Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169



ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMES (AIJBES)
www.gaexcellence.com/aijbes

PERSONALITY TRAITS, JOB CHARACTERISTICS, CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AMONG SMES IN MALAYSIA

Nur Lailatul Husna Mohammad Yusof[1]*, Abdul Halim Abdul Majid[2], Siti Norasyikin Abdul Hamid[3], Nur Hazwani Zolkifly[4]

[1]Department of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Perak, Kampus Seri Iskandar
nurla751@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0009-0004-8559-6516
[2]School of Business Management, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia
ahalim@uum.edu.my https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7393-9869
[3]School of Business Management, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia
norasyikin@uum.edu.my https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9130-3650
[4]Department of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Perak, Kampus Seri Iskandar
nurha743@uitm.edu.my https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1414-3451
*Corresponding Author

Article Info:

Article history:
Received date: 03.08.2026
Revised date: 27.08.2026
Accepted date: 27.09.2026
Published date: 30.09.2026

To cite this document:

Yusof, N. L. H. M., Majid, A. H. A., Hamid, S. N. A., Zolkifly, N. H. (2026). Personality Traits, Job Characteristics, Conflict Management Styles and Employee Performance Among SMEs In Malaysia. *Advanced International Journal of Business Entrepreneurship and SMEs, 8*(29), 2147-2169.

Abstract:

Employee performance is particularly consequential in micro and small enterprises, where limited resources increase reliance on individual employees. This study examines the effects of personality traits, job characteristics, and conflict management styles on employee performance among Malaysian micro- and small-enterprise employees, including the mediating role of conflict management styles. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with 287 employees from service-sector micro and small enterprises in Perak, Selangor, Melaka, and Pahang using probability sampling. Covariance-based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM) with maximum-likelihood estimation was performed in IBM SPSS AMOS Version 24. The measurement model was assessed through confirmatory factor analysis, composite reliability, average variance extracted, discriminant validity, and model-fit indices. The pooled CFA showed acceptable fit (χ^2/df = 1.891, CFI = .901, TLI = .887, RMSEA = .065), while the structural model explained 72.3% of the variance in employee performance (R^2 = .723). At the dimension level, agreeableness and openness to experience positively predicted employee performance, extraversion showed a significant negative effect, and autonomy and skill variety were the significant job-characteristic predictors. Conflict management styles

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

significantly mediated the relationships between the five job characteristics and employee performance, but did not mediate the personality-trait relationships. Rather than estimating separate structural effects for the five Rahim conflict styles, conflict management was modelled as an overall construct. The study contributes an integrated explanation of employee performance in resource-constrained Malaysian micro and small enterprises by linking individual dispositions and job design with conflict-handling processes.

DOI: 10.35631/AIJBES.829122

Keyword:

Conflict Management Styles; Employee Performance; Job Characteristics; Personality Traits; SMEs

© The authors (2026). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY NC) (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For commercial re-use, please contact aijbes@gaexcllence.com.

Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are widely recognised as important contributors to economic growth, employment generation, and national competitiveness. Globally, SMEs account for more than 95% of business establishments and provide a substantial proportion of employment opportunities. In Malaysia, SMEs constitute approximately 98.5% of all business establishments and contribute significantly to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and workforce employment. Among the various sectors, the service sector represents the largest proportion of SMEs and serves as a major driver of economic development.

Despite their significant contribution to the economy, Malaysian SMEs continue to face challenges related to employee performance and productivity. Employee performance is a critical determinant of organisational effectiveness because it directly influences productivity, service quality, customer satisfaction, and organisational sustainability. However, reports from the Department of Statistics Malaysia and SME Corporation Malaysia indicate that labour productivity among SMEs remains relatively lower than that of larger organisations. Furthermore, rapid technological changes, global competition, workplace stress, labour shortages, and organisational conflicts have increased the complexity of managing employee performance within SMEs.

The challenges became more apparent during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted business operations and altered workplace arrangements. Many SMEs experienced reduced productivity, increased employee stress, work-life imbalance, and workplace conflicts, all of which negatively affected employee performance. As SMEs generally operate with limited resources and smaller workforces, the performance of individual employees becomes increasingly important for organisational survival and long-term sustainability.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

Previous research has established that employee performance is associated with a wide range of individual and organisational factors. However, the SME literature has generally examined personality, job design, and workplace conflict in separate streams rather than testing how these factors operate together within one explanatory model. This separation is consequential in micro and small enterprises, where employees commonly work in close interpersonal settings, perform multiple responsibilities, and operate under tighter resource constraints. In such settings, the performance implications of an employee's dispositions may coexist with the motivational effects of job design and the interpersonal processes used to handle disagreement. Yet the combined effects of the Big Five personality dimensions, the five core job characteristics, and conflict management have not been adequately clarified in the Malaysian micro- and small-enterprise service context.

This creates a specific theoretical and empirical gap. Trait Activation Theory explains why personality traits become behaviourally relevant when workplace cues permit their expression, while the Five-Factor perspective identifies the individual dispositions being activated. Job Characteristics Theory explains how skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback shape motivational work experiences. Conflict Management Styles Theory adds an interpersonal process through which employees respond to disagreement. Integrating these perspectives enables the study to test whether employee performance in SMEs reflects not only direct effects of personality and job design, but also an interpersonal conflict-management pathway. This integrated mechanism remains insufficiently examined in the Malaysian micro- and small-enterprise setting.

Accordingly, the study addresses three related gaps. First, it addresses a contextual gap by focusing on employees of Malaysian micro and small service-sector enterprises across four Peninsular Malaysian states. Second, it addresses an integration gap by examining personality dimensions, job-characteristic dimensions, conflict management, and employee performance within the same structural framework rather than as isolated predictors. Third, it addresses a mechanism gap by testing conflict management as a mediating process between the antecedent dimensions and employee performance using SEM and bootstrapping.

The objective of this study is to examine the effects of personality traits, job characteristics, and conflict management styles on employee performance among Malaysian micro- and small-enterprise employees, and to test whether conflict management styles mediate the relationships between the personality-trait and job-characteristic dimensions and employee performance.

