

RGC Ref. No.: UGC/FDS14/H13/18 (please insert ref. above)

**RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL
COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEMES FOR
THE LOCAL SELF-FINANCING DEGREE SECTOR**

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (FDS)

Completion Report
(for completed projects only)

<p><u>Submission Deadlines:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Auditor's report with unspent balance, if any: within <u>six</u> months of the approved project completion date. 2. Completion report: within <u>12</u> months of the approved project completion date.
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Part A: The Project and Investigator(s)

1. Project Title

Destined for Conflict? An Implicit Theory Approach to Relational Motive and
Dispute Resolution Practices

2. Investigator(s) and Academic Department(s) / Unit(s) Involved

Research Team	Name / Post	Unit / Department / Institution
Principal Investigator	Prof Fu Ho Ying Jeanne / Professor	Department of Management/ The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong
Co-Investigator(s)	Dr Chao Man Chi Melody / Associate Professor	Department of Management / The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
	Dr Hui Pun Zee Pamsy / Senior Teaching Fellow	Department of Management and Marketing / The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Others	N/A	

3. Project Duration

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval (must be quoted)
Project Start Date	1 Jan 2019	1 Jan 2019	N/A
Project Completion Date	31 Dec 2021	31 Dec 2022	Approved by RGC on 25 May, 2022
Duration (<i>in month</i>)	36	48	
Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	31 Dec 2022	31 Dec 2023	

4.4 Please attach photo(s) of acknowledgement of RGC-funded facilities / equipment.

Part B: The Final Report

5. Project Objectives

5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. To develop a measurement for the new construct: Implicit theory of conflict
2. To study the effect of implicit theory of conflict on the preference for a dispute resolution system (DRS)
3. To test the mediating role of cognition-based trust in driving the implicit theory of conflict's effect on the preference for DRS
4. To explore the moderating factors for the implicit theory of conflict's effect
5. To inform practitioners in Hong Kong and worldwide of the psychological factors that will enhance or reduce the use of DRS. We will present our findings and results through journal publications, conference presentations and workshops for business practitioners

5.2 Revised objectives

Date of approval from the RGC: N/A

Reasons for the change:

1.

2.

3. ..

5.3 Realisation of the objectives

(Maximum 1 page; please state how and to what extent the project objectives have been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)

The five objectives were addressed via six main empirical studies and several other pre-tests and pilot tests with more than 2000 participants. The objectives have been satisfactorily achieved.

Objective 1: A large-scale measurement validation study involving several psychometric tests was conducted to develop the measurement of implicit theory of conflict. The research team first generated the measurement items by interviewing undergraduates from different cultural backgrounds on the extent to which they viewed conflict as inevitable or preventable and the reasons behind their beliefs. Through this step, several items with ambiguous meanings were modified or removed to ensure the precision of the wording. The revised version was presented to another group of undergraduates for further comments. After rounds of such revision, the face validity of the items was basically established. The final pool of items was then subject to a test-retest reliability and internal consistency test where participants filled out the same set of items three times in a 14-day period. The items were also subject to content validity tests against optimism and implicit theory of morality.

Objective 2: The effect of implicit theory of conflict on dispute resolution system was tested in a scenario study. The research team created two collaboration scenarios to simulate two common contexts where participants may experience conflict. The first scenario focused on a typical team project setting, whereas the other one depicted a business venture setting. In the scenarios, participants were asked to imagine they were working with a teammate who initiated signing a contract on how future conflicts would be handled should they occur (DRS). Participants rated how willing they were to sign the contract and their perceptions and feelings toward the teammate who proposed the DRS. The effect of implicit theory of conflict was compared against other plausible individual difference constructs including locus of control, optimism, emotional regulation, self-regulatory focus, and implicit theories of personality, morality, and world. The factor structure of the measure of implicit theory of conflict was also tested in this study.

Objective 3: The mediating role of participants' cognitive trust, interpersonal liking, and moral perception of the DRS proponent was tested in the same scenario developed above. Participants read the scenario and then rated the teammate who proposed the DRS contract along these three person perception dimensions. By including the three mediators in the same statistical model, we can compare the relative strength of each mediator in explaining the variance of the effect of implicit theory of conflict on the preference for DRS.

Objective 4: We tested a few moderators for the effect of implicit conflict belief on the perception of the DRS proponent and preference for DRS in separate studies. In the first

study, the moderating role of risk aversion and time pressure were tested using the scenario materials developed in previous studies. Risk aversion was manipulated with pretested materials, while time pressure was measured using an individual difference scale. In another study, we manipulated focal concern (self vs. others) to examine whether the implicit theory of conflict would likely manifest when individuals were being considerate to others as compared to when they asserted themselves.

Objective 5: Results from the above empirical studies were submitted to and presented at three international conferences where academics and practitioners met to discuss the significance and implications of the research. Manuscripts were also prepared and submitted to top-tier journals for consideration for publication.

