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The Influence of Emotional Intelligence on Conflict Resolution Styles among Undergraduate Students

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Article Details

ABSTRACT

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This study showed the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution styles among students using a quantitative correlational research design. 203 participants solved the standardized self-report questionnaires measuring emotional intelligence and conflict resolution behavior. Descriptive statistics explored that students commonly proved moderate to high levels of emotional intelligence and a range of conflict management strategies. Pearson's correlation and linear regression analyses exposed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution styles. In detail, students with higher emotional intelligence were more likely to use positive approaches, such as collaboration and compromise, when dealing conflicts. The regression analysis showed that emotional intelligence was a significant predictor of conflict resolution style ($\beta = .306, p < .001$), while the effect size was modest ($R^2 = .094$). These findings support with current literature and suggest that emotional intelligence plays a important role in forming students' interpersonal problem-solving behaviors. The study highlights the value of developing emotional skills in educational locations to improve students' capacity to cope conflict well. Limitations include the use of convenience sampling and self-report measures. Recommendations for future research include longitudinal studies, mixed-method approaches, and more research into cultural and gender differences.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to understand, manage, and use emotions effectively in oneself and others (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1997). It plays an important role in personal growth and healthy relationships. Important elements of EI include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Mayer et al., 2016). These abilities help individuals to manage stress, communicate well, and resolve conflicts more confidently. Conflict happens when people have different goals, needs, or ideas. Conflict resolution styles include avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, and collaborating. Avoiding means removing from conflict, while accommodating involves prioritizing others' needs over your own. Competing is standing strong for personal goals, which may harm relationships. Compromising means both sides give up something, and collaborating look for a win-win result through open communication (Shlath et al., 2013).

Emotional intelligence effects how people manage conflict. People with high EI be likely to stay calm, understand emotions (their own and others'), and respond in positive ways (Fernandes et al., 2022). Instead of becoming aggressive, they use cooperation or compromise. This builds trust and long-term relationships, making EI an important life skill in personal, academic, and work settings (Hamdan et al., 2022). University students commonly face interpersonal and academic stress. In their group projects or daily social life, their ability to manage conflict impacts their academic achievement and mental health (Cava et al., 2021). Some students avoid conflict or react emotionally. On the other hand, those with emotional skills like empathy, self-control, and active listening are more able to handle disagreements effectively (Fernández-Berrocal & Cabello, 2021). While emotional intelligence and conflict resolution are well-studied in place of work and schools, there is narrow research among university students in rising countries (Tareq & Isha, 2023). However, university is place where students form identities and learn to navigate emotional and social challenges. By understanding how EI impacts conflict styles, educators and counselors can develop more effective interventions to improve conflict resolution abilities.

Research indicates that university students face different types of conflicts in their lives, whether in teamwork, social interactions, or when managing academic stress. How they deal with these conflicts can affect their studies, mental health, and relationships (Cava et al., 2021). Emotional intelligence (EI), which means the ability to recognize, cope, and express own and other's emotions is an important skill through which people handle conflict easily (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016). Students with high emotional intelligence are normally better at staying calm, recognize the feelings of others, and searching peaceful solutions to problems. This leads them to use positive conflict solutions such as collaboration and compromise instead of avoiding issues or becoming aggressive (Hamdan et al., 2022). Today, universities are focused on teaching soft skills like communication, teamwork and sympathy. This is why the study affects emotional intelligence conflict solution styles, helping teachers and consultants help students more efficiently.

Emotional Intelligence:

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the skill to understand, manage and express one's own feelings and to recognize and react to others' feelings. This is important in decision making, building relationships and solving conflicts. According to Mayor, Caruso, and Salovi (2016), EIs include skills such as identifying emotions, understanding their meaning, controlling emotional reactions, and using emotions to guide behavior. Research shows that university students with high EI are better at managing stress, staying motivated, and resolving conflicts through positive methods like collaboration and compromise (Tareq & Isha, 2023). EI also helps improve communication, decrease anxiety, and support mental health (Fernández-Berrocal & Cabello, 2021). Many

universities now offer training programs to help students form emotional and social skills (Nightingale et al., 2021). This makes emotional intelligence an important part of academic success and personal welfare.

Conflict Resolution Styles

Conflict is a natural part of life, especially in social, educational and professional situations. The way people handle the struggle, they play an important role in maintaining good relationships, reducing stress and improving overall welfare. To understand that people have a famous model Thomas-Kilman model (1974) to react to conflict, with five main conflicts resolution styles based on vocalism (focusing on one's own needs) and cooperation (focusing on others' needs). These styles include (ignoring the issue), competing (trying to win), adjustment (giving to others), compromising (giving both sides a little), and cooperation (working together for a win-win solution).

