

Article

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Conflict Management Among Teams

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Abstract: This study explores the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in managing conflict within organizational teams. As team dynamics increasingly involve diverse individuals with varied emotional responses, the capacity to recognize, understand, and regulate emotions has become essential in minimizing interpersonal conflict and enhancing collaboration. The research aims to analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence competencies—such as self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation—and effective conflict resolution strategies. A quantitative method was employed using surveys distributed to team members across various organizations, with data analyzed through regression analysis. The findings indicate a significant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and constructive conflict management, suggesting that teams with higher EI levels are more likely to engage in collaborative problem-solving and exhibit lower levels of destructive conflict. The study contributes to the field of organizational behavior by emphasizing the importance of emotional intelligence training in team development programs. The implications highlight the need for HR and leadership to incorporate EI frameworks into performance evaluations and team-building efforts to foster healthier workplace relationships and improved team outcomes.

Keywords: conflict management, emotional intelligence, organizational behavior, team dynamics, workplace relationships.

1. Introduction

In today's increasingly collaborative and diverse work environments, managing interpersonal conflict has become a critical factor in ensuring team effectiveness and organizational success. Conflict is a natural component of team interaction due to differences in individual goals, communication styles, personalities, and emotional responses (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). When not managed properly, conflict can escalate and negatively affect team performance, trust, and satisfaction. Therefore, understanding the mechanisms that influence how conflict is managed within teams has become a vital concern in organizational behavior studies.

Emotional Intelligence (EI), defined as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions in oneself and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), has gained recognition as a core competency in team conflict management. Research suggests that individuals with higher emotional intelligence are more capable of handling interpersonal tensions, engaging in empathetic dialogue, and promoting constructive conflict resolution strategies (Jordan & Troth, 2004). These individuals tend to remain composed under pressure and contribute to creating psychologically safe team climates where open communication and mutual respect are maintained.

Despite the established connection between EI and conflict resolution, recent studies have highlighted the need for further empirical investigation, particularly in team-based organizational settings. While previous research primarily focuses on individual emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness (Goleman, 1998; Wong & Law, 2002), limited attention has been given to the collective influence of team members' EI on conflict dynamics within diverse and interdependent teams. This gap raises the question of how team-level emotional intelligence competencies impact the quality and outcome of conflict management processes.

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Moreover, as organizations adopt more agile and cross-functional team structures, the urgency to explore EI as a shared team resource becomes increasingly relevant. Research by Druskat and Wolff (2001) introduced the concept of group emotional intelligence, emphasizing that teams can develop emotional norms that influence their conflict resolution behavior. However, further empirical evidence is required to validate how such norms manifest in various organizational settings and contribute to the mitigation of destructive conflict.

The objective of this study is to examine the role of emotional intelligence in conflict management among organizational teams. By using a quantitative approach to analyze the relationship between EI competencies and conflict-handling styles, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how emotional intelligence contributes to constructive team interactions. The findings are expected to offer practical insights for enhancing team effectiveness through emotional intelligence development initiatives in the workplace.

2. Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

Emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a central theoretical construct in understanding effective interpersonal functioning, particularly in team and organizational settings. The concept was first introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990), who defined EI as the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions. Their framework proposed four key components of EI: perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thinking, understanding emotions, and regulating emotions. These dimensions laid the groundwork for numerous subsequent models and empirical investigations into how EI operates in various social contexts, including the workplace.

Goleman (1998) expanded the concept into a broader model suitable for organizational application, emphasizing five domains: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. This model has been widely used in management and leadership studies, illustrating that emotionally intelligent individuals are better equipped to handle stress, build relationships, and resolve conflicts constructively. In team-based settings, these competencies allow individuals to navigate emotional dynamics, interpret group interactions more accurately, and foster more cooperative and productive behaviors (Côté, 2005). The relevance of EI to conflict management arises from its impact on emotional control, empathy toward differing perspectives, and ability to communicate effectively during tense situations.

The relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management has been examined in several empirical studies. Jordan and Troth (2004) found that individuals with higher EI were more likely to engage in integrative conflict resolution strategies, such as collaboration and compromise, rather than avoidance or competition. Similarly, research by Ayoko, Callan, and Härtel (2008) showed that team members with strong emotional regulation skills contributed significantly to reducing interpersonal tension and fostering more constructive conflict discussions. These findings suggest that EI serves as both a buffer and a facilitator in conflict-laden situations, enhancing the quality of interactions and outcomes within teams.

Furthermore, the concept of group emotional intelligence (GEI), introduced by Druskat and Wolff (2001), extends EI from the individual to the collective level. GEI refers to the norms and behaviors that teams develop to recognize, understand, and manage the emotions of their members. Teams with high GEI are more adept at regulating emotional expressions, encouraging open communication, and managing conflict collaboratively. This perspective aligns with social learning theory, which posits that emotional competencies can be learned and reinforced within team contexts (Bandura, 1986), emphasizing the potential for organizational development initiatives to cultivate emotionally intelligent teams.

Taken together, these theoretical insights and empirical findings highlight the significance of emotional intelligence as a critical factor in conflict management within teams. While earlier studies have primarily focused on individual-level EI, there is a growing recognition of the collective emotional capability of teams and its role in shaping conflict resolution processes. This study builds on these foundations by exploring the extent to which emotional intelligence contributes to constructive conflict management in team-based organizational environments.

3. Proposed Method

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management among organizational teams. The approach was chosen to enable statistical testing of hypotheses and to measure the strength and direction of relationships between the variables (Creswell, 2014). The study used a correlational design to identify the influence of emotional intelligence competencies on conflict management styles in team contexts.

