Conflict at Work, Negative Emotions, and Performance: A Diary Study

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Abstract

This study examines how daily conflict events at work affect people's active (anger, contempt) and passive (sadness, guilt) negative emotions and in- and extra-role performance. We introduce the concept of conflict detachment and examined whether this coping strategy alleviates the degree of negative emotions a person feels due to a conflict experience. Sixty-two individuals from various professions in the Netherlands provided questionnaire and daily survey measures during five consecutive workdays. Multilevel analyses showed that daily relationship and process conflict experiences at work were positively related to daily negative emotions. In addition, the results demonstrated a lagged effect of passive negative emotions: feelings of guilt and sadness predicted lower in-role and extra-role performance the following day. We also found that conflict detachment moderated the relationship between daily conflict and negative emotions. We discuss the implications of our findings for organizational practice and suggest possible ways for future research.

It seems intuitive that experiencing workplace conflicts elicits negative emotions in people, yet empirical evidence is rather scarce (Nair, 2007). Although some studies investigated the emotional correlates of workplace conflict, they mainly focused on anger (Jehn, Greer, Levine, & Szulanski, 2008; Rispens, 2012; Spector and Bruk-Lee 2008). However, given the different issues central in workplace conflicts (i.e., regarding the task, the work process, or the relationship; Jehn, 1997), it may be that different emotions are triggered depending on what the conflict is about. Past work suggests conflicts are one of the biggest stressors people face in the workplace (Hahn, 2000). What is even more, conflicts seem to be on the rise in today's organization because of an increasingly diversifying workforce and the accompanying differences in values and beliefs (cf. Dijkstra, Beersma, & Cornelissen, 2012). In addition, past research suggests emotions have important direct and indirect motivational consequences (Beal, Weiss, Barros, & MacDermid, 2005; Rothbard & Wilk, 2011; Seo, Feldmann Barrett, & Bartunek, 2004) and negative emotions in particular have negative consequences (Brown, Westbrook, & Challagalla, 2005). Given the assumed negative emotions associated with workplace conflict experiences, the suspected rise of conflicts in the workplace, and the negative motivational and performance consequences of negative emotions, we think it is paramount to investigate the relationship between workplace conflict and emotions.

In general, conflict is defined as incompatibilities between two or more people (Boulding, 1963). Previous studies on workplace conflict have examined the consequences of general levels of conflict at one point in time (see for a meta-analysis De Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012) and did not focus on people's responses to specific conflict events (for exceptions see Hahn, 2000; Ilies, Johnson, Judge, & Keeney,

2011). That is unfortunate, because conflicts are omnipresent rather than rare episodes. Therefore, to fully understand how conflict experiences affect employees, we propose to study people's conflict experiences over time and close to its occurrence. To evaluate how far-reaching and possibly detrimental conflicts are, our aim was to examine conflict experiences of employees during five consecutive workdays.

Given the often detrimental effects of conflict for individuals (De Wit et al., 2012), it is necessary to examine factors that mitigate these consequences. We examine whether mentally detaching from the conflict situation (i.e., psychological conflict detachment) buffers the expected negative consequences of conflict. Surprisingly, little is known about how people themselves manage workplace conflicts close after their occurrence. We believe that this is important to examine because learning how people reduce the tension closely after conflict occurrences generates new knowledge that guides developing individualized interventions.

This study aimed to contribute to the literature in several ways. First, the within-person approach allows gaining a deeper understanding of the psychological processes that are pivotal when employees experience a conflict event and allows us to directly connect employees' responses to a specific conflict event (i.e., less recollection bias). Frameworks such as the affective events theory also highlight the importance of studying within-person experiences (Beal et al., 2005; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Second, although it is widely assumed that workplace conflict stirs negative emotions, empirical evidence is rather scarce. Furthermore, we examine whether different types of conflict bring about different emotions and we therefore include two classes of negative emotions: passive and active negative emotions (Russell & Barrett, 1999). Finally, we contribute to the existing body of research by examining psychological conflict detachment as a coping strategy for conflict experiences at work.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Conflict and emotions

Past research on workplace conflict distinguished between task, relationship, and process conflict (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Task conflicts are disagreements over task-related issues. An example is when two coauthors disagree about the theoretical framework for their study. Relationship conflicts are about issues unrelated to the task that deal with personal values and issues (e.g., political views) underlying people's relationships in the workplace. Process conflicts deal with logistical issues related to the task (e.g., who is responsible for which task or when to schedule a meeting). This distinction is important because different types of conflict have been related to different outcomes (cf. Jehn & Rispens, 2008).

