects of a servant leader who focuses on development of employees in the domain of task- effectiveness, community stewardship, self-motivation and leadership potential. Startup leaders should practice regular one-on-one communication in order to understand the abilities, needs, goals and potential of their employees and build trust through selflessly serving the needs of the team members. In contrast an autocratic leader will have a hard time managing conflicts and building strong teams. This is already evident to many entrepreneurs as more and more startups are setting up decentralised decision making structures.

This study shows that both integrative problem solving as well as forcing tactics can help to manage intragroup conflicts. Although I could not go into depth on which style is best suited for a specific conflict it is clear that leaders have to actively manage conflicts. Sometimes through soft tactics, getting all the parties together to work out a 'best' solution and sometimes by making those hard decisions needed in the extreme startup uncertainty. In this way leaders pave the way for strong and connected teams making moonshots a reality. In any case, leaders should always remember, "*the first great gift can bestow on others, is being a good example*" (Thomas Morell).

Footnotes

[1]By adding all the three types of conflicts into the linear regression analysis I found that only relationship conflict predicted significantly team cohesion (β = -.41, t(66) = -2.53, p = .01). Both process conflict (β = -.34, t (66) = -1.37, p = .18) and task conflict (β = .30, t (66) = 1.61, p = .11) were not significant in predicting team cohesion. This means that relationship conflict also explains a part of the variance of process and task conflict in predicting team cohesion. To test if the different types of conflict together predicted affective commitment a linear regression analysis was conducted. This test showed no significant results, neither for process conflict (β = -.31, t(66) = -1.66, p = .10), nor for task conflict (β = -.04, t(66) = -.26, p = .80) or relationship conflict (β = .10, t(66) = -.59, p = .56). This means that none of the different conflict types explained a significant amount of variance in predicting affective commitment.

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Appendix

A. Expected theoretical model

B. Dual concern model of conflict management

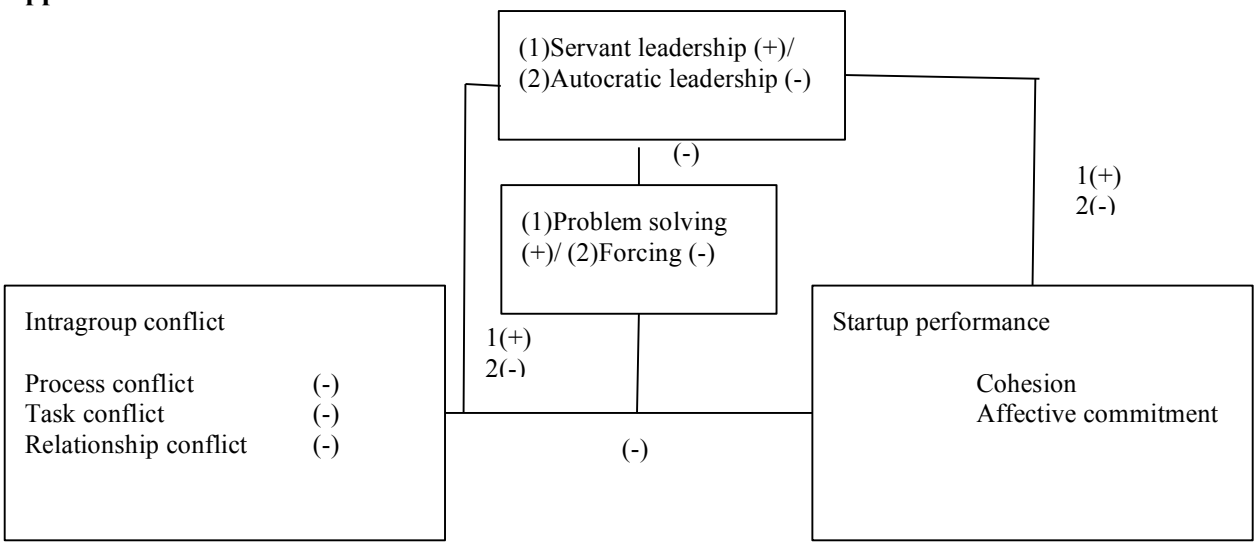
C. Full questionnaires

D. Simple slopes of the moderation analysis (D-L)

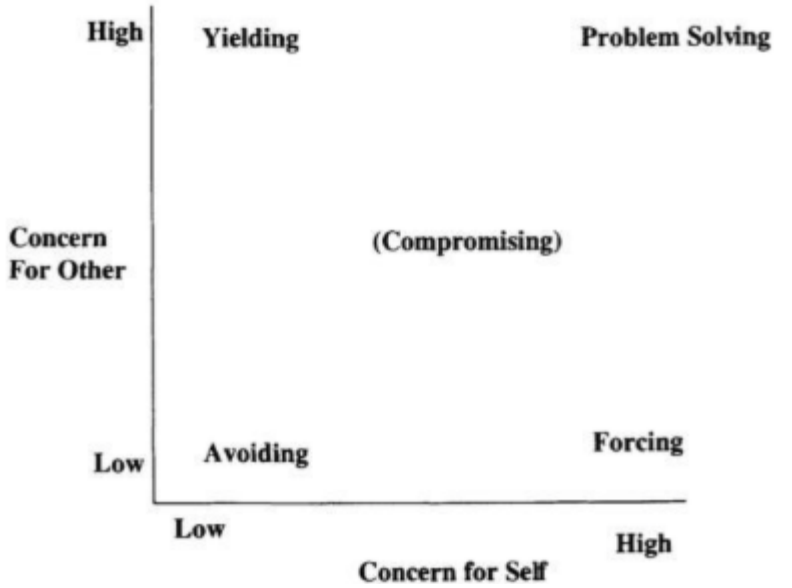
M. Summary of the findings per conflict type

N. Practical decision-model of conflict management

Appendix A



Appendix B



Theoretical framework with the representation of the five conflict management styles as a function of concern for self and concern for other.

