






Exploring the influence of tenacity, competence and spirituality on conflict management among youth in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Youths must overcome multiple challenges to adjust to a combative environment. Resilient individuals may overcome all negative thoughts and attitudes when confronted with difficulty. However, students who are unable to change or control the conflict will have a negative attitude throughout their lives. Thus, this study aimed to examine the influence of the resilience construct on conflict management among youths in Malaysia.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This study used a quantitative approach through a questionnaire instrument involving a total of 533 respondents among youths comprising students of educational programme and novice teachers in the northern zone of Peninsular Malaysia. The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale and Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI II) questionnaires were used in this study. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28 and Structural Equation Model-Part Least Square, SmartPLS 4 software.

Findings: The findings showed that there was an influence of the resistance dimension on conflict management. The findings also showed that tenacity and spiritual dimensions have an influence on conflict management.

Conclusion: Resilience is a skill that should be learned and possessed by each individual especially youths when facing life conflicts.

Research Limitation: The data found in this study were based on questionnaires. The findings of the study were limited as they depended on the honesty and willingness of the respondents to answer the questionnaire.

Contribute to the Literature: This study contributes to the existing literature that resilience constructs have influence on conflict management among youths.

Keywords: Conflict management, Conflict, Northern zone Peninsular Malaysia, Resilience, Spirituality, Tenacity and competence, Youths.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the Malaysian Ministry of Education created the Malaysian Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025 to develop graduates who are holistic, enterprising and balanced through the first shift in MEB (HE) (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). Malaysian youth need to be prepared with strong ethical foundations and skills as well as resilience and entrepreneurial traits to face an increasingly challenging future (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015) because the youth are an asset and pillar of a country's progress. According to Rohana and Norhasni (2016), the calibre of a nation's youth serves as an indicator of its development and setbacks. In Malaysia, the active role of social involvement in the development of the country is seen as significant due to the challenges faced in the effort to create a 5.0 society (Tavares, Azevedo, & Marques, 2022).

According to the national education philosophy, it is essential for students to comprehend the notion of conflict, the factors of conflict influence, the effect of conflict and conflict management abilities (Mua'azam, Zuriadah, Yus'aiman, Fauziah, & Noor Haifa, 2021). Skills to effectively manage conflicts are important (Rahim, 2001). According to Hakvoort, Larsson, and Lundström (2020), conflicts can manifest in various forms capable of

negatively affecting anyone. Therefore, it is important for youths to have conflict management skills when faced with conflict as individuals in conflicting situations exhibit unconscious behavior that can ruin lives (Akan, 2020). According to Fauziah, Nazirah, and Werdi (2018), university students should be given exposure related to resilience before graduating. A structured dedication and training on resilience for youths, especially university students will create a high level of resilience (Nor Ezdianie & Muhammad, 2020).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Youths may experience psychological stress when they first enter a higher education institution to begin their studies (Bracaglia, 2017; Wu et al., 2020). University students may experience stress due to a variety of reasons including being away from their families (Feyisa, Merdassa, & Biru, 2022), the search for self-identity, financial difficulties, adjusting to a new environment and society (Gomez, Zayas, Ruiz, & Guil, 2018) as well as issues with their academic performance (Anasuri & Anthony, 2018). According to Shankland, Genolini, Riou França, Guelfi, and Ionescu (2010), some students will develop an active response strategy for fulfilling life as students. However, students who are unable to alter or control the circumstances will develop a negative attitude towards learning which will decrease their motivation and confidence to complete their studies (Shankland et al., 2019). Early exposure of conflict resolution skills to individuals will produce a positive attitude able to reduce violence and aggressiveness in the individual (Sagkal, Turnuklu, & Totan, 2016). The study by Safrankova and Emrova (2018) shows that youth should learn and practice skills to cope with conflicts. When conflicts occur, improper conflict management may have a negative effect on both the organization and an individual (Rai & Singh, 2021). Nor Ezdianie and Muhammad (2020) believe that university students who demonstrate resilience abilities will be able to deal with obstacles in life because individuals with a high level of resilience or endurance in life are able to recover and advance after going through hardships in life (Lipat, Espinol, Maranan, & Manalo, 2022).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Resilience