Although not often examined (Nair, 2007), workplace conflict is assumed to incite negative emotions (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Workplace disagreements—even those about the task or work process—are not just factual, but involve people's perceptions of the facts and personal views about what is needed to proceed (Yang & Mossholder, 2004). Social verification theory suggests that individuals interpret conflicts about viewpoints, values, or beliefs as a negative taxation of their capabilities or personalities (Swann, Polzer, Seyle, & Ko, 2004). For example, people may hear in a task conflict that their opinion is wrong, according to the opposing conflict party. Even when this comment is made neutrally, it may threaten people's positive self-view (i.e., being competent). Thus, conflicts likely increase personal inferences related to skills, personalities, or competencies, creating a threatening situation. And when people perceive situations as threatening, negative emotions and other stress reactions are likely (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996).

Recently, researchers started recognizing the importance of studying emotional reactions to workplace conflict. Studies report that perceptions of a high level of conflict among coworkers are associated with increased negative emotions (Greer & Jehn, 2007; Todorova et al., 2014). Additionally, the few studies on daily-level conflict suggest conflict experience fluctuations are associated with fluctuations in negative affect (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Schilling, 1989; Brissette & Cohen, 2002; Ilies et al., 2011) and

discrete emotions (Hahn, 2000). Notably, only the work of Hahn (2000) and Ilies et al. (2011) have examined *workplace* conflict, while Bolger et al. (1989) examined conflicts both at work and at home. Based on the reviewed literature, we formulated the first hypothesis:

> **Hypothesis 1:** Daily conflict (task, relationship, and process conflict) is positively related to daily negative emotions.

Coping with Conflict: Psychological Conflict Detachment

Conflicts are work stressors with substantial effects for the individual (Jex, 1998); thus, it is essential to investigate employees' strategies to minimize the costs of conflict. People can apply cognitive and/or behavioral strategies to manage the external demands of conflict (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988); that is, people have different ways to cope with these stressors. We examined one such strategy namely psychological conflict detachment defined as the ability to mentally disconnect from the conflict event during working time.

Our concept of conflict detachment is inspired by the concept of psychological detachment from work used in the literature on work stress and recovery (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005). Detachment from work is defined as disengaging oneself from work and to stop thinking about job-related problems (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Employees who apply the strategy of psychological detachment are prevented from prolonged worry over stressful events (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005). In the current study, detachment refers explicitly to workplace conflict experiences rather than stressful events in general. Rumination about the conflict extends its negative effects (cf. Brosschot, Gerin, & Thayer, 2006; McCullough, Orsulak, Brandon, & Akers, 2007), increasing the experienced negative emotions (Koole, Smeets, van Knippenberg, & Dijksterhuis, 1999; Rusting & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1998). Rather, being able to mentally disconnect oneself from the conflict situation should leave individuals with more cognitive resources and the ability to focus on their work tasks instead of the conflict. Conflict detachment means not engaging in fighting behaviors nor searching for resolution and refraining from thinking excessively about the conflict. We think conflict detachment will decrease individuals' level of negative emotions. Indeed, recent studies suggest that psychological detachment from work is positively related to a positive mood at bedtime (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005) and seems a useful strategy to buffer the negative effects of job stressors on people's psychological strain (Sonnentag, Unger, & Nägel, 2013). Similarly, we expect the following:

> **Hypothesis 2:** The relationship between daily conflict and negative emotions is moderated by psychological conflict detachment, such that those who are able to detach themselves from the conflict experience less negative emotions compared to those who cannot detach.

Negative Emotions and Performance

According to affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), negative emotions influence individuals' attitudes and behaviors more than positive emotions. Negative emotions are passing states that have performance (Beal et al., 2005) and motivational consequences (Seo et al., 2004). People who experience negative emotions are preoccupied with these emotions, and behaviors are triggered that aim at dealing with these emotions (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Such behaviors (e.g., revengeful acts, continuously avoiding the other party) are incompatible with expected behaviors at work.