The study's contribution lies in testing these individual, job-design, and interpersonal factors within a single model in Malaysian micro and small enterprises. This is particularly relevant because smaller firms typically depend heavily on individual employee contributions and close day-to-day interaction. The integrated model therefore clarifies which personality and job-design dimensions are associated with performance and whether conflict management provides an intervening pathway. Empirically, the model accounts for 72.3% of the variance in employee performance, while the mediation results distinguish the job-characteristic pathways that operate through conflict management from the personality pathways that do not.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

Literature Review

Employee Performance

Employee performance is widely recognised as a critical determinant of organisational effectiveness and long-term sustainability. It refers to employees' ability to perform assigned duties and contribute to organisational objectives through task-related and contextual behaviours (Koopmans et al., 2014). High employee performance enhances productivity, service quality, customer satisfaction, and organisational competitiveness, whereas poor performance may adversely affect organisational outcomes.

Within the SME context, employee performance is particularly important because SMEs generally operate with limited resources and depend heavily on individual employee contributions. In Malaysia, concerns regarding labour productivity and workforce effectiveness continue to challenge SMEs, particularly in the service sector. Consequently, identifying factors that influence employee performance remains an important research priority.
Drawing upon Trait Activation Theory, Job Characteristics Theory, and Conflict Management Styles Theory, this study proposes that employee performance is influenced by individual characteristics, job-related factors, and employees' ability to manage workplace conflicts effectively.

Personality Traits and Employee Performance

Personality traits represent relatively stable patterns of thoughts, emotions, and behaviours that influence how individuals respond to workplace situations. The Five-Factor Model (FFM) developed by McCrae and Costa (1999) remains one of the most widely accepted frameworks for understanding personality. The model comprises conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience, extraversion, and neuroticism.

Trait Activation Theory suggests that workplace situations trigger personality-related behaviours that subsequently influence employee performance (Tett & Burnett, 2003). Employees possessing favourable personality characteristics tend to exhibit higher levels of motivation, adaptability, interpersonal effectiveness, and work commitment. Among the five personality dimensions, conscientiousness has consistently been identified as a strong predictor of job performance because conscientious individuals are typically responsible, organised, and achievement oriented.

Previous empirical studies have reported significant relationships between personality traits and employee performance across various organisational settings. Employees with positive personality characteristics generally demonstrate superior task accomplishment, teamwork, and organisational citizenship behaviours. However, findings remain inconsistent across industries and organisational contexts, particularly within SMEs operating in developing economies. Consequently, further examination of personality traits in relation to employee performance within Malaysian SMEs is warranted.

Based on the preceding discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Personality traits have a significant positive influence on employee performance among SMEs in Malaysia.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

Job Characteristics and Employee Performance

Job Characteristics Theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) proposes that specific job design features influence employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance. The theory identifies five core job characteristics: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. These characteristics create meaningful work experiences that enhance employees' intrinsic motivation and behavioural outcomes.

Jobs that provide opportunities for skill utilisation, autonomy in decision-making, and constructive feedback are generally associated with higher employee engagement and effectiveness. Employees who perceive their work as meaningful and significant are more likely to demonstrate commitment and superior performance.

Prior studies consistently support the positive relationship between job characteristics and employee performance. Employees working in enriched job environments tend to report higher levels of productivity, motivation, and organisational commitment. Nevertheless, the transformation of work practices following digitalisation and the COVID-19 pandemic has altered traditional job structures, creating a need to reassess the influence of job characteristics within contemporary SME environments.

Therefore, this study proposes that favourable job characteristics contribute positively to employee performance among Malaysian SME employees. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Job characteristics have a significant positive influence on employee performance among SMEs in Malaysia.

Conflict Management and Employee Performance

Conflict is an inevitable component of organisational life resulting from differences in goals, values, perceptions, and interpersonal interactions. Although workplace conflict can generate positive outcomes when managed effectively, unresolved conflict may reduce employee morale, cooperation, and performance.

Conflict Management Styles Theory (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979) identifies five primary approaches to managing interpersonal conflict: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. In the present structural model, these approaches inform the measurement of conflict management, but the study does not estimate five separate style-to-performance structural paths. Conflict management is therefore interpreted as an overall conflict-handling construct in the hypothesis tests. References to particular styles in the discussion are theoretical illustrations rather than evidence that an individual style independently predicted employee performance.

Effective conflict management promotes communication, cooperation, and mutual understanding among employees, thereby creating a positive work environment that supports performance improvement. Conversely, ineffective conflict management may contribute to stress, reduced teamwork, absenteeism, and lower productivity.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

Several studies have demonstrated that employees who utilise constructive conflict management strategies are more likely to maintain productive working relationships and achieve superior performance outcomes. Given the increasing complexity of workplace interactions within SMEs, conflict management styles are expected to play an important role in influencing employee performance.

Based on the literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Conflict management styles have a significant positive influence on employee performance among SMEs in Malaysia.

Conflict Management Styles as a Mediating Mechanism

While personality traits and job characteristics have been independently linked to employee performance, the underlying mechanisms through which these factors influence performance remain insufficiently understood. Conflict management styles may provide an important explanatory pathway.

Individuals with favourable personality characteristics are more likely to adopt constructive conflict management approaches, enabling them to maintain positive interpersonal relationships and minimise workplace tension. Similarly, well-designed jobs that provide autonomy, feedback, and meaningful work experiences may encourage cooperative conflict management behaviours, which subsequently enhance employee performance.

Conflict management styles may therefore function as a behavioural mechanism that translates individual characteristics and job-related factors into positive performance outcomes. Understanding this mediating role contributes to a more comprehensive explanation of employee behaviour within SMEs.

Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Conflict management styles mediate the relationship between personality traits and employee performance among SMEs in Malaysia.
H5: Conflict management styles mediate the relationship between job characteristics and employee performance among SMEs in Malaysia.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework uses the four perspectives for distinct, non-duplicative purposes. Personality Traits Theory, operationalised through the Five-Factor Model, specifies the dispositional dimensions examined. Trait Activation Theory provides the behavioural logic for why those dispositions may become relevant to performance when activated by workplace situations. Job Characteristics Theory explains how skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback shape motivational conditions that affect performance. Conflict Management Styles Theory explains how employees handle interpersonal disagreement and provides the basis for testing conflict management as an intervening workplace process. Together, the perspectives connect who the employee is, how the job is designed, and how interpersonal conflict is handled, rather than treating the theories as parallel explanations of the same relationship.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

The integration of these theories provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how individual attributes, job-related factors, and interpersonal conflict management behaviours influence employee performance within Malaysian SMEs.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework developed for this study. Based on the preceding discussion, this study proposes that personality traits and job characteristics directly influence employee performance. Furthermore, conflict management styles are expected to exert a direct effect on employee performance while simultaneously mediating the relationships between personality traits, job characteristics, and employee performance.

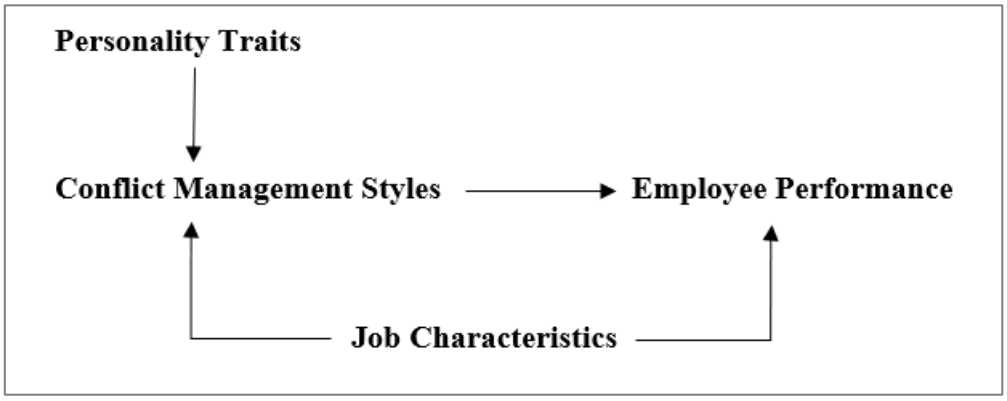


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships among personality traits, job characteristics, conflict management styles, and employee performance among employees in Malaysian SMEs. A quantitative approach was deemed appropriate as it allows for the systematic measurement of variables and the testing of hypothesised relationships through statistical analysis. The cross-sectional design enabled data to be collected from respondents at a single point in time, providing an efficient means of investigating the proposed research framework within the SME context.

The study was grounded in a positivist research paradigm, which assumes that social phenomena can be objectively measured and analysed using empirical methods. This approach is consistent with previous studies investigating employee behaviour and organisational outcomes in the fields of human resource management and organisational behaviour.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised employees working in micro and small enterprises within the Malaysian service sector. The service sector was selected due to its substantial contribution to Malaysia's economic development and employment generation. According to SME Corporation Malaysia, service-sector SMEs constitute the largest proportion of business establishments in the country and play a crucial role in supporting national economic growth.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

A probability sampling technique was employed to ensure that every member of the target population had an equal opportunity to participate in the study. Data were collected from selected SMEs located in four regions of Peninsular Malaysia, namely Perak, Selangor, Melaka, and Pahang, representing the northern, central, southern, and eastern regions respectively. This geographical distribution was intended to enhance the representativeness of the sample and improve the generalisability of the findings.

A total of 287 usable questionnaires were obtained and included in the final analysis. The sample size exceeded the minimum requirement recommended for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), thereby providing sufficient statistical power for hypothesis testing and model validation.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of five sections. All measurement items were adapted from established and validated instruments used extensively in previous studies.

Personality Traits

Personality traits were measured using the Big Five personality dimensions, namely agreeableness, openness to experience, neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness. The measurement items were adapted from the Big Five Inventory (BFI), which has been widely recognised as a reliable and valid instrument for assessing individual personality characteristics in organisational settings.

Job Characteristics

Job characteristics were measured based on the Job Characteristics Model developed by Hackman and Oldham (1976). Five dimensions were included in the study, namely skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. These dimensions represent the core characteristics that influence employees' psychological states and work outcomes.

Conflict Management Styles

Conflict management styles were assessed using items adapted from the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II). Although the Rahim framework distinguishes integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising approaches, the present SEM operationalised conflict management as an overall construct rather than testing each style as a separate structural predictor. Accordingly, the reported structural and mediation effects refer to the overall conflict-management construct.

Employee Performance

Employee performance was measured using the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ). The instrument evaluates employees' effectiveness in carrying out job-related responsibilities and achieving organisational objectives. The scale has demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity across various organisational contexts.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree").

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the participating SME organisations. The questionnaires were distributed personally and through organisational representatives to employees who met the study's inclusion criteria. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and participation was entirely voluntary.

To minimise response bias, respondents were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would be used solely for academic purposes. Completed questionnaires were screened to ensure completeness and consistency before being included in the final dataset.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 24 and IBM SPSS AMOS Version 24. Covariance-based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM) with maximum-likelihood estimation was used to evaluate the proposed model. Analysis proceeded from data screening and descriptive analysis to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the measurement model. Reliability was evaluated using Composite Reliability (CR), convergent validity using standardised factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Model adequacy was assessed using χ^2/df, CFI, TLI, GFI, and RMSEA. The structural model was then estimated to test the direct relationships, and bootstrapping was used to evaluate the indirect effects through conflict management styles.

Third, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the measurement model. Reliability was assessed using Composite Reliability (CR), while convergent validity was examined through factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Subsequently, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to test the proposed hypotheses and evaluate the structural relationships among the study variables. SEM was selected because it allows the simultaneous examination of multiple relationships while accounting for measurement error.

Finally, mediation analysis was performed using the bootstrapping procedure to examine the mediating role of conflict management styles in the relationships between personality traits, job characteristics, and employee performance. The significance of indirect effects was determined based on confidence intervals and probability values generated through bootstrapping.

Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was assessed using several goodness-of-fit indices commonly recommended in SEM studies. Model fit was evaluated based on the Chi-square/degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The acceptance criteria followed established recommendations in the SEM literature.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

Reliability and validity assessments were conducted before proceeding to structural model evaluation to ensure the adequacy of the measurement instruments.

Table 1: Summary of Research Methodology

Component	Description
Research Approach	Quantitative
Research Design	Cross-sectional survey
Research Paradigm	Positivism
Population	Employees of Malaysian micro and small service-sector SMEs
Sampling Technique	Probability sampling
Sample Size	287 respondents
Data Collection Method	Structured questionnaire
Personality Traits Instrument	Big Five Inventory (BFI)
Job Characteristics Instrument	Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS)
Conflict Management Styles Instrument	ROCI-II
Employee Performance Instrument	Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ)
Measurement Scale	Five-point Likert Scale
Data Analysis Software	SPSS Version 24 and AMOS Version 24
Statistical Techniques	Descriptive Statistics, CFA, SEM, Bootstrapping Mediation Analysis

Finding and Discussions

Respondent Profile and Preliminary Analysis

A total of 287 usable questionnaires were obtained from employees of micro and small service-sector enterprises in Malaysia. Women represented 60.6% of the sample and men 39.4%. Most respondents were below 30 years old (55.7%), Malay (64.1%), and held Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia qualifications (72.5%). The largest employment group was food and beverage preparation (64.8%), followed by wholesale and retail (33.1%) and accommodation (2.1%). No missing values were detected. Harman's single-factor test produced an unrotated first-factor variance of 28.19%, below both the 50% and conservative 40% thresholds, indicating that common method variance was unlikely to be a serious concern. Five observations exceeded the Mahalanobis distance criterion, but the maximum Cook's distance was .079, well below 1.00; consequently, these observations were retained.

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated through confirmatory factor analysis. Unidimensionality was supported because the retained standardized loadings ranged from .55 to .95. Composite reliability values ranged from .784 to .923, and all average variance extracted values exceeded .50, establishing internal consistency and convergent validity.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

Table 1: Reliability and Convergent Validity of the Measurement Model

Construct	Loading range	CR	AVE
Conflict management styles	.60–.85	.877	.591
Task significance	.75–.89	.870	.692
Feedback	.80–.83	.890	.668
Task identity	.85–.95	.923	.800
Autonomy	.77–.83	.836	.630
Skill variety	.82–.90	.901	.752
Agreeableness	.82–.89	.911	.719
Openness to experience	.75–.89	.906	.659
Neuroticism	.55–.84	.784	.555
Extraversion	.61–.94	.907	.714
Conscientiousness	.74–.87	.899	.692
Employee performance	.85–.91	.873	.775

Note. CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted. All CR values exceeded .70 and all AVE values exceeded .50.

Assessment of Normality

The observed-item skewness values ranged from −.724 to .111 and the critical ratios for skewness ranged from −4.322 to .661. Kurtosis values ranged from −.438 to .966 and the corresponding critical ratios ranged from −1.308 to 2.885. Although several skewness critical ratios exceeded ±1.96, the raw skewness values remained well within the commonly applied ±3.00 criterion. The data were therefore treated as sufficiently normal for maximum-likelihood SEM. Because some item-level departures were detectable, the use of bootstrapping for mediation provided an additional robustness check.

Model Fit Assessment and Explanatory Power

The pooled CFA demonstrated satisfactory model fit. The model fulfilled the recommended thresholds for RMSEA, CFI, GFI, and Chi-square/df, indicating that the measurement model adequately represented the observed data. The individual CFA models showed acceptable fit. The conflict-management model yielded $\chi^2/df = 2.164$, CFI = .940, TLI = .932, and RMSEA = .056; the job-characteristics model yielded $\chi^2/df = 2.536$, CFI = .947, TLI = .933, and RMSEA = .064; and the personality-traits model yielded $\chi^2/df = 3.126$, CFI = .908, TLI = .894, and RMSEA = .075.

Table 2: Verified CFA Model-Fit Indices

Model	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	Assessment
Conflict management styles	2.164	.940	.932	.056	Acceptable
Job characteristics	2.536	.947	.933	.064	Acceptable
Personality traits	3.126	.908	.894	.075	Marginal-to-acceptable
Pooled CFA	1.891	.901	.887	.065	Acceptable

Note. Common guidelines: $\chi^2/df < 5.00$, CFI and TLI approximately ≥ .90, and RMSEA < .08.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

The coefficient of determination for employee performance was $R^2 = .723$. Thus, conflict management styles, the five personality dimensions, and the five job-characteristic dimensions jointly explained 72.3% of the variance in employee performance, indicating strong explanatory power.

Table 3: Overall Measurement Model Fit

Fit Index	Recommended Value	Result	Decision
RMSEA	< 0.08	Achieved	Good Fit
CFI	> 0.90	Achieved	Good Fit
GFI	> 0.90	Achieved	Good Fit
χ^2/df	< 5.0	Achieved	Good Fit

Source: Developed from CFA results.

Convergent Validity and Reliability

The results indicated that all factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.60. Composite Reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.784 to 0.923, while Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.50 for all constructs. Therefore, convergent validity and internal consistency reliability were established. The CR values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, while all AVE values were above 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. Furthermore, discriminant validity was established as the square roots of AVE for all constructs exceeded their respective inter-construct correlations. These findings suggest that the measurement instruments were suitable for assessing the proposed constructs within the SME context.