Appendix C Full questionnaires

Order of the questionnaires:

1) Intragroup conflict
2) Conflict management style
3) Servant leadership
4) Autocratic leadership
5) Affective commitment
6) Cohesion

Intragroup conflict

Item	Task Conflict	Relationship Conflict	Process Conflict
1. How much relationship tension is there in your work group?	.01	**.90**	−.21
2. How often do people get angry while working in your group?	−.02	**.91**	.08
3. How much emotional conflict is there in your work group?	−.08	**.61**	.39
4. How much conflict of ideas is there in your work group?	**.91**	.14	−.16
5. How frequently do you have disagreements within your work group about the task of the project you are working on?	**.85**	−.11	.19
6. How often do people in your work group have conflicting opinions about the project you are working on?	**.90**	.18	−.17
7. How often are there disagreements about who should do what in your work group?	.06	−.06	**.97**
8. How much conflict is there in your group about task responsibilities?	−.06	−.03	**.83**
9. How often do you disagree about resource allocation in your work group?	.23	−.15	**.60**
Variance explained by each factor.[a]	6.79	6.86	6.35

[a] With other factors controlled.

Conflict management style

The Dutch Test for Conflict Handling (DUTCH)

When I have a conflict at work, I do the following:

Yielding
1. I give in to the wishes of the other party.
2. I concur with the other party.
3. I try to accommodate the other party.
4. I adapt to the other parties' goals and interests.

Compromising
5. I try to realize a middle-of-the-road solution.
6. I emphasize that we have to find a compromise solution.
7. I insist we both give in a little.
8. I strive whenever possible towards a fifty-fifty compromise.

Forcing
9. I push my own point of view.
10. I search for gains.
11. I fight for a good outcome for myself.
12. I do everything to win.

Problem solving
13. I examine issues until I find a solution that really satisfies me and the other party.
14. I stand for my own and other's goals and interests.
15. I examine ideas from both sides to find a mutually optimal solution.
16. I work out a solution that serves my own as well as other's interests as good as possible.

Avoiding
17. I avoid a confrontation about our differences.
18. I avoid differences of opinion as much as possible.
19. I try to make differences loom less severe.
20. I try to avoid a confrontation with the other.

Servant leadership

Servant-Leadership Items

- My department manager spends the time to form quality relationships with department employees.
- My department manager creates a sense of community among department employees.
- My department manager's decisions are influenced by department employees' input.
- My department manager tries to reach consensus among department employees on important decisions.
- My department manager is sensitive to department employees' responsibilities outside the work place.
- My department manager makes the personal development of department employees a priority.
- My department manager holds department employees to high ethical standards.
- My department manager does what she or he promises to do.
- My department manager balances concern for day-to-day details with projections for the future.
- My department manager displays wide-ranging knowledge and interests in finding solutions to work problems.
- My department manager makes me feel like I work with him/her, not for him/her.
- My department manager works hard at finding ways to help others be the best they can be.
- My department manager encourages department employees to be involved in community service and volunteer activities outside of work.
- My department manager emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community.

Autocratic leadership

- Is bossy and orders subordinates around

- Takes firm measures if considered necessary
- Believes that, in reality, only one person can be the leader
- Makes sure that his/her self-interests are always met
- Is very critical of new ideas

Affective commitment

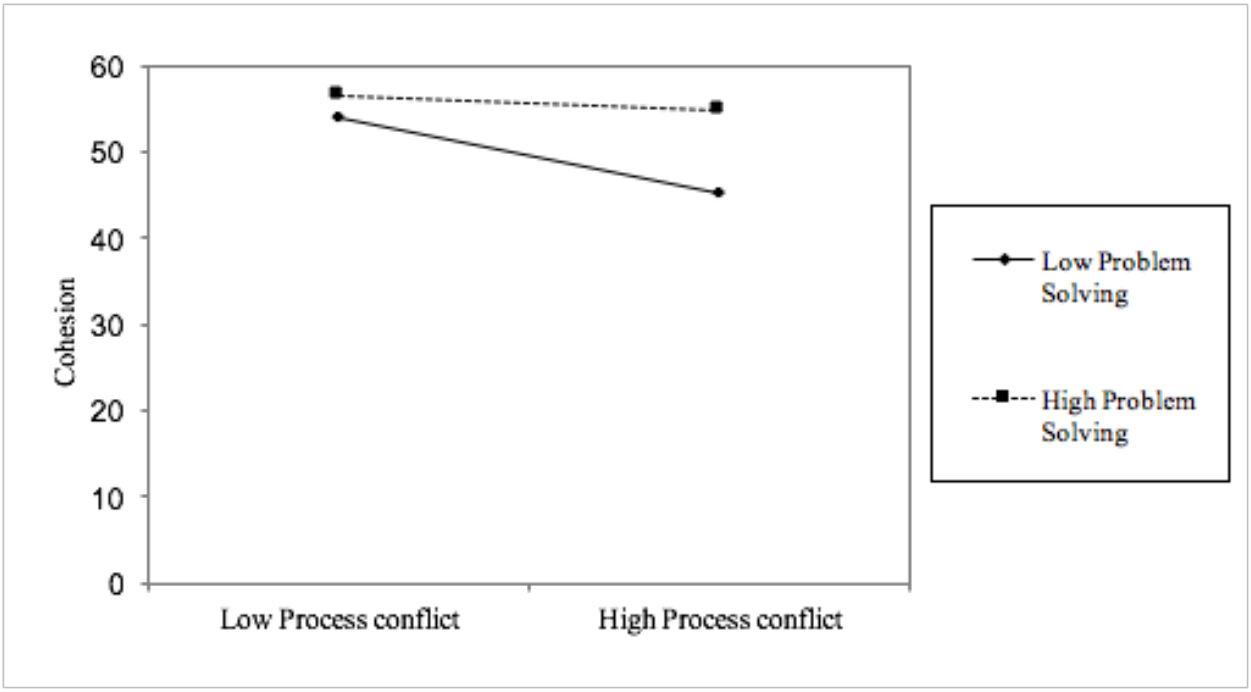
- I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
- I enjoy discussing about my organization with people outside it.
- I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
- I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one.(Contra)
- I do not feel like 'part of the family' at my organization.(Contra)
- I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization.(Contra)
- This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
- I do not feel a 'strong' sense of belonging to my organization.(Contra)