Active negative emotions trigger action tendencies toward an individual's urge to preserve or enhance one's self-esteem, whereas disgust enhances people's impulse to eliminate the cause of the emotion (Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2008). When caused by workplace conflict, attitudes and behaviors of angry or contemptuous individuals are focused on retaliation or revenge and distract time, effort, and commitment from the task (cf. Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Passive negative emotions, such as sadness and

guilt, activate withdrawal and disengagement (when feeling sad) or pondering the conflict situation (when feeling guilty). Conflict threatens a collaborative relationship, and the sadness and guilt people feel may induce thinking about how to alter their personal circumstances (Ashton-James & Ashkanasy, 2008), which also occurs at the costs of attention and effort invested in the task.

Additionally, we expect negative emotions to be negatively related to extra-role performance. Extra-role performance is defined as the discretionary behaviors performed by an employee that are thought to promote the effective functioning of an organization (e.g., organizational citizenship behavior, personal initiative, constructive voice behavior; Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010). Negative emotions may impair fairness perceptions (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), and research on extra-role performance has underscored the importance of fairness; people who feel fairly treated are more likely to perform extra-role behaviors than people who do not feel fairly treated (Organ, 1990). Indeed, negative emotions predict deviant behaviors (Lee & Allen, 2002), specifically active negative emotions. In general, people's reaction toward conflict experiences includes disengagement or revenge behaviors (Fitness, 2000) rather than performing beyond one's job description. Therefore, we expect a negative relationship between negative emotions and in-role and extra-role performance:

Hypothesis 3a: Daily negative emotions are negatively associated with daily in-role and extra-role performance.

In addition, we hypothesize lagged effects of negative emotions on performance. Day-level research suggests that experiences during 1 day can impact behaviors the following day (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2009). The reason why someone felt angry (i.e., the other conflict party) is likely to still be there the next day; therefore, the negative emotions raised yesterday may be reactivated the following day, thereby again distracting attention and energy from the tasks. People who felt sad or guilty because of the conflict event yesterday may still ruminate about how to repair the damaged relationship the following day. Or people who felt angry may have lost sleep or other recovery opportunities after work because of their focus on plotting revenge strategies to restore perceived injustice. Indeed, research has suggested that conflicts experienced at work inhibit recovery from work (Volmer, Binnewies, Sonnentag, & Niessen, 2012) and deteriorate sleep quality (Thomsen, Mehlsen, Christensen, & Zachariae, 2003). Therefore, we expect a lagged effect of negative emotions on the in-role and extra-role performance of the following day. To stated formally:

Hypothesis 3b: Negative emotions of the previous day negatively affect individuals' in-role and extra-role performance the next day.

Regarding negative emotions, we explore whether all types of conflict elicit identical negative emotions (as suggested in past conflict research) or that differences are possible depending on the type of conflict. The literature distinguishes between passive and active negative emotions (Russell & Barrett, 1999). Active negative emotions activate a sense of mobilization or energy (e.g., anger or contempt) whereas passive negative emotions are not associated with high levels of energy (e.g., sadness or guilt). Anger elicits approach tendencies (Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009), and contempt typically increases activities to socially exclude the other party such as gossiping or slandering (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). Sadness and guilt, on the other hand, do not increase arousal (Shields, 1984) rather they inhibit ongoing behavior. We think that both types of negative emotions can occur in the face of conflict and are interested whether the experience of emotions is dependent upon the conflict type. Lacking theoretical reasons and empirical evidence that link specific negative emotions to specific conflict types, we will only explore whether different negative emotional responses depend on the type of daily conflict. To state formally:

RQ 1: Do different types of conflict trigger different negative emotional responses?

Method

Procedure and Sample

Participants were employees from various Dutch organizations. Suitable participants were 18 years or older and part of the paid labor force. Research assistants recruited the participants and distributed questionnaires and diaries via their personal contacts, which guaranteed heterogeneity of the sample. Participants received a package that included a letter explaining the purpose of the study and assuring anonymity and confidentiality of their responses, instructions about the completion of the surveys, a general questionnaire, a diary questionnaire, and a return envelope. Participation was voluntary.

Participants first filled in the general questionnaire, after which they completed the daily questionnaires for five consecutive workdays (at the end of their workday). Sixty-four participants returned the packages. Because of incomplete data (missing 3 or more daily questionnaires), the responses of 2 people were removed, resulting in a final sample of 62 respondents. This sample size is sufficient because it exceeds the minimum of 50 observations on Level 2 (Maas & Hox, 2005).

The majority of the participants was male (53.9%), and respondents' average age was 36 years (SD = 12.27). Most respondents worked in the financial sector (17%), business services (14%), or the educational sector (12%). On average, respondents had 14 years of work experience (SD = 10.64) and worked 35.4 hr per week (SD = 11.01).