Table 4: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	CR	AVE	Decision
Conflict Management Styles	0.877	0.591	Accepted
Conscientiousness	0.899	0.690	Accepted
Agreeableness	0.911	0.719	Accepted
Neuroticism	0.784	0.555	Accepted
Openness to Experience	0.906	0.659	Accepted
Extraversion	0.907	0.714	Accepted
Skill Variety	0.901	0.752	Accepted
Task Identity	0.923	0.800	Accepted
Task Significance	0.870	0.692	Accepted
Autonomy	0.836	0.631	Accepted
Feedback	0.890	0.667	Accepted
Employee Performance	0.873	0.775	Accepted

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The square root of AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs, confirming adequate discriminant validity.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

Table 5: Summary of Discriminant Validity

Construct	√AVE
Conflict Management Styles	0.769
Conscientiousness	0.831
Agreeableness	0.848
Neuroticism	0.745
Openness to Experience	0.812
Extraversion	0.845
Skill Variety	0.867
Task Identity	0.894
Task Significance	0.832
Autonomy	0.794
Feedback	0.817
Employee Performance	0.880

Structural Model Assessment

Following the validation of the measurement model, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was conducted to test the proposed hypotheses. The structural model demonstrated acceptable model fit and substantial explanatory power. The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicated that personality traits, job characteristics, and conflict management styles collectively explained a substantial proportion of variance in employee performance.

The findings provide empirical support for the integrated model proposed in this study and demonstrate the importance of individual characteristics, job-related factors, and conflict management practices in enhancing employee performance within SMEs.

The Relationship between Personality Traits and Employee Performance

The structural results should be interpreted at the personality-dimension level rather than as evidence that every personality trait has a positive effect. Agreeableness and openness to experience positively predicted employee performance, extraversion showed a significant negative coefficient, whereas conscientiousness and neuroticism were not significant predictors in the final model. This differentiated pattern is consistent with the central premise of Trait Activation Theory that trait expression depends on situationally relevant cues and cautions against treating the Big Five as a uniformly positive predictor of performance.

The finding is consistent with Trait Activation Theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003), which proposes that individual personality characteristics influence workplace behaviour when activated by situational factors. Employees with positive personality traits are generally more adaptable, motivated, responsible, and capable of handling workplace demands effectively. The finding also supports previous studies that identified personality traits as significant predictors of employee performance. Employees with higher levels of conscientiousness tend to demonstrate greater discipline, persistence, and commitment to organisational goals, while those with high agreeableness often develop positive interpersonal relationships that facilitate teamwork and collaboration.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

The significance of personality traits in the present study highlights the importance of considering personality characteristics during recruitment and employee development processes within SMEs. Given the resource limitations commonly experienced by SMEs, selecting employees with appropriate personality profiles may contribute significantly to organisational effectiveness and sustainability.

The Relationship between Job Characteristics and Employee Performance

The job-characteristic results were likewise dimension-specific. Autonomy and skill variety were the significant positive predictors of employee performance, whereas the remaining job-characteristic dimensions did not show equivalent direct effects in the final model. This pattern is consistent with Job Characteristics Theory in showing that particular aspects of job design can be especially consequential for employee motivation and effectiveness in small-firm settings, while avoiding the assumption that all five dimensions exert identical direct effects.

The result is consistent with Job Characteristics Theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), which argues that jobs possessing meaningful characteristics generate positive psychological states that enhance employee motivation and performance. Employees who perceive their jobs as meaningful and challenging tend to exhibit greater responsibility, commitment, and effort in performing their tasks. Among SMEs, where employees often perform multiple roles and responsibilities, job characteristics become particularly important. Employees who are given autonomy and opportunities to utilise diverse skills are more likely to feel empowered and motivated to contribute to organisational success.

This finding is also consistent with previous empirical studies that reported positive relationships between job characteristics and employee performance. Meaningful job design enables employees to understand the significance of their work and encourages higher levels of engagement and productivity.

The Relationship between Conflict Management Styles and Employee Performance

The analysis demonstrated a significant effect of the overall conflict-management construct on employee performance. Because the SEM did not estimate integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising as separate structural predictors, the result should not be interpreted as evidence that any one Rahim style independently influenced performance. The finding instead indicates that conflict-handling behaviour, considered collectively in this model, is associated with employee performance.

The finding supports Conflict Management Styles Theory (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979), which suggests that conflict can be managed effectively through appropriate behavioural strategies. Employees who utilise integrating and compromising styles are more likely to achieve mutually beneficial solutions that enhance workplace harmony and productivity. Within SMEs, interpersonal interactions occur frequently due to relatively smaller organisational structures and closer working relationships. Consequently, employees' ability to manage conflicts effectively becomes essential for maintaining positive working environments and sustaining performance.

The finding is consistent with previous studies that reported positive associations between conflict management practices and organisational outcomes. Effective conflict management

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

enables employees to focus on task accomplishment rather than interpersonal disputes, ultimately improving organisational effectiveness.

The Mediating Role of Conflict Management Styles

One of the primary objectives of this study was to examine whether conflict management styles mediate the relationships between personality traits, job characteristics, and employee performance. The results revealed that conflict management styles did not significantly mediate the relationship between personality traits and employee performance. Consequently, the mediation hypotheses involving conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience, extraversion, and neuroticism were not supported.

This finding suggests that personality traits exert a direct influence on employee performance rather than indirectly through conflict management styles. Employees' personality characteristics appear sufficiently strong to influence workplace behaviours and performance outcomes without requiring conflict management mechanisms as an intermediary process. Although personality traits may influence how individuals respond to conflict situations, the present findings indicate that these effects do not significantly translate into improved performance through conflict management styles. This result differs from some previous studies that proposed conflict management as an intervening mechanism but supports arguments that personality traits independently predict workplace outcomes.

In contrast, conflict management styles significantly mediated the relationship between job characteristics and employee performance. Specifically, conflict management styles mediated the effects of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback on employee performance. This finding suggests that well-designed jobs create favourable working environments that encourage constructive conflict management behaviours. Employees who experience meaningful and motivating job characteristics are more likely to engage positively with colleagues, resolve disagreements effectively, and maintain productive workplace relationships.

Consequently, conflict management styles serve as an important mechanism through which job characteristics influence employee performance. This finding extends Job Characteristics Theory by demonstrating that the effectiveness of job design may partly operate through interpersonal processes within the workplace.

