Relational Governance and conflict, the moderating role of justice:

A study on construction companies in a region of Morocco

Mariyam EL IDRISSI

Faculty of Law, Economics and Social Sciences, University Mohamed V, Rabat. Morocco
mariyam.elidrissi@um5r.ac.ma

Abdelmajid EL WAATMANI

Faculty of Law, Economics and Social Sciences, University Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah, Fez. Morocco
abdelmajid.elwaatmani@usmba.ac.ma

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Abstract

Purpose: To study the extent to which relational governance mechanisms can mitigate conflicts in the construction sector, while reaching out to a total of 103 manufacturers and suppliers in the Rabat-Casablanca region.

Method: We use Structural equation model with smart PLS.

Results: The dimensions of relational governance (solidarity, mutuality, participation and flexibility) have opposite effects on conflict. However, there is evidence that relational governance help in mitigating tensions in the interorganizational relations.

Originality/relevance: Studying the mechanisms that mitigate conflict in its escalation process. It is a particular study on some companies in a Moroccan city**.**

Keywords: relational governance, affective conflict, manifest conflict and aftermath conflict.

Gouvernance relationnelle et conflit, l'effet modérateur de la justice : Une étude sur les entreprises de construction dans une région du Maroc

Résumé

Objectif : Étudier dans quelle mesure les mécanismes de gouvernance relationnelle peuvent atténuer les conflits dans le secteur de la construction, tout en s'adressant à un total de 103 fabricants et fournisseurs de la région de Rabat-Casablanca.

Méthode : Nous utilisons le Modèle d'équation structurelle avec smart PLS.

Résultats : Les dimensions de la gouvernance relationnelle (solidarité, mutualité, participation et flexibilité) ont des effets opposés sur le conflit. Cependant, il est prouvé que la gouvernance relationnelle aide à atténuer les tensions dans les relations inter-organisationnelles.

Originalité/pertinence : Étudier les mécanismes qui atténuent le conflit dans ses phases de développement.

Mots clés : gouvernance relationnelle, conflit affectif, conflit manifeste et conflit d'après.

Introduction

Conflict remains a little explored subject in the social sciences. Despite the growing interest in collaborative practices in the literature, distortions and clashes between partners still ubiquitous, being an integral part of human nature: "Men are on earth to make war". Moreover, business relationships are often characterized by the simultaneous presence of collaboration and conflict.

Conflict exists when two or more people, with opposing opinions or principles, disagree. It is also an antagonistic state where mental clashes, contradictory interests and often a symmetrical power of the actor's reign. This last point is critical since in case of asymmetry of power, there will be no conflict, but rather a struggle (for example the class struggle). In this sense, it appears that the conflict is composed of several dimensions (mental clashes, oppositions of ideas, etc.), which led us to study its nature.

Even if governance is a recent concept in work dealing with the interorganizational relationships, it has opened the door to new research perspectives. Among these new opportunities, we have opted for the contract as the central mechanism of governance. Indeed, the relational instrument is the best way to influence the behavior of individuals in organizations. In this sense, four aspects of the contract were taken into consideration: solidarity, flexibility, participation and mutuality.

Based on the forgoing discussions, the purpose of this paper is to investigate to what extent relational governance mechanisms can mitigate conflict. We have chosen to analyze conflict as a multi-dimensional phenomenon instead of the traditional view, which considered it as a "*one body*" concept. We argue that relational governance is a double-edged sword since it exercises different impacts on the emergence of the affective and manifest conflict.

This paper is organized as follows. In the subsequent sections, we shed light on theoretical foundations, and we review the conceptual model and hypothesis. Then, we summarize the research methodology and report results. Finally, we conclude with discussion.

1. Relational exchange theory

Transaction cost economics is not the only theoretical current that has dealt with contractual relations since others have shared this same mission, which consists of putting the contract in the place it deserves. No one can deny that relational exchange theory fits into this perspective. The particularity of this theoretical current is that it emerged very early in the second half of the 20th century (more particularly at the end of the 1960s) when the classic approach to the contract dominated the literature (Campbell, 2004).

The relational exchange theory made its real emergence in the 60s of the last century (in parallel with the metamorphosis of the theory of transaction costs), mainly following the work of Ian Macneil. In this sense, Williamson and Macneil share the same conviction, which is the only point in common: the transaction is the basic unit of analysis (McLaughlin et al., 2014). Macneil's remarks can be placed as complementary to Williamson's ideas: internal administrative coordination (in the hierarchy) is not the only way to reduce the transaction costs generated by the bounded rationality and opportunism of economic agents since relational norms (which we will detail in the next chapter) will make it possible to better govern interorganizational relations. As a result, Macneil « marked the shift from individualist, essentialist and atomistic scientific thought to more relationist, contextualist and systemic thought » (Mandard, 2012, pp: 13), which pushed Macaulay, "the number two in the theory of relational exchange" to advocate the work of Macneil: « People should not attempt to write about contracts until they have studied Macneil. » (Macaulay, 2000, pp: 776).

The first branches of the relational exchange tree began to emerge in 1967, on the annual conference of American law professors (Mandard, 2012). At first, Macneil's work received little interest from researchers, and it was necessary to wait for the proliferation of publications for it to position itself as a reference contractual theory. These are mainly three works that contributed to the proliferation of Macneil's work: The many futures of contract (1974), Contracts: adjustment of long-term economic relations under classical, neoclassical, and relational contract law (1978) and the new social contract (1980). This last book is the one that encouraged researchers in management science to take an interest in this theory (Mandard, 2012). Marketing is the management discipline where this approach was initially applied (Burchell et al., 2013; DeJong et al., 2006), since « marketing literature has always considered the notion of the relationship as a state of association » (Coovi, 2010, p: 14).

