# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEES' COMMITMENT: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK MOTIVATIONS

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### Abstract

Conflict management and work motivations play a critical role in improving the employees' commitment which results in attaining organizational success (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Unfortunately, the literature demonstrated that the relationships between these constructs have never been studied previously. Therefore, the purpose of this quantitative study was to determine the mediating effect of work motivations on the relationship between conflict management and employees' commitment. One hundred and eighty-six participants selected randomly from twenty-four insurance companies in Jordan completed the survey questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed that both conflict management and work motivations have a positive effect on employees' commitment. Also, the findings indicated that work motivation partially mediates the relationship between conflict management and employees' commitment. Thus, organizations that hope to maintain highly committed employees should integrate work motivations with the conflict management process.

Keywords: Conflict Management, Work Motivations, Employees' Commitments

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Employees' commitment is a critical management construct and a vital component of organizational success. Many scholars confirmed that employees' commitment leads to higher levels of loyalty, lower levels of absenteeism, higher levels of performance, and lower rates of turnover, which in turn, improves the organizational performance as a whole (Arnolds

& Boshoff, 2004; Okoli, Okeke, & Nuel-Okoli, 2017; Martono et al., 2020; Park & Rainey, 2007). Prior studies also found that committed employees have higher levels of productivity (Arnolds & Boshoff, 2004; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). In contrast, research indicates that employees who feel their workplace is uncomfortable for them sense not so much committed, and these decreases in commitment levels produce performance levels



decreases (Okoli et al., 2017; Martono et al., 2020). One of the most common reasons that make the workplace uncomfortable is unhandled conflict resulting in disruption (Ebikeseye & Dickson, 2018).

Conflict within organizations has several negative consequences that affect not only employees' commitment and organizational productivity but also can cause failure (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2005; Slaikeu & Hasson, 1998). This conflict could be caused by misunderstanding and disagreements, or it could be a result of dissatisfaction with certain situations (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2005; Okoli et al., 2017).

Historically, management scholars adopted the concept of conflict avoidance, but nowadays they are using the concept of conflict management. Conflict management has been used essentially by effective managers to solve organizational issues (Adu, Muah, Sanda, & Sarfo, 2015). Where the literature defines conflict management as the process of identifying and dealing with the conflict in an effective, reasonable, and unbiased way, using problem-solving techniques, effective communication channels, and bargaining skills with an emphasis on the organization's interests (Maureen, Maore, & Were, 2021).

Thus, organizational conflict management plays a critical role in maintaining employees' commitment by providing a stable and secure work environment (Fox & Spector, 1999; Storms & Spector, 1987). Prior studies have proved that when organizations apply conflict management techniques to their workplaces, employees' feelings of organizational commitment increase (Ayoko, Callan, & Hartel, 2003; Robbins & Judge, 2013).

Managing conflict effectively in organizations is considered an important issue for both employers and employees and enables leaders to guarantee the organization attains success (Emerson, 2016; Jordan, Lawrence, & Troth, 2006; Klingel & Maffie, 2016). Unluckily, scholars have shown that managing conflict in many cases is ineffectively executed (Sedina, 2016; Woods, 2016). Therefore, for leaders to effectively manage conflicts, motivation skills are required.

Motivations are one of the most repeatedly studied topics in the management and organizational behavior fields. Recent studies revealed that a majority of personnel are not committed to their jobs, because of the absence of motivation, therefore, motivation could be considered an essential element that contributes to enhancing employee commitment, regardless of the motivation is either intrinsic or extrinsic (Rivai, Lukito, & Fauzi, 2018).

Work motivations unify employees' efforts, encourage them to work together using their capabilities and skills to accomplish the organization's goals (Santoso & Riyanto, 2020), and help leaders overcome any disagreements or conflicts. As a result, it is expected that work motivations can increase the positive effects of conflict management on employees' commitment.

Unfortunately, few empirical studies to date have directly handled the mechanism in which conflict management and work motivations affect employee commitment. Therefore, the present study is intended to examine how styles of managing conflicts and applying motivations contribute to employees' commitment. In addition, the current

study illustrates how work motivations contribute to or detract from the relationship between conflict management and employees' commitment especially since this topic has never been studied. Therefore, studying such a relationship contributes to the body of knowledge related to conflict management, work motivations, and employees' commitment. Based on the aforementioned, the purpose of the current study is to examine the mediating effect of work motivations on the relationship between conflict management and employees' commitment.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 is a literature review, including conflict management, employees' commitment, and work motivation. Section 3 is a research methodology that presents the study model and hypotheses development. Section 4 provides results. Section 5 is a discussion of the results and implications. Section 6 concludes the paper.

#### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Conflict management

Conflict happens typically when there is a mismatch in feelings and goals between people, which leads to disagreement and divergence (Prieto-Remón, Cobo-Benita, Ortiz-Marcos, & Uruburua, 2015). In the organizational context, conflict is defined as a process that starts when one employee realizes other employees have or is about to negatively affect something the first employee concerned about (Robbins & Judge, 2013). It can be intrapersonal, interpersonal, and interdepartmental based on the interaction between groups in an organization (Daisy, 2020). However, conflict is a normal phenomenon that occurs in organizations and needs management (Okoro, Ogochukwu, & Okoro, 2018).

Accordingly, managing conflict is important because it influences the organization. Conflict can also influence individuals' personal, cultural, and social advancement. Therefore, conflict demands organizations deal with it rather than ignore it (Howell, 2014). For instance, it directs employees to handle situations professionally, increases productivity, and among others supports the development of employees and managers (Daisy, 2020).

Conflict management is a practice that aims to reduce the negative sides of the conflict while maximizing the positive sides of the conflict situation (Somaya & Dellington, 2014). Moreover, conflict management is the process that attempts to transfer the conflict consequences and negative energy to positive outcomes individually and collectively which in turn become better for the organization (Okoli et al., 2017). It is a connection process to replace a bad or emotional situation in a specific conflict with an emotional case that allows finding an unbiased solution for the involved parties successfully and effectively (Abu Taher, Das, & Rashed, 2008).

Managing conflict involves different strategies such as avoiding, accommodating, competing, collaborating, and compromising (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). Avoiding occurs when the employee discovers a conflict and selects to withdraw from the conflict situation (Pellington, 2014). Accommodating occurs when the employee needs to maintain a relationship, so he is putting other

employees' interests over his particular interests Competing occurs (Aylward, 2013). the employee needs to employ the resources and programs of the organization to fulfill his demands without caring about the interests of the other individuals in the organization. Collaborating includes the conditions in which the engaged employees of the conflict situation are longing to fully meet the concerns of a large number of those engaged (Aylward, 2013; Pellington, 2014). In the collaboration, the individuals try to take care of the case by focusing on contrasts instead of imposing different views. The compromising strategy includes the positions where every employee will capitulate something (Aylward, 2013). In this case, there is no winner or loser. Conflict parties admit to the arrangement where the interests of all parties are met (Aylward, 2013; Kassim, Abdullah, & Mansor, 2018; Pellington, 2014). These strategies can influence different employee aspects such as satisfaction. For instance, Briggs (2022) found that compromising, accommodating, avoiding, and dominating strategies of conflict management have a significant relationship with employee satisfaction.

## 2.2. Employees' commitment

The definition of employees' commitment developed by Allen and Meyer (1996) is considered the most cited one in the literature. They define employees' commitment as "... a psychological link between the employee and his or her organization that makes it less likely that the employee will voluntarily leave the organization" (Allen & Meyer, 1996, p. 252). While Robbins and Judge (2013) define employees' commitment as "the degree to which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in the organization" (p. 446).

Research has demonstrated the importance of organizational commitment as it relates to the employees' health, wellbeing, intent to leave, turnover, performance, and productivity (Meyer et al., 2002; Park & Rainey, 2007). Therefore, successful organizations pay great attention to promoting their employees' commitment.

There are several theories about employees' commitment to the organization in the literature. The most common one is the employees' commitment model developed by Meyer and Allen (1991). The model includes three components. Those components are affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Every component contributes to the personnel's overall commitment to the organization and no lone component can fully forecast or depict a personnel behavior.

The literature demonstrates that there are numerous instruments have been used to measure employees' commitment. For instance, Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) designed the Organization Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) to measure employees' commitment as one construct. However, scholars critiqued this scale. Therefore, the measure developed by Allen and Myer (1990) is still the most accepted in the literature. The literature also discussed and found a positive relationship between employee commitment and other variables such as job satisfaction (Aziz et al., 2021).

