



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Entrepreneurial Team Conflict and Firm Performance: Evidence from Private Entrepreneurial Firms

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Jan 18, 2026	<p>Entrepreneurial teams play a critical role in shaping the performance outcomes of new ventures, yet internal team conflict remains a pervasive challenge in entrepreneurial firms. Drawing on survey data collected from private entrepreneurial firms in China, this study empirically examines the determinants of entrepreneurial team conflict and its impact on firm performance using quantitative research methods. Based on a large-sample questionnaire survey, the study measures task conflict and relationship conflict within entrepreneurial teams and investigates their associations with both managerial and performance outcomes. Regression analyses reveal that demographic and structural heterogeneity within entrepreneurial teams significantly influences the emergence of team conflict. Specifically, age and educational heterogeneity are positively associated with task conflict, while relationship conflict is negatively related to firm performance. Further empirical results indicate that task conflict and relationship conflict exert differential effects on entrepreneurial performance, and these effects vary across different stages of the entrepreneurial life cycle. Additional analyses using publicly available data from listed entrepreneurial firms provide supplementary evidence on the persistence of team conflict and its performance implications after initial public offerings. The findings demonstrate that entrepreneurial team conflict is a significant explanatory factor of firm performance beyond structural and environmental conditions. By providing large-sample quantitative evidence from an emerging economy, this study contributes to the entrepreneurship and management literature by clarifying the performance consequences of entrepreneurial team conflict and offering empirically grounded insights into entrepreneurial team management.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial activity is widely recognized as a critical driver of economic growth, innovation, and employment, particularly in emerging economies where private entrepreneurial firms play a central role in market development. While prior research has extensively examined environmental, institutional, and strategic determinants of entrepreneurial performance, increasing attention has been directed toward the internal dynamics of entrepreneurial teams. Entrepreneurial teams are responsible for opportunity identification, resource mobilization, and strategic decision-making under conditions of high uncertainty, making their internal processes a key determinant of venture outcomes. Among these processes, team conflict has emerged as a salient yet insufficiently understood factor influencing entrepreneurial performance (Huang et al., 2022).

Existing entrepreneurship and management literature suggests that conflict within entrepreneurial teams is both inevitable and consequential. Entrepreneurial ventures are often characterized by heterogeneous founding teams, rapid growth trajectories, and ambiguous role structures, all of which increase the likelihood of internal disagreements. Quantitative studies have distinguished between task conflict, which arises from differences in opinions and perspectives regarding work-related issues, and relationship conflict, which involves interpersonal tension and emotional friction

among team members. However, empirical evidence on how different types of entrepreneurial team conflict affect firm performance remains mixed, particularly in the context of private entrepreneurial firms operating in transitional and emerging markets (Bian et al., 2020).

Most prior empirical studies on team conflict and performance have focused on large corporations or publicly listed firms, relying heavily on secondary archival data. While these studies provide valuable insights, their findings may not be directly applicable to entrepreneurial firms, which differ substantially in governance structures, decision-making processes, and performance metrics. Entrepreneurial firms typically operate with limited formalization, high managerial discretion, and strong dependence on founding teams, making internal team dynamics especially influential. Consequently, there is a need for large-sample quantitative studies that directly measure entrepreneurial team conflict and examine its performance implications at the firm level.

This study addresses this gap by empirically investigating the antecedents and performance consequences of entrepreneurial team conflict using survey-based quantitative data collected from private entrepreneurial firms. By focusing on task conflict and relationship conflict within entrepreneurial teams, the study aims to clarify how different forms of conflict are associated with entrepreneurial performance outcomes. Rather than treating conflict as a unidimensional construct, this research adopts a multidimensional perspective that allows for a more nuanced assessment of its effects. This approach is consistent with recent calls in entrepreneurship research to move beyond simplistic assumptions and examine the complex mechanisms through which internal team processes shape venture performance (Li et al., 2025).

In addition to examining the direct effects of entrepreneurial team conflict on performance, this study incorporates team heterogeneity as a key explanatory factor. Prior quantitative research suggests that demographic and cognitive diversity within entrepreneurial teams may simultaneously enhance information processing and increase the likelihood of conflict. Variables such as age heterogeneity, educational heterogeneity, and functional background diversity have been shown to influence both task-related disagreements and interpersonal tensions. However, empirical findings remain inconclusive, particularly with respect to entrepreneurial firms in emerging economies. By integrating team heterogeneity into the analytical framework, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the structural conditions under which entrepreneurial team conflict arises (Li et al., 2025).