Macneil made a revolution in contract theory, notably by shaping a new belief that considers that the objectives of the traditional contract can be achieved without resorting to the design of contracts that are complex, expensive and which are, even worse, inevitably incomplete (Macneil , 1980; Williamson 1979). The hypothesis developed by the "architects" of transaction cost theory (which states that opportunism is a pervasive human characteristic) is rejected by Macneil. The latter granted little interest to opportunism, considering that it constitutes the exception rather than the rule (Granovetter, 1985) and therefore, through a panoply of informal norms, “the relational approach” rivals “the 'transactional approach' (Ambroise et al., 2009).

The starting point of Macneil's work was the distinction between the transactional approach and the relational approach. For each typology corresponds a set of standards (Rousseau, 1990, Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993) illustrated in Table 5 below. The transactional approach represents primitive market interactions, where the parties seek only to maximize their short-term profits and are not interested in maintaining the relationship. When interactions become influenced by “organizational memory”, the degree of uncertainty and the margins of negotiation are reduced and are regulated only by written legal agreements. In other words, the individuals in relation accumulate a history motivating them to work together (Coovi, 2010), the satisfaction of the actors does not remain determined only by the economic aspects, but also, and above all by a set of dimensions: qualified by Macneil “relational norms” (Macneil, 1980). He reiterates “The new social contract is not at all new and even it is the oldest of contracts” (1980, pp: XII).

The relational exchange theory is based on two fundamental points: a critical examination of the norms common to each contract and the implementation of a two-sided axis that begins with the classic contract and extends to the relational contract (Macneil, 1978). Through the distinction between the transactional and relational, Macneil (1980) identified norms specific to discrete transactions, norms that correspond to relational exchanges and others that are common.

The concept of norm was born long before the work of Macneil because it is anchored in long tribal traditions, even before the emergence of “civilized society”. However, the formalization of the concept of norm only saw the light of day with the work of Sherif (Heide & John, 1992). In line with these works, Sumner (2002) introduced the notion of “Folkways” which means the dominant ways of behaving in a group of individuals, and which manifest themselves in the form of habits, customs and traditions. As a result, the social norm requires the presence of institutions regardless of whether they are formal or informal (Platteau, 2006).

Researchers have identified different levels of norms (Elster, 1989; Heide & John, 1992; Zhang et al., 2003), namely: moral norms, social norms, industrial norms, legal norms, private norms, transactional norms and relational norms. Poppo & Zenger (2002) identified two mechanisms through which relational norms exert their influence: economic and sociological. Economic mechanisms refer to the rational and calculating aspect that promotes cooperation. Sociological mechanisms mean the social ties that arise and are reinforced through previous exchanges.

2. Conceptual model and hypotheses

2.1. Variables of the conceptual model

Our conceptual model is made up of a set of variables, divided into four main items: first, independent variables made up of six dimensions relating to the mechanisms of relational governance (solidarity, participation, flexibility and mutuality). Then, two mediating variables (affective conflict and overt conflict) and one dependent variable (aftermath conflict). Finally, a moderating variable (perceived injustice).

2.1.1. Solidarity

Solidarity is a key component of relational norms (Heide & John, 1992; Liu et al., 2009; Lumineau & Henderson, 2012; Macneil, 1980; Rokkan et al., 2003). Ian Macneil asserts that solidarity "is a state of mind or, rather, a state of minds. It is a belief not only in future peace among those involved but also in future harmonious affirmative cooperation" (Macneil, 1986, pp: 572). Solidarity is, therefore, a belief of being able to rely on another party (Paulin et al, 1997). Lumineau & Henderson (2012), Heide & John (1992) as well as Rokkan et al. (2005) equated solidarity with an expectation. The definition of the former was more complete since it treated this concept as being an expectation of the action of the partners who will act in the direction of the mutual sharing of benefits, the bilateral settlement of disputes as well as joint and coordinated actions which contribute to the achievement of common goals. According to Heide & John (1992), we can only speak of solidarity when there is an expectation on the part of the partners that the value placed in the relationship is substantial. The authors speak here of voluntary work rather than of solidarity. Another group of authors (Hechter, 1987; Lindenberg, 1998; Doreian & Fararo, 1998), under the sociological cap, affirmed that solidarity is a bipolar concept, made up of two components: emotional and behavioral (Doreian & Fararo, 1998). Emotional solidarity refers to the existence of love, feelings of camaraderie or brotherhood, while behavioral solidarity is the use of individual resources to contribute to common goals. Broadly speaking, solidarity is present when the partners jointly develop feelings of brotherhood combined with the establishment of a common platform for sharing gains, structured conflict resolution and collaboration, all without the expectation of direct compensation.