General Questionnaire Measures

Participants completed a general questionnaire before the daily surveys. In the general questionnaire, we asked respondents about their demographic background.

Daily Questionnaire Measures

To keep the daily surveys as short as possible, we used abbreviated scales and single-item measures, which is common practice in diary study research (Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen, & Zapf, 2010). Responses were given on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 = *not true at all*, 5 = *totally true*) except for the responses on the daily in-role and extra-role performance scales which were given on a 7-point Likert scale (0 = *not at all*, 6 = *very much*).

Conflict Types
Respondents first read an introduction (following Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001) that respondents can help to understand how often conflicts occur, what conflicts are about, and how conflicts are dealt with. We then told that conflicts are not necessarily bad and that they can be functional in helping to understand others as well as ourselves. We also told participants that conflicts vary between differences of opinion to full-blown fights. We measured whether participants experienced a task conflict, a relationship conflict, or a process conflict during their workday. Following earlier research (Hahn, 2000; Van Doorn, Branje, Hox, & Meeus, 2009), we used one item for each of the types of Jehn's (1995; Jehn & Mannix, 2001) conflict typology. We introduced each type of conflict before presenting the item (following Jehn et al., 2008). The items for task, relationship, and process conflict were "It was a task-related conflict," "We disagreed about personal issues," and "We disagreed on how to do the task," respectively.

Conflict Detachment
We measured participants' ability to detach themselves mentally from the conflict soon after the event occurred and during working hours with the following items based on Sonnentag and Fritz's (2007)

detachment from work scale: "Because of my work I forgot about the conflict I experienced today"; "Due to my work I did not think about the conflict I experienced today"; and "My work enabled me to distance myself from the conflict I experienced today". The Cronbach's α = .89.

In-Role Performance
We used two items to measure in-role performance (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Heuven, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2008): "Today, I have performed well" and "Today, I achieved the objectives of my job." The correlation between these items was $r = .62$, $p < .001$, and the Cronbach's α = .76.

Extra-Role Performance
We measured participants' extra-role performance with two items (Xanthopoulou et al., 2008): "Today, I volunteered to take on extra work" and "Today, I helped colleagues who had too much work to do." The correlation between these items was $r = .43$, $p < .001$, and the Cronbach's α = .60.

Negative Emotions
We asked respondents how they felt about their opponent at the end of their work day. Respondents indicated on a 5-point scale (1 = *completely disagree*, 5 = *completely agree*) how much they felt contempt, anger, guilt, or sadness answering the question "When I think about the conflicting party now, I feel...". We performed an exploratory factor analysis which indicated that two factors best represented this data. The factor loading for daily contempt was .81 and for daily anger .76 on factor 1 (active negative emotions); for daily sadness .85 and daily guilt .56 on factor 2 (passive negative emotions). The active negative emotions factor accounted for 58.3% of the variance and the passive negative emotions factor explained an additional 20.6% of the variance in our data. We combined sadness and guilt ($r = .51$, $p < .001$; Cronbach's α = .67) and contempt and anger ($r = .64$, $p < .001$; Cronbach's α = .77) to create passive and active negative emotions, respectively.

Control Variables
There is the possibility that conflict gets resolved quickly which minimizes respondents' negative emotions (Kross, Ayduk, & Mischel, 2005). Additionally, time spent resolving the issue and repairing the relationship may distract time and effort otherwise invested in task execution (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Therefore, we controlled for daily conflict resolution. Conflict resolution was measured with one item: "The conflict has been completely resolved" (1 = *completely disagree*; 5 = *completely agree*). Additionally, we controlled for whether the conflict respondents experienced was with their supervisor (or manager or boss) or not. Studies have suggested that conflicts with supervisors may spur task effort (Fitness, 2000; Sy, Cote, & Saavedra, 2005). We also controlled for the person-level variables tenure and gender (Dijkstra, Beersma, & Evers, 2011; Jehn, 1995).

We performed a Harman's single factor test which revealed that a single factor did not account for the majority of the variance in our data, thereby alleviating potential concerns about single source bias.

Analytical Strategy

Our data have a hierarchical structure. Level 1 is composed of data collected at the day-level whereas Level 2 is composed of measurements at the person-level. Day-level data are nested within persons. Thus, the appropriate approach is multilevel analysis (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992), and we used the MLwiN program (Rashbash, Browne, Healy, Cameron, & Charlton, 2000). We centered predictor variables at the day level around the respective person mean.

Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations among all study variables. Day-level variables were averaged across the 5 days to correlate them with person-level variables.

We examined how much variance was attributed to within-person variation. Results showed that for passive negative emotions this was 39.85% of the variance, for active negative emotions this was 38.63%, for extra-role performance this was 37.94%, and for in-role performance it was 17.69%. These results supported the decision to apply multilevel analysis.

Test of Hypotheses

For Hypotheses 1 and 2, we compared four nested models. First, a null model with the intercept as the only predictor. In Model 1, we included person-level and day-level control variables. In Model 2, we entered the conflict related predictors (i.e., conflict types and conflict detachment). In Model 3, we entered the interaction effects of the conflict types and conflict detachment. To test Hypothesis 3, we compared three nested models. We assessed the improvement of each model over the previous one by comparing the difference between the respective likelihood ratios.

For passive negative emotions (Table 2, Model 2), we found significant positive associations with daily relationship conflict ($t = 3.29$, $p < .01$) and process conflict ($t = 3.16$, $p < .01$). We also found a significant positive association between the control variable tenure and daily passive negative emotions (Table 2, Model 1: $t = 2.43$, $p < .05$). For active negative emotions (Table 3), we found similar results. Daily relationship conflict ($t = 3.02$, $p < .01$) and process conflict ($t = 3.25$, $p < .01$) were positively associated with active negative emotions. Tenure was not related to daily active negative emotions;

Table 1
Descriptives and Correlations (Level 1 n = 62; Level 2 n = 310)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Level 2													
1. Gender	1.45	0.50											
2. Tenure	8.05	8.71	−.13										
Level 1													
3. Conflict with superior													
4. Conflict resolution	3.44	1.26			−.05								
5. Task conflict	3.16	1.46			.01	−.01							
6. Relationship conflict	1.95	1.27			.03	−.03	−.33**						
7. Process conflict	3.20	1.37			.02	−.02	.24**	−.16*					
8. Conflict detachment	2.98	1.01			.04	.23**	−.08	.01	−.08				
9. Passive negative emotions	1.67	0.83			.04	−.24**	.06	.25**	.11	−.13*			
10. Active negative emotions	1.98	1.11			.15*	−.38**	.02	.21**	.18**	−.25**	.49**		
11. In-role performance	2.20	0.71			.05	−.25**	−.02	−.03	−.05	.12	.12	.13*	
12. Extra-role performance	2.88	0.89			.02	−.06	.16*	−.17**	−.02	.04	−.08	.03	.43**

Note. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Table 2
Multilevel Estimates Predicting Daily Passive Negative Emotions

Variable	Null Model			Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	t
Constant	1.665	.079	21.08	1.567	.100	15.67	1.568	.103	15.22	1.591	.104	15.30
Conflict with superior				0.227	.126	1.80	0.132	.119	1.09	0.151	.115	1.31
Conflict resolution				−0.059	.042	−1.40	−0.052	.041	−1.27	−0.048	.040	−1.20
Gender				0.226	.155	1.46	0.251	.159	1.58	0.221	.160	1.38
Tenure				0.017	.007	2.43	0.019	.007	2.71	0.018	.007	2.57
Daily task conflict							0.064	.038	1.68	0.054	.040	1.35
Daily relationship conflict							0.138	.042	3.29	0.144	.041	3.51
Daily process conflict							0.120	.038	3.16	0.113	.037	3.05
Daily conflict detachment							−0.033	.054	−0.61	−0.024	.052	−0.46
Task conflict × detachment										0.027	.056	0.48
Relationship conflict × detachment										−0.168	.054	−3.11
Process conflict × detachment										−0.064	.054	−1.19
−2 × log	550.116			529.715			501.173			489.818		
Difference of −2 × log				20.401			28.542			11.355		
df				3			4			3		
Level 1 intercept variance (SE)	0.269 (.069)			0.238 (.063)			0.268 (.066)			0.281 (.068)		
Level 2 intercept variance (SE)	0.406 (.042)			0.398 (.042)			0.342 (.036)			0.318 (.034)		

