The relationship between conflict resolution strategies and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and the moderating role of trait Emotional Intelligence (EI) were investigated. Participants were 320 public servants (male = 180, female = 140) randomly selected from 5 states in southwestern Nigeria. Measures of trait EI, OCB, and conflict resolution strategies were administered to the respondents, and multiple regression was used to analyze the data collected. The results indicate that forcing and withdrawing strategies negatively and significantly predicted OCB. Confronting, compromising, and smoothing strategies significantly predicted OCB. Trait EI moderated the relationship between OCB and forcing and withdrawing strategies. It was recommended that counseling and organizational psychologists should design trait EI education and training in conflict resolution for both subordinates and superiors in work organizations.

Keywords: conflict resolution, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, trait EI, work attitudes, work-related behavior.

Over the years, several studies have linked conflict resolution with work performance or work indicators (attitudes) (Alper, Law, & Tjosvold, 2000; Meyer, 2004; Ogungbamila, 2006). The federal government’s implementation of the monetization policy and organizational changes/restructuring engendered much interpersonal conflict between workers and managers in several organizations in
Nigeria because the workers’ unions felt they did not have enough involvement in the exercise (Adebayo, 2006). However, the attitudes of public service workers in Nigeria following a conflict resolution process have not been adequately investigated. Such workers’ attitudes may mediate the relationship between conflict resolution and work indicators or outcomes.

The choice of public service workers in Nigeria was informed by the fact that many public enterprises have undergone organizational changes and restructuring in order to improve operational efficiency and competitiveness. These organizational changes and restructuring have resulted in the retrenchment of many workers in the public service (Adebayo, 2006). The retrenchment had grave psychological consequences for both laid-off workers and the survivors of layoffs who remained on the job. The workers’ union’s strikes negotiations, protests, and pleas did stop the government from continuing with the retrenchment.

It is possible that the management of most government ministries and firms used a combination of conflict resolution strategies to resolve the conflicts that arose. The consequence for the survivors of the layoffs was job insecurity. The survivors of the layoffs had been reported to have experienced anxiety about losing their jobs, lower morale, decreased loyalty, distrust, reduced productivity, creativity, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Adebayo, 2006; Sverke, Hellgren, & Näswall, 2006). The survivors of layoffs were likely to have perceived their managements and superiors as perpetuating organizational injustice. The more employees perceive procedural injustice and job insecurity as arising from the workplace, the more they might reciprocate by exhibiting more negative attitudes such as reduced organizational commitment, trust, loyalty, and withholding OCB. All these might subsequently lead to further conflicts between the management and the workers.

Thus, there is a need to examine the effects of different conflict resolution strategies on the work attitudes of employees. This is because a worker who has experienced workplace frustration or suffered organizational injustice arising from the way management-worker conflicts were resolved may engage in counterproductive work activities such as character assassination, spreading negative rumors, sabotaging, turnover, (Ogungbamila, 2006), and withholding organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Alotaibi, 2001; Giap, Hackermeier, Jiao, & Wagdarikar, 2005; Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002).

The purpose of this study was to examine how much organizational citizenship behavior could be predicted by five conflict resolution strategies (forcing, smoothing, compromising, confronting, and withdrawing) and the moderating role of trait EI in the prediction.
CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AND OCB

Conflict resolution is a process in which interpersonal communication is used to allow two conflicted parties to reach an amicable and satisfactory point of agreement (Omoluabi, 2001). There are five conflict resolution strategies: confronting/collaborating, withdrawing/avoiding, forcing/competing, smoothing, and compromising, which can be adopted by conflicting parties (Meyer, 2004; Ogungbamila, 2006).

The confronting/collaborating strategy ranks high on both assertiveness and cooperativeness. It has the highest level of win/win orientation that involves information sharing, openness, and clarification of issues on the point of conflict to reach a solution acceptable to both parties (McShane & Von Glinow, 2000). The compromising strategy is a give-and-take method of resolving conflict. Each party gives up something that the other party wants. Use of this style may result in positive work behavior and attitudes. The forcing or competitive style is one in which one party adopts the competing strategy to force the other party to accept a particular position. The forcing style rates very high on assertiveness and is low on cooperativeness, so a win-lose orientation is adopted which may result in negative work behavior.