Cohesion

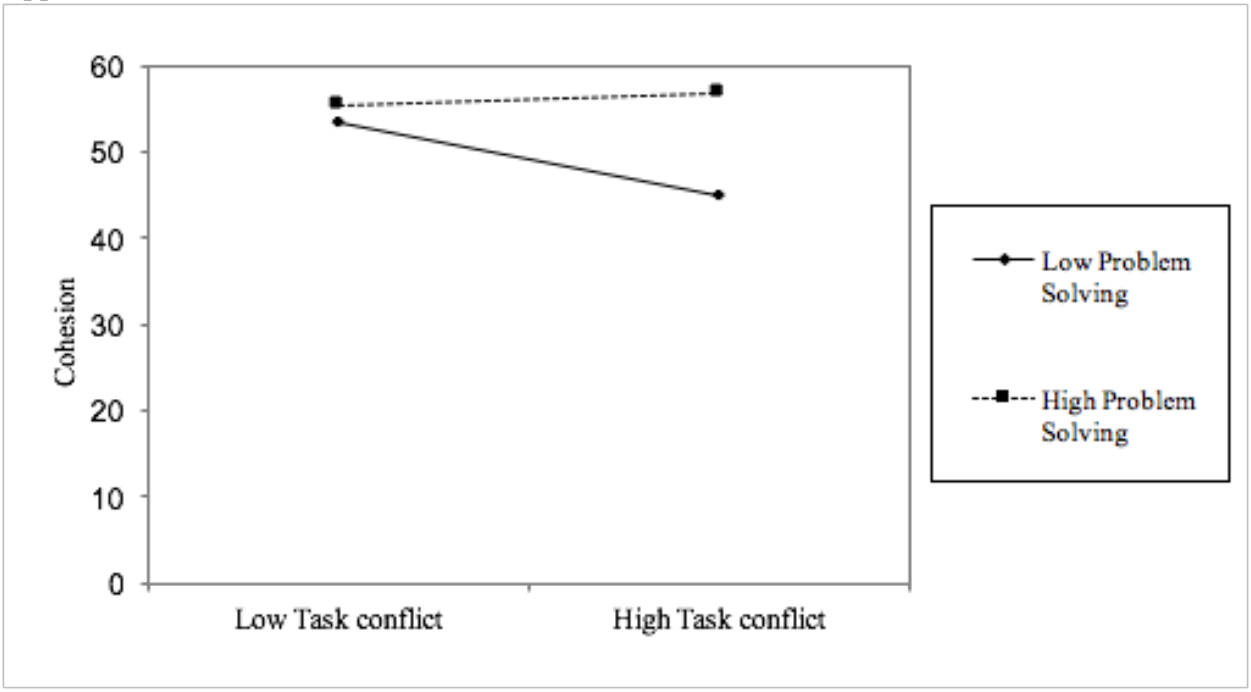
Team cohesion instrument used in this study ($\alpha = .91$)

- There is a friendly atmosphere among people.
- People in my work group trust each other.
- People are warm and friendly.
- People treat each other with respect.
- People work well together as a team.
- People cooperate with each other.
- People are willing to share resources.
- People almost always speak well of it.
- People are proud to belong to the group.