Table 3
Multilevel Estimates Predicting Daily Active Negative Emotions

| Variable	Null Model			Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	t
Constant	1.979	.105	18.85	1.898	.137	13.58	1.902	.137	13.88	1.923	.137	14.04
Conflict with superior				0.362	.161	2.25	0.279	.152	1.84	0.290	.152	1.91
Conflict resolution				−0.260	.054	−4.81	−0.235	.052	−4.52	−0.237	.053	−4.47
Gender				0.209	.211	0.99	0.205	.212	0.97	0.185	.211	0.88
Tenure				0.008	.010	0.80	0.008	.010	0.76	0.008	.010	0.80
Daily task conflict							0.037	.049	1.00	0.040	.052	0.77
Daily relationship conflict							0.160	.053	3.02	0.172	.054	3.19
Daily process conflict							0.159	.049	3.25	0.154	.049	3.14
Daily conflict detachment							−0.179	.069	−2.59	−0.174	.069	−2.52
Task conflict × detachment										0.065	.074	0.88
Relationship conflict × detachment										−0.077	.072	−1.07
Process conflict × detachment										−0.002	.071	−0.03
−2 × log	696.978			656.224			624.112			621.075		
Difference of −2 × log				40.754			32.112			3.037		
df				3			4			3		
Level 1 intercept variance (*SE*)	0.471 (.123)			0.464 (.118)			0.491 (.118)			0.484 (.117)		
Level 2 intercept variance (*SE*)	0.748 (.078)			0.655 (.069)			0.562 (.062)			0.555 (.059)		
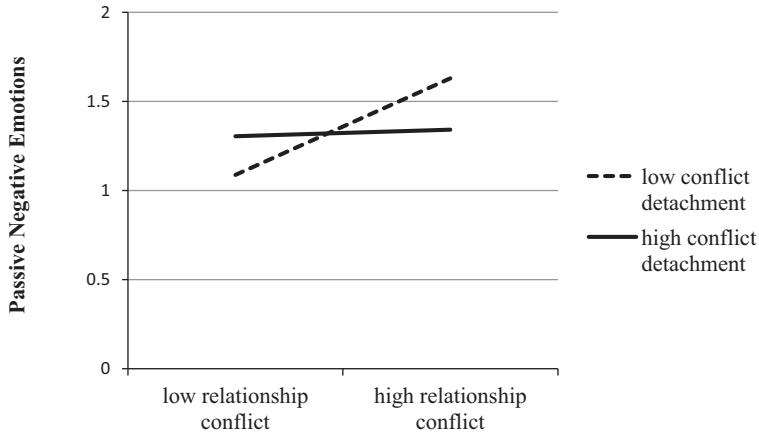
Figure 1. Interaction of daily relationship conflict and conflict detachment.

however, conflict resolution was negatively related to daily active negative emotions (Table 2, Model 1; $t = -4.81$, $p < .01$). These findings largely confirm Hypothesis 1: Daily relationship and process conflict are related to an increase in daily active and passive negative emotions.

These results also answer our Research Question whether different types of conflict stir different types of negative emotions. We found no relationship between daily task conflict and negative emotions; however, relationship and process conflicts were both positively related to passive as well as active negative emotions. Thus, we did not find strong evidence that different types of daily conflict prompt different classes of negative emotions.

We tested whether conflict detachment weakens the positive relationship between daily conflict and daily negative emotions. The results partially confirmed our expectation (Tables 2 and 3). Conflict detachment significantly moderated the relationship between daily relationship conflict and passive negative emotions ($t = -3.11$, $p = .01$). Plotting the interaction revealed that conflict detachment weakens the positive relationship between passive negative emotions and relationship conflict (Figure 1). We found no support that conflict detachment moderated the relationships between daily task and process conflict and negative emotions. However, we did find a direct negative relationship between daily conflict detachment and active negative emotions (Table 2, Model 2; $t = -2.59$, $p < .05$). These results partially confirmed Hypothesis 2.

Next, we tested whether active and passive negative emotions were negatively related to people's daily in-role and extra-role performance (Hypothesis 3a). The results indicated no significant association of neither passive nor active negative emotions with daily in-role and extra-role performance on the same day. Thus, Hypothesis 3a was not confirmed.