The smoothing strategy is a system of avoiding conflict. The smoothing style rates low on assertiveness and high on cooperativeness. Differences are not emphasized, and points common to both parties are highlighted. This style may also result in positive work behavior and attitudes. The withdrawal strategy involves the tendency of a party in conflict to refrain from or ignore the conflict altogether rather than trying to directly resolve it. This style has the tendency to engender counterproductive work behavior (Alper et al., 2000; Meyer, 2004; Ogungbamila, 2006; Omoluabi, 2001).

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB) are those which are voluntary and above the call of duty behaviors that not only contribute to company success but are necessary for success (McShane & Von Glinow, 2000; Organ, 1988). Organ identified five categories of OCB: Altruism-helping of an individual coworker on a task; courtesy-alerting others in the organization about changes that may affect their work; conscientious – carrying out one’s duties beyond the minimum requirements; sportsmanship – refraining from complaining about trivial matters, and civic virtue – participating in the governance of the organization. Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994) modified the categorizations, merging altruism and courtesy and terming it helping.

Several researchers have found that OCB results in organizational effectiveness, efficiency, and group performance ( Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997) and unit performance (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1994).

Empirical evidence generally indicates that studies on the antecedents of OCB, particularly conflict resolution styles, are scarce and not well established
Conflict Resolution Strategies and OCB

(Podsakoff et al., 1997; Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 1994). A few studies that are related to the constructs investigated in this study are reported here. For example, perceived procedural justice was found to be significantly related to organizational citizenship behavior (Alotaibi, 2001; Giap et al., 2005). Zellars et al. (2002) found that abusive supervision was negatively related to OCB.

Ogungbamila (2006) found that the forcing strategy had a direct significant relationship with work frustration – while confronting, withdrawing, smoothing, and compromising styles did not. Furthermore, Montoro-Rodriguez and Small (2006) reported that nurses’ job satisfaction, psychological morale, and occupational stress were influenced by conflict resolution styles. Similarly, in some studies conflict resolution styles have been linked with work performance or work indicators (Alper et al., 2000; Meyer, 2004).

Subordinates who are unfairly treated by their supervisors’ use of the forcing and withdrawing conflict resolution strategies are likely to withhold their OCB. Subordinates whose supervisors use confronting, compromising, and smoothing strategies will likely reciprocate this supportive leadership behavior by performing more OCBs (Organ, 1988).

Trait EI and OCB

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a concept proposed to account for the variability in individuals’ ability and propensity to regulate their emotions. Trait EI is the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Trait EI may enhance helping behavior and other citizenship behaviors because it enables employees to comprehend their coworkers’ feelings and to respond better than employees with low trait EI (Abraham, 1999). Indeed, individuals with high trait EI may engage in helping behavior because being in a good mood is reinforcing and displaying helping behavior is rewarding (Carmeli, 2003). People in good moods are more socially interactive. Employees who have positive emotional reactions to their jobs are more likely to be engaged in helpful behavior.

Moderating Effects of Trait EI

The literature suggests that the negative effects of conflict resolution strategies that correspond to organizational injustice on work attitudes may be moderated by several variables including trait EI (see e.g., Carmeli, 2003; Martins, Eddleston & Veiga, 2002; Mikolajczak, Luminet, Leroy, & Roy, 2007). In this study, trait EI is expected to moderate the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and OCB. Unfair treatment arising from a superior’s use of forcing or
withdrawal/avoidance, or uncooperative conflict resolution strategies may have some negative consequences for the extent to which an employee will exhibit OCB.

Individuals with high trait EI scores are likely to have the ability to appraise both the situation and their resources, process the emotional information arising from the unfair treatment or organizational injustice, and select adaptive coping strategies (e.g., problem-focused coping) by assertively seeking fair treatment from their employers rather than using maladaptive coping strategies (e.g., avoidance and violence) in order to deal with the negative events (Mikolajczak, Nelis, Hansenne, & Quoidbach, 2008). Through this process, unfairly treated individuals with high trait EI will likely develop high OCB. Therefore, it is expected that trait EI will interact with conflict resolution strategies and thereby help to enhance OCB of the workers.

HYPOTHESES

Based on theoretical and empirical evidence, the following hypotheses were proposed at the 0.05 level of significance: Forcing and withdrawing conflict resolution strategies will negatively predict organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Hypotheses 1 and 2). Confronting, compromising, and smoothing strategies will positively predict OCB (Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5). Trait EI will positively predict OCB (Hypothesis 6). Trait EI will moderate the relationships between each of the conflict resolution strategies (forcing, withstanding, confronting, compromising, and smoothing) and OCB (Hypothesis 7).