The empirical analysis is based on a structured questionnaire survey administered to a large sample of private entrepreneurial firms. All key constructs, including team conflict dimensions and firm performance indicators, are operationalized using validated multi-item scales and subjected to rigorous reliability and validity testing. Regression-based analytical techniques are employed to assess the relationships among team heterogeneity, entrepreneurial team conflict, and firm performance. This quantitative design enables systematic hypothesis testing and enhances the robustness and generalizability of the findings. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the entrepreneurship literature by empirically demonstrating that entrepreneurial performance cannot be fully explained by external environmental factors or firm-level structural characteristics alone. Instead, internal team processes, particularly conflict dynamics within entrepreneurial teams, constitute a critical explanatory mechanism. By providing firm-level quantitative evidence from an emerging economy context, the study extends existing research on team conflict and performance into the domain of entrepreneurship (Mazra, 2017).

From a practical standpoint, the findings offer data-driven insights for entrepreneurs, investors, and policymakers concerned with the sustainability and growth of private entrepreneurial firms. Understanding how different types of team conflict affect performance can inform more effective team composition, governance practices, and conflict management strategies in entrepreneurial settings. Overall, this study advances empirical knowledge on entrepreneurial team dynamics and underscores the importance of internal organizational processes in shaping entrepreneurial success.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Entrepreneurial Teams and Internal Conflict

Entrepreneurial firms are typically founded and managed by small teams whose members jointly engage in opportunity recognition, strategic decision-making, and resource allocation. Compared

with established corporations, entrepreneurial firms operate under higher levels of uncertainty, limited formalization, and strong dependence on founding team members. As a result, internal team processes play a particularly important role in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes. Among these processes, conflict within entrepreneurial teams has attracted increasing attention in quantitative entrepreneurship and management research (Zhou et al., 2015).

Prior empirical studies commonly conceptualize team conflict as a multidimensional construct and distinguish between task conflict and relationship conflict. Task conflict refers to disagreements among team members regarding task content, goals, or methods of task execution, whereas relationship conflict reflects interpersonal tension, emotional disagreement, and affective friction. This distinction has been widely adopted in quantitative studies using survey-based measures and validated conflict scales. In entrepreneurial contexts, where strategic decisions are often made collectively and under time pressure, both types of conflict are likely to emerge and exert measurable effects on firm performance. Empirical findings regarding the performance consequences of entrepreneurial team conflict remain inconsistent. Some quantitative studies suggest that task conflict may enhance information processing and decision quality, while others report null or negative effects. In contrast, relationship conflict has been more consistently associated with negative performance outcomes. These mixed findings indicate the need for further large-sample quantitative evidence, particularly from entrepreneurial firms in emerging economies (Demirkan et al., 2019).

2.2 Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Team Conflict

A prominent stream of quantitative research has examined team heterogeneity as a key antecedent of internal conflict. Demographic and cognitive differences among team members may increase the diversity of perspectives, but they may also intensify disagreement and misunderstanding. Empirical studies have operationalized team heterogeneity using indicators such as age diversity, educational diversity, gender composition, and prior work experience diversity (Zhou et al., 2015).

Quantitative evidence suggests that age and educational heterogeneity are positively associated with task conflict, as heterogeneous teams are more likely to hold divergent views regarding strategic issues and task execution. At the same time, certain forms of heterogeneity may also influence relationship conflict, depending on how demographic differences are perceived and managed within the team. In entrepreneurial firms, where role boundaries are often ambiguous and authority structures are fluid, the effects of heterogeneity on conflict may be particularly salient. Accordingly, this study focuses on team demographic heterogeneity as a measurable determinant of entrepreneurial team conflict (Sundermeier et al., 2023).

Hypothesis 1a: Entrepreneurial team demographic heterogeneity is positively associated with task conflict.

Hypothesis 1b: Entrepreneurial team demographic heterogeneity is positively associated with relationship conflict.

2.3 Entrepreneurial Team Conflict and Firm Performance

The relationship between entrepreneurial team conflict and firm performance has been examined primarily through quantitative survey-based studies. Firm performance in entrepreneurial research is commonly measured using subjective assessments of financial performance, growth performance, and operational effectiveness, which have been shown to correlate with objective indicators (Wang et al., 2020).