According to the *Resilient Research Center*, resilience is defined as the ability of individuals to push themselves towards psychological, social, cultural and physical resources to maintain well-being. Resilience also means the ability of the individual to deal with hardships and at the same time to develop professional and social competencies (Rirkin & Hoopman, 1991). In the context of university students, resilience is defined as the ability of students to recover or rise from life difficulties, conflicts in everyday life and even failures (Feyisa et al., 2022). It is common that the university is a place where students start their academic studies at a high level. At university, they will be faced with some challenges such as having to solve problems they have never faced and dealing with new interpersonal relationships (De Almeida Santos & Benevides Soares, 2018). This condition will lead to the existence of negative experiences in life that can affect the individual as to the probability of their ability to live a fulfilling life or an unsatisfactory life (Toktas, 2019). Students will struggle and overcome difficulties if stress is allowed to build up and is poorly controlled (Jeryl Shawn, 2023). Lack of resilience skills in the face of life challenges might also lead to health problems such as depression and anxiety (Wu, Sang, Zhang, & Margraf, 2020). Thus, resilience is seen as an internal force that guides individuals to seek self-goals, care for others, have the generous qualities of harmony and be sourced from spiritual strength (Richardson, 2002). In addition, Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) argue that each individual should balance between two processes to produce resilience i.e. factors in oneself such as emotional regulation of high response strategies and external factors such as social support in order to overcome stress and achieve positive achievements when faced with challenges. According to Connor and Davidson (2003), there are five dimensions of resilience i.e.1) tenacity and competence, 2) trusting in one's instinct and tolerance of negative affect, 3) acceptance of change and a secure relationship, 4) control 5) spiritual. The definition of each construct is shown in Table 1.

3.2. Conflict Management

Conflict is a natural thing that exists due to differences in gender, age, race, appearance, educational status, culture, religion and differences of opinion that occur between two individuals or groups in a social context (Deutsch, 1991). Conflict is a process that is connected to a social entity through non-conforming or consensual actions (Rahim, 2002). According to Thomas (1976), each individual will use various strategies to stop the conflict. Conflict resolution is a skill that plays an important role in the well-being of individuals (Dost-Gözkan, 2019). In

educational institutions, [Mungania and Kihoro \(2017\)](#) argue that conflicts that occur are inevitable which requires that individuals who are experiencing conflicts act wisely in overcoming them. In addition, conflict resolution skills among youths should be given special focus to form a relationship between their parents and their friends ([Collins & Steinberg, 2006](#)). In addition, [Akan \(2020\)](#) also thinks that basic life skills such as communication, conflict resolution and empathy are skills that can help youths adapt to society and face challenges in their lives because when they enter higher education, they face a new life that is different from the school realm. In addition to having basic skills such as conflict resolution, [Gheihman, Cooper, and Simpkin \(2019\)](#) argue that the resilient skills that students possess when studying in an educational institution will help them cope with environmental pressures before stepping into a more challenging professional world.

Table 1. Five constructs of resilience.

Five constructs of resilience	
1) Tenacity and competence	Tenacity is defined as the desire, effort and determination to overcome the life obstacles faced by each individual (Çelik, Aka, Çalik, Bayraktar, & Bayram, 2018).
2) Tolerance of negative affect	Negative affect is defined as a diversity of negative emotions i.e. anger, humiliation and fear that can add negative feelings to oneself (Benetti & Kambouropoulos, 2006).
3) Acceptance of change	Acceptance of change is defined as an analysis of the need for flexibility, a high level of ambiguity tolerance and awareness that emotions are always present when change happens (Bonalmi & Fisher, 1999).
4) Control	Control is defined as the level of the individual's belief that they have control and influence over the events that occur in their lives (Dolan & Renaud, 1992).
5) Spirituality	Spirituality is defined as personal beliefs, meditation or passion that allow individuals to survive or thrive (Elkington & Breen, 2015).