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Three hundred and twenty participants responded to the survey. One hundred and eighty (56.25%) were male and 140 (43.75%) female. Their ages ranged from 25 to 55 years with a mean age of 32.50 (SD = 9.20). The educational qualifications of the participants ranged from primary school certificate to University degree. Eighteen (5.6%) had primary school certificate, 84 (26.25%) had secondary school certificate, 104 (32.5%) had the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE)/Ordinary National Diploma (OND), 79 (24.68%) had B.Sc., B.A., B.Ed./HND, and 35 (10.93%) had masters’ degrees.

The participants’ job status varied from low (248) to middle (40) to high (32). Employees from low, middle, and high levels of organization were involved in the study because they were survivors of a mass retrenchment exercise and had experienced unfair treatment arising from their superior’s use of conflict of resolution strategies that had an assertive and uncooperative orientation.
The Conflict Resolution Strategies Scale (CRSS) (Howat & London, 1980) was used to measure the perception of the participants of their superior’s typical behavior when resolving conflicts in the workplace on a 5-point scale (1 = never to 5 = always). The CRSS is a 25-item inventory with 5 subscales consisting of confronting, withdrawing, forcing, smoothing, and compromising respectively. Howat and London obtained the following Cronbach’s alpha values for the CRSS subscales: 0.84 (confronting), 0.66 (withdrawing) 0.84 (forcing), 0.73 (smoothing), and 0.64 (compromising) respectively. For this study, the Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients obtained for the CRSS subscales were 0.80 (confronting), 0.72 (withdrawing), .82 (forcing), .72 (smoothing), and .70 (compromising) respectively. Sample items for each subscale of the CRSS are: “He/She brings the problems clearly into the open and pursues them to resolution” (confronting); “He/She gives in a little to get a little” (compromising); “He/She imposes his/her solution” (forcing); “He/She plays down our differences” (smoothing); and “He/She tries not to get involved” (withdrawing). The higher the scores, the higher the extent to which the superior usually used the style to resolve conflict. The CRSS has been used with success by Ogungbamila (2006) with Nigerian samples.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) was measured by means of the OCB measure by Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994). It consists of 3 sections: helping behavior (7 items), sportsmanship (3 items), and civic virtue (3 items). The workers’ ratings of their superiors’ citizenship behaviors were obtained on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. For this study, the Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficients for helping = .95, civic virtue = .96, and sportsmanship = .88 while that for the whole OCB scale was 0.93. Sample items for each subscale of OCB are: Help each other if someone falls behind in his/her work (helping). Provide constructive suggestions about how colleagues can improve their effectiveness (civic virtue). Always focus on what is wrong with our situation, rather than the positive side (sportsmanship, reverse scored). The OCB measure was used as a unidimensional scale.

Trait EI was measured by means of a 16-item emotional scale developed by Wong and Law (2002) (WLEIS) and based on the model developed by Mayer and Salovey (1997). The response format for the WLEIS is a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The WLEIS has 4 subscales with 4 items each: self-emotions appraisal (4 items, $\alpha = 0.90$), use of emotions (4 items, $\alpha = 0.79$), regulation of emotions (4 items, $\alpha = 0.89$), others’ emotions appraisal (4 items, $\alpha = 0.93$). Sample items for each subscale of the WLEIS are: I have a good understanding of my own emotions (Self-Emotions Appraisal, SEA). I always know how my friends are feeling from their behavior (Others – Emotions Appraisal, OEA). I would always encourage myself to try my best (Use of Emotion, UOE). I am quite capable of controlling my own emotions...
Conflict Resolution Strategies and OCB

The WLEIS can be used as either a multidimensional or a unidimensional scale. A Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.87$ was obtained for the WLEIS when used as a unidimensional scale in this study.

**Procedure**

Participants were randomly selected across all ministries in five states in southwestern Nigeria with the help of some assigned personnel. The three questionnaires were distributed to the participants in their workplaces after obtaining their consent. The purpose of the study, which was given as an academic research exercise designed to discover the participants’ ratings of the conflict resolution strategies used by their superiors in their organizations and their perceived OCB, was explained to the participants at the end. In a section of the questionnaire background information concerning the participants’ age, sex, education, job status, and tenure with the organization was requested.

The questionnaires were completed anonymously by the participants in their offices, units, or departments. Of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 320 were used for analysis, giving a response rate of 80.0%. The others were incomplete.