Relationship conflict has been found to undermine trust, communication quality, and cooperation among team members, thereby reducing decision efficiency and performance outcomes. Empirical results across multiple studies indicate a robust negative association between relationship conflict and firm performance. In contrast, the effects of task conflict appear to be more context-dependent. While some studies report positive effects of task conflict on performance through enhanced information exchange, others find non-significant or negative effects, particularly in early-stage entrepreneurial firms. Given the high uncertainty and resource constraints faced by entrepreneurial firms, unresolved task disagreements may delay decision-making and increase coordination costs. Therefore, the net effect of task conflict on entrepreneurial performance remains an empirical question requiring further quantitative testing (Li et al., 2020).

2.4 Entrepreneurial Life Cycle as a Contingency Factor

Recent quantitative studies emphasize that the effects of team processes on performance may vary across different stages of the entrepreneurial life cycle. Entrepreneurial firms at early stages typically lack formal structures and routines, making them more vulnerable to the disruptive effects of conflict. In contrast, firms at later stages may develop mechanisms that allow them to better manage disagreement and leverage diverse perspectives (Patzelt et al., 2021).

Empirical evidence suggests that task conflict may exert different performance effects depending on firm maturity. In early stages, task conflict may hinder coordination and reduce performance, whereas in later stages it may facilitate strategic adaptation. Relationship conflict, however, is expected to exert negative effects across stages due to its emotional and interpersonal nature (Kollmann et al., 2017).

Hypothesis 3a: The negative relationship between task conflict and entrepreneurial firm performance is stronger in the early stage of the entrepreneurial life cycle than in later stages. Hypothesis 3b: The negative relationship between relationship conflict and entrepreneurial firm performance persists across different stages of the entrepreneurial life cycle.

3. Conceptual Framework and Research Model

Table 1. Quantitative evidence supporting the conceptual framework and research model

Model Component	Variable (Operationalized)	Empirical Relationship	Direction	Statistical Significance	Sample Size
Antecedents	Age Heterogeneity	→ Task Conflict	Positive	$p < 0.01$	N = 235
Antecedents	Educational Heterogeneity	→ Task Conflict	Positive	$p < 0.01$	N = 235
Antecedents	Work Experience Heterogeneity	→ Task Conflict	Positive	$p < 0.05$	N = 235
Antecedents	Gender Heterogeneity	→ Relationship Conflict	Negative	$p < 0.05$	N = 235
Antecedents	Age Heterogeneity	→ Relationship Conflict	Positive	$p < 0.05$	N = 235
Mediating Mechanism	Task Conflict	→ Entrepreneurial Performance (Full Sample)	Not significant	n.s.	N = 235
Mediating Mechanism	Relationship Conflict	→ Entrepreneurial Performance (Full Sample)	Negative	$p < 0.01$	N = 235
Moderation (Life Cycle)	Task Conflict × Early Stage	→ Entrepreneurial Performance	Negative	$p < 0.05$	Subsample
Moderation (Life Cycle)	Task Conflict × Middle/Late Stage	→ Entrepreneurial Performance	Positive	$p < 0.05$	Subsample
Moderation (Life Cycle)	Relationship Conflict × Middle/Late Stage	→ Entrepreneurial Performance	Negative	$p < 0.01$	Subsample
Robustness Test	Management Team Conflict (Post-IPO)	→ Firm Performance	Negative	$p < 0.05$	Listed firms
Model Diagnostics	Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs)	Multicollinearity Test	All < 10	Acceptable	N = 235

Notes: Entrepreneurial performance is measured using multi-item subjective performance indicators. Conflict variables are measured using validated Likert-scale instruments. Life cycle stages are classified based on firm age and development status. reported relationships are estimated using regression-based statistical models.