Resilience in the context of university students is an adaptation to the life changes that occur in a whole new life that requires students to adapt to the situation ([Turner, Scott-Young, & Holdsworth, 2016](#)). A review of the literature shows that there is a relationship between resilience and conflict resolution. Studies conducted by [Iannucci, Richards, and MacPhail \(2021\)](#) show that individuals who are resilient have reduced conflict. In educational institutions such as institutions of higher learning, [Pines et al. \(2014\)](#) state that it is essential for undergraduates to have the resilience and skills to manage conflicts from the beginning before starting their work environment as their preparation for future challenges and conflicts.

Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between resilience constructs and conflict management among youths in higher education institutions. The main subjects of this study were youths who were students of higher learning institutions for educational programs and novice teachers in the northern zone of the peninsula. In this study, resilience was the independent variable with five constructs while conflict management was the dependent variable.

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The study aimed to investigate the influence of resilience in terms of tenacity and competence, trusting in one's instinct and tolerance of negative affect, acceptance of change and secure relationships, control and spiritual on conflict management among youth in the northern part of Malaysia.

4.1. Research Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant influence between tenacity, competence and conflict management among youth in North Malaysia.

Ho₂: There is no significant influence between instinct and conflict management among youth in Malaysia.

Ho₃: There is no significant influence between accepting change and conflict management among youth in Malaysia.

Ho4: There is no significant influence between control and conflict management among youth in Malaysia.

Ho5: There is no significant influence between spirituality and conflict management among youth in Malaysia.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1. Population and Sampling

This study was conducted using a cross-sectional approach where the process for collecting quantitative data was through questionnaires answered by respondents. The target population for this study was youths studying at public universities and the Malaysian Institute of Teacher Education in the North of Malaysia. A total of 504 respondents were selected through the purposive sampling technique.

5.2. Instrument

This study used the instruments Rahim Conflict Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI II) by [Rahim \(1983\)](#) and Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) by [Connor and Davidson \(2003\)](#). Rahim Conflict Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI II) contained 28 question items. Meanwhile, the CD-RISC instrument consisted of 25 items of five constructs namely tenacity, competence, trusting in one's instinct and tolerance of negative affect, acceptance of change and secures relationships, control and spiritual. The data was analyzed through descriptive methods using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28 software and to examine the influence of resilience on conflict management using SmartPLS 4 software.

5.3. Pilot Study

The pilot test phase was implemented to facilitate the researchers to review of the respondents' understanding of the study instrument. In addition, the pilot testing phase would enable researchers to conduct reliability tests on instruments to ensure that the quality assessed on resilience was in accordance with the understanding of the actual questionnaire (prime source). [Chuan \(2006\)](#) recommended that a pilot study be conducted to determine the validity and reliability of the selected instrument in order to obtain information to achieve the objectives of the study. This is due to the fact that even if the questionnaire has gone through the translation process, pilot tests still need to be carried out in order to obtain a positive response ([Ariffin, Idris, & Abdullah, 2014](#)) and avoid cross-cultural problems ([Wild et al., 2005](#)). According to [Creswell \(2005\)](#), the reliability of the instrument is tested by researchers to ensure the validity and stability of the measuring device before the researcher conducts the actual study. In addition, as recommended by [Creswell \(2014\)](#), researchers used the Cronbach alpha method to test the consistency and reliability of the study instrument. For [Sakaran \(2005\)](#), 0.61 to 0.79 is an alpha value that can be adopted in studies ([Sakaran, 2005](#)). [Table 2](#) shows the reliability of the questionnaire.

Table 2. Cronbach alpha of the instrument.