2.1.2. Flexibility

Macneil defines flexibility as the ability of a contract to change in response to environmental pressures (Macneil, 1980). In their study of the impact of complexity and knowledge transfer on supply chain flexibility, Blome et al. (2014) treated this concept as the ability of a supply chain to respond to and compensate for changes in the environment. It is then a question of having internal mechanisms that allow the firms to neutralize the risks of change (active listening to the market). This same perspective was shared by the contribution of Vickery et al. (1999), who adopted a marketing view to conceptualize flexibility. Indeed, they proposed four types of flexibility: product-flexibility (it is the ability to respond effectively to urgent non-standard consumer needs), distribution-flexibility (it is the ability to cover a large geographical area), flexibility-volume (it is the ability to increase or decrease production in order to meet consumer needs) and finally responsiveness to target markets (it is the overall ability to meet target needs). Two other dimensions characterize the concept of flexibility: the inability to foresee the evolution of the environment (Boyle et al., 1992; Noordewier et al., 1990) and subtle alterations in policies and practices (Boyle et al., 1992). Throughout this thesis, we will deal with flexibility from the angle of these two dimensions.

2.1.3. Participation

According to relational contract theory, participation is the parties' willingness to invest in the relationship and share information, whether this behavior is contractual or not (Heide & John, 1992; Lumineau & Henderson, 2012; Lush & Brown, 1996; Macneil, 1980). This refers, on the one hand, to investing in specific assets and, on the other hand, to the existence of a deep conviction that each party will provide the other party with useful information. (Heide & John, 1992). Participation is also the ingrained belief in each party that the other party plays, through mutual understanding and socialization, a substantial role (Liu et al., 2009).

Participation figures in some work on relational norms under the heading of information sharing (Heide & John, 1992, Macneil, 1980). Lumineau & Anderson (2012) have had the merit of clarifying the concept of participation by making it emerge from a simple synonym of information sharing to an independent concept.

2.1.4. Mutuality

The norms of relational exchange are based on the expectation of mutuality (Heide & John, 1992). The latter is one of the eleven dimensions of exchange highlighted by Macneil (1978, 1980, 1986,). Mutuality exists when each party in the exchange contributes positively and reciprocally to the relationship (Macneil, 1980; Kaufmann & Stern, 1992). It also refers to combined efforts between independent firms (Simatupang et al., 2002). Mutuality does not require equality in the sharing of the value produced, but rather equity (Macneil, 1980), i.e. each party will be rewarded according to its contribution to the creation of value. Elster (1989) offered an example that concretely illustrates the concept of mutuality: "I invoke the norm of reciprocity, saying, 'Since they had us over for dinner, it is our turn to invite them now.' My wife invokes another norm: "Since we have already invited two single men, we must invite two women, to create a balance" (pp: 4).

2.1.5. Affective conflict

Affective conflict appears in the third phase in Pondy's model (Pondy, 1967, 1992). We can group the definitions of affective conflict according to two approaches: affective conflict as feelings and affective conflict as incompatibilities. According to the first approach, affective conflict can be defined as the existence of feelings of frustration, irritation or anger between members of a group (Glinow et al, 2004). These negative feelings reflect a hostile relationship between individuals who seek their personal interest and who feel uncomfortable and anxious when working together (Vahtera et al., 2017). According to the second approach, the affective conflict is the set of interpersonal incompatibilities where there are tensions, annoyance, animosity between the members of a group. By integrating the two approaches, we can say that the affective conflict refers to the psychological distortions, between two or more people in relation, which manifest themselves in the form of anger, hostility and irritation.

2.1.6. Manifest conflict

Manifest conflict is the most studied dimension of conflict in the literature (Winsor et al., 2012). It can be conceptualized as the emergence of behaviors which are explicitly contradictory to the objectives of one party (Winsor et al., 2012) and which must be perceived as such by at least one other party (Pondy, 1967). Therefore, to transform from affective to manifest, one (or more) member of the relationship must identify its existence. Brown and Day (1981) went in the same direction since they treated overt conflict as the set of behaviors on the part of one party that hinder another party in the relationship from achieving its objectives, to nurture its values as well as the pursuit of its interests. Another group of authors (Lusch, 1996; Samaha et al., 2011) proposed a definition close to opportunism. Indeed, manifest conflict exists when disagreements emerge between members of a network where each party seeks to accomplish its own interests and needs.

2.1.7. Aftermath conflict

Pondy (1967) identified aftermath conflict as the last phase in the evolution of conflict. It comes directly after the manifest conflict. If the members of the relationship manage to manage the conflict, the latter turns into cooperation (Pondy, 1967). If the conflict is not resolved, it either feeds and aggravates the latent conflict (Winsor et al., 2012) or it leads to the end of the relationship. It is this legacy of conflict episodes that is called the aftermath conflict (Malhotra & Lumineau, 2011; Pondy, 1967). In this sense, the aftermath conflict can also be considered as the set of residual perceptions that occur directly after the manifest conflict. Unresolved, the aftermath conflict constitutes the ingredient of the latent stage of another conflict.

2.1.8. Perceived Injustice

Justice refers to the perception, by two or more people in a relationship, that the benefits derived from a transaction are proportional to the efforts invested (Griffith et al., 2006). Perceived injustice refers to the perception of members of a network that the rewards drawn from the relationship, relative to the efforts made, are inequitable (Samaha et al., 2011).

The partners are not only concerned with their share in the value produced by the relationship, but also whether this share is equivalent to the investment made. In other words, it is about whether value sharing is fair (Katok & Pavlov, 2013). A body of academic research has shown that individuals tend to focus on the negative rather than the positive in the relationship and tend to blame others for dissatisfaction. As a result, when they observe forms of opportunism or conflict, individuals will seek to explain the reasons for these negative behaviors (Samaha et al., 2011).