According to Table 1. Based on the quantitative results, entrepreneurial team heterogeneity is a significant antecedent of internal conflict, as age, educational, and work experience heterogeneity are all positively associated with task conflict ($p < 0.05$ – 0.01 , $N = 235$), while age heterogeneity increases and gender heterogeneity reduces relationship conflict ($p < 0.05$). Relationship conflict is consistently detrimental to entrepreneurial performance, showing a significant negative effect in the full sample ($p < 0.01$) and remaining negative in middle and later life-cycle stages ($p < 0.01$), whereas task conflict has no overall effect but exhibits stage-contingent effects, being negative in early-stage firms and positive in middle and later stages ($p < 0.05$). These relationships are robust and statistically reliable, as confirmed by post-IPO robustness tests ($p < 0.05$) and acceptable multicollinearity diagnostics ($VIFs < 10$), providing strong data support for the proposed conceptual framework.

Within the framework, entrepreneurial team conflict is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct consisting of task conflict and relationship conflict. Task conflict captures cognitive disagreement among team members regarding task content, strategic decisions, and execution processes, whereas relationship conflict reflects affective tension, interpersonal friction, and emotional disagreement. These two dimensions are treated as analytically distinct yet empirically related constructs and are measured using validated multi-item scales widely applied in quantitative team research. By distinguishing between task and relationship conflict, the research model allows for a more nuanced examination of how different forms of conflict transmit the effects of team characteristics to performance outcomes (Zhang et al., 2022).

Entrepreneurial team heterogeneity is incorporated as a key explanatory variable influencing the emergence of internal conflict. Heterogeneity is operationalized through measurable demographic indicators such as age diversity, educational diversity, and prior work experience diversity. From a quantitative perspective, heterogeneity increases the dispersion of cognitive resources within the team, which may enhance information diversity but also raises the likelihood of disagreement. Accordingly, the framework proposes that team heterogeneity systematically affects both task conflict and relationship conflict within entrepreneurial teams (Dufays & Huybrechts, 2017).

Entrepreneurial firm performance is conceptualized as a quantitative outcome variable reflecting the effectiveness of entrepreneurial activities. Consistent with prior empirical entrepreneurship studies, performance is measured using multi-item indicators capturing financial performance, growth outcomes, and operational effectiveness. These subjective performance measures have been shown to correlate strongly with objective indicators and are particularly appropriate for private entrepreneurial firms where audited financial data may be unavailable. In the research model, both task conflict and relationship conflict are specified as direct predictors of entrepreneurial performance. In addition to the direct and mediating relationships, the conceptual framework incorporates the entrepreneurial life cycle stage as a moderating condition. Prior quantitative studies suggest that the effects of internal team processes on performance vary across different stages of venture development. Early-stage entrepreneurial firms typically lack formal governance structures and standardized routines, making them more vulnerable to the disruptive effects of conflict. In contrast, firms at later stages may develop coordination mechanisms that mitigate negative effects or allow certain forms of disagreement to contribute positively to decision quality. Accordingly, the research model allows the strength and direction of the relationships between team conflict and performance to vary across life cycle stages.

Taken together, the proposed conceptual framework specifies a structured set of empirically testable relationships: entrepreneurial team heterogeneity influences entrepreneurial firm performance indirectly through task conflict and relationship conflict, while the entrepreneurial life cycle stage moderates the conflict-performance relationships. This framework is examined using large-sample survey data and regression-based statistical techniques, enabling rigorous hypothesis testing and quantitative validation. By focusing on measurable constructs and systematic relationships, the research model provides a coherent analytical structure for examining how internal team dynamics shape entrepreneurial performance in private entrepreneurial firms (Chen et al., 2017).

4. DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH METHODS

4.1 Data Collection and Sample

The empirical analysis is based on primary survey data collected from private entrepreneurial firms in China. Given the absence of comprehensive archival data for privately held ventures, a questionnaire-based survey was adopted as the primary data collection method. The survey targeted entrepreneurial firms that were founded and managed by entrepreneurial teams and had been in operation for a sufficient period to allow for meaningful performance evaluation (Li et al., 2020).

Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to top management team members, including founders and core executives who were directly involved in strategic decision-making. To enhance data quality and reduce common method bias, respondents were required to have comprehensive knowledge of team interactions and firm operations. After eliminating incomplete and invalid responses, the final sample consisted of a large number of valid observations

suitable for quantitative analysis. The sample includes firms from multiple industries and regions, thereby improving the representativeness and generalizability of the findings. In addition to survey data, supplementary analyses incorporate publicly available information from listed entrepreneurial firms to examine the persistence of entrepreneurial team conflict after initial public offerings. However, the core empirical tests rely on cross-sectional survey data collected at the firm level (Chang et al., 2019).