Instrument	Cronbach alpha
Tenacity and competence	0.89
Trusting in one's instinct and tolerance of negative affect	0.81
Acceptance of change and secure relationship	0.81
Control	0.74
Spirituality	0.66
Resilience	0.94
Conflict management	0.82

The resilient reliability analysis showed a high alpha value of $\alpha = .94$ ([Connor & Davidson, 2003](#)). The alpha value of each dimension of tenacity and competence resilience was $\alpha = .89$ trusting in one's instinct and tolerance of negative affect ($\alpha = .81$), acceptance of change and secure relationships ($\alpha = .81$), control ($\alpha = .74$) and spirituality ($\alpha = .66$). The reliability test for Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory showed a high value of $\alpha = .82$.

5.4. Procedure

The distribution of the questionnaire began with the faculty at University Utara Malaysia and the Institute of Teacher Studies in the North receiving questionnaires which were subsequently forwarded to the chosen sample studies. The first step to conducting an actual study was to obtain permission from the Research and Innovation

Management Centre of the University Utara Malaysia (RIMC). After obtaining permission from the RIMC, researchers applied for permission from the Education Planning and Policy Research Division (EPPRD) at the Ministry of Education Malaysia through the online application system at the following URL: <https://eras.moe.gov.my/>.

The researchers then take permission from the respective schools and faculties to distribute the study questions after obtaining permission from the ministry. A total of 550 survey questions were distributed and the total return received was 533 questionnaires. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28 and SmartPLS 4 software.

6. RESULTS

6.1. Demographic

Table 3 shows that out of the 533 questionnaires collected, 125 or 23.5% were from male respondents while the remaining 408 or 76.5% were from female respondents.

Table 3. Demographic.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	125	23.5
Female	408	76.5
Total	533	100.0

We used partial least squares (PLS) modeling using the SmartPLS 4 version (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2022) as the statistical tool to examine the measurement and structural model as it does not require a normality assumption and survey research is not normally distributed (Hair et al., 2021). The data was collected using a single source. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) statistic was used to assess multicollinearity in the indicators (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982) and if the $VIF \leq 3.3$, then there is no bias from the single source data.

Table 4. Multicollinearity statistics (VIF) for indicators

Item	VIF
F10	2.392
F11	2.841
F12	1.783
F17	1.834
F19	1.355
F21	1.357
F22	1.357
F24	2.266
F25	2.029
F3	1.449
F5	1.684
F7	1.355
F8	1.684
F9	1.449
G1	2.207
G12	1.899
G15	2.106
G20	1.641
G22	2.530
G23	3.203
G28	2.452
G4	2.826
G5	3.121
G7	1.332

The analysis yielded a VIF less than 3.3 indicated that single source bias was not a serious issue with our data. According to Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2016), multicollinearity is not a serious issue if the value for VIF is below 5. Table 4 presents the VIF values for the indicators in the study and reveals that the VIF for each of the indicators is below the recommended threshold.

6.2. Measurement Model

A 2-step method recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was used to test the constructed model. First, the measurement model was tested following the guidelines of Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, and Ringle (2019) and Ramayah, Cheah, Chuah, Ting, and Memon (2018) to test the validity and reliability of the instruments. Then, the researchers ran the structural model to test the hypothesis.