2.2. Hypotheses

Solidarity represents a protection for the supplier since it prevents the buyer from abusing his control prerogatives, thereby securing the relationship. As a result, both parties will seek to intensify their relationship by taking advantage of the balance of power in the relationship. In order to guarantee the sustainability of the relationship, the partners must develop social mechanisms to mitigate the effect of these disagreements. Trust is a major component of these mechanisms since it promotes the construction of emotional bonds and reduces differences of interest. In a relationship characterized by a high degree of trust, the members have an interest in limiting the extent of feelings of frustration and distrust since they are likely to damage the relationship. In the same way, when partners do not trust each other, they will interpret the ambiguous behavior of others negatively, which can feed feelings of anger and frustration.

In view of these conclusions, we support the following hypothesis:

H_1: Solidarity slows down the emergence of affective conflict

Flexibility reduces uncertainty and ensures fine-grained movement of products and services. The study by Lee (2004) supports this observation, since it studied the role played by the flexibility of the supply chain in improving the competitive position of three European leaders specializing in textiles and clothing (H&M, Mango and Zara). When the members of the relationship manage to adapt together with new trends in the environment and to capture value in the form of new market shares, they become able to settle their differences and converge their ideas towards the direction of the 'common interest. Differences in ways of seeing then become a strong point instead of being a hindrance. As a result, attacks and personal clashes are unlikely to emerge.

In view of these conclusions, we support the following hypothesis:

H_2: Flexibility slows down the emergence of affective conflict

Participation creates a sense of psychological safety and meaning among group members. Therefore, a supply chain characterized by a high degree of participation will allow its actors to feel free to express their expectations and desires as well as they will interpret their efforts in the relationship as a source of personal esteem and psychological reward. Interorganizational relationships are characterized by iteration, i.e. constancy in the adaptation of transactional behaviors. In this sense, the continuity of activity and the fear of opportunism have made participation and communication two related concepts. Even if participation does not require contractual guarantees, the parties unconsciously expect a counterpart, manifested among other things in the form of information sharing and volunteering.

In view of these conclusions, we support the following hypothesis:

H_3: participation slows down the emergence of affective conflict

When mutuality exists, each member of an inter-organizational relationship does not monitor the performance of the others since it does not adopt the logic of the last transaction (that is, it does not consider this one as being the last) and even opportunistic behavior can be interpreted as cooperative behavior. We can give the example of so-called "ephemeral" market relations and those based on the continuity of the activity. The delay in the delivery of items for the benefit of a client company may be interpreted by the latter according to two perspectives: the presence or absence of mutuality.

In view of these conclusions, we support the following hypothesis:

H_4: Mutuality slows down the emergence of affective conflict

Affective conflict reduces the satisfaction of individuals in a relationship. The psychological distance caused by this type of conflict weakens the willingness of individuals to work together and the emergence of a simple disagreement is likely to turn into deliberate behaviors, hindering one or more parties from achieving their objectives. Similarly, there is evidence that individuals who are anxious towards others or are looked down upon by others do not feel involved in a relationship that brings them together. The tension reduces, then, the satisfaction of the individuals in relation.

In view of these conclusions, we support the following hypothesis:

$H_{5:}$ Affective conflict triggers the manifest conflict

Given the strong correlation between manifest conflict and relationship destroyers, including opportunism and power asymmetry (Anderson & Narus, 1990; Gaski, 1984), the emergence of overt behaviors is likely to create problems, even after the end of the conflict, since according to classical psychological theory, individuals tend to recall memories that made them feel better than those that made them happy and gone, even after the end of an episode of conflict (manifest), members of the relationship will retain residual perceptions, constituting a source for potential latent conflict.

In view of these conclusions, we support the following hypothesis:

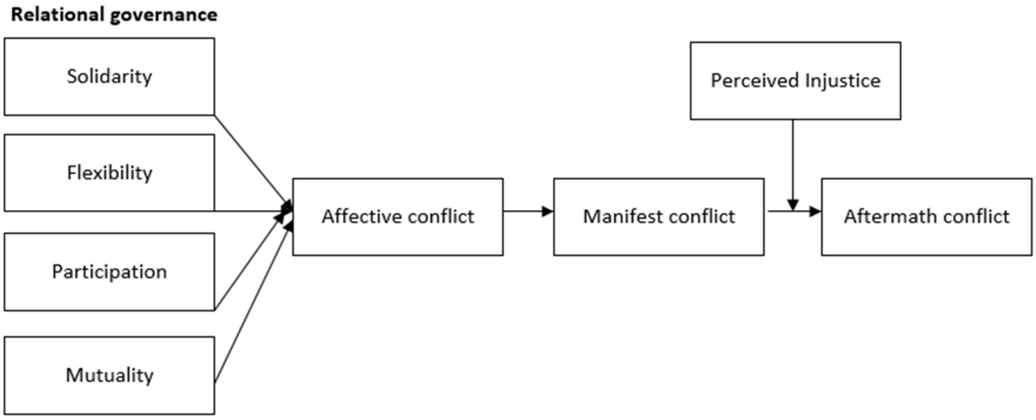
H_6: Manifest conflict triggers the aftermath conflict

In a situation of perceived injustice, individuals will seek revenge even if it will cause them financial loss. Added to a situation of affective conflict, anger and hostility will increase, which will cause these clashes to be recorded in individual memories, the effect of which goes beyond the end of the conflict. When related individuals perceive a state of injustice, they restrict or refuse to communicate and share information, to trust and to work together to achieve the objectives set. Similarly, when individuals in a relationship believe that they have been victims of a malicious act on the part of others, they feel hurt and question the possibility of revenge and seek the restoration of fairness.