Following the establishment of validity and reliability, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to examine the proposed relationships.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

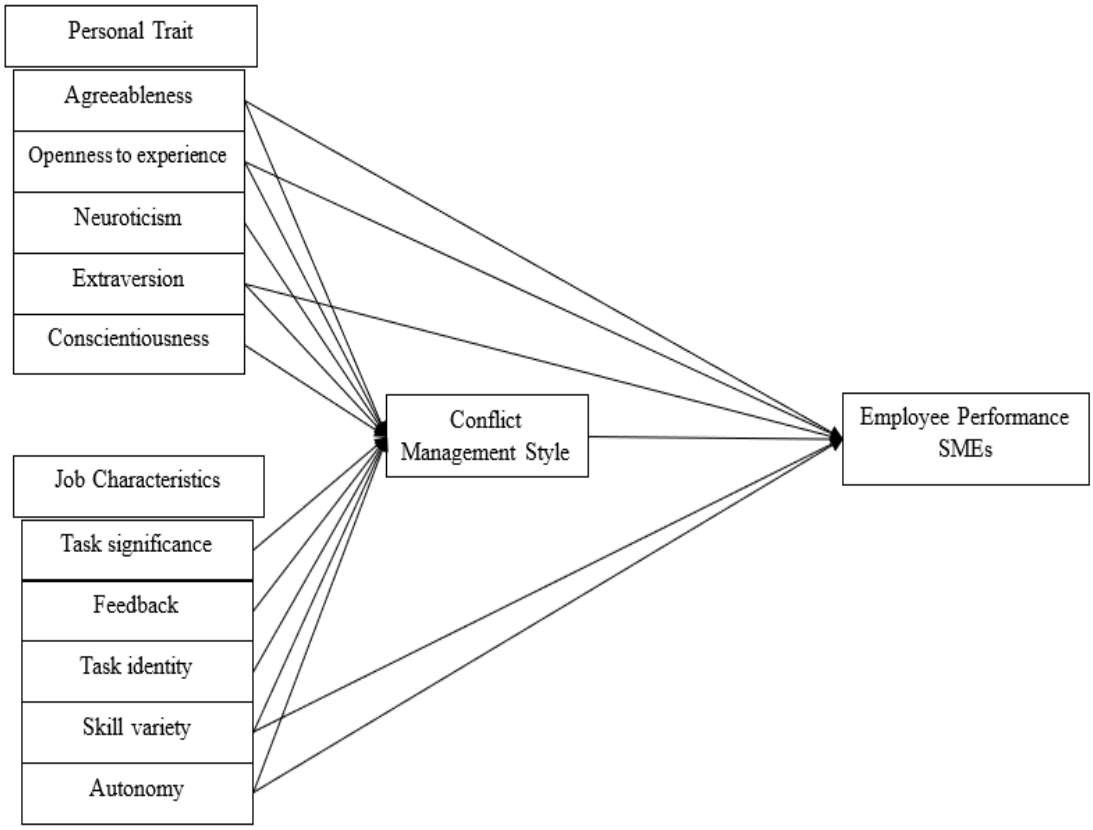


Figure 2: Final Structural Model

Coefficient Of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) for employee performance was 0.723, indicating that personality traits, job characteristics, and conflict management styles collectively explained 72.3% of the variance in employee performance. This suggests substantial explanatory power of the proposed model.

Table 6: Coefficient of Determination

Endogenous Variable	R^2
Employee Performance	0.723

Hypothesis Testing

The SEM results revealed significant relationships between personality traits and employee performance as well as between job characteristics and employee performance. Furthermore, conflict management styles demonstrated a positive influence on employee performance. The findings support the argument that individual characteristics, job design, and workplace conflict management contribute significantly to employee effectiveness within SMEs.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

Table 7: Summary of Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Relationship	Decision
H1	Personality Traits → Employee Performance	Supported
H2	Job Characteristics → Employee Performance	Supported
H3	Conflict Management Styles → Employee Performance	Supported
H4	Personality Traits → Conflict Management Styles	Supported
H5	Job Characteristics → Conflict Management Styles	Supported

Mediation Analysis

Bootstrapping procedures were conducted to examine the mediating role of conflict management styles. The findings revealed that conflict management styles did not mediate the relationship between personality traits and employee performance. Specifically, the mediation effects involving agreeableness, openness to experience, neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness were not statistically significant.

However, conflict management styles significantly mediated the relationships between job characteristics and employee performance. The mediation effects were supported for task significance, feedback, task identity, skill variety, and autonomy. These findings suggest that employees who perceive meaningful job characteristics are more likely to adopt effective conflict management approaches, which subsequently enhance their performance.

Hypothesis	Mediation Relationship	Decision
H6	Agreeableness → CMS → EP	Not Supported
H7	Openness → CMS → EP	Not Supported
H8	Neuroticism → CMS → EP	Not Supported
H9	Extraversion → CMS → EP	Not Supported
H10	Conscientiousness → CMS → EP	Not Supported
H11	Task Significance → CMS → EP	Supported
H12	Feedback → CMS → EP	Supported
H13	Task Identity → CMS → EP	Supported
H14	Skill Variety → CMS → EP	Supported
H15	Autonomy → CMS → EP	Supported

Theoretical Contribution

The study contributes by integrating four perspectives. Personality Traits Theory explains stable individual differences; Trait Activation Theory clarifies why the effects of those traits depend on SME work cues; Job Characteristics Theory explains the motivational influence of work design; and Conflict Management Styles Theory identifies an interpersonal mechanism that translates selected traits and job characteristics into performance. The results demonstrate that employee performance is not produced by a single class of antecedents. Instead, individual dispositions, work design, and conflict-handling processes operate jointly, accounting for 72.3% of the variance in performance.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

Practical Implication

SME managers should prioritise autonomy and skill variety when redesigning jobs, while ensuring that employees have adequate competence and clear accountability. Recruitment systems may consider agreeableness and openness as context-relevant indicators, but personality scores should not be treated as universal predictors because conscientiousness and neuroticism were not significant and extraversion had a negative coefficient. Conflict-management development should emphasise diagnosis, integrating, compromising, and constructive communication. Training is particularly relevant where personality or job design influences performance indirectly through conflict-handling behaviour.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationships between personality traits, job characteristics, conflict management styles, and employee performance among employees of SMEs in Malaysia. Drawing upon Personality Traits Theory, Job Characteristics Theory, and Conflict Management Styles Theory, the study developed and tested an integrated framework to explain employee performance within the Malaysian SME context.