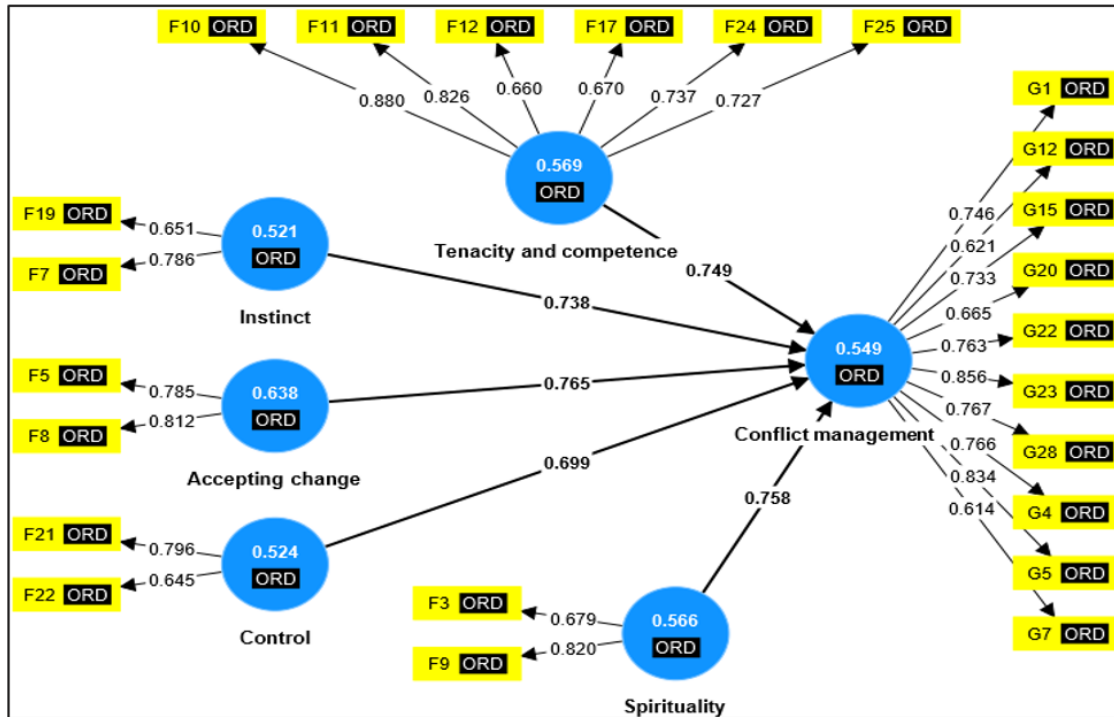


Figure 1. Measurement model.

Researchers evaluated the loadings, discriminant validity, average extracted variance (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) for the measurement model. The five dimensions of resilience were assessed as shown in Figure 1: tenacity and competence, instinct, accepting change, control and spirituality. The values of loadings should be ≥ 0.5 , the AVE should be ≥ 0.5 and the CR should be ≥ 0.7 . According to Table 6, the AVEs were all higher than 0.5 and the CRs were all approximately higher than 0.7. The loadings were also acceptable with only a few loadings less than 0.708 (Hair et al., 2019). Therefore, the model of this study achieved the required internal consistency (Hair, Thomas, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017).

Table 5. Internal consistency.

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha
Tenacity and competence	0.886
Instinct	0.677
Accepting change	0.778
Control	0.678
Spirituality	0.715
Conflict management	0.922

Table 6. Measurement model for the constructs.

Constructs	Items	Loading	AVE	CR
Tenacity and competence	F10	0.880	0.569	0.894
	F11	0.826		
	F12	0.660		
	F17	0.670		
	F24	0.737		
	F25	0.727		
Instinct	F7	0.786	0.521	0.693
	F19	0.651		
Accepting change	F5	0.785	0.638	0.779
	F8	0.812		
Control	F21	0.796	0.524	0.698
	F22	0.645		
Spirituality	F3	0.679	0.566	0.732
	F9	0.820		
Conflict management	G1	0.746	0.549	0.928
	G12	0.621		
	G15	0.733		
	G20	0.665		
	G22	0.763		
	G23	0.856		
	G28	0.767		
	G4	0.766		
	G5	0.834		
	G7	0.614		

Secondly, the Fornell-Larker criteria (Hair et al., 2017) and the HTMT criterion proposed by Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2015) were used to evaluate the discriminant validity. Table 7 indicates the value of discriminant validity (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982) by comparing the square root of each diagonal AVE with the (off-diagonal) correlation coefficient for each construct in the relevant row and column. The discriminant validity is acceptable for this measurement model and supports the discriminant validity between the constructs.

Table 7. Discriminant validity.

CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Accepting change	0.799					
2. Conflict management	0.765	0.741				
3. Control	0.805	0.699	0.724			
4. Instinct	0.892	0.738	0.934	0.722		
5. Spirituality	0.972	0.758	0.696	0.73	0.753	
6. Tenacity and competence	0.953	0.749	0.914	0.854	0.884	0.754

Table 8. Discriminant validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT).

CONSTRUCT	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Accepting change						
2. Conflict management	0.767					
3. Control	0.799	0.706				
4. Instinct	0.889	0.742	0.962			
5. Spirituality	0.975	0.762	0.695	0.733		
6. Tenacity and competence	0.953	0.748	0.923	0.877	0.874	

The value of discriminant validity using the HTMT criteria revealed (see Table 8) that the sum of the correlation

coefficients between each construct is less than 1.00. As a result, respondents recognised that all constructions varied from one another. These two validity factors have demonstrated that the measurement items were accurate and dependable.

6.3. Structural Model Assessment

The next step was the evaluation of the structural path for the evaluation of path coefficients (relationships among study constructs) and their statistical significance following the assessment of the measurement model (see Figure 2). According to Hair et al. (2019), the path coefficients, standard errors, t-values and p-values for the structural model using a 5,000-sample re-sample bootstrapping procedure were reported (Ramayah et al., 2018). Table 9 shows a summary of the criteria used to test the hypotheses developed.

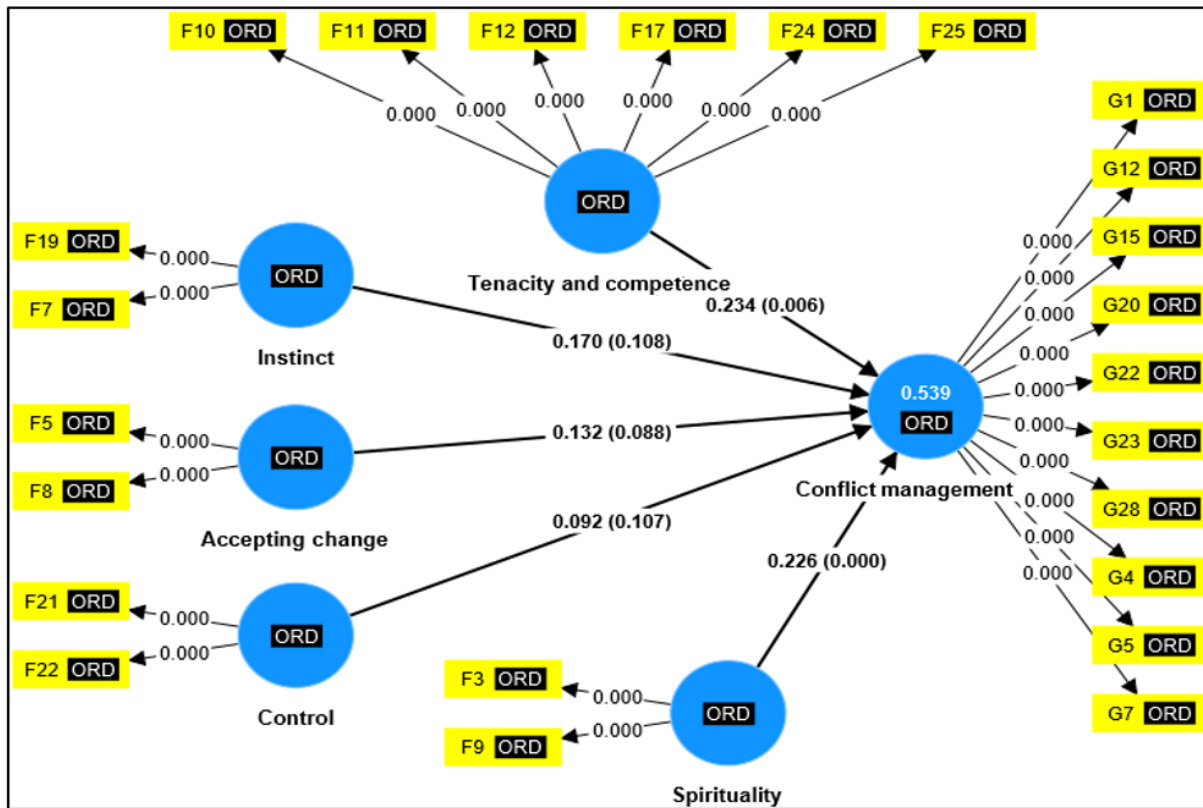


Figure 2. Structural model.