#### 2.3. Work motivations

Research indicates that motivated employees perform better jobs (Bagus Hendra, Windijarto, & Saptandari, 2019). Consequently, motivation in the workplace is a necessary component for any organization because it influences the efficiency and effectiveness of the employees' performance.

Robbins and Judge (2013) define motivation in the organizational context as "the processes that account for an individual's intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward attaining organizational goals" (p. 202). Accordingly, Robbins and Judge (2013) mentioned that there are three key elements in motivation definition. First, is the intensity which depicts the degree to which a person tries hard. High levels of intensity produce appropriate job performance results when the efforts are directed to benefit the organization. Therefore, the second element is the quality of effort. Particularly, efforts that are aimed toward, and harmonized with, the organization's goals. Lastly, motivation has a persistence dimension. This determines how long an individual can preserve effort. Motivated employees stay with a task long enough to achieve their organization's goals.

There are many theories related to work motivations developed during the last decades. One of them is the two-factor theory — also called the "motivation-hygiene theory".

The two-factor theory introduced by Herzberg states that intrinsic factors like career advancement, effort recognition, responsibility, and achievement are attached to job satisfaction and work commitment (as cited in Putra, Cho & Liu, 2017). Whereas extrinsic factors, like leadership, supervision, compensation, company policies and rules, and workplace conditions are attached to job dissatisfaction and lack of commitment (Ryan & Deci 2000)

Accordingly, work motivation can be increased based on different management skills such as coaching using the different measures to enlarge the number of internal training, determine what motivates employees on daily bases, and among others align business with the changes in the environment (i.e., the pandemic) (Stanković & Radojević, 2022).

#### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study relied on descriptive and analytical research methodology to test the mediating effect of work motivations on the relationship between conflict management and employees' commitment. SmartPLS 3 software was used to test the study hypotheses.

# 3.1. Study population, sample, and procedures

Participants in the current study included employees from 24 insurance companies operating in Jordan and listed on the Amman Stock Exchange. One hundred and eighty-six (186) randomly sampled employees participated in the study. Data was collected using a self-administrated web-based survey questionnaire. The majority of respondents that answered the survey questions were those aged from 40 to 50 years (39%) and from 15 to 20 years

of experience (31%). Regarding gender, males constituted approximately (56%) of the sample.

#### 3.2. Study instrument

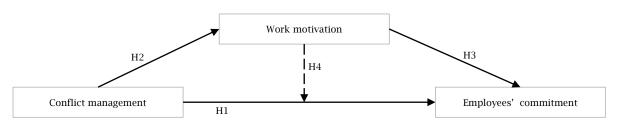
A questionnaire was developed by the authors for data collection. It consists of four sections. The first section consists of personal information. The second section covers conflict management, and it was written based on Rahim's (1983) study and measured by 11 questions. The third section concerns work motivation, it was adopted from Saleem, Mahmood, and Mahmood's (2010) study and measured by 8 questions. Whereas the last section covers employee commitment was adopted

from Allen and Meyer (1990) and measured by 10 questions. The answers to questionnaire questions were based on the Likert scale and ranged from 1 to 5.

# 3.3. Study model

The proposed model for this study was built after reviewing conflict management, employee commitment, and work motivation literature as presented in the previous section. It also presents the mediating effect of work motivation on the relationship between employees' commitment and conflict management. Figure 1 presents the study model.

Figure 1. Proposed study model



### 3.4. Hypotheses development

# 3.4.1. Conflict management and employees' commitment

The relationship between conflict management and employee commitment was considered in the literature. For instance, Akhtar and Hassan (2021) found that conflict management styles such as integrating, obliging, and compromising related significantly and positively to organizational commitment. This result supports the findings of Abazeed (2017) who found a positive influence of organizational conflict strategies on organizational commitment. Furthermore, Ojo and Abolade (2014) said that effective conflict management improves the performance of employees and has a positive employees' and significant effect on the commitment. Finally, Nambozo (2011) confirmed that conflict resolution has a positive relationship with employees' commitment. Based on the above discussion, the first hypothesis is:

H1: Conflict management has a significant positive effect on employees' commitment.