To test Hypothesis 3b, we constructed lagged variables using the commands of the MlWin software (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009). Analyses showed that previous days' active negative emotions did not predict next days' in-role nor extra-role performance. However, passive negative emotions predicted next days' in-role performance (Table 4, Model 2; $t = -2.59$, $p < .05$) and extra-role performance (Table 5, Model 2; $t = -2.44$; $p < .05$), partially confirming Hypothesis 3b.[1]

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[1]As one of the reviewers pointed out, answering the daily survey may have influenced respondents' emotions and reported performance over the 5 days. Therefore, we ran the analyses again controlling for the response day and found that it did not influence our results. Additionally, we also controlled for the average hours per week people work. As one reviewer pointed out it could be that full-time workers may have more time to cope with the conflict experience during work hours than part-time employees. The results did not change when including this control variable.

Table 4

Multilevel Estimates Predicting Daily In-Role Performance

Variable	Null Model			Model 1			Model 2		
	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	t
Constant	2.196	.060	36.60	2.113	.078	28.95	2.077	.077	26.97
Conflict with superior				0.123	.124	0.99	0.391	.177	2.21
Conflict resolution				−0.083	.041	−2.02	−0.114	.051	−2.24
Gender				0.167	.121	1.38	0.184	.126	1.46
Tenure				0.012	.006	2.00	0.002	.006	0.33
LAG passive negative emotions							−0.264	.102	−2.59
LAG active negative emotions							0.068	.076	0.89
$-2 \times \log$	606.677			493.070			310.561		
Difference of $-2 \times \log$				113.607			182.509		
df				4			2		
Level 1 intercept variance (SE)	0.151 (.041)			0.107 (.039)			0.038 (.039)		
Level 2 intercept variance (SE)	0.535 (.032)			0.387 (.041)			0.424 (.059)		

Table 5

Multilevel Estimates Predicting Daily Extra-Role Performance

Variable	Null Model			Model 1			Model 2		
	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	t	Estimate	SE	t
Constant	2.879	.081	35.54	2.779	.104	26.72	2.710	.115	23.57
Conflict with superior				.065	.146	0.44	0.305	.197	1.55
Conflict resolution				−.038	.049	−0.78	−0.049	.056	−0.88
Gender				.135	.162	0.83	0.175	.186	0.94
Tenure				.014	.007	2.00	0.011	.009	1.22
LAG passive negative emotions							−0.273	.112	−2.44
LAG active negative emotions							0.033	.082	0.40
$-2 \times \log$	722.408			587.106			362.773		
Difference of $-2 \times \log$				135.02			224.333		
df				4			2		
Level 1 intercept variance (SE)	0.302 (.073)			0.233 (.070)			0.232 (.084)		
Level 2 intercept variance (SE)	0.494 (.045)			0.539 (.057)			0.485 (.068)		

Discussion

Although many conflict researchers defined workplace conflict as a process (Van de Vliert, 1997), we are among the first to increase our understanding of this phenomenon on the daily level. Our study adds to the literature by providing insights on the emotional and behavioral reactions of individuals to workplace conflicts, and on one possible strategy that they can apply to manage conflict. Our results showed that daily relationship and process conflict prompt both active and passive negative emotions.

Specifically, the passive negative emotions were found to negatively affect both in-role and extra-role performance the following day. Conflict detachment buffered the positive association between relationship conflict and passive negative emotions.

The finding that daily relationship and process conflicts elicit both active and passive negative emotions is important for the workplace conflict literature where negative emotions are largely equated with frustration and anger. Our results emphasize the complexity of emotional responses toward daily conflicts. A conflict event not simply increases anger and contempt but also guilt and sadness. This finding underscores the value of distinguishing classes of negative emotions to thoroughly examine the conflict process and its effect on employees.

The associations of daily relationship and process conflict with negative emotions resemble cross-sectional research findings (Greer & Jehn, 2007). Daily task conflicts were unrelated to negative emotions, which seems to contradict the belief that task conflicts are likely to evoke negative emotions (Chen & Ayoko, 2012; Rispens, 2012). However when scrutinizing the literature, we think endurance is an important factor that we overlooked. Lingering task conflict may increase negative emotions and accompanying behaviors (cf. Yang & Mossholder, 2004). We expect that a persistent daily task conflict with the same person(s) over a significant amount of time elicits negative emotions which we have not captured in our study. Alternatively, the lack of an association between daily task conflict and negative emotions could suggest that task conflicts activate positive emotions (e.g., alertness, challenge). Task conflict may bring about a lively discussion, which may increase one's personal excitement (Todorova, Bear, & Weingart, 2014). Therefore, we think it is important that future studies include more negative emotions (e.g., fear and shame) as well as positive emotions to unravel the linkages between conflicts and emotional reactions on a daily level of analysis. Furthermore, investigating the mediating role of threats to self-views (Swann et al., 2004) on the link between daily conflict types and emotions can help to better understand these relationships.