Table 9. Direct relationship.

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	SD	t- values	p-values	Result
H ₀₁	Tenacity and competence -> Conflict management	0.234	0.085	2.763	0.006	Supported
H ₀₂	Instinct -> Conflict management	0.170	0.106	1.610	0.108	Rejected
H ₀₃	Accepting change -> Conflict management	0.132	0.077	1.707	0.088	Rejected
H ₀₄	Control -> Conflict management	0.092	0.057	1.613	0.107	Rejected
H ₀₅	Spirituality -> Conflict management	0.226	0.053	4.262	0.000	Supported

We tested the effect of five constructs of resilience on conflict management. The results revealed that the tenacity and competence construct (B = .234, t = 2.763, p < 0.05) and spirituality construct (B = .226, t = 4.262, p < 0.001) have a significant and positive impact on conflict management. Hence, H₀₁ and H₀₅ were supported. However, the results of the other constructs did not significantly and positively affect conflict management (see Table 5)

INS→CM (B = .170, t = 1.610, p >0.05), AC→CM (B = .132, t = 1.707, p >0.05) and CTL→CM (B = .092, t = 1.613, p >0.05). Thus, H₀₂, H₀₃ and H₀₄ were rejected.

7. DISCUSSION

The results of the SEM-PLS 4.0 analysis showed that only spirituality, tenacity and competence dimensions affect youth conflict management while the other three aspects of resilience (trusting in one's instinct and tolerance of negative affect, acceptance of change and control) were not significant. The findings of this study are in line with the findings of the Paul (2016) and Nicolaidis (2018) studies which show that spirituality factors play a role in individuals managing conflict because most people believe that everyone needs to balance the spiritual and physical aspects of their lives. The spiritual element can lead oneself and avoid various problems (Noor, Norsaleha, & Khairul, 2019).

The findings of the study are in line with the findings of Tosun and Dilmac's (2015) study which found that each person's level of resilience will determine how they choose to resolve conflicts. The resilient aspect has relevance in the selection of styles for resolving conflicts. Studies conducted by Fauziah et al. (2018) showed that the level of resilience among undergraduates is at a high level. This proves that students with high resilience will be able to deal with all the challenges and difficulties in life (McGilivray & Pidgeon, 2015; Nor Ezdianie & Muhammad, 2020). Youths will be better equipped to handle conflict inside institutions once they enter the workplace if they are exposed to resilience (Gheihman et al., 2019; Iannucci et al., 2021; Pines et al., 2014). The development of resilient and conflict-resolution abilities in young people is crucial. Skills acquired by children are among the essential skills that people should have in life to guide them through various problems in life.

Basic skills such as determination in the face of adversity and conflict resolution are qualities that prepare young people to confront any life obstacles. This is in line with the national education philosophy to develop human capital that has a strong identity, has a noble personality and has high skills to meet the needs of developed countries (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013).

7.1. Limitations of the Study

This study was a quantitative one. The study's findings were based on surveys created in western countries and used by for-profit organizations. The reliability analysis was carried out by the researchers. However, the findings of the study were limited as it depended on the honesty and willingness of the respondents to answer the questionnaire. The researchers suggest that further studies use other methods to determine the influence of resilience on conflict management such as observation and interview techniques and survey tests. We also suggest that future researchers use other sampling techniques in subsequent studies.

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INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD STATEMENT

The Ethical Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia has granted approval for this study on 30 August 2019 (Ref. No. FRGS/1/2019/SS06/UUM/02/4).

TRANSPARENCY

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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