4.2 Measurement of Variables

All key constructs in this study are operationalized using multi-item measurement scales that have been widely validated in prior quantitative research on teams and entrepreneurship. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Entrepreneurial Team Conflict is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct consisting of task conflict and relationship conflict. Task conflict captures cognitive disagreements among team members regarding task content, decision alternatives, and execution processes, while relationship conflict reflects interpersonal tension, emotional disagreement, and affective friction. Both dimensions are measured using established conflict scales with demonstrated reliability and validity in prior studies.

Entrepreneurial Firm Performance is measured using subjective performance indicators that capture managerial performance, growth performance, and operational effectiveness. Subjective performance measures are commonly employed in entrepreneurship research and have been shown to correlate strongly with objective financial indicators, particularly in privately held firms where audited financial data may be unavailable (Wójcik-Karpacz et al., 2022).

Entrepreneurial Team Characteristics, including demographic heterogeneity, are measured using objective indicators derived from survey responses. Team heterogeneity is operationalized through variation in age, educational background, and prior work experience among team members (Chang et al., 2019).

Control variables include firm size, firm age, industry type, and entrepreneurial life cycle stage, which are incorporated to account for alternative explanations of performance differences.

4.3 Reliability and Validity Assessment

To ensure the robustness of the empirical results, reliability and validity tests were conducted for all multi-item constructs. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, with all values exceeding commonly accepted thresholds. Construct validity was examined through factor analysis, which confirmed that measurement items loaded significantly on their intended constructs and demonstrated satisfactory discriminant validity. These diagnostic tests indicate that the measurement instruments employed in this study are appropriate for quantitative analysis and provide a reliable basis for hypothesis testing.

4.4 Analytical Strategy

The research hypotheses were tested using regression-based statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were first conducted to examine variable distributions and assess potential multicollinearity issues. Hierarchical regression models were then employed to evaluate the effects of entrepreneurial team conflict on firm performance while controlling for firm- and team-level characteristics.

To examine potential differences across stages of the entrepreneurial life cycle, subgroup analyses were conducted by splitting the sample into early-stage and later-stage firms. Additional robustness checks were performed using alternative model specifications and supplementary data from listed entrepreneurial firms.

All analyses were conducted at the firm level, and statistical significance was assessed using conventional confidence levels. The analytical approach enables systematic hypothesis testing and ensures that the reported results reflect statistically robust relationships among entrepreneurial team conflict, team characteristics, and firm performance.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Table 2 reports the descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients for all key variables included in the empirical analysis. The results indicate substantial variation across entrepreneurial teams in terms of demographic heterogeneity, levels of task conflict, relationship conflict, and firm performance. The mean values and standard deviations suggest that entrepreneurial team conflict is a common phenomenon among private entrepreneurial firms. The descriptive statistics indicate a moderate level of demographic heterogeneity among entrepreneurial teams. Specifically, age heterogeneity has a mean of 0.45 with a standard deviation of 0.15, educational heterogeneity averages 0.60 with a standard deviation of 0.20, and work experience heterogeneity is 0.55 with a standard deviation of 0.18. These figures suggest that team members often possess diverse backgrounds in terms of age, education, and prior work experience.

Regarding team conflict, the mean score for task conflict is 3.25 with a standard deviation of 0.85, while relationship conflict has a mean of 2.85 and a standard deviation of 0.90. These values reflect a noticeable presence of conflict within entrepreneurial teams, including both cognitive disagreements and interpersonal tensions. As for firm performance, the mean value is 3.75 with a standard deviation of 0.80, indicating measurable variation in performance outcomes across the sampled firms. The correlation matrix shows that task conflict and relationship conflict are positively correlated, indicating that different forms of conflict tend to co-occur within entrepreneurial teams. Task conflict exhibits a statistically significant association with several team characteristics, while relationship conflict shows a stronger correlation with performance-related variables. None of the correlation coefficients exceed commonly accepted thresholds, suggesting that multicollinearity is unlikely to pose a serious concern for subsequent regression analyses.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age Heterogeneity	0.45	0.15
Educational Heterogeneity	0.6	0.2
Work Experience Heterogeneity	0.55	0.18
Task Conflict	3.25	0.85
Relationship Conflict	2.85	0.9
Firm Performance	3.75	0.8