# 3.4.2. Conflict management and work motivations

Prior studies have examined the relationship between conflict management and work motivations. For instance, scholars found that conflict management has a positive impact on work motivation (Wolor, Supriyati, & Purwana, 2019; Nurismilida, Yolanda, & Br. Purba, 2018). Moreover, Sharma and Mehta (2017) provided empirical evidence regarding the positive relationship between the mechanism of conflict resolution and employees' motivation.

Based on the above, the study proposed the second hypothesis:

H2: Conflict management has a significant positive effect on work motivations.

# 3.4.3. Work motivations and employees' commitment

Fernet, Austin, and Vallerand (2012) investigate the relationship between motivation and employee commitment and found a positive relationship between them. This result supported Bytyqi (2020) who found that motivation has a significant effect on organizational commitment. Moreover, Singh and Ghosh (2018) investigated the influence of different elements of motivation such as compensation and support on employee commitment. They also found a significant and positive relationship between work motivation and employee commitment. In addition, Danish, Ur-Rehman, and Munir (2012) showed that there is a significant relationship between job involvement, working environment, and incentives with employee commitment. Hence, the third hypothesis is:

H3: Work motivations have a significant positive effect on the employees' commitment.

# 3.4.4. Conflict management, work motivations, and employees' commitment

Prior studies have proved that when organizations apply conflict management techniques to their workplaces, employees' feelings of organizational commitment increase (Ayoko et al., 2003; Robbins & Judge, 2013). Recent research revealed that a majority of employees are not committed to their work, because of the absence of motivation, therefore, motivation could be considered an essential element that contributes to enhancing employee commitment, regardless of the motivation is either intrinsic or extrinsic (Rivai, Lukito, & Fauzi, 2018). Work motivations unify employees' efforts, encourage them to work together using their capabilities and skills to accomplish the organization's goals (Santoso & Riyanto, 2020), and help leaders overcome any disagreements or conflicts. Consequently, the fourth hypothesis is:

H4: Work motivations have a mediating effect on the relationship between conflict management and employees' commitment.

#### 4. RESULTS

# 4.1. Analysis and findings

# 4.1.1. Descriptive statistics

Table 1 presents the values of means and standard deviations for the study variables. As shown in

Table 1, the participants indicated that their companies implement conflict management techniques at a moderate level. Also, respondents indicated that their companies employ work motivations at a moderate level. Finally, respondents demonstrated a moderated level of commitment to their companies.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Variable Mean		Level	
Conflict management	3.57	0.690	Moderate	
Work motivations	3.48	0.711	Moderate	
Employees' commitment	3.61	0.741	Moderate	

### 4.1.2. Data analysis

Structural equation modeling has been used to analyze the data and test study hypotheses by utilizing SmartPLS 3 software. The analysis has included a two steps process. The first step addressed the measurement model assessment, whereas the second step handled the structural model assessment.

In the measurement model assessment stage, the authors checked the measurement reliability and validity by evaluating the composite reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. In the structural model assessment stage, the authors evaluated the expected relationship between the study constructs.

#### 4.1.3. Measurement model assessment

As shown in Table 2, Cronbach's alpha values for conflict management, work motivations, and

employee commitment are 0.936, 0.913, and 0.930, respectively, and all of these values are higher than 0.70, which is acceptable and fit for analysis (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Table 2 also shows that the composite reliability values are higher than 0.70 and indicates that all independent variables' values are acceptable. Moreover, Table 2 shows that the values of average variance extracted (AVE) are higher than 0.50, which is within the acceptable limit. Finally, Table 2 and Figure 2 show that the factor loading values are higher than 0.70 except that paragraphs 2 and 11 were within the conflict management axis, and paragraphs 13 and 19 were within the work motivations axis. Accordingly, these paragraphs will be removed in the analysis of the second level.