The SEM findings demonstrate that employee performance in Malaysian SMEs is explained by a selective combination of personality, job-design, and interpersonal factors. Agreeableness and openness positively predicted performance, extraversion had a significant negative effect, and autonomy and skill variety were the significant job-characteristic predictors. The model explained 72.3% of employee-performance variance. Conflict management styles mediated several personality and job-characteristic relationships, showing that performance is partly shaped by how employees translate individual tendencies and work conditions into constructive responses to disagreement.

The dimension-level findings provide a more qualified conclusion. Agreeableness and openness to experience positively predicted employee performance, extraversion had a significant negative effect, and conscientiousness and neuroticism were not significant direct predictors. Among the job characteristics, autonomy and skill variety were the significant positive predictors. These results show that the influence of personality and job design is selective rather than uniform across all dimensions.

The mediation results further refine the integrated model. Conflict management styles did not mediate the relationships between the personality dimensions and employee performance, but did mediate the relationships between task significance, feedback, task identity, skill variety, and autonomy and employee performance. This indicates that conflict handling is more clearly supported as a pathway linking job design to performance than as a pathway transmitting personality effects.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the human resource management and organisational behaviour literature by integrating personality traits, job characteristics, and conflict management styles into a single explanatory framework. The study extends existing knowledge by demonstrating that employee performance in SMEs is influenced not only by individual and job-related factors but also by interpersonal processes that occur within the workplace. This integrated perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of employee behaviour and performance in the SME sector.

Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's
AIJBES
EISSN: 2682-8545
Volume: 8 Issue: 29 (September 2026) PP. 2147-2169

From a practical standpoint, the findings offer valuable implications for SME owners, managers, and human resource practitioners. SMEs should emphasise personality-based recruitment and selection practices to ensure a better fit between employees and organisational requirements. Organisations should also focus on designing jobs that provide greater autonomy and opportunities for employees to utilise a variety of skills. Furthermore, training and development programmes should incorporate conflict management competencies to equip employees with the skills necessary to handle workplace disagreements effectively and maintain productive working relationships.

Despite its contributions, the study is subject to several limitations. The use of a cross-sectional research design restricts the ability to establish causal relationships among the variables. In addition, the study focused solely on employees from service-sector SMEs in Malaysia, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other sectors or organisational contexts. Future research may employ longitudinal research designs, include SMEs from different industries, and examine additional organisational or behavioural variables that may further explain employee performance.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that employee performance within Malaysian SMEs is influenced by a combination of personality traits, job characteristics, and conflict management styles. By recognising the interplay among these factors, SME organisations can develop more effective human resource strategies that enhance employee performance, strengthen organisational competitiveness, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the SME sector in Malaysia.

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Universiti Teknologi MARA for providing the necessary resources and support throughout the course of this research. Special appreciation is extended to colleagues and peers who contributed valuable insights and constructive feedback, which greatly enhanced the quality of this paper.

Funding Statement: No Funding

Conflict of Interest Statement: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. All authors have contributed to this work and approved the final version of the manuscript for submission to the Advanced International Journal of Business, Entrepreneurship and SME's (AIJBES)

Ethics Statement: Ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. The anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were strictly maintained, and no personally identifiable information was collected. The data were used exclusively for research purposes and were reported in aggregate form to protect participants' privacy.

Author Contribution Statement: All authors contributed significantly to the development of this manuscript. Dr. Nur Lailatul Husna was responsible for the conceptualization, methodology, and overall supervision of the study. Prof. Dr.Abdul Halim and Assoc.Prof Dr. Siti Norasyikin handled data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results. Dr. Nur Hazwani contributed to the literature review, drafting, and critical revision of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript prior to submission.

References

Adam, A., Hassan, R., & Abdullah, H. (2021). Maintaining the survival of Malaysian SMEs during the COVID-19 outbreak: Challenges and suggestions for management. *ASEAN Entrepreneurship Journal, 7*(1).

Ahmad Raflis, C. O., Suraiya, I., & Mohd Abdullah, J. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 Movement Control Order on SMEs' businesses and survival strategies. *Malaysian Journal of Society and Space, 16*(2). https://doi.org/10.17576/geo-2020-1602-11

Agyemang Ameyaw, M., Yong Yue, W., Kwame Asare, D., & Patrick Kweku, G. (2020). The mediating role of conflict on personality traits and performance in Ghana. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development, 4*(5), 1686–1693.

Ahmed, I., Nawaz, M. M., Shaukat, M. Z., & Usman, A. (2010). Personality does affect conflict handling style: Study of future managers. *International Journal of Trade, Economics and Finance, 1*(3). https://doi.org/10.7763/IJTEF.2010.V1.48

Ali, N., & Zia-ur-Rehman, M. (2014). Impact of job design on employee performance: Mediating role of job satisfaction. A study of FMCG's sector in Pakistan. *International Journal of Business and Management, 9*(2). https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v9n2p70

Aliakbari, M., & Amiri, M. (2016). Personality, face concern, and interpersonal conflict resolution styles: A case of Iranian college students. *Personality and Individual Differences, 97*, 266–271. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.03.068

Antonioni, D. (1998). Relationship between the Big Five personality factors and conflict management styles. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 9*(4), 336–355. https://doi.org/10.1108/eb022814

Aoun, M., Mubarak, S., & Hasnan, N. (2020). The effect of conflict management styles on employee performance among Lebanese industrial firms. *Journal of Technology and Operations Management, 15*(1), 50–59. https://doi.org/10.32890/jtom2020.15.1.5

Asian Development Bank. (2020). *Asia small and medium-sized enterprise monitor 2020: Volume I—Country and regional reviews*. Asian Development Bank.