5.4 Summary of objectives addressed to date

Objectives (as per 5.1/5.2 above)	Addressed (please tick)	Percentage Achieved (please estimate)
1. To develop a measurement for the new construct: <i>Implicit theory of conflict</i>	✓	100%
2. To study the effect of implicit theory of conflict on the preference for a dispute resolution system (DRS)	✓	100%
3. To test the mediating role of cognition-based trust in driving the implicit theory of conflict's effect on the preference for DRS	✓	100%
4. To explore the moderating factors for the implicit theory of conflict's effect	✓	100%
5. To inform practitioners in Hong Kong and worldwide of the psychological factors that will enhance or reduce the use of DRS. We will present our findings and results through journal publication, conference presentation and workshops for business practitioners	✓	100%

6. Research Outcome

6.1 Major findings and research outcome

(Maximum 1 page; please make reference to Part C where necessary)

In establishing the measurement of the implicit theory of conflict, we obtained good level of internal consistency of the eight items generated from focus groups. Internal consistency ranged from .79 to .91 across studies. Test-retest reliabilities across a 14-day period were satisfactory (.74 to .80). For content validity, two indices, the proportion of

substantive agreement ($p_{sa} = .88$ to $.98$; $M = .94$, $SD = .03$) and the substantive-validity coefficient ($c_{sv} = .77$ to $.97$; $M = .88$, $SD = .06$), were computed from the item-sorting task. Both indices suggested good and strong validity.

Another set of major psychometric tests we conducted for the measurement were explanatory and confirmatory factor analyses. Our results showed that the eight items of the measurement gave rise to one latent trait factor and one latent method factor with good fit (CFI = .98, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .05, SMRM = .03). The trait factor captured the variances in one's belief in conflict inevitability, whereas the method factor addressed the wording artifact (four items were worded in the direction of inevitability while the other four were in the direction of preventability). The measurement invariance tests showed that this factor structure was consistent across samples from two regions (the United States and Hong Kong) and genders (female and male). Therefore, it is expected that the measurement can be administered to diverse populations.

To test the uniqueness of the implicit theory of conflict as a psychological construct, we compared its effect with several individual difference constructs that may tap at mildly related but theoretically different concepts. These concepts include locus of control, self-regulatory focus, emotional regulation and implicit theory of personality, morality, and world. Convergent validity test showed some weak to mild correlations of the implicit theory of conflict with some of these variables, strengthening the theoretical basis of the measurement. On the other hand, results from the divergent validity test suggested that including implicit theory of conflict in the same measurement model with these constructs reduced the model fit, alluding to the uniqueness of implicit theory of conflict from other theoretically relevant constructs.

To test for criterion validity, we examined the effect of implicit theory of conflict on participants' perception of the DRS proponent and their preference for adopting DRS in two collaboration settings (team project and business venture). Results revealed that implicit theory of conflict had a positive effect on the competence perception of the DRS proponent, which in turn positively affected the adoption of DRS. These effects remained despite competing constructs being added to the mediation model, and the pattern of results was consistent across collaboration settings. It was concluded that the implicit theory of conflict could explain unique variances in criterion variables beyond competing constructs.

In a study that explored the moderating effect of implicit theory of conflict, it was found that when participants focused on being social and friendly to others, the inevitable theorists perceived a DRS proponent to be more trustworthy and honest than preventable theorists. At the same time, this pattern of relationships was not observed when participants focused on asserting themselves. These results suggest there are boundaries to the effect of implicit theory of conflict and its effect was more pronounced when interpersonal relationships were highlighted in the context.

6.2 Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action *(Maximum half a page)*

There is a lot of potential from the findings of this research program. With the establishment of the measurement of the implicit theory of conflict, the construct can be applied to understanding other topics in conflict management. For instance, it can be employed to study interpersonal dynamics in different group settings such as work teams, political groups, social groups, and even family. The study of the effect of implicit theory

of conflict can also be extended to supervisor-supervisee relationships and contribute to the literature on leadership and followership. Future studies can explore how inevitability believers plan their interactional behaviors and react to conflict with their supervisor or supervisee.

From the perspective of conflict management, findings from this project open up new ways to tackle unanswered questions in the field. For instance, prior research on how individuals prevent conflict is relatively scant. By incorporating the implicit theory of conflict into the literature, researchers can study the antecedents of conflict prevention in greater depth. Besides, our research adds to the implicit theory literature by enriching our understanding of laypeople's psychological expectations towards conflict. The implicit theory of conflict explains effects beyond those of implicit theory of personality, morality and world. Future research can examine its effects against other types of implicit theories such as implicit of intelligence and negotiation ability in the domains of conflict management.