Table 2. Composite reliability and convergent validity

Variable	Items	Factor loading	CA	CR	AVE	
Variable		More than 0.70	More than 0.70	More than 0.70	More than 0.50	
	Q1	0.863			0.573	
	Q2	0.687				
	Q3	0.705		0.936		
	Q4	0.765				
Conflict	Q5	0.876	0.924			
management	Q6	0.830	0.924	0.930		
management	Q7	0.771				
	Q8	0.779				
	Q9	0.703			İ	
	Q10	0.742				
	Q11	0.548		0.913	0.569	
	Q12	0.782				
	Q13	0.697				
	Q14	0.815				
Work motivations	Q15	0.801	0.891			
WOLK IIIOUVations	Q16	0.713				
	Q17	0.769				
	Q18	0.804				
	Q19	0.636			<u> </u>	
	Q20	0.730			0.571	
	Q21	0.793		0.930		
	Q22	0.764				
	Q23	0.720				
Employees	Q24	0.745	0.916			
commitment	Q25	0.810	0.910			
	Q26	0.732				
	Q27	0.741				
	Q28	0.746				
	Q29	0.769				

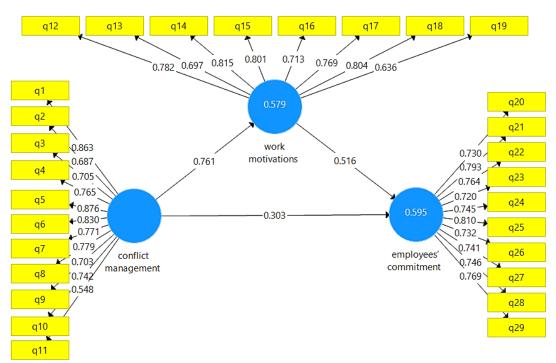


Figure 2. The standardized loading model and path coefficient for the trimmed model

Discriminant validity has been measured using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. As shown in Table 3, the values of discriminant validity indicate a logical interval of the paragraphs for the whole study variables and no interventions or frequencies with other variables, and this is consistent with what Fornell and Larker (1981) mentioned. Furthermore, Table 3 shows that all the values of study variables are more than the correlations related to latent variables, which in turn confirms that the measures have adequate levels of discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant validity

Variables	Conflict management	Work motivations	Employees commitment	
Conflict management	0.757			
Work motivations	0. 695	0.755		
Employees commitment	0.746	0.754	0.761	

# 4.2. Structural model assessment

The authors tested the study hypotheses by implementing bootstrapping technique using SmartPLS 3 software. The results presented in Table 4 show that the proposed paths are significant, which indicates that the study model is convenient. More specifically, the results show that conflict management has a significant ( $\beta = 0.694$ , t = 17.920,

p=0.000) positive effect on employees' commitment. Therefore, H1 is supported. Moreover, the results show that conflict management has a significant ( $\beta=0.781$ , t=28.675, p=0.000) positive effect on work motivations. Thus, H2 is supported. Finally, the results show that work motivations have a significant ( $\beta=0.770$ , t=22.316, p=0.000) positive effect on employees' commitment. Thus, H3 is supported.

Table 4. Hypotheses testing results

Hypothesis	Variables	$R^2$	R <sup>2</sup> adjusted	β	SD	T-test	Sig.	Decision
H1	$CM \rightarrow EC$	0.482	0.479	0.694	0.039	17.920	0.000	Accepted
H2	$CM \rightarrow WM$	0.611	0.608	0.781	0.027	28.675	0.000	Accepted
Н3	$WM \rightarrow EC$	0.593	0.591	0.770	0.035	22.316	0.000	Accepted

*Note: Significant at the level of 0.05.* 

On the other hand, the authors tested the fourth hypothesis by implementing mediation analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The results presented in Table 6 show that the values of the confidence interval for the upper level and lower level are 0.514 and 0.270, which means the zero value does not cross with them. Moreover,

the results presented in Tables 4 and 5 show that both direct and indirect effect is significant. Therefore, we can say that work motivations partially mediate the relationship between conflict management and employees' commitment (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014).

Table 5. Fourth hypothesis testing

Independent variable	Mediator variable	Dependent variable	β	SD	T-test	Sig.	Result
CM -	· WM -	→ EC	0.392	0.062	6.317	0.000	Accepted
R <sup>2</sup>				0.595			
R <sup>2</sup> adjusted				0.591			

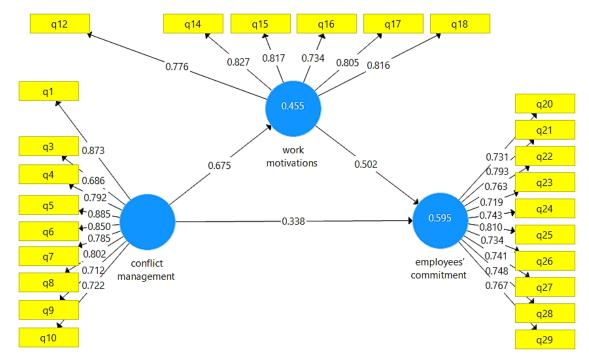
**Table 6.** The template mediation calculation of the fourth hypothesis test