Research shows that cooperation and compromise is the most effective style, as they give rise to better teamwork, low stress and strong relationships. In comparison, stress in abstinence and competition may increase and lead to unresolved problems. In university, students often face conflicts during teamwork, academic challenges, and social relations. Using positive conflict styles, especially when combined with emotional intelligence, helps students solve problems calmly and respectfully. Overall, understanding conflict resolution and how emotional intelligence affects it may help people manage disagreements more effectively, especially in universities. Hence, research supports the idea that emotional intelligence positively influences how individuals react to conflict. By improving emotional awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, EI allows individuals to accept more helpful, respectful, and supportive conflict resolution strategies. This relationship is especially important in educational settings, where interpersonal collaboration and communication are important for success. Developing emotional intelligence among students may not only improve their academic experiences but also prepare them for healthier social and professional relationships outside university.

Research Gaps

Research evidence shows that connecting emotional intelligence to conflict resolution styles (Shlath et al., 2013), most of this research is based in Western cultures. The findings may not fully apply to non-Western or developing countries where emotional expression and conflict methods can vary (Fernandes et al., 2022). This makes a need for cultural research focused on students in different countries like Pakistan. In addition, many studies treat EI as a single concept instead of observing its components like empathy, emotion regulation, or motivation separately (Mayer et al., 2016). By exploring these elements separately help to recognize which is most effective in conflict situations. Most recent work uses cross-sectional surveys, limiting the ability to measure long-term changes or connection. Hence, it is hypothesized that emotional intelligence significantly influences the use of conflict resolution styles among university students. Gender and culture also remain unknown variables as they shape how EI is used during conflict. Therefore, self-report tools lead EI research, which may not always reflect true emotional behavior. Combining methods like interviews, peer calculations, or behavioral observations could improve correctness (Nightingale et al., 2021).

Hypothesis

1. Emotional intelligence significantly influences the use of conflict resolution styles among university students.
2. Emotional intelligence will impact the conflict resolution style.

Method

Sample & Procedure

The study used a convenience sampling technique to select a sample of 203 students from colleges and universities, selected based on their availability and willingness to participate. This method was useful for accessing a different group of students within a limited timeframe and source controls. These demographic details provided a complete understanding of the participants' background for discovering emotional intelligence and conflict resolution styles. Data were collected through an online survey distributed through email and social media platforms, confirming wide availability. Participation was unpaid, unknown, and based on informed consent. The survey took approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. Ethical approval was got from the official review board, and participants were guaranteed of privacy and their right to withdraw at any stage.

Instruments

Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) used the 33-item scale by Hyde, Pethe, and Dhar (2002) to measure emotional intelligence. It measures self-awareness, empathy, emotional stability, self-motivation, and emotional regulation. It uses a 5-point Likert scale and has high reliability .93).

Conflict Resolution Style Inventory (CRSI) developed by Kurdek's (1994) 16-item inventory measures conflict styles like avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, and collaborating. It showed good reliability .82 for the student sample.

Analysis Procedure

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 20, beginning with descriptive and reliability statistics, followed by Pearson correlation analysis to observe the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict resolution styles, with a significance threshold set at $p < .01$ for strong clarification of results.

Results

4.1 Table

Frequencies of all the Demographic Variables used in this study.

	Demographics	<i>f</i> (%)
Gender	Male	70(30.4)
	Female	133(65.5)
Qualification	Intermediate	53(26.1)
	Undergraduate	111(54.7)
	Postgraduate	39(19.2)
Socioeconomic Status	Lower	6(3.0)
	Middle	177(87.2)
	Upper	19(9.4)

Table 4.1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 203 participants included in the study.

The gender distribution shows that most of the participants identified as female (65.5%), while 34.5% identified as male. In terms of educational qualification, most respondents were undergraduates (54.7%), followed by intermediate-level students (26.1%) and postgraduates (19.2%). Regarding socioeconomic status, most participants (87.2%) identified as belonging to the middle class, while 9.4% reported an upper-class background and 3.0% identified with the lower socioeconomic group. Educational levels different, with 26.1% at the intermediate level, 54.7% pursuing undergraduate studies, and 19.2% enrolled in postgraduate programs. In terms of socioeconomic status, most participants (87.2%) identified as middle class, while smaller percentages informed upper-class (9.4%) or lower-class (3.0%) backgrounds.