In view of these conclusions, we support the following hypothesis:

H_7: Perceived injustice amplifies the positive relationship between manifest conflict and aftermath conflict.

Figure 1: Conceptual model



3. Data and methods

3.1. Data collection

The research framework consists of the antecedents of affective conflict including four dimensions of relational governance (solidarity, flexibility, participation and mutuality), the exploration whether the affective conflict switch into manifest and aftermath forms between supplier and manufacturer in the construction sector. We also investigate the moderating effect of perceived injustice on the conflict transformation from manifest to aftermath. The conceptual framework of this study is shown in figure 1. The research is empirically based on the primary data (suppliers and manufacturers) collected from 103 construction companies located in Morocco. The survey was conducted from December 13, 2022, to February 23, 2023. To ensure the respondents understand the content of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was distributed to a pilot sample composed of 10 construction companies and took their feedback into consideration what made the questionnaire easier to understand. The samples are convenient samples. Of the 347 sent questionnaires, 52 were deemed invalid. The number of valid observations is 103.

3.2. Method and measurement

The questionnaire was developed and tested from previous management studies. It was pre-tested on 10 construction companies from Rabat, the capital of Morocco. The feedback showed the instructions and questions were well understood. Relational governance items were adapted from authors in table 1. Concerning flexibility, we opted for a measurement scale composed of four items: the introduction of adjustments, the non-respect of certain contractual clauses, the modification of contractual clauses and the application of the terms of the contract. To measure participation, we used a measurement scale of three items: It is essentially about the sharing of useful information and the regular transfer of information. We chose five items to measure solidarity which are, among others, the existence of partnership, cooperation and trust. Concerning mutuality, we used five-scale measure scale. In order to measure affective conflict, four dimensions have been identified: confrontation of personalities, tensions, irritation and personal friction. Based on the works of Bradford et al., (2004) and Kumar et al., (1998), we adjusted three items, which turn around two dimensions: disagreements and differences of opinion. Finally, we adopted the items proposed by Samaha et al., (2011), who chose to compare the feeling of fairness to three situations: roles and responsibilities of the supplier, what other companies earn and the contribution the marketing efforts of the supplier. The total 29 items (shown in Table 1) by five-point Likert scale which ranges from "strongly agree= 1" to "strongly disagree=5".

Table 1: Items

Variables	Items	Reference
Solidarity	**1.** We are committed to maintaining a good working relationship with our supplier. **2.** We consider our supplier as a partner. **3.** We have a determined desire to maintain a cooperative relationship with our supplier. **4.** There is a high level of trust with our supplier. **5.** Our relationship with our supplier can be described as “an arm wrestling negotiation” than a “cooperative effort”.	Boyle et al. (1992) Kaufmann & Stern (1992)
Participation	**6.** We provide our supplier with all the information that may be useful to him. **7.** We transmit, frequently and informally (telephone, e-mail, etc.), information to our supplier and not only according to an agreement specified in advance. **8.** We keep our supplier informed about any event or change that may affect it.	Lush & Brown (1996)
Flexibility	**9.** We are generally willing to introduce adjustments to the contract with our supplier in the face of problems or particular circumstances. **10.** We are ready to set aside the terms of the contract in order to solve the complicated problems. **11.** We are prepared to review previous agreements when unforeseen events or disruptions arise. **12.** We make sure to apply the terms of the contract under any circumstances.	Boyle et al. (1992) Kaufmann & Stern (1992)
Mutuality	**13.** Each transaction is executed completely and individually. **14.** Our organization ensures that our supplier acts in accordance with its expectations by monitoring its performance. **15.** Our organization monitors the performance of each transaction separately to ensure compliance with expectations. **16.** Any fluctuation, even temporary, in the performance of our supplier is unacceptable. **17.** Discrepancies in our supplier's performance, no matter how small, must be investigated.	Kaufmann & Stern (1992)
Affective Conflict	**18.** Our personalities eventually clash. **19.** We had a lot of tension with our supplier. **20.** From time to time, we feel irritated towards our supplier. **21.** We have personal friction with our supplier.	Bradford et al., (2004)
Manifest conflict	**22.** Group members disagreed on how to complete the project **23.** Group members had differences of opinion over how to complete the project **24.** We experiences differences of opinion	Bradford et al., (2004)
Aftermath conflict		

Perceived injustice	**25.** Even if we stop arguing, we remain angry with each other. **26.** Even if we stop arguing, we behave with hatred and wickedness. **How fair are your firm's outcomes and earnings compared to:** **27**. The roles and responsibilities the supplier assigns to our organization. **28.** What other dealers in our industry earn. **29.** The contributions we make to this supplier's marketing effort.	Grych et al., (1992) Samaha et al., (2011) Kumar et al., (1995)

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Demographic Data

Table 2 below illustrates the breakdown of the respondents in terms of gender, age, education and respondent's position.

Table 2: demographic statistics

Demographics	Category	Percentage
Gender	Female	12,4%
	Male	87,6%
	25-35	34,9%
Age	35-55	47,4%
	55 and above	17,7%
	Bachelor degree	12,1%
Education	Master degree	67,4%
	MBA degree	20,5%
	Junior manager	26,9%
Respondent's position	Senior manager	52,8%
	Executive manager	20,3%

Among the respondents, 87,6% were males and 47,4% of the respondents were aged 35-55. In total, about two thirds (67,4%) of the respondents had master's degree. Over the half of the respondents (52,8%) were senior managers.