Ayub, N., AlQurashi, S. M., Al-Yafi, W. A., & Jehn, K. (2017). Personality traits and conflict management styles in predicting job performance and conflict. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 28*(5), 671–694. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCMA-12-2016-0105

Aziz, N. A., Othman, J., Lugova, H., & Suleiman, A. (2020). Malaysia's approach in handling COVID-19 onslaught: Report on the Movement Control Order (MCO) and targeted screening to reduce community infection rate and impact on public health and economy. *Journal of Infection and Public Health, 13*(12), 1823–1829. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jiph.2020.08.007

Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands–resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 22*(3), 309–328. https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710733115

Barbuto, J. E., Phipps, K. A., & Xu, Y. (2010). Testing relationships between personality, conflict styles and effectiveness. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 21*(4), 434–447. https://doi.org/10.1108/10444061011079967

Barrick, M. R., & Mount, M. K. (1991). The Big Five personality dimensions and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology, 44*(1), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1991.tb00688.x

Barrick, M. R., Mount, M. K., & Judge, T. A. (2001). Personality and performance at the beginning of the new millennium: What do we know and where do we go next? *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 9*(1–2), 9–30. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2389.00160

Borman, W. C., & Motowidlo, S. J. (1993). Expanding the criterion domain to include elements of contextual performance. In N. Schmitt & W. C. Borman (Eds.), *Personnel selection in organizations* (pp. 71–98). Jossey-Bass.

Borman, W. C., & Motowidlo, S. J. (1997). Task performance and contextual performance: The meaning for personnel selection research. *Human Performance, 10*(2), 99–109. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327043hup1002_3

Campbell, J. P. (1990). Modeling the performance prediction problem in industrial and organizational psychology. In M. D. Dunnette & L. M. Hough (Eds.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (2nd ed., Vol. 1, pp. 687–732). Consulting Psychologists Press.

Carlos, V. S., & Gouveia, R. (2016). Development and validation of a self-reported measure of job performance. *Social Indicators Research, 126*(1), 279–307. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-015-0883-z

Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., & Leiter, M. (2014). Burnout and job performance: The moderating role of selection, optimization, and compensation strategies. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 19*(1), 96–107. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035062

Department of Statistics Malaysia. (2020). *Report of special survey on effects of COVID-19 on companies and business firms*. Department of Statistics Malaysia.

Department of Statistics Malaysia. (2021). *Labour force survey report, Malaysia, 2020*. Department of Statistics Malaysia.

Febriani, E., Gamayuni, R. R., & Syaipudin, U. (2023). Employee performance during the COVID-19 pandemic: A bibliographic study from various perspectives. *Journal of Economics, Finance and Management Studies, 6*(1). https://doi.org/10.47191/jefms/v6-i1-03

Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1976). Motivation through the design of work: Test of a theory. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 16*(2), 250–279. https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073(76)90016-7

Hamid, M., Wahab, S. A., Hosna, A. U., Hasanat, M. W., & Kamruzzaman, M. (2020). Impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) and employees' reaction to changes on employee performance in Bangladesh. *The International Journal of Business & Management, 8*(8).

Hasin, H., Jamil, A., Johari, Y. C., & Kasim, E. S. (2021). COVID-19 and its impact on small and medium enterprises: Evidence from Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Accounting, Finance and Management Sciences, 11*(11), 719–739.

Johari, J., & Yahya, K. K. (2016). Job characteristics, work involvement, and job performance of public servants. *European Journal of Training and Development, 40*(7), 554–575. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-07-2015-0051

Koopmans, L., Bernaards, C. M., Hildebrandt, V. H., De Vet, H. C. W., & Van der Beek, A. J. (2014). Measuring individual work performance: Identifying and selecting indicators. *Work, 48*(2), 229–238. https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-131659

Koopmans, L., Bernaards, C. M., Hildebrandt, V. H., Lerner, D., De Vet, H. C. W., & Van der Beek, A. J. (2016). Cross-cultural adaptation of the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire. *Work, 53*(3), 609–619. https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-152237

McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T., Jr. (1999). A five-factor theory of personality. In L. A. Pervin & O. P. John (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (2nd ed., pp. 139–153). Guilford Press.

Motowidlo, S. J., & Van Scotter, J. R. (1994). Evidence that task performance should be distinguished from contextual performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 79*(4), 475–480. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.79.4.475

Narayanamurthy, G., & Tortorella, G. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 outbreak on employee performance: Moderating role of Industry 4.0-based technologies. *International Journal of Production Economics, 234*, 108075. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2021.108075

Parker, S. K., Van den Broeck, A., & Holman, D. (2017). Work design influences: A synthesis of multilevel factors that affect the design of jobs. *Academy of Management Annals, 11*(1), 267–308. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2014.0054

Pradhan, R. K., & Jena, L. K. (2017). Employee performance at workplace: Conceptual model and empirical validation. *Business Perspectives and Research, 5*(1), 69–85. https://doi.org/10.1177/2278533716671630

Rahim, M. A. (2002). Toward a theory of managing organizational conflict. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 13*(3), 206–235. https://doi.org/10.1108/eb022874

Rahim, M. A., & Bonoma, T. V. (1979). Managing organizational conflict: A model for diagnosis and intervention. *Psychological Reports, 44*(3 Suppl.), 1323–1344. https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1979.44.3c.1323

Salgado, J. F. (1998). Big Five personality dimensions and job performance in army and civil occupations: A European perspective. *Human Performance, 11*(2–3), 271–288. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327043hup1102&3_8

SME Corporation Malaysia. (2019). *SME annual report 2018/19*. SME Corporation Malaysia.

Sonnentag, S., & Frese, M. (2002). Performance concepts and performance theory. In S. Sonnentag (Ed.), *Psychological management of individual performance* (pp. 3–25). John Wiley & Sons.

Tett, R. P., & Burnett, D. D. (2003). A personality trait-based interactionist model of job performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*(3), 500–517. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.3.500

Van Scotter, J. R., Motowidlo, S. J., & Cross, T. C. (2000). Effects of task performance and contextual performance on systemic rewards. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 85*(4), 526–535. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.85.4.526

Viswesvaran, C., & Ones, D. S. (2000). Perspectives on models of job performance. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 8*(4), 216–226. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2389.00151

World Bank. (2020). *Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) finance*. World Bank.