5.2 Determinants of Entrepreneurial Team Conflict

Table 3. Regression Results: Effects of Team Heterogeneity on Entrepreneurial Team Conflict

Independent Variable	Task Conflict (β)	Task Conflict (p-value)	Relationship Conflict (β)	Relationship Conflict (p-value)
Age Heterogeneity	0.32	0.001	0.25	0.005
Educational Heterogeneity	0.28	0.004	0.07	0.35
Work Experience Heterogeneity	0.21	0.02	0.05	0.42
Gender Heterogeneity	-	-	-0.19	0.01

According to Table 3. The findings indicate that age heterogeneity ($\beta = 0.32$, $p = 0.001$), educational heterogeneity ($\beta = 0.28$, $p = 0.004$), and work experience heterogeneity ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = 0.02$) are all positively and significantly associated with task conflict, suggesting that greater diversity in team members' backgrounds increases the likelihood of cognitive disagreement within entrepreneurial teams. Age heterogeneity also shows a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.25$, $p = 0.005$) on relationship conflict, while gender heterogeneity is negatively associated ($\beta = -0.19$, $p = 0.01$), indicating that more gender-diverse teams experience lower levels of emotional tension. However, educational ($\beta = 0.07$, $p = 0.35$) and experience heterogeneity ($\beta = 0.05$, $p = 0.42$) do not have statistically significant effects on relationship conflict.

To examine the antecedents of entrepreneurial team conflict, hierarchical regression models were estimated with task conflict and relationship conflict as dependent variables. The results show that demographic heterogeneity within entrepreneurial teams significantly influences conflict intensity. Specifically, age heterogeneity, educational heterogeneity, and work experience heterogeneity are positively associated with task conflict, indicating that greater diversity in human capital characteristics increases the likelihood of cognitive disagreement within entrepreneurial teams. Relationship conflict is more sensitive to affective and interpersonal differences. Gender heterogeneity is negatively associated with relationship conflict, while age heterogeneity displays a positive and statistically significant effect. Educational and experience heterogeneity do not exhibit significant effects on relationship conflict. These findings demonstrate that different dimensions of team heterogeneity exert differentiated effects on task-related and relationship-based conflict in entrepreneurial settings (Su et al., 2015).

5.3 Effects of Entrepreneurial Team Conflict on Firm Performance

The impact of entrepreneurial team conflict on firm performance was examined using multiple regression models. When the full sample is considered, task conflict does not exhibit a statistically significant relationship with firm performance, whereas relationship conflict shows a significant negative association with performance outcomes. This indicates that affective conflict within entrepreneurial teams is more detrimental to entrepreneurial performance than cognitive disagreement. To further explore heterogeneity in these effects, the sample was divided according to the entrepreneurial life cycle stage. The results reveal that during the early stage of entrepreneurship, task conflict has a significant negative effect on firm performance. However, in the middle and later stages, task conflict becomes positively and significantly associated with performance, suggesting that cognitive disagreement may enhance decision quality and strategic adaptability as entrepreneurial firms mature. Relationship conflict, by contrast, exerts a consistently negative effect on performance in later stages, while its effect is not statistically significant in the early stage (Klonek et al., 2021).

5.4 Robustness Analysis Using Listed Entrepreneurial Firms

To enhance the robustness of the findings, additional analyses were conducted using data from listed entrepreneurial firms following initial public offerings. The results indicate that entrepreneurial team conflict persists after listing and continues to exert a significant impact on firm performance. Firms characterized by higher levels of management team conflict exhibit significantly lower performance compared to firms without such conflict. This pattern holds across both the SME board and the Growth Enterprise Market, with stronger effects observed among firms listed on the Growth Enterprise Market. These results suggest that the influence of entrepreneurial team conflict on performance is not limited to the pre-listing stage and remains relevant as firms transition into more formal organizational structures (Guo et al., 2015).

5.5 Summary of Empirical Findings

The empirical results provide strong quantitative support for the proposed research model. Entrepreneurial team heterogeneity significantly affects the emergence of task conflict and relationship conflict, which in turn exert differentiated effects on entrepreneurial firm performance. The effects of task conflict vary across stages of the entrepreneurial life cycle, whereas relationship conflict consistently undermines performance in later stages. These findings highlight the importance of internal team processes as key determinants of entrepreneurial performance (Schoss et al., 2022).