4.2. Exploratory factor analysis

Before performing the structural equation modeling analysis (SEM-A), we conducted a exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The latter allows the researcher to test whether the data collected are in agreement with the conceptual model developed (Kline, 2015).

IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0 is the software used to conduct EFA in this study. Based on three main outputs (KMO index, communalities and Cronbach Alpha), illustrated in table 3 below, we can infer that our scale measures are valid and reliable. Firstly, All KMO index are above 0,6 which means that date is factorized. Secondly, all communalities exceed the threshold of 0,5 which means a high correlation of each item with one other. Finally, all Cronbach Alphas are above 0,7. Consequently, all measurement scales have strong internal consistency.

4.3. PLS analysis

The PLS (partial least square analysis) approach is an iterative nonlinear approach which minimizes the residual variances under a fixed-point constraint. We distinguish two essential components in a

PLS approach a measurement model and a structural model. The measurement model, also called the external model, specifies the relationships between a latent variable and its observed variables. A latent variable is an unobservable variable which can be described by observable (manifest) variables. The structural model, also called the internal model, specifies the relationships between the latent variables.

We run the PLS analysis through four steps: 1) assessment of the measurement model, 2) evaluation of the structural model, 3) mediating effect test, 4) moderating effect test.

Table 3: Summary of constructs and their measurement properties

Constructs	Items	KMO index	Communalities	Cronbach Alpha
Flexibility	FL1 FL2 FL3 FL4	,747	,915 ,955 ,935 -,221	,931
Solidarity	SO1 SO2 SO3 SO4 SO5	,872	,861 ,875 ,861 ,750 ,481	,936
Mutuality	MU1 MU2 MU3 MU4 MU5	,667	,684 ,962 ,950 ,758 ,743	,845
Participation	PA1 PA2 PA3	,749	,836 ,809 ,830	,890
Affective conflict	CAF1 CAF2 CAF3 CAF4	,728	,881 ,910 ,921 860	,960
Manifest conflict	CMA1 CMA2 CMA3	,744	,971 ,959 ,917	,973
Aftermath conflict	ACO1 ACO2	,749	,981 ,992	,992
Perceived injustice	INP1 INP2 INP3	,618	,861 ,620 ,905	,721

4.3.1. Assessment of the measurement model

According to Hair et al., (2014), assessing results of the measurement model “includes composite reliability (CR) to evaluate internal consistency, individual indicator reliability (IR), and average variance extracted (AVE) to evaluate convergent validity. In addition, the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross loadings are used to assess discriminant validity. » (p. 100).

Table 4 below summarizes the key results of convergent validity evaluation. In order to say that indicators of a construct are correlated to each other, three conditions have to be met:

1) CR>0,7
2) AVE>0,5
3) Loadings >0,7

All outputs meet the threshold requirements which means that convergent validity is confirmed.

Table 4: Results summary of measurement model – convergent validity

Construits	Items	Loadings	**AVE** (*average variance extracted*)	**CR** (*composite reliability*)
Solidarity	SO1	0.911	**0.818**	**0.947**
	SO2	0.920		
	SO3	0.914		
	SO4	0.873		
Flexibility	FL1	0.886	**0.807**	**0.995**
	FL2	0.921		
	FL3	0.887		
Participation	PA1	0.911	**0.825**	**0.9996**
	PA2	0,903		
	PA3	0,911		
Mutuality	MU1	0,807	**0,518**	**0,918**
	MU2	0,620		
Affective conflict	CAF1	0,938	**0,893**	**0,999**
	CAF2	0,952		
	CAF3	0,960		
	CAF4	0,930		
Manifest conflict	CMA1	0,986	**0,949**	**0,998**
	CMA2	0,980		
	CMA3	0,957		
Perceived Injustice	INP1	0,957	**0,682**	**0,947**
	INP2	0,444		
	INP3	0,965		
Aftermath conflict	ACO1	0,981	**0,963**	**0,998**
	ACO2	0,982		

According to Fornell-Larcker criterion (1981), each variable must have the highest correlation value with itself to be retained. The results provided by SmartPLS (table 5 below) lead us to validate this test since each construct has the highest correlation with itself and even more, some variables have correlations very close to 1 (i.e.: affective conflict and manifest conflict).

Table 5: Fornell-Larcker criterion

	Aftermath conflict	Affective conflict	Manifest conflict	Flexibility	Perceived injustice	Mutuality	Participation	Solidarity
Aftermath conflict	0,981							
Affective conflict	0,779	0,945						
Manifest conflict	0,740	0,857	0,974					
Flexibility	-0,621	-0,545	-0,633	0,898				
Perceived injustice	-0,707	-0,611	-0,597	0,560	0,826			
Mutuality	0.543	0.580	0.544	-0.504	-0.502	0.719		
Participation	-0,482	-0,417	-0,472	0,528	0,362	-0,451	0,908	
Solidarity	-0,722	-0,623	-0,608	0,654	0,587	-0,578	0,567	0,905

Cross loadings are the second parameter in evaluating discriminant validity. The goal is made sure that the items are measuring the construct they are supposed to measure. The results illustrated in Table 6 below show that all the items give the highest values with their respective constructs.