**Data Analysis**

Control variables were age, sex, education, tenure, and job status and were treated as covariates to reduce error variance (Aiken & West, 1991). Age, sex, education, job status, and tenure were treated as control variables because previous researchers have proved that they exert some influence on OCB (Salami, 2007, 2008; Zellars et al., 2002). The independent variables were the conflict resolution strategies – confronting, compromising, forcing, smoothing, and withdrawing. The moderator variable was trait EI, while the dependent variable was OCB. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data in order to examine the prediction of OCB from the five conflict resolution strategies.

In the first step the control variables were entered. In the second step conflict resolution strategies and trait EI were entered. In step 3 the interaction effects between conflict resolution strategies and trait EI were tested.

**Results**

Means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha) for each scale are presented in Table 1. All scale reliabilities ranged from .64 to .93. Results in Table 1 reveal that all the control variables had nonsignificant relationships with OCB. Significant positive relationships were obtained between OCB and Trait EI ($r_{(318)} = .36, p < 0.05$), confronting ($r_{(318)} = .33, p < .05$), smoothing ($r_{(318)} = .35, p < .05$), and compromising strategies ($r_{(318)} = .28, p < .05$). However, OCB had significant negative relationships with
ConflicResolution strategies and OCB withdrawing \((r_{(318)} = -0.20, p < 0.05)\), and forcing strategies \((r_{(318)} = -0.24, p < 0.05)\).

**Table 1**

Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations of all Variables in the Study \((N = 320)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OCB (.93)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait EI (.87)</td>
<td>.36*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronting (.84)</td>
<td>.33*</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawing (.66)</td>
<td>-.20*</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forcing (.84)</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoothing (.73)</td>
<td>.35*</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromising (.64)</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.30*</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (.81)</td>
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<td>.03</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (.79)</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure (.62)</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (.61)</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Status (.23)</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.08</td>
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<td>.18</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[M \quad 48.24 \quad 50.32 \quad 17.40 \quad 12.30 \quad 0.41 \quad 18.20 \quad 18.60 \quad 32.50 \quad 1.50 \quad 8.50 \quad 2.60 \quad 1.60\]

\[SD \quad 3.40 \quad 2.70 \quad 5.00 \quad 3.45 \quad 4.20 \quad 1.80 \quad 3.42 \quad 9.20 \quad 0.50 \quad 7.50 \quad 3.30 \quad 6.50\]

*Note: Reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha) of each scale are on the diagonal (in parentheses). SD = Standard Deviation, OCB = Organizational Citizenship Behavior, * = p < .05 (two-tailed test)*

**Table 2**

Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Prediction of OCB from Conflict Resolution Strategy Moderated by Trait EI \((N = 320)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>(R^2)</th>
<th>(\Delta R^2)</th>
<th>(F)</th>
<th>(df)</th>
<th>(\beta)</th>
<th>(t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>(5,314)</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Status</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>7.56*</td>
<td>(6,308)</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>2.60*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>-2.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawing</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.58</td>
<td>-7.80*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forcing</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>5.23*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoothing</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>9.82*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>6.25*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>8.75*</td>
<td>(5,303)</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>1.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confronting X EI</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2.20*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Withdrawing X EI</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>1.96*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.57</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: EI = Trait EI; * = p < .05 (2-tailed test)*
Consistent with the hypothesized model, results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis showed that the overall model was significant ($R^2 = .48$, $\Delta R^2 = .13$, $F_{(16,303)} = 8.75$, $p < .05$).

In step 1, control variables (age, sex, education, job status, and tenure with the organization) entered did not make any significant contribution (7.0%) to the variance in OCB ($\Delta R^2 = .07$, $F_{(5,324)} = 1.28$, $p > .05$). In step 2, addition of the five conflict resolution strategies and trait EI made significant contribution (28%) to the variance of OCB ($\Delta R^2 = .28$, $F_{(6,308)} = 7.56$, $p < .05$).

Forcing and withdrawing conflict resolution strategies negatively and significantly predicted OCB ($\beta = -.58$, $t = -7.80$, $p < .05$ and $\beta = -.17$, $t = -2.00$, $p < .05$) respectively, thus Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported. Supporting Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5, results showed that confronting ($\beta = .20$, $t = 2.60$, $p < .05$), compromising ($\beta = .72$, $t = 9.82$, $p < .05$), and smoothing ($\beta = .69$, $t = 5.23$, $p < .05$), conflict resolution strategies significantly predicted OCB. Support was also found for Hypothesis 6. Subordinates with high trait EI developed higher OCB ($\beta = .52$, $t = 6.25$, $p < .05$).