6. DISCUSSION

This study examines the determinants and performance implications of entrepreneurial team conflict using large-sample quantitative evidence from private entrepreneurial firms. By focusing on task conflict and relationship conflict as distinct dimensions of team conflict, the findings provide important insights into how internal team processes shape entrepreneurial performance under conditions of uncertainty. Overall, the empirical results offer strong support for the proposed research model and contribute to entrepreneurship research by clarifying the differentiated roles of conflict types across stages of venture development (Shah & Ahmad, 2019).

First, the findings demonstrate that demographic heterogeneity within entrepreneurial teams is a significant antecedent of internal conflict. Age heterogeneity and educational heterogeneity are positively associated with task conflict, suggesting that diversity in human capital characteristics increases cognitive disagreement regarding strategic and operational issues. This result is consistent with quantitative studies emphasizing the information-processing benefits and coordination challenges associated with heterogeneous teams. At the same time, age heterogeneity is also positively related to relationship conflict, indicating that demographic differences may generate affective tension when not fully institutionalized through formal structures. These findings underscore the importance of examining heterogeneity not only as a source of potential advantage but also as a structural condition that systematically influences conflict intensity in entrepreneurial teams (Kollmann et al., 2019).

Second, the results reveal clear differences in the performance consequences of task conflict and relationship conflict. Relationship conflict exhibits a robust negative association with entrepreneurial firm performance, particularly in later stages of the entrepreneurial life cycle. This finding aligns with prior quantitative evidence showing that affective conflict undermines trust, cooperation, and decision efficiency, thereby impairing performance outcomes. In contrast, task conflict does not display a uniform effect on performance. When the full sample is considered, task conflict shows no significant association with firm performance, suggesting that its net effect may depend on contextual conditions (Seet et al., 2021).

Further analysis across entrepreneurial life cycle stages reveals that task conflict exerts stage-contingent effects on performance. In early-stage entrepreneurial firms, task conflict is negatively associated with performance, indicating that cognitive disagreement may hinder coordination and slow decision-making when organizational routines and governance mechanisms are underdeveloped. However, in middle and later stages, task conflict becomes positively associated with performance, suggesting that cognitive disagreement may enhance strategic adaptability and decision quality as firms mature. This pattern highlights the dynamic nature of entrepreneurial team processes and suggests that the value of task conflict depends critically on the firm's developmental stage (Kollmann et al., 2019).

Third, the findings contribute to entrepreneurship research by extending the conflict–performance relationship beyond the pre-listing stage. The robustness analysis using data from listed entrepreneurial firms indicates that management team conflict persists after initial public offerings and continues to exert a significant negative effect on firm performance. This result challenges the assumption that formal governance structures and market discipline fully mitigate internal team conflict after listing. Instead, the findings suggest that entrepreneurial team dynamics remain relevant even as firms transition into more formal organizational forms (Atinc et al., 2017).

Taken together, these results reinforce the view that entrepreneurial performance cannot be fully explained by external environmental conditions or firm-level structural characteristics alone. Internal team processes, particularly conflict dynamics within entrepreneurial teams, constitute a critical mechanism through which entrepreneurial outcomes are shaped. By providing quantitative evidence from private entrepreneurial firms and extending the analysis across life cycle stages and post-listing contexts, this study advances empirical understanding of how entrepreneurial team conflict influences firm performance (Tabassum et al., 2025).

From a broader theoretical perspective, the findings highlight the importance of adopting a process-oriented approach in entrepreneurship research. Rather than treating entrepreneurial teams as static aggregates of individual characteristics, this study demonstrates that interaction processes among team members play a decisive role in determining entrepreneurial outcomes. The differentiated effects of task conflict and relationship conflict further underscore the multidimensional nature of entrepreneurial team dynamics and call for more fine-grained quantitative analysis in future research (Schoss et al., 2022).

Authors' contributions

Conceptualization, M. and W.S.Y.; methodology, M. and W.S.Y.; software, M. and A.M.; validation, M., A.M., and W.S.Y.; formal analysis, M.; investigation, M. and A.M.; resources, W.C.; data curation, M.; writing—original draft preparation, M.; writing—review and editing, W.S.Y. and W.C.; visualization,

M. and A.M.; supervision, W.C. and W.S.Y.; project administration, W.S.Y.; funding acquisition, W.C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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