Our results suggest that passive negative emotions evoked by a conflict experience on one day inhibit people's in- and extra-role performance the following day. We suspect that people's feelings of sadness and guilt fuel rumination processes that prevent people to fully focus on their tasks the following day and perhaps fairness perceptions explain why people engage less in extra-role behaviors. In contrast, it seems that active negative emotions are short-lived and serve a quick recovery from a conflict event. More research is needed to test these suggested mediational processes. Not finding relationships between negative emotions and someone's in-role and extra-role performance on the same day contrasted our initial expectations. However, the emotion regulation literature suggests that reflection on emotions, which we suspect often happens after the workday has finished and people have some distance to the (work) situation, depletes resources that are functional for work performance (Gross, 2002; Trougakos, Beal, Green, & Weiss, 2008) and further corroborates our finding of a lagged effect.

We found that people who were able to mentally disconnect themselves from a relationship conflict event experienced less passive negative emotions. We believe this finding is important. The potential negative effects of conflict are well-known, yet research hardly focused what employees themselves can do to minimize conflict's negative impact. Demonstrating that psychological conflict detachment decreases the level of passive negative emotions as a consequence of relationship conflict is a first step to examine coping strategies employees use to face conflict situations. Moreover, this finding adds to recent research aiming at identifying circumstances that buffer the effects of relationship conflicts (Rispens, Greer, Jehn, & Thatcher, 2011).

Regarding active negative emotions our results showed a negative relationship with conflict detachment instead of a moderating effect. Thus, the more participants were able to re-focus their attention to their work, their levels of anger and contempt decreased. This corroborates earlier studies suggesting a "cooling off" helps resolution because of the anticipated decrease in negative emotions (Ury, Brett, & Goldberg, 1988). Not finding a moderating effect of conflict detachment for task and process conflicts is probably due to our operationalization of conflict detachment. We worded the scale items as mentally

disconnecting from the conflict by focusing on work tasks. However, task and process conflicts are so much intertwined with people's work that detachment seems impossible. Thus, we need to rethink our operationalization of conflict detachment and consider a distinction based on the type of conflict. Perhaps it is more suitable to formulate task conflict detachment, for example, as a mentally disconnecting by engaging in social or physical activities.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite its strengths, the current study is not without limitations. One limitation that we should discuss is that we relied on self-report data, which raises concerns about common-method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Because we used person-centered scores in our analyses and investigated lagged effects, we believe the danger of this bias is not a substantial threat for the current study. Moreover, the complexity of the established relationships (i.e., the interaction and lagged models) similarly reduces these concerns (Lance, Dawson, Birkelbach, & Hoffman, 2010).

The fact that our sample included employees from different organizations and branches enhances the ecological validity of our findings to the general Dutch employees. However, given that solely Dutch employees participated in our study obviously limits the generalizability of our findings.

Additionally, a fruitful avenue for further research is to include measures about whether respondents were the instigators of the conflict event or not. Retrospectively, we think that this difference is important and being the instigator or not could predict how people emotionally react to a conflict event at work. For example, instigators may be the ones who report feeling angry whereas the "receiving" party is likely to feel guilt or sadness. Differentiating between instigators and receivers of daily-level conflict would increase our knowledge about conflict as a process.

Practical Implications

Daily process and relationship conflicts are positively related to people's negative emotions, and specifically, passive negative emotions appear to be detrimental for future in-role and extra-role performance. For organizations, it seems important to prevent passive negative emotional reactions following conflict. Organizations can set norms on how to air feelings and frustrations related to conflict and that these feelings matter (Brett, 1984). Another option is training employees to foster positive thoughts and to increase problem-solving skills (Aldao & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2010).

People can effectively buffer negative emotions when they are able to psychologically detach themselves from a relationship conflict. We believe that this coping strategy can be developed in a training program to provide employees with the necessary skills. In relation to this, organizations can establish norms not to respond immediately to personal disputes, but to "cool down" by refocusing their cognitive energy toward the task.

Concluding, we consider the study of daily-level conflict a fruitful strategy for future research on workplace conflict because it will generate more specific and accurate knowledge on how people respond to specific conflict events at work, which, in turn, will help the development of interventions that are necessary to empower employees.

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