In step 3, the inclusion of the interaction terms between conflict resolution strategies and trait EI accounted for an additional 13.0% of the variance in OCB ($F_{(8,303)} = 8.75$, $p < .05$). Results further showed that there were significant positive interactions between withdrawing strategy and trait EI, ($\beta = .20$, $t = 2.20$, $p < .05$) and between forcing strategy and trait EI ($\beta = .12$, $t = 1.96$, $p < .05$) but none between each of confronting, smoothing, compromising strategy, and trait EI. Therefore hypothesis 7 was partially supported.

**DISCUSSION**

In this study the degree to which Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) could be predicted by conflict resolution strategies and the moderating role of trait Emotional Intelligence (EI) in the prediction were examined.

That forcing and withdrawing strategies negatively predicted OCB show that the more the superiors used these two strategies, the less their subordinates developed OCBs. These results are in agreement with the work of Alotaibi (2001), Alper et al. (2000), Meyer (2004), and Ogungbamila (2006). An explanation for these findings is that when subordinates feel that they have been robbed of the opportunity to share and exchange information on an issue in conflict, they will feel unfairly treated and in exchange they may not develop high OCB. Instead they may feel aggrieved and frustrated and may withdraw OCB.

The findings from this study indicate that confronting, compromising, and smoothing strategies significantly predict OCB. These results are in consonance with those from previous studies (Alotaibi, 2001; Alper et al., 2000; Giap et al., 2005; Meyer, 2004; Montoro-Rodriguez & Small, 2006; Omoluabi, 2001).
However, the results contradicted the results obtained by Meyer (2004) who found that the relationship between conflict handling styles (forcing) and negative work indicators disappeared when the amount and intensity of conflict were held constant. These results could be because the subordinates felt that they had the opportunity to share and exchange information on the issue in conflict and they were able to negotiate adequately. This might have assisted them in developing a high level of OCB.

That subordinates with high trait EI developed more OCBs corroborate the work of Abraham (1999) and Carmeli (2003), who reported similar findings. Employees with high trait EI were able to comprehend their superiors and co-workers’ feelings and were able to shift from negative to positive moods by adopting the right coping strategies to deal with stress caused by unfair treatment by superiors. Consequently they were able to develop more OCBs.

The results indicate that the interaction between EI and each of the forcing and withdrawing resolution strategies significantly predicted OCB. When forcing and withdrawing resolution strategies were used among subordinates who had high trait EI, they were able to appraise their resources and the situation and select adaptive coping strategies to face the challenges of unfair treatment from their superiors. Consequently, they developed more OCBs. For subordinates who had lower trait EI, under a supervisor who used forcing and withdrawing resolution strategies, the reverse was the case. Their OCB reduced significantly.

These results are consistent with research findings that trait EI is a moderator of the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and OCBs (Carmeli, 2003; Martins et al., 2002).

The interaction between each of confronting, smoothing, compromising strategies, and trait EI were not significant in predicting OCB. This is because each of these conflict resolution strategies has more win/win orientation, cooperativeness, and less assertiveness dimensions. These conflict resolution strategies could predict OCB regardless of the level of EI of the employees.

The present findings have both theoretical and practical implications. Previous studies in which factors affecting work attitudes and behaviors of workers were examined have highlighted the need for superiors/managers to be seen to be just and fair to their subordinates during conflict resolution. The findings from this study have built on this by demonstrating the importance of trait EI in the resolution of conflicts in organizations in order to elicit the most positive reactions from workers after resolving workplace conflicts and to enhance OCB among them.

Given that conflict resolution strategies and trait EI have been implicated in this study in enhancing the OCB of workers, practical steps should be taken to train supervisors to adopt the conflict resolution strategies that can ensure information exchange and sharing on issues of conflict in the workplace. Also,
efforts should be made to enhance the trait EI of the workers through trait EI education and training by counseling/organizational psychologists.

This study is not without its limitations, one of which is the self-report measures used in data collection. In future studies, therefore, these measurements could be complemented with other methods such as interview and focus group discussion techniques. Another shortcoming is the cross-sectional nature of the study, and a longitudinal study that would span one or two years is suggested in future research so that cause-and-effect relationships may be able to be established. In conclusion, the results from this study demonstrate that conflict resolution strategies predicted OCB and that trait EI moderated the relationship between conflict resolution strategies and OCB.

REFERENCES