Table 6: Cross loadings

	Affective conflict	Manifest conflict	Solidarity	Flexibility	Participation	Mutuality	Perceived injustice	Aftermath conflict
CAF1	,937	-,634	-,678	,435	-,175	0,235	-0,576	-0,162
CAF2	,952	-,375	,432	-,385	-,342	0,329	-0,594	-0,178
CAF3	,960	-,374	-,234	,329	,275	0,385	-0,594	-0,299
CAF4	,930	-,275	,211	-,274	,237	0,001	-0,546	-0,263
CMA1	,850	,985	,283	,184	,786	0.603	-0,571	-0.429
CMA2	,843	,979	-,543	-,476	,346	0.576	-0,570	-0.485
CMA3	,811	,957	-,321	,346	-,456	0.623	-0,606	-0.476
SO1	-,234	,257	,876	,384	,531	-0.485	-0,576	-0.517
SO2	,130	,381	,829	,446	-,749	-0.476	-0,594	-0.486
SO3	,455	,256	,660	,323	-,268	-0.517	-0,594	-0,420
SO4	-,285	,391	,783	,187	-,169	-0.486	-0,546	-0,472
FL1	-,275	,248	,314	,698	-,418	-0,420	-0,571	-0,343
FL2	-,144	,124	,332	,683	,268	-0,472	-0,570	-0,410
FL3	-,221	,215	-,437	,936	,569	-0,343	-0,606	-0,342
PA1	0,334	,153	,425	,526	0,911	-,652	-0,576	-0,476
PA2	0,209	,224	,463	,625	0,903	,552	-0,594	-0,162

PA3	0,251	,243	,352	,263	0,911	,435	-0,594	-0,178
MU1	-0,368	,323	,439	,736	,652	0.707	-0,546	-0,299
MU2	-0,103	,187	,736	,424	,452	0,620	-0,571	-0,263
INP1	-,258	,385	-,346	,329	,954	,442	,954	-0.429
INP2	-,395	,299	,327	-,633	,667	,532	,667	-0.485
INP3	-,186	,583	,494	-,345	,963	,452	,963	-0.476
ACO1	0,753	,243	,627	-,520	,524	,342	,642	0,981
ACO2	0,775	,467	,632	-,627	,577	,452	,452	0,982

4.3.2. Assessment of the measurement model

Once we have confirmed the reliability and validity of construct measures, the evaluation of the structural model results is the next step. The purpose is to assess the predictive capability of independent variable, on the one hand and to test constructs' relationships, on the other hand. To do so, we must perform five tests: 1) path coefficient (hypotheses test), 2) Coefficient of determination R^2, 3) effect size f^2, 4) predictive relevance Q^2 and 5) goodness of fit GoF.

The path coefficient consists in determining the strengthness of the hypotheses by calculating the probability of the error. This probability is commonly called P-value = (<5%). Table 7 blow illustrates the key results.

Table 7: ***Path coefficient of the research hypotheses***

	Relationship	**Std. Beta**	**Std. Error**	**T-value**	**P-value**	**Decision**
H_1	Solidarity → affective conflict	-0,293	-0,284	1,032	,015	Supported
H_2	Flexibility → affective conflict	-0,146	-0,137	1,066	,181	Rejected
H_3	Participation → affective conflict	0,001	-0,001	1	,986	Rejected
H_4	Mutuality → affective conflict	0,290	0,289	1,004	,001	Supported
H_5	Affective conflict → manifest conflict	,781	,066	11,915	,000	Supported
H_6	manifest conflict → Aftermath conflict	0,174	0,178	,978	0,018	Supported
H_7	Moderating effect	,698	,212	3,292	,001	Supported

We note that two out of seven hypotheses are confirmed. The supposed positive impact of relational governance on affective conflict has an 70 % probability of error exceeding the 5% floor threshold. Consequently, our observations collected do not offer enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis H0; that a correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable exists.

Table 8: Coefficient of determination R^2

	R^2	**Result**
Affective conflict	,264	Weak
Manifest Conflict	,744	High
Aftermath conflict	,774	High

Effect size measures the relative effect of a latent independent variable on a latent dependent variable through the fluctuations of the coefficient R^2 (Chin, 1998). Table 9 represents the key features.

Table 9: Effect size f^2

	Aftermath conflict	Affective conflict	Manifest conflict
Solidarity		0,70	
Participation		0,04	
Flexibility		0,19	
Mutuality		0,101	
Manifest conflict	0,32		
Affective conflict	0,79		0,760
Moderating effect	0,011		

According to Cohen (1988), four categories arise from the interpretation of the values of f^2: large size effect (> 0.35), medium size effect (between 0.15 and 0.35), small size effect (between 0.02 and 0.15) and no size effect (<0.02).

Predictive relevance is the capacity of the conceptual framework to measure the endogenous variable (Hair et al., 2014). The independent variables are deemed to have predictive relevance as soon as the coefficient Q^2 is positive. As a result, the results illustrated in table 10 above demonstrate that our model has a strong predictive relevance since all the values of Q^2 are high.

Table 10: Predictive relevance Q^2

	SSO	SSE	Q^2
Aftermath conflict	206,000	70,169	0,659
Affective conflict	412,000	319,910	,224
Manifest Conflict	309,000	94,895	,693

Goodness of fit evaluates to what extent the researcher can rely on the developed model (measurement and structural) to study the causal relationships between constructs.