Bootstrapped confidence interval								
	Path a Path b Indirect effect S.E. T-value 95% LL 95% UL Decision							
H4	0.761	0.516	0.392	0.062	6.323	0.270	0.514	Mediation

Finally, regarding the model predictive ability, the values of  $R^2$  presented in Figure 3 are 0.455 for work motivations and 0.595 for employees'

commitment. These values are considered moderate (Hair et al., 2014).

Figure 3. Standardized loading model and path coefficients for the trimmed model



# 5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study investigates the mediating effect of work motivations on the relationship between conflict management and employee commitment. The study findings showed that conflict management has a significant positive effect on the employees' commitment. This result is supported by Akhtar and Hassan's (2021) and Abazeed's (2017) findings.

Akhtar and Hassan's (2021) study showed that conflict management styles have a positive relationship with organizational commitment. This complies with Abazeed (2017) who stated that organizational conflict strategies have a significant and positive influence on organizational commitment. The resultant implication is that employees are more committed when their organizations apply conflict management techniques. Therefore, organizations that hope to maintain high levels of employee commitment should implement conflict resolution techniques effectively rather than ignoring the conflict.

Furthermore, the study shows that conflict management has a significant positive effect on work motivations. This result is supported by the studies of Wolor et al. (2019), and Nurismilida et al. (2018) who found that conflict management impacts positively work motivation. This result also agreed with Sharma and Mehta (2017) who found that the mechanism of conflict resolution has associated with employees' motivation. The resultant implication is that employees are more motivated when their organizations handle conflict situations. Therefore, organizations that hope to maintain high levels of motivated employees should manage conflict effectively.

Moreover, the study showed that motivation has a significant positive effect on the employees' commitment. This result is consistent with Bytyqi (2020) who found that motivation has a significant impact on organizational commitment. The resultant implication is that employees are more committed when their organizations create motivating work environment. Therefore, organizations that hope to maintain high levels of committed employees should motivate them by

recognizing their efforts, providing a suitable leadership style, and offering opportunities for advancement.

Finally, the current study found that work motivations have a mediating effect the relationship between conflict management and employees' commitment. This result is consistent with related literature. When organizations handle conflict situations in the workplace, employees' feelings of organizational commitment increase (Ayoko et al., 2003; Robbins & Judge, 2013). As well as, a motivating work environment is considered an essential element that contributes to enhancing employee commitment (Rivai, Lukito, & Fauzi, 2018) by unifying employees' efforts, encouraging them to work together using their capabilities and skills to accomplish the organization's goals (Santoso & Riyanto, 2020), and helping leaders overcome any disagreements or conflicts. The resultant implication is that work motivations increase the effectiveness of conflict management, which in turn leads to an increase in the employees' commitment. Therefore, organizations that hope to maintain highly committed employees should integrate work motivations with the conflict management process.

#### 6. CONCLUSION

Conflict management, work motivations, and employees' commitment topics continue to acquire attention in organizations. Researchers and practitioners acknowledge the need to conduct sustained research because the phenomena of conflict, motivations, and commitment remain largely unexplored.

While extensive research in organizations has provided insight into the factors that contribute to promoting employees' commitment, there is still much to be learned about what constitutes the employees' commitment. Therefore, the problem investigated by this study was understanding how conflict management and work motivations impact employees' commitment, and how work motivations increase or modify the relationship between conflict management and employees' commitment.

The present study provides empirical evidence regarding the positive effect of both conflict management and work motivation on employees' commitment, as well as the positive mediating effect that work motivation has on the relationship between conflict management and employees' commitment. These findings enrich the literature and expand the body of knowledge related to conflict management, work motivation, and employees' commitment.

This study has some limitations including respondents' bias since the nature of constructs used in the study depends on the respondents' perceptions. Another possible limitation related to this study is the ability to generalize findings to other companies, especially since manufacturing companies were not included in the study. Therefore, it is useful for researchers to conduct similar studies on other sectors to verify the current finings.

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