The population in this study comprised employees working in team-based structures across various organizational sectors in Indonesia, including corporate, educational, and governmental institutions. Using purposive sampling, a total of 150 respondents were selected based on their active involvement in team activities for at least six months. This criterion ensured that respondents had sufficient experience to assess emotional and conflict dynamics within their teams.

Data were collected using two standardized instruments. Emotional intelligence was measured using the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), which includes four dimensions: self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion (Wong & Law, 2002). Conflict management styles were measured using the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory–II (ROCI–II), which classifies responses into five styles: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising (Rahim, 2002). Both instruments have demonstrated high reliability and construct validity in previous studies. In this research, the Cronbach's alpha values for each construct were above 0.80, indicating strong internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Data analysis was conducted using multiple regression analysis to examine the influence of emotional intelligence on conflict management styles. The F-test was used to determine the simultaneous significance of the independent variables, while the t-test evaluated the partial effect of each dimension of emotional intelligence on conflict management. All statistical tests were conducted using SPSS software. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to assess how much variance in conflict management could be explained by emotional intelligence.

The research model can be expressed as follows:

$$CM = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SEA + \beta_2 OEA + \beta_3 UOE + \beta_4 ROE + \varepsilon$$

Where:

- CM = Conflict Management
- SEA = Self-Emotion Appraisal
- OEA = Others' Emotion Appraisal
- UOE = Use of Emotion
- ROE = Regulation of Emotion
- β_0 = Constant
- β_1, \dots, β_4 = Regression Coefficients
- ε = Error Term

This model is adapted from Wong and Law (2002) and aims to determine how each EI dimension contributes to conflict management styles within teams.

4. Results and Discussion

Data for this study were collected over a two-month period from February to March 2025 across several organizations in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya, representing corporate, educational, and governmental sectors. A total of 150 valid responses were obtained through the dissemination of structured questionnaires using Google Forms and in-person distribution. The collected data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis to evaluate the influence of emotional intelligence dimensions on conflict management.

Table 1 below presents the results of regression analysis examining the relationship between emotional intelligence dimensions—Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA), Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA), Use of Emotion (UOE), and Regulation of Emotion (ROE)—and Conflict Management (CM).

Table 1. Regression Results of Emotional Intelligence on Conflict Management

Variable	B Coefficient	t-value	Sig. (p-value)
Constant	2.173	3.012	0.003
SEA	0.287	4.121	0.000
OEA	0.201	2.895	0.005
UOE	0.113	1.743	0.084
ROE	0.326	4.672	0.000
R ²	0.628		
F-value	47.321		0.000

Source: Processed data using SPSS (2025)

The results indicate that Self-Emotion Appraisal (SEA) and Regulation of Emotion (ROE) have the strongest influence on conflict management, with statistically significant p-values ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that individuals who can accurately recognize their own emotions and effectively regulate them are more capable of handling interpersonal conflict constructively, consistent with findings by Jordan and Troth (2004) and Côté (2005). Others' Emotion Appraisal (OEA) also has a significant effect, indicating the importance of empathy in managing team tensions. However, Use of Emotion (UOE) was not statistically significant ($p = 0.084$), suggesting that the motivational application of emotions may be less critical in direct conflict resolution scenarios.

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.628$) implies that approximately 62.8% of the variance in conflict management can be explained by the four dimensions of emotional intelligence. The F-test result ($F = 47.321$, $p < 0.001$) confirms that the regression model is statistically significant as a whole.

These findings align with the theoretical framework proposed by Goleman (1998), who emphasized the value of self-regulation and empathy in emotional intelligence. The results also support the group emotional intelligence theory advanced by Druskat and Wolff (2001), in which emotionally competent team members collectively influence the emotional climate and conflict resolution processes. The significant role of ROE reinforces the idea that managing emotional reactions during conflict is essential to maintaining team harmony and effectiveness.

Interestingly, the non-significance of UOE challenges some prior assumptions, such as those by Wong and Law (2002), who suggested that the ability to use emotions to facilitate performance could support interpersonal effectiveness. This may be context-dependent, indicating that motivational aspects of EI are more relevant in performance-based tasks than in emotionally charged conflict scenarios.

Theoretical implications of this study include the reinforcement of emotional intelligence as a predictor of effective conflict management, particularly through self-awareness and emotional regulation. Practically, the findings suggest that organizations should integrate EI-focused training—especially in the domains of self-regulation and empathy—into their leadership and team development programs to promote healthier conflict-handling norms.

5. Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in managing conflict among organizational teams, particularly through the dimensions of self-emotion appraisal (SEA), others' emotion appraisal (OEA), and regulation of emotion (ROE). These findings confirm that individuals who are aware of their own emotions, can empathize with others, and effectively regulate emotional responses are more likely to manage conflict constructively, aligning with prior research by Jordan and Troth (2004) and Druskat and Wolff (2001). While the use of emotion (UOE) showed a weaker influence, the overall model indicates that emotional intelligence accounts for a substantial portion of variance in conflict management strategies ($R^2 = 0.628$). In light of these findings, organizations are advised to integrate emotional intelligence development—particularly in self-regulation and empathy—into training programs to enhance team cohesion and reduce destructive conflict. However, this study is limited by its cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce response bias. Future research is recommended to explore longitudinal effects and include qualitative methods to deepen the understanding of emotional dynamics in team conflicts. Additionally, exploring cultural and sectoral variations in the impact of emotional intelligence on conflict resolution would be valuable to enhance the generalizability of the findings (Côté, 2005; Goleman, 1998; Wong & Law, 2002).

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