The formula for calculating the Goodness of fit GoF is (Chin, 2010):

$$GoF = \sqrt{(\overline{R^2} * \overline{AVE})}$$

After carrying out the necessary calculations, we obtained:

GOF = 0,479

According to Wetzels et al., (2009), there are four cases in the interpretation of the GoF:

GoF above 0,1	**No fit**
GoF between 0,1 et 0,25	**Small**
GoF between 0,25 et 0,36	**Medium**
GoF greater than 0,36	**Large**

According to the above Table, and the value of the GoF (0.479), it can be concluded that the GoF model of this study is large enough to be considered sufficient for global PLS model validity.

4.3.3. Mediating effect test

Hair et al., (2016) proposed two main stages in analyzing the mediating effects: on the one hand, test the significance of direct effect between variables without including the mediating influence. On the other hand, and if the relationship is significance, include the mediating variable in the PLS path model and assess the significance of the indirect effect.

After performing the one stage test (table 11), we kept only the interactions between contractual coordination, affective conflict and manifest which have a significant p-values.

Table 11: Significance analysis of path coefficient without the mediator

	Path coefficient	**P-value**
Solidarity → affective conflict	-,262	,001
Flexibility → affective conflict	-,349	,068
Participation → affective conflict	,546	,088
Mutuality → affective conflict	,425	,000
Affective conflict → manifest conflict	,857	,000
Manifest conflict → aftermath conflict	,732	,001

After including the mediator in the path model (results shown in table 12) affective conflict has a significant mediating effect on the relation between the dimensions of relational governance and manifest conflict (p-value < 5 %).

Table 12: Bootstrapping results of the indirect effect

	Path coefficient	**P-value**
Solidarity → manifest conflict	-,262	,001
Flexibility → manifest conflict	-,349	,068
Participation → manifest conflict	,546	,088
Mutuality → manifest conflict	,425	,000

4.3.4. Moderating effect

In order to be accepted, the moderating effect has to be significant, which means that its error probability must not exceed the threshold of 5%. As shown in table 13, the perceived injustice has a significant moderating effect on the relation between affective conflict and manifest conflict.

Table 13: Moderating effect results

	Path coefficient	**P-value**
Moderating effect	-,116	,047

5. Discussion and conclusion

The common thread throughout this article was the questioning of the role of relational governance mechanisms in the birth and development of conflict. We have presented relational governance in the form of four dimensions. These were all assumed to have a negative relationship with the conflict. The first is solidarity, which is a belief of being able to rely on another party to achieve set goals. Solidarity is confirmed during critical moments when market shares stagnate or decrease, penalizing legislation, higher prices of raw materials... The installation of this value in individual memories leads to a positive perception of the relationship. This explains why the companies surveyed confirmed the research proposal.

The second hypothesis tested is the negative impact of participation on affective conflict. This interaction was invalidated by the companies surveyed. This result means that the willingness of the parties to invest in the relationship and to share information with the partners does not influence the conflict. The observation noted above regarding the role of participation in the creation of feelings of security and psychological meaning among supply chain actors did not have any place among the respondents.

The negative relationship of flexibility with affective conflict has been rejected following empirical confrontation. The ability of a contract to change as a result of environmental pressures seems to have no impact on affective conflict. This result was unexpected since flexibility reduces uncertainty and ensures fine movement of products and services along the supply chain. Boyle et al. (1992) argued that flexibility has the merit, through the stimulation of competitiveness and performance, of making conflict constructive. Despite these assets, we can say that Morocco remains an emerging market where these practices have not yet reached their cruising speed and that the actors grant little or no interest in the capacity to adapt as a determining factor in mitigation tensions.

The negative impact of mutuality on affective conflict received the strongest support among the propositions in our model. We recall that mutuality exists when each party in the exchange contributes positively and reciprocally to the relationship. When mutuality exists, each member of an interorganisationnel relationship does not monitor the performance of the others since it does not adopt the logic of the last transaction. The values of mutual aid are rooted in Moroccan society and, for centuries, conflicts have been dampened by tribal traditions considering the individual an extension of the tribe. To this end, feelings of hostility are inversely proportional to the entrenchment of mutuality.

The fifth proposition tested (the positive relationship between affective conflict and manifest conflict) is validated by the companies surveyed. This evidence can be explained by the fact that individuals, who are anxious towards others or are despised by others, do not feel involved in a relationship that brings them together. The tension then reduces the satisfaction of the individuals in relation, generating the emergence of the conflict in the form of confrontations and clashes.

The positive relationship between manifest conflict and aftermath conflict is validated by our field of investigation. The aftermath conflict is the set of residual perceptions that occur directly after the manifest conflict phase. The conflict arrives at the manifest stage when it goes beyond the cognitive and emotional states and manages to emerge in the form of behaviors. The emergence of these explicit behaviors is likely to create problems even after the conflict has ended, since individuals tend to recall memories that caused them pain rather than those that made them happy and gone, even after the end. From an episode of (manifest) conflict, the members of the relationship will retain residual perceptions, constituting a source for potential latent conflict. Worse still, the non-resolution of the aftermath conflict constitutes the ingredient of another conflict.

Perceived injustice appears to have no effect on the relationship between manifest conflict and aftermath conflict. That said, revenge and the restoration of fairness are accentuated by other factors than the perception of injustice. On the other hand, the weak generalization of these statements makes it necessary to test the hypotheses by other sampling techniques (probability sampling).

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