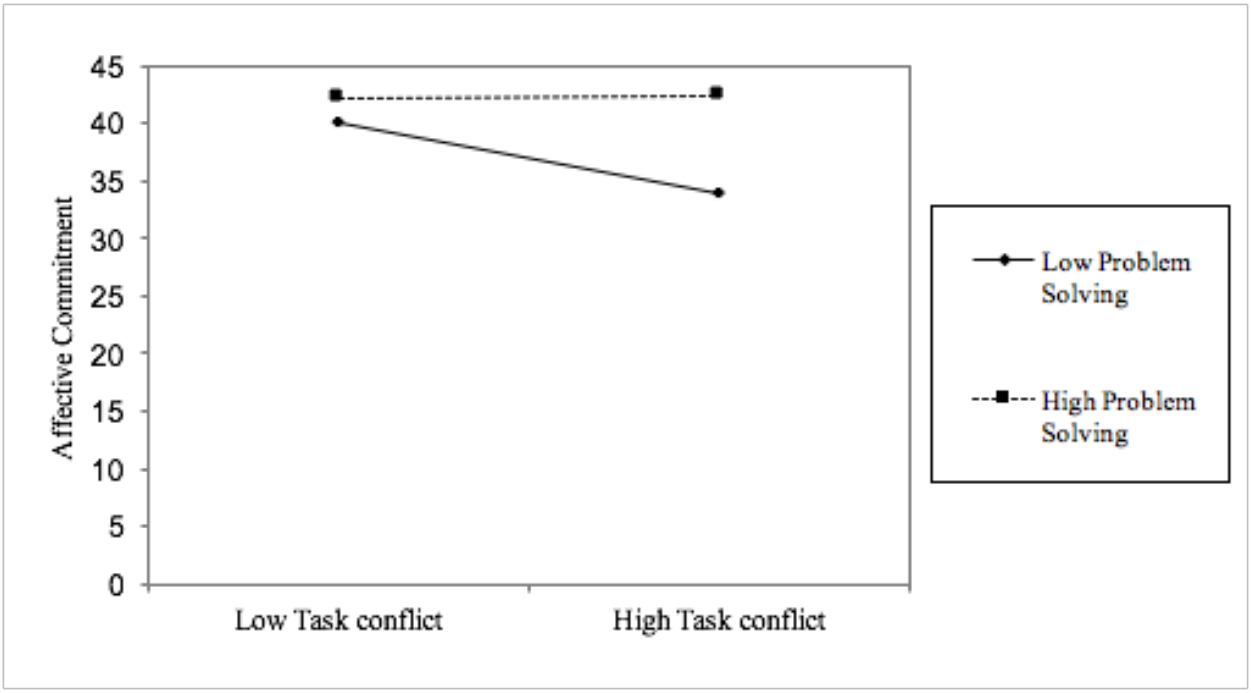
Appendix D PC*PS*COH



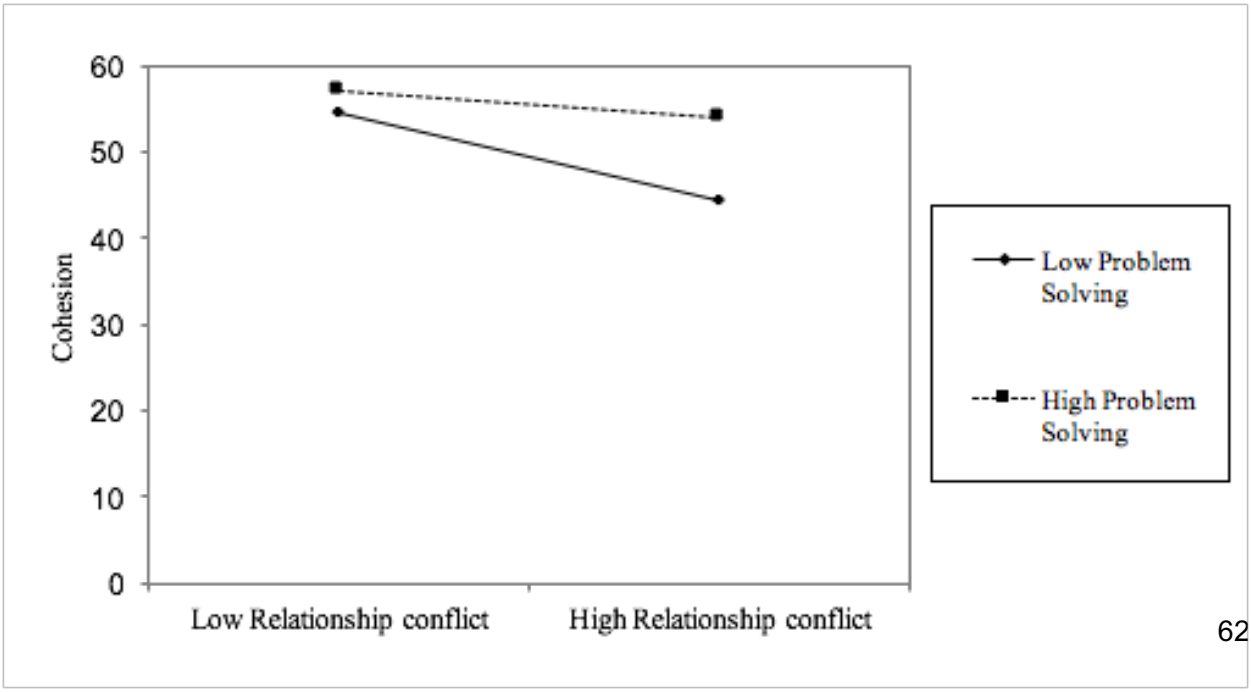
Appendix E TC*PS*COH



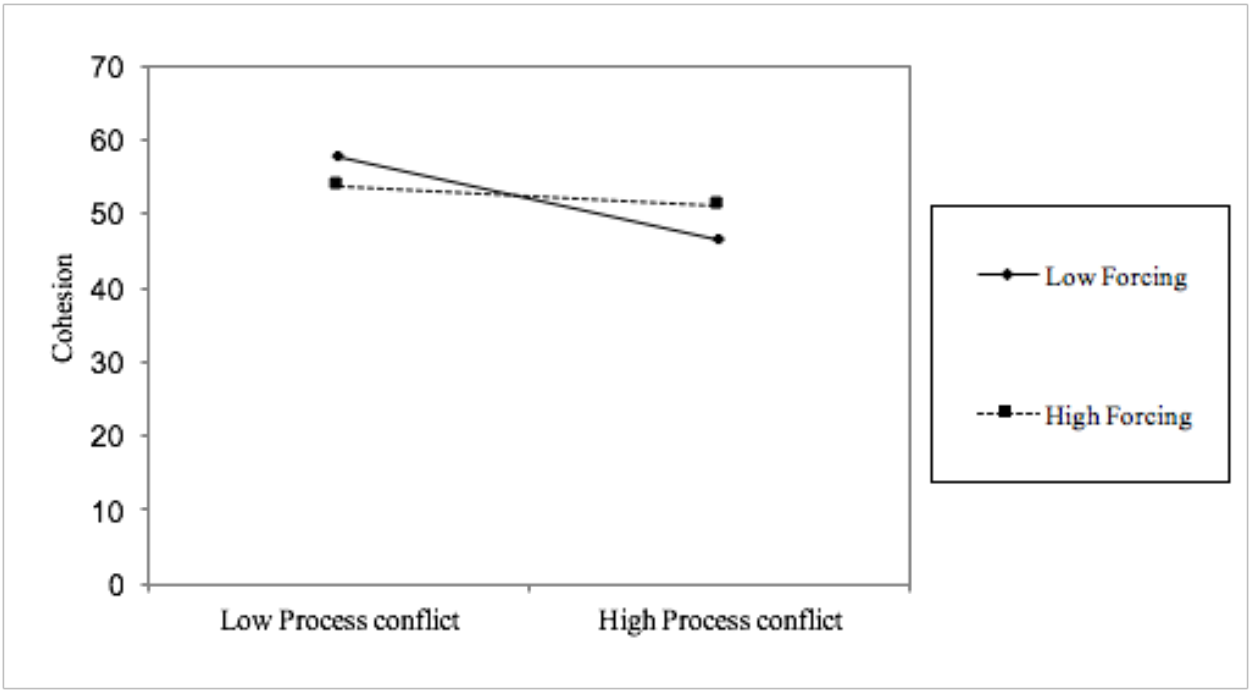
Appendix F TC*PS*AFC



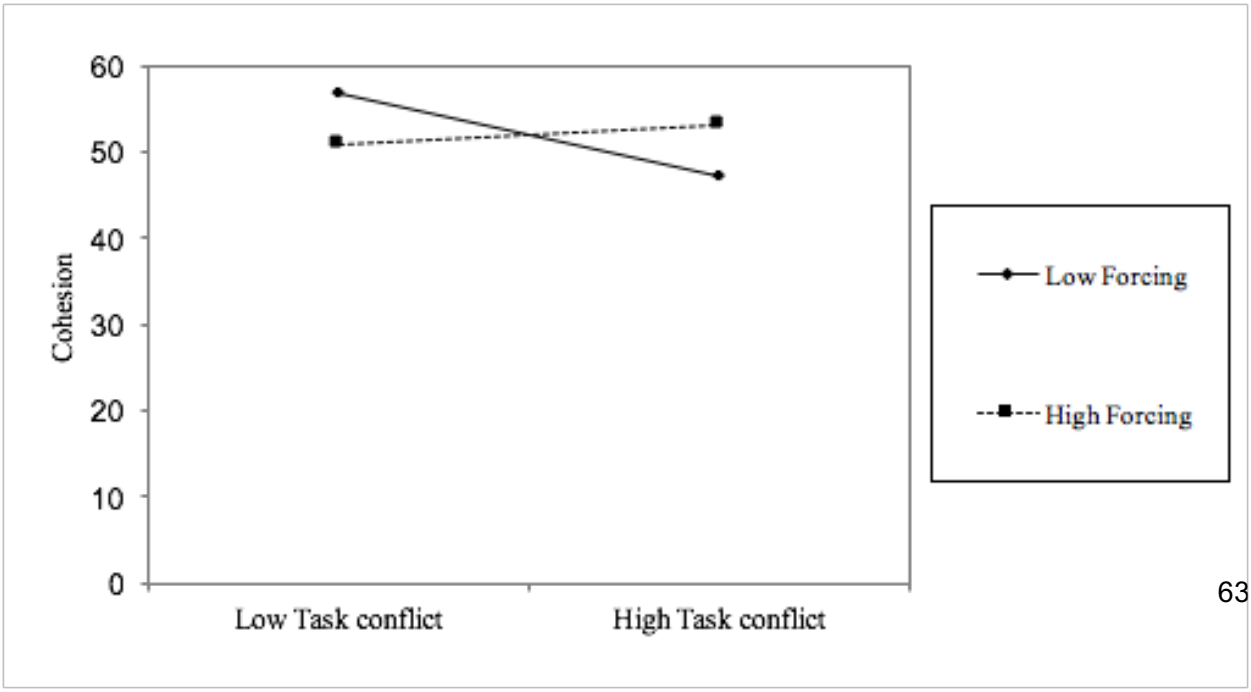
Appendix G RC*PS*COH



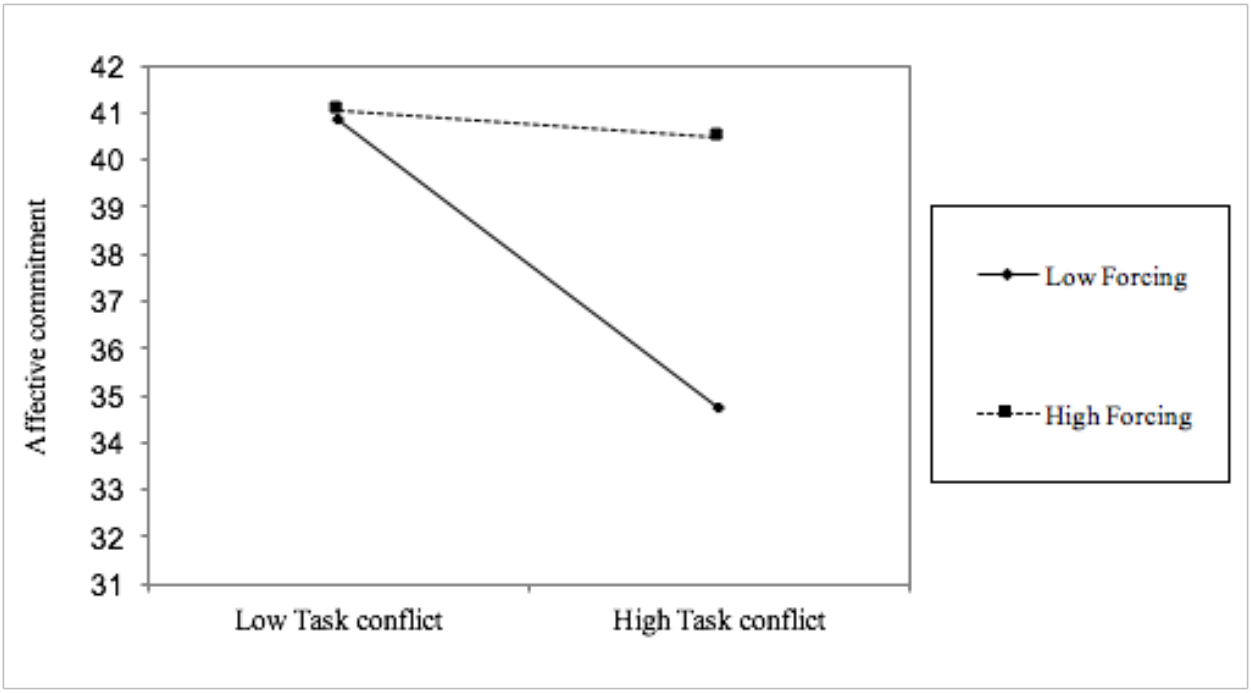
Appendix H PC*FORC*COH