7. Layman's Summary

(Describe in layman's language the nature, significance and value of the research project, in no more than 200 words)

Leveraging its common-law-based legal system, Hong Kong has been aiming to become an international dispute resolution center. Among various forms of conflict management, using a Dispute Resolution System (DRS) - having parties sign a contract explicitly detailing the dispute resolution procedures, sequence, and terms prior to any official business activities - is relatively uncommon, especially in small- and medium-sized businesses. This research explores the psychological factors behind the tendency to adopt such a system and proposes that the implicit theory of conflict motivates people to employ specific measures to manage their work relationships. People who believe that conflicts are inevitable in their lives may be motivated to search for ways to contain relational damages before they start working with their partners. We developed a measurement for the implicit theory of conflict and found that the inevitable theorists are more likely than their preventable counterparts to perceive a partner who proposes a DRS to be competent. They are also more likely to adopt DRS as a result. Overall, this research program provides new insights into promoting DRS as an alternative dispute resolution approach and offers a new theoretical perspective in studying conflict management and work relationships.

Part C: Research Output**8. Peer-Reviewed Journal Publication(s) Arising Directly From This Research Project**

(Please attach a copy of the publication and/or the letter of acceptance if not yet submitted in the previous progress report(s). All listed publications must acknowledge RGC's funding support by quoting the specific grant reference.)

The Latest Status of Publications				Author(s) (denote the corresponding author with an asterisk*)	Title and Journal / Book (with the volume, pages and other necessary publishing details specified)	Submitted to RGC (indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)	Attached to this Report (Yes or No)	Acknowledged the Support of RGC (Yes or No)	Accessible from the Institutional Repository (Yes or No)
Year of Publication	Year of Acceptance (For paper accepted but not yet published)	Under Review	Under Preparation (optional)						
		Under Review		Fu, J. H. Y.*, Chao, M., Hui, P., & Luk, R. C. T.	Implicit belief of conflict and adoption of dispute resolution system. Administrative Science Quarterly/	N/A	No	Yes	No
		Under Review		Luk, R. C. T.*, Chao, M., Hui, P., & Fu, J. H. Y.	The paradox of conflict, negative affect, and conflict management styles. Academy of Management Discoveries/	N/A	No	Yes	No
2023				Hui, P. P. Z.*, Fu, J. H. Y., & Tong, J. Y. Y.	Coolly Provocative: A Microfoundational Framework of interorganizational cultural distance and exploratory innovation./ <u>Cross-Cultural and Strategic Management</u> , 30(2), 324-347	N/A	Yes Appendix I	No	Yes https://researchdb.hsu.edu.hk/view/publication/202300245

9. Recognized International Conference(s) In Which Paper(s) Related To This Research Project Was / Were Delivered

(Please attach a copy of each conference abstract)

Month / Year / Place	Title	Conference Name	Submitted to RGC <i>(indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)</i>	Attached to this Report <i>(Yes or No)</i>	Acknowledged the Support of RGC <i>(Yes or No)</i>	Accessible from the Institutional Repository <i>(Yes or No)</i>
December / 2020 / Hong Kong, China	Implicit belief of conflict and adoption of dispute resolution system.	Academy of International Business Southeast Asia Regional Conference.	2022	Yes Appendix II	Yes	Yes
July / 2021 / Czech	Forestalling the inevitable? Belief in conflict inevitability and dispute resolution system adoption.	32 nd International Congress of Psychology.	2022	Yes Appendix III	Yes	Yes
December / 2022 / Ningbo, China	Mitigating conflict- induced negative emotions: Implicit conflict belief and conflict management style.	Academy of International Business (AIB) Asia Pacific Regional Conference.	N/A	Yes Appendix IV	Yes	Yes

10. Whether Research Experience And New Knowledge Has Been Transferred / Has Contributed To Teaching And Learning

(Please elaborate)

The new knowledge generated from the project has contributed to teaching by enhancing authors' understanding of the literature on implicit belief and conflict management. Some of the concepts and research findings have been introduced to students via focus groups or individual project consultations. Students in turn shared their thoughts and views particularly on the new construct of conflict inevitability by citing different life experiences.

11. Student(s) Trained

(Please attach a copy of the title page of the thesis)

Name	Degree Registered for	Date of Registration	Date of Thesis Submission / Graduation
N/A			

12. Other Impact

(e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, technology transfer, teaching enhancement, etc.)

The project funding provided resources to train a research assistant who pursued a research-based Master's degree at a research university after working on the project for two years.

13. Statistics on Research Outputs

	Peer-reviewed Journal Publications	Conference Papers	Scholarly Books, Monographs and Chapters	Patents Awarded	Other Research Outputs (please specify)	
No. of outputs arising directly from this research project	1	3	0	0	Type	No.
					Paper under review or under preparation	2

14. Public Access Of Completion Report

(Please specify the information, if any, that cannot be provided for public access and give the reasons.)

Information that Cannot Be Provided for Public Access	Reasons
N/A	