4.2 Table

Descriptive Statistics, Reliability and Correlation Analysis of all Scales used in this study (N=203)

Variables	M	SD	α	CRS	EQI
Conflict Resolution Style	115.72	20.75	.93	-	-
Emotional Intelligence Inventory	43.55	10.37	.82	.306**	-

Table 4.2 shows the average scores and reliability of the tools used in this study. The average score for Emotional Intelligence was 115.72 with a standard deviation of 20.75. It showed good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .93, meaning it consistently measured what it was supposed to. The Conflict Resolution Style Inventory had an average score of 43.55 with a standard deviation of 10.37. It also showed good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .82. These results confirm that both tools were reliable for measuring Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution styles in this study. Regarding Pearson correlation results $r = .306$, with correlations, indicate statistically positive relations between emotional intelligence (TEQ) and conflict solution style (TCRS). This shows that individuals with high emotional intelligence are more likely to adopt creative conflict solution strategies. The moderate positive association effectively highlights the important role of emotional regulation and awareness in managing mutual conflicts. These conclusions support the theoretical expectations that emotional competencies are linked to healthy communication and relationships.

4.3 Table

Regression Analysis showing Emotional Intelligence for Conflict Resolution Style (N = 203)

Predictor	β	Std. Error	β	t	p
Constant	25.85	3.94		6.56	.000
Emotional Intelligence	.153	.034	.306	4.56	.000

Note. $R^2 = .094$, ($F(1,201) = 20.78$), $p < .001$

* $p < .001$

Table 4.3 shows the results of a linear regression analysis that was used to check how the emotional intelligence between 203 participants affects the solution style. The analysis found that the struggle of emotional intelligence was an important positive effect on the solution style,

including $B = 0.153$, $SE = 0.034$, $\beta = 0.306$, $T(201) = 4.56$, $P < .001$. This means that as the emotional intelligence increases, the conflict solution also improves the style. The size of the effect is moderate, but the result is statistically important, it shows that emotional intelligence plays an important role in predicting how students manage struggle.

Discussion

The study revealed how the conflict solution between students of the University of Emotional Intelligence (EI) affects styles (CRS). The results showed an important positive relationship, showing that high EI students use more supportive and collaborative methods when dealing with conflict. Emotional abilities such as sympathy, emotional regulation and communication skills were the main elements in promoting healthy conflict management strategies. The results support with present psychological theories, mainly Mayer and Salovey's (1997) model of EI, which underlines the importance of understanding and managing emotions in social connections. Statistical results, including a significant regression and medium pierecne correlation, support the idea that emotional intelligence supports more adaptive mutual behavior in educational settings.

This insight highlights the value of a mixture of emotional intelligence training in university programs to improve the social and emotional skills of students. Reliable tools used in the study are more accurate the results, highlighting EI's role in promoting positive peer relationships and a cooperative campus environment.

In spite of the valued results, this study has some limitations. The sample needed variety, with a majority of participants being female and from middle socioeconomic backgrounds, which controls the generalizability of the results. This Sample was not diverse for gender and background. The Cross-sectional design limits fundamental understanding. The Self-report data may have biasness. In addition, cultural impacts were not studied. The findings may not apply outside the university students. To overcome these limitations, future research should include more diverse participant groups in terms of gender, culture, and socioeconomic status. Longitudinal studies would offer better insight into how emotional intelligence and conflict resolution skills grow with passage of time. Combining qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups could offer a deeper understanding of individual understandings in managing conflict. Researchers are also encouraged to explore intervention-based studies that test the effectiveness of emotional intelligence training programs in improving students' conflict resolution skills. This would help confirm whether increasing emotional abilities can lead to measurable behavioral changes in real-life interpersonal situations. The study's results have significant implications for both academic and practical situations. Introducing emotional intelligence (EI) training in university programs could help students form better interpersonal skills, decrease conflict, and improve academic and social results. Counseling facilities can also use EI-focused methods to support students' emotional well-being and conflict management. These understandings spread to workplace settings, where raising EI through professional development may lead to improved team connections and effective conflict solutions. Overall, encouraging EI can add to more respectful and cooperative environments across various social and professional areas.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research confirms that emotional intelligence positively calculates how students manage conflict. While the results support with present theories, additional studies are necessary to extend understanding and increase applicability. Increasing EI can support individual relationships and add to more emotionally strong groups.

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