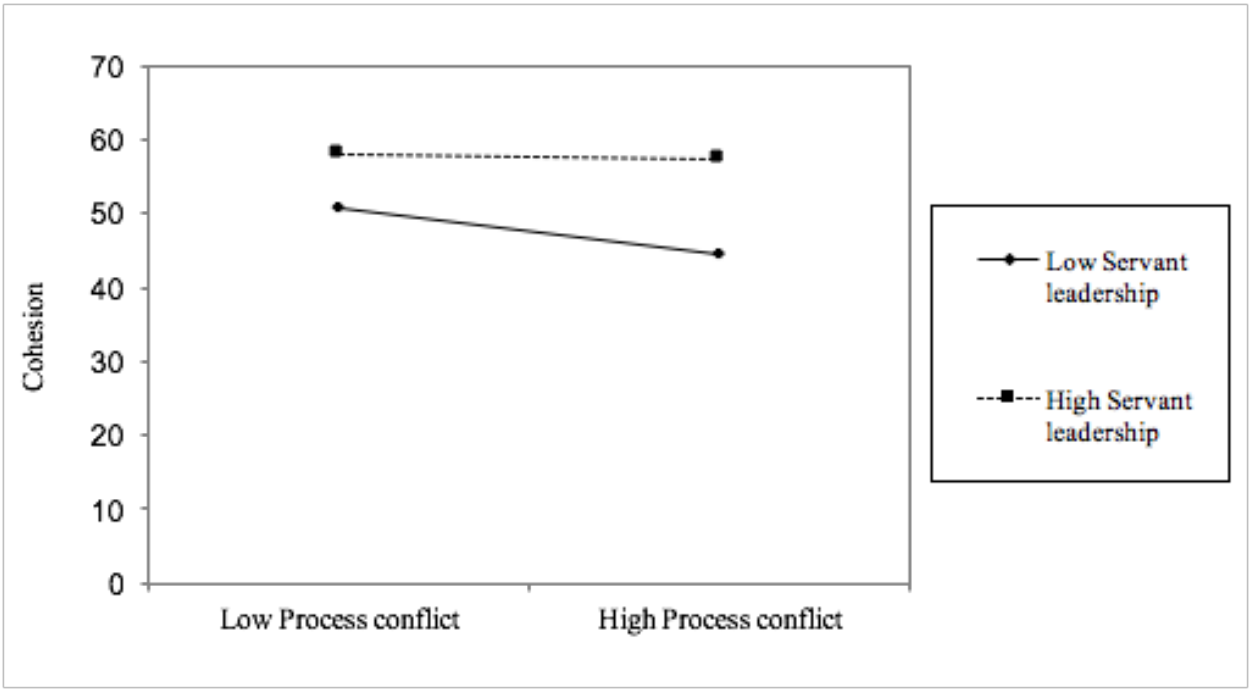
Appendix I TC*FORC*COH



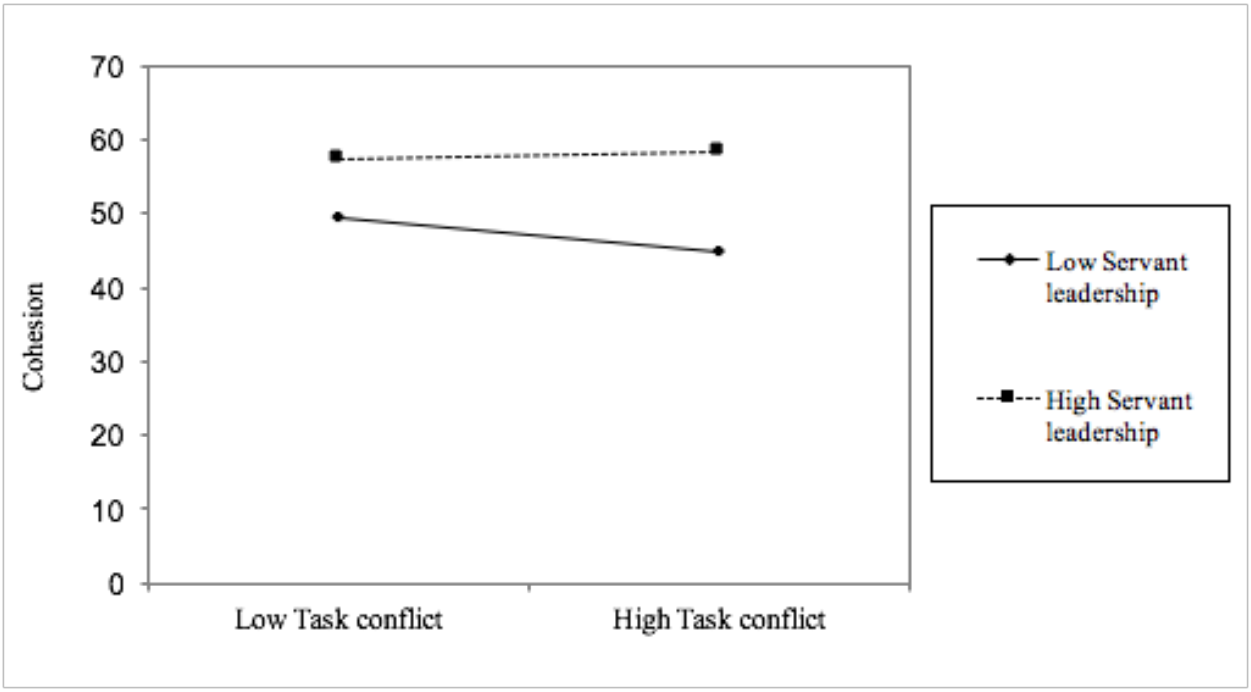
Appendix J TC*FORC*AFC



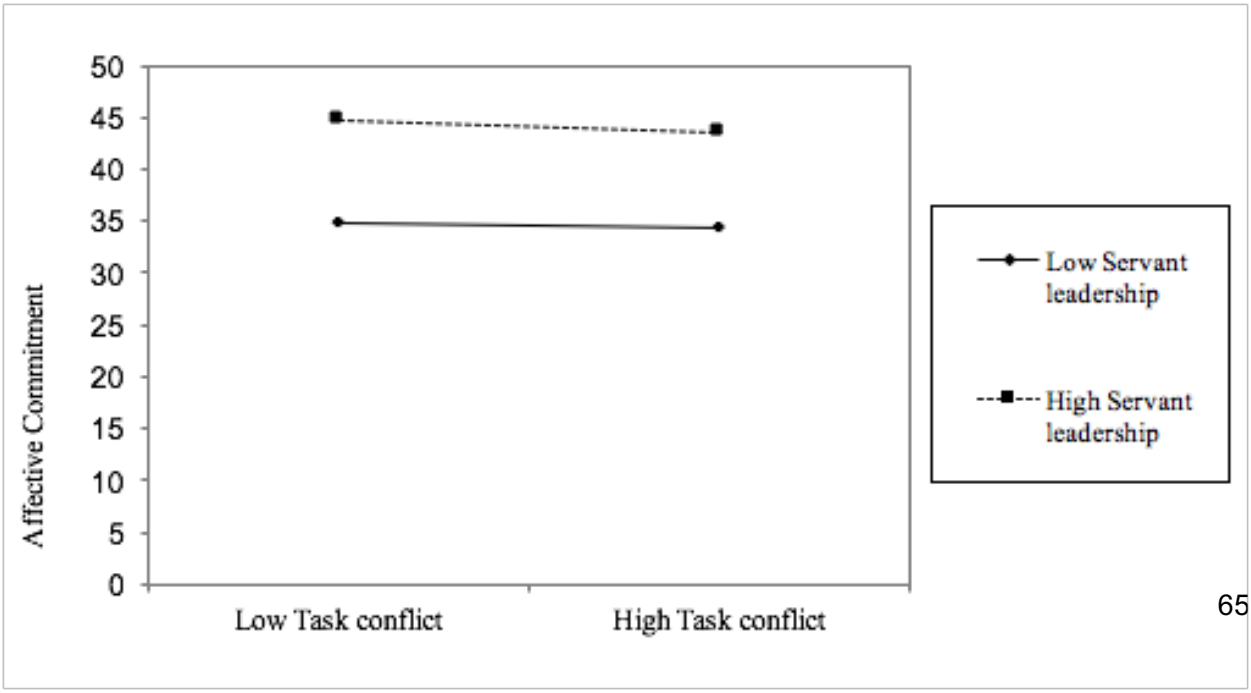
Appendix K PC*SL*COH



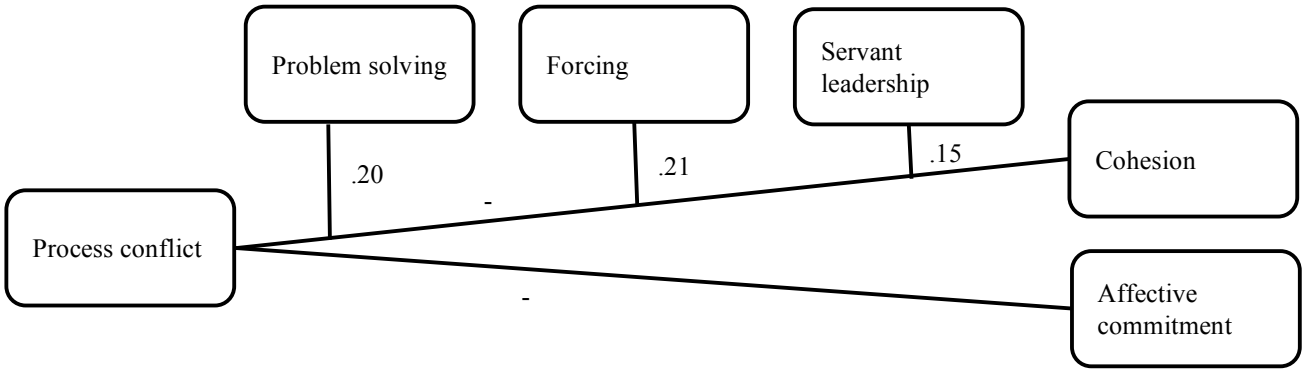
Appendix L TC*SL*COH



Appendix M TC*SL*AFC



Appendix N1 visualised summary of results



Direct effect of process conflict on cohesion and affective commitment. Moderation effect of problem solving, forcing and servant leadership on the relation between process conflict and cohesion.

* Significant at $p < .05$

** Significant at $p < .01$

+ Marginal significant at $p < .10$

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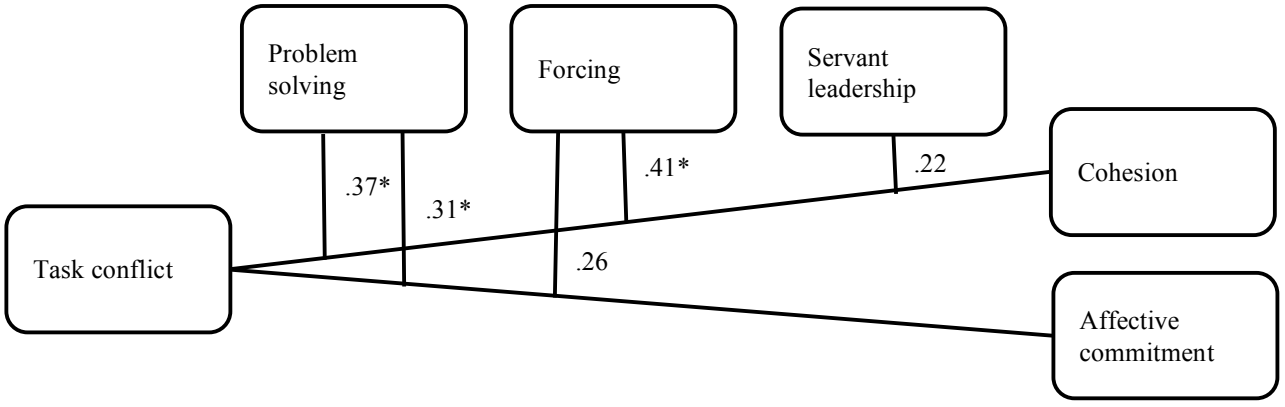
Appendix N2



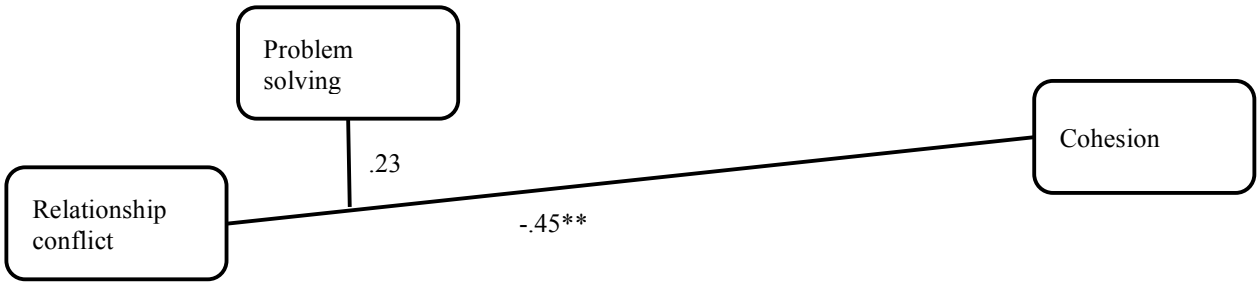
Task conflict. Moderation effect of problem solving, forcing and servant leadership on the relation between task conflict and cohesion and task conflict and affective commitment.

* Significant at $p < .05$

** Significant at $p < .01$

+ Marginal significant at $p < .10$

Appendix N3



Direct effect of relationship conflict on cohesion. Moderation effect of problem solving between relationship conflict and cohesion.

* Significant at $p < .05$

** Significant at $p < .01$

+ Marginal